

(Galatians) Another Gospel

by Brian Brodersen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of the true gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and warns against any distortion or addition to this message.

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Scripture: Galatians 1:11

Topics: "False Gospel", "Gods Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his personal journey of discovering the true message of the Bible. He explains that the gospel is the good news of God's grace and the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The urgency of the Apostle Paul's message to the Galatians is highlighted, as false teachers had come in and challenged the validity of Paul's apostleship and the gospel he preached. The speaker encourages listeners to open their hearts and receive the grace of God, emphasizing that salvation is about being reconnected with God through Jesus Christ.

Transcript

So we pick up this evening in verse 6 of chapter 1. We began last week with just looking really at Paul's introduction. We gave just a basic sort of a introduction ourselves into the region of Galatia, the people that were there, how the churches were started by the Apostle Paul, and then looked at that initial introduction that he had written himself to those people in the churches in Galatia. Now as we pick up in verse 6, it's an interesting sort of a thing here and very uncharacteristic of Paul's epistles.

He immediately jumps into his topic. He gets straight to the point with them unlike the other epistles that he wrote. In the other epistles he gives his introduction and then following his introduction there's generally some sort of word of praise or some sort of word of commendation or even a prayer for them or something like that.

But there's nothing of that in this epistle here. Paul skips that completely and he gets as I said straight to the point. And that really gives us an idea of the urgency that the Apostle felt regarding the situation in Galatia.

As you might remember what had happened is Paul had gone into the region, they had preached the gospel, they had planted churches, they had seen many come to faith in Jesus, and then after his departure at some point certain false teachers came in and they began to contradict Paul. They began to

contradict the gospel that he had brought to the people. They began to challenge the validity of his apostleship and sadly many of the believers there just sort of bought the whole thing hook line and sinker.

And so word gets back to Paul that there's all this confusion now in these churches and that they have turned away from that simple and pure gospel message that he had presented to them. And so he just comes straight to the point here in the early part of the chapter in verse 6. He says, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel. Paul said, I'm amazed, I'm stunned, I can't believe it.

You see God had done such a wonderful work there amongst the Galatians and as we go through the epistle we'll get some hints here and there as to the kind of things that were happening. But as we look at it we see that when Paul went into this region he went full of the power of the Holy Spirit and wonderful conversions took place. People's lives were tremendously transformed and there was a real sense of the presence of God and the power of God and miracles were being wrought and all kinds of glorious and exciting things were happening.

But now everything's sort of just come to a halt. The brakes have been slammed on because suddenly the people have taken a turn in the wrong direction. And instead of just simply loving Jesus and rejoicing in his grace and thanking God for the salvation and growing in that wonderful message of his grace, they're now embracing this new view on things.

This idea that somehow you've got to work your way into the favor of God. You've got to work your way into God's blessing. You've got to add something to what Jesus did on the cross.

You've got to add your own particular effort to it along with the Jewish rituals of circumcision and keeping all of the meticulous details of the law. And so Paul is really, he's just astounded. He can't believe it, that they have left this wonderful experience and really gone into a spiritual captivity.

That's what's happened with them. And so he says, I'm marveling that you're turning away so soon from him who called you to a different gospel. But notice what he says in verse seven, which is not another.

It's interesting. You've turned to a different gospel, but he says in actuality, it's not a gospel. What you've turned to is not good news.

You see, that's what the gospel is. That's actually the meaning of the word itself. It's good news.

And the good news is it's real simple. The good news is that Jesus Christ did everything that needed to be done for all people to be saved. And all we do is simply put our faith in trust in what he accomplished.

That's the good news. Christ did it all. We just simply embrace it.

We receive it. But you see, they came along, these false teachers, and they said, oh, you know what Christ did was important for sure, but you must do something as well. You must make a contribution.

You must work in order to assure your salvation. Paul says, that's not good news. That's bad news.

If I've got to work my way into God's favor, you know, the problem is I can never be sure whether I'm in God's favor or not, because I can never be sure whether or not I've done a sufficient amount of work. And so I live under this burden. I live under this sense of condemnation and this sense of failure because I don't know if I'm living up to what God requires.

You know, this isn't something that was unique to the believers there in Galatia. This was something that Paul battled all of his ministry life because this kind of thing tried to make its way into a number of the other churches as well. But it didn't stop with the apostolic period.

It has been a battle that's been going on throughout all of history, all of church history. There's been this constant attempt to impose something else on people in order for them to be saved. And I'll tell you, I hate to say it, but I'm going to say it anyway.

Probably the greatest offender in history has been the Roman Catholic Church. They early on left the simple gospel message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ, and they began to heap all of these other things onto people so that there's not a Catholic on the planet who has assurance of salvation, unless they put more stock in what the Bible says than what the church says. But if you look to the church, if the church is your instructor in this area, as a Roman Catholic, you can never ever have total assurance of salvation.

The best you can do is say, you know, I hope I make it. I want to get there, but I'm not sure. And you probably have to concede that there's definitely going to be some time in purgatory.

But you see, this is all because they have left off the simple gospel of Christ as revealed in the pages of the New Testament. God wants to make salvation easy because he wants everybody to be saved. And so Jesus didn't come and just do part of what needed to be done for people to be saved.

Jesus did everything. And all we do now is simply just enter into what he did. But tragically, that church has completely missed it.

And they're not the only ones, but I think they're probably the greatest culprit because it's been going on for so many centuries and it still is the reality today. There is not an understanding of the of the free grace of God. There's not the promotion of that idea.

There's not the proclamation of the gospel that Christ will simply save you by you putting your faith and trust in him. It just doesn't happen within that institution. And it's so sad because there are a billion people that are connected to it and the vast majority of them don't have any real idea of whether or not they're saved or even how to get saved.

Growing up in that system myself, I didn't even know that I had to be saved. I didn't even know that it was a possibility to know God personally, to have a relationship with him where he would speak to me and guide my life and and love me personally and promise that I would go to heaven. I didn't even know that that kind of thing existed.

And it wasn't until in just sort of desperation. Because of the the futility of life that I sensed in my early 20s that I began to open the Bible and to look at what it had to say, and I realized that there's an entirely different message here than the one that I grew up with. It's a message of the grace of God, the gift of God.

You see, the gospel is the good news. It's the good news that Christ did it all. And we just lay hold of it now by faith.

We just say, Jesus, I believe you did it all. Save me. And he does.

He saves us. He does the work. It's a wonderful thing.

And when that happens, as many of you, of course, know already, when that happens, man, your life changes and suddenly your eyes are opened and you realize there is a God and your ears are open and you start hearing his voice and your life changes and you have joy and peace instead of depression and frustration. And you think, man, I've come into a relationship with God. Yes, that's what's happened.

That's what Jesus came to do. And, you know, it is the height of human iniquity to suggest to God that what his son did on the cross was not good enough to save us. Paul battles against that idea more intensely than he battles against anything else.

Paul fought that till the day he died. He fought against the idea that we had to help Salvation Long by making a contribution to it, because he saw that as the height of sin to suggest to God that the sacrifice of Jesus was not sufficient to save us. And so he says, you've gone after a different gospel, but in reality, it's not a gospel.

It's not a gospel at all. And these men are troubling you and perverting or another translation is distorting the gospel of Christ. That's what they were doing.

They were distorting it. You see, the devil is at work all the time. And he is doing his best to keep people from being saved.

And he has a number of tactics that he uses. First of all, he tries to keep the message as far from people as is possible, doesn't want them to hear it at all, because he knows that even if they hear just a bit of it, that could be enough to capture their hearts and to lead them out of his grip. So he tries to keep them as far from the word of God as he possibly can.

But if he can't do that, then the next best thing is to try to distort the message, to pervert it, to twist it in some way. So it's not the true message. It's not the pure message.

And that's what was happening. Paul said these men are perverting the gospel. They're twisting it.

They're distorting it. But even if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you, then what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. Let him be under the judgment of God.

That's the meaning of the term accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you, then what you have received, let him be accursed. He repeats it again.

You know, some might accuse Paul of just allowing his human emotion to sort of get out of control. You know, he says, oh, let these guys be accursed. But just so we know that this wasn't something that just was a result of him being overly excited.

He repeats it very clearly again. As I said before, I'm going to say again, let him be accursed. You see, that's how serious God takes his gospel.

It's the most serious thing in all the universe. And anyone that would twist it or distort it or pervert it is under the sentence of eternal damnation. That is heavy.

You see, to lead a person down the wrong road spiritually is the greatest crime that anyone could commit. And for those who intentionally do that, there is a severe punishment that awaits them in the future. And

that's what Paul is really talking about here.

But notice what he says. He says, but even if we he's referring to himself, of course, as an apostle, he's referring to the apostles. Collectively, even if we if we suddenly changed our position, if we suddenly began to preach something else to you other than what we've already preached, Paul said, let us be accursed.

He said, if we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you, let him be accursed. You know, in this one verse, verse eight. Paul really lays it out clearly that there is one true gospel.

And any diversion from that is a diversion from hell. It's from the enemy, even if it would come through somebody that seemed to be a spiritual leader. Even if it would come through some sort of a supernatural kind of an experience in the year 610, Mohammed should have known that this spiritual experience that he was having was not from God.

He suspected it wasn't from God, but then he was told by others to persevere through it because it probably was God. And that's where Islam originated. An angel from heaven brought him a different message, a message not about the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, but a message that denied the supremacy of Jesus Christ and exalted another God named Allah.

But you see, this was already written then. And there was a Christian community in that particular region. Mohammed should have known that.

In 1820, Joseph Smith, the founder of what we know today as Mormonism, the Church of Jesus Christ and the Latter-day Saints. Joseph Smith should have known better when he claimed that an angel, the angel Moroni, came and brought him information about the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ. He should have known better because Paul had already written it 1,800 years earlier.

If we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel to you, let them be accursed. What Paul wants us to understand, and of course, remember, Paul is writing by inspiration of the Spirit. What God wants us to understand is the gospel that was preached by Jesus Christ and the apostles is the gospel.

It'll never change. It'll never be altered. It'll never be modified.

It'll never be added to. It is God's way of salvation. There's no other way.

There never will be another way. And anyone who comes along and says anything different is under a divine curse, is headed for damnation unless they repent. Heavy words.

But that's how Paul jumps into this epistle. He is. He's upset, righteously indignant that these precious souls that he labored to see come to Christ.

That now they've been diverted and now they're caught up in all of this religion, all of this ritual, all of this other stuff that has no power or no real significance. So as he goes on, he says this in verse 10. For do I now persuade men or do I now seek the favor of men or God? Or do I seek to please men? You see, by the fact that Paul says this, it implies that that was part of what the false teachers had stated concerning Paul and his gospel.

They probably came into town and they probably said, you know, Paul, he's not really an apostle. He's a renegade. He's not part of the true apostolic band.

And we know these guys personally. We've come from Jerusalem. But we can assure you, Paul's not part of that.

He's never been part of that. And this message that he's giving you about salvation being the free gift of God without any works attached to it. He's only doing that because he wants to please you.

He wants to be popular among you. And so he's withholding the true message because, you know, the real message is a lot harder than that. But hey, we're going to tell you the truth, they would say.

We're going to level with you. We're going to shoot straight with you. You can't be saved simply by believing in Jesus.

You've got to be circumcised. You've got to keep the law of Moses. In other words, you've got to become a Jew in order to be a real Christian.

And so they were saying that Paul had compromised the real message because he knew it was too hard for the Gentiles. So he brought a watered down version. He left the law out of it, but he did it because he wanted to please men.

He wanted to be popular. He wanted to be liked. And so Paul, evidently having heard that that's the kind of thing that was going around about him.

He says, if anyone preaches another gospel, let him be accursed. You think I'm trying to please men now? Do you really think that that's my motive? Do you think that that's what I'm all about or interested in? And then he said this. He said, if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Jesus Christ.

If I still pleased men, notice that there was a time in Paul's life when he did please men. He lived to please man. He lived for the praise of man.

As a Jewish rabbi, as possibly a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, as the chief student of the great rabbinical Dr. Gamaliel, Paul did so much of that for the praise of men. He was highly esteemed among his fellow Jews. He was one that was looked up to.

He was one that was admired. He was one that people wanted to be like, and he was one that people would long to just sit at his feet and listen to his great understanding of the law. And it was all so pleasant and so enjoyable and so satisfying for his ego.

And he was doing it all to please himself and to please others. But he said, if I was still pleasing men, I wouldn't be the bondservant of Jesus Christ. And you know, there's something to that for all of us.

When you do serve Christ truly, when you follow him, you're not going to win any popularity contest. Oh, there will be some people that will admire you. Some will respect you.

Most will just flat out think you're weird. That's just the way it is. They'll think you're weak.

Oh, you need a crutch, they say. You know, that kind of stuff, I just, I don't even listen to it. I think, you know, these poor people, they just don't have a clue.

They don't know what they're talking about. Hey, we need a lot more than a crutch. We need a full-on resurrection because we're dead in sins and only Christ can raise us up.

But this life of being a Christian and this message of the gospel, this message is never going to be popular, never has, never will be. And we have to just make a decision and be determined that if we're going to follow Christ, we're not going to please men. You can't be both.

If you want to please men, you can't be the bondservant of Christ. If you're going to be the bondservant of Christ, you can't please men. But, you know, think about it.

There's a day coming when every man is going to die. And when we die, guess what? We don't stand before each other. We stand alone before God.

And it doesn't really matter what anybody else thought of me. Doesn't really matter if they thought I was really cool or if they thought I was just a complete idiot. It doesn't matter because they don't have the final say so.

But those who thought whatever they did think about me, guess what? They're going to be standing there all alone themselves. And I remember myself personally when I became a Christian. There were some of my friends that just, I didn't think it was that cool of a thing.

And they didn't really care to be my close friend anymore. And I remember in my mind just sort of having to weigh it out, thinking, well, you know, I like this friendship, but yet I think that what Jesus Christ thinks of me is a little more important than what they do. And so you make that decision, but all of us have to.

It's just the way it is. This is a, it's just really a rule of the Christian life. If you're going to serve God, you can't please men.

If you're going to be the pleaser of men, you can't serve God. Now, at this point, what Paul is going to do is he's going to, he's going to lay out a defense of his apostleship. You see, because that was another thing they challenged.

These false teachers came in, they said, Paul's not a real apostle. He wasn't part of that original band. You know them, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Matthew, you know, he wasn't part of that group.

And they were, they were trying to undermine his apostolic authority. And so what Paul is going to do now, he's going to basically share his apostolic testimony. He's going to tell them things that he didn't tell them previously.

Paul didn't go into town arrogantly. Hey, I'm an apostle. I've seen Jesus.

He went in humbly, he served the Lord, he ministered to the people, and then he left. And these guys come in and lie about him. So now, as he would have to do on other occasions, reluctantly, he would have to kind of come to his own defense.

He would have to stand up and say, let me tell you the truth about these matters. In writing to the Corinthians, who kind of fell for a similar sort of a thing at one point, he actually had to go into this thing that he called boasting. He said, I do this reluctantly.

But since you're so impressed with these other people who have come in and stole your affection, let me tell you a little bit about my own experience. And then he goes on to talk about his experiences with Christ. But he does it hesitantly.

He doesn't want to do that. Now, here with the Galatians, he does a similar sort of thing, but he does it in a bit of a different tone. With the Corinthians, it was almost like he was just so frustrated with them.

They, no matter what, they seem to just keep gravitating toward the false teachers. So he, sort of in an exasperated mode, he just says, all right, I'm going to tell you the facts. Here, he approaches it a little more gently.

But he's going to lay out for them, beginning in verse 11, all the way through verse 16 of chapter 2, he's basically going to lay out his apostolic testimony. So we're going to read through it tonight, and I'll stop occasionally to make comments on certain key statements here. But I want to go all the way through it because I want you to get the flow of what he's saying.

If we stop and, you know, just take a few verses and pick it up next week, and take a few more verses and pick it up the following week, we're going to miss the continuity of thought that is important to pick up. Because it's after he shares his apostolic testimony and defends his position as an apostle that he'll really get into the doctrinal aspect of the epistle, and there he will build his case to defend his message. So he's going to defend his position as an apostle first, then secondly, he will defend his message.

And so he says, But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. That's the first thing he says. I didn't invent this message.

It's not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it. But it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

You see, they were saying that, oh, Paul just invented this thing. This is his own thing. This isn't what the apostles in Jerusalem are teaching, they would say.

Because, of course, there was a huge gap geographically between them. The Galatians didn't know any better. So they could say those kinds of things.

This is something that Paul invented himself. This isn't what's being taught in Jerusalem by the key leaders. This isn't what Jesus really taught.

But Paul says, The gospel which I preach is not according to man. The gospel is not according to man. No mind of fallen man could ever come up with this gospel.

It's too glorious. It's far beyond the thinking process of man. You see, if you look at literally, without any exaggeration, if you look at any and every other religion on the planet, every one of them, take them all, and you lay them side by side, you will find that although there are differences, they have certain commonalities.

And the one thing that every religion on the planet has in common with every other religion is this. The teaching that man is saved, whatever that means, it varies from religion to religion, but that essentially man is saved through something that he does, through some sort of work, through some effort on his part, some kind of self-denial, some keeping of a list of rules, some thing that you do. That weighs into your salvation.

The gospel is the only message in the world that says salvation is a free gift from God. The nature of the message itself, to me, is strong, strong evidence that it is a message from God, not from men. Men never

have thought of this.

They've never thought of a God who saves you by doing all that needs to be done himself, and then simply offering salvation as a gift. It's not in the thinking process of man. No mind of fallen man has ever dreamed it up.

And as a matter of fact, when you tell people this, they often say, no way, that can't be true. That's too easy. What do you mean? I just have to believe in Jesus and nothing else.

You see, the mind of man can't grasp it because man's mind is fallen into sin and is darkened. And so we don't think like God thinks. But the gospel that Paul preached, the gospel that we believe is, like we said before, it's the good news.

God did all the work. And now he just offers the free gift to the entire human family. Anybody who wants the free gift can have the free gift.

Jesus paid the price. That's what the cross was all about. So Paul says, my gospel, it's not according to man.

I didn't receive it from a man. I wasn't taught it by a man. How did Paul come to know the gospel? It came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Interesting with Paul. Paul was actually taught the gospel directly by God. Not by Christ himself.

Now, that's also true of the other apostles. But they were taught the gospel prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul was taught the gospel after the resurrection.

Paul was taught the gospel by Christ in his glorified state. Where the other apostles were taught the gospel during the public ministry of Jesus. So it came by a direct revelation from God.

And, amazingly, it's completely harmonious with the gospel that was learned by Peter and John and James and the others as well. Except Paul seemed to have a little bit of a clearer understanding in some areas than they actually did. They seemed to, at times, sort of miss a little bit of it because their own nationalistic prejudice sort of kept them from seeing things so clearly.

They didn't quite understand the plan that God had for the Gentiles, the non-Jewish world. They were sort of still thinking that everything was restricted to Israel. But Paul's the one who comes along and he gets this clear revelation from Jesus that the gospel is going to go out to the Gentiles in a huge way.

And so, he didn't receive it from men. Of course, there's nothing to matter with receiving a gospel from men. As long as it's a true gospel.

But Paul's just seeking to show in his particular case, because they were accusing him of sort of making this up, that he didn't do that and he didn't even receive this through other means. He didn't receive it through human instrumentation. You know, God generally works through human instrumentation.

Most people that hear the gospel, that come to faith in Jesus, come through the influence of another person. Most, but not all. There are exceptions to the rule.

That's more or less the rule, but there are exceptions to the rule. There are those that, without any human instrumentation, at least in the sense of, you know, someone speaking to you. There could be other, you know, human factors.

There could be people praying that you're not even aware are praying for you, and that would, to some extent, be human instrumentation. But there are some that come to Christ without anyone ever necessarily, you know, coming to them and actually laying the gospel out to them verbally. And that was, of course, the case with Paul.

It wasn't that Peter and James and John and Andrew and these guys got him down, set him, or, you know, got around him and said, Okay, now listen, we want to teach you this. It was something that Christ himself did. And, of course, that was the case with his conversion as well.

You remember, as Paul was traveling on the road to Damascus to arrest the Christians, or to apprehend those who had been arrested and to take them back to Jerusalem for trial. There, Jesus met him on the road in all of his glory as a light shining brighter than the sun from heaven and knocked him from his horse. And it was at that moment that he was converted.

He said, For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my father. So that's where Paul was.

He excelled beyond many of his contemporaries. And there is some extra biblical literature, meaning literature outside the Bible, that gives us some indication that that was indeed the case. Of course, it was.

We don't doubt Paul's word. But there are other writings that speak of the prominent position that this man held. But we even see it in the scriptures themselves, because you remember, he went directly to the high priest.

He had access to the high priest, and he was commissioned by them to go out and to arrest those who were believing in Jesus. So he excelled beyond many of his contemporaries. He was zealous for the tradition of his fathers.

Many at that time were just sort of sitting back and wondering where this thing was going to go, this new message. But not Saul of Tarsus. He was going from village to village, town to town.

He was hunting down these people and putting them in prison and giving his vote against them when they were being sentenced to death. He was zealous. He wanted to stamp this new sect out.

But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. So he talks about now his conversion experience. But notice what he says.

Something interesting. He said, but when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through his grace. It's a funny thing.

Although Paul, on the one hand, he's talking about his his zeal as a Jew to the extent of persecuting Christians. He also recognizes that God's hand was on his life even from his earliest days. You know, it's a funny sort of a thing.

I'm sure some of you can relate to it. Maybe all of you can. When you become a Christian.

And you look back over your life, even though you might have been. The most hardcore sinner. You still can sort of see that all the way along there seemed to be God's hand there somehow.

Somehow guiding, somehow protecting, somehow preserving, somehow, you know, just sort of directing. And I know I can do that. I look back at the years before I became a Christian.

I think, you know, even in those years, even though I was lost, even though I was rebelling, even though I was living in sin. I can look back and still I remember being convicted. I remember feeling bad about the things I was doing.

And I remember thoughts of, you know, maybe there is a God and maybe I need to find out who he is. And, you know, so I can look back and I can see where God was patiently dealing with me all the way along. And perhaps some of you can as well.

Isn't God merciful that he he's so patient? He waits for us all of our lives. He's trying to get our attention and get us to turn. But we keep going our own way, being stubborn.

And, you know, there he is. He's just persevering. By his grace.

And that was Paul. He could look back and he could say, from my mother's womb, God was dealing with me. Took him probably 30 years to come to Christ, but that God's hand was dealing with him all that time.

But he refers to his salvation as God's son being revealed in him. So that is salvation, Christ in us. But he says that I might preach him among the Gentiles.

So he says, I didn't immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But I went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. So when Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, remember the story we have it recorded in the ninth chapter of Acts.

He sent from Jerusalem up north to Damascus, the same Damascus that you can find in Syria today. The same city he sent there. And he's going to bring back those who are in prison there.

He's going to bring them back to Jerusalem for trial. But Jesus meets him on the road. And so there he's converted.

But after he's converted, he doesn't then immediately go to Jerusalem to confer with the apostles. But rather he stays in Damascus and immediately begins to preach the gospel. He is persecuted for that.

So he leaves Damascus and he goes into Arabia. And so he spends a lengthy amount of time in Arabia. Then he comes back for another brief stay in Damascus.

And we learn this from other portions of Scripture. We learn some of it from the book of Acts. We learn some of it from his epistle to the Corinthians, the second epistle.

But what we learn there is that when he comes back to Damascus the second time, the persecution is so intense against him that he has to be snuck out of the city at night. Actually lowered down the city wall in a basket. His life was threatened.

And that's how he escaped and fled and went to Jerusalem. But here he tells us, look in verse 18, he says, Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem. This is interesting.

Three years from his conversion before he finally goes up to Jerusalem. Paul spent approximately three years in Arabia. Now the Arabia that he would be referring to would be a deserted area.

Some people believe that he actually went to the very place where the Ten Commandments were given to Moses. Because the Sinai Peninsula is in Arabia. And that could be true.

We don't know for sure. But he went out into the desert alone. And it was there for approximately three years that Jesus Christ personally educated Paul in the gospel.

That's what he's talking about. I received it by revelation, not from men, but by revelation from Jesus Christ himself. So for those three years the Lord taught him.

You know, everyone who receives the gospel really ultimately is taught it by Jesus Christ. It might be through a person God's using. It's always through the Holy Spirit.

But behind it all it's the Lord who's teaching us. Three years is interesting because you find that it was a three year period that Jesus spent with the apostles as well. The other apostles in his public ministry.

And you know, it just sort of seems like that's kind of a pattern in scripture. That there's sort of a three year training period that God gives us. And you know, noticing that in scripture over the years when I've been training up guys to go out into the ministry.

I've kind of used three years as sort of a model. I'll never forget many years ago when Joey Brown and I were serving together down in San Diego County. And Joey was chomping at the bit to go out.

You know, he's ready. You know how much energy Joey has today? You should have seen him when he was 25. He was ready to go.

He was ready to go conquer the world for Jesus. And he came to me and said, I've got to go. I've got to get out of here.

You know, there's this big world and I want to go to the east coast and all this. And I said, well, you know, you've been here a couple years. There's a three year pattern in the scripture.

Let's give it another year. And sure enough in that year the Lord finalized things. And it was after three years that the Lord sent him back to Virginia Beach.

And then on to Vermont. But you know, I had a three year training period here with Pastor Chuck. From 1980 to 1983.

And that's not to say that it's only three years or it can't be two or it can't be five or whatever. But it's interesting that you just sort of see this pattern throughout scripture. Three years is a good time to really, you know, get a good foundation.

Of course, if you're really focusing, if you're really concentrating. And so there is this three year period of time that Paul mentions. And then after that, he finally goes up to Jerusalem to see Peter.

And he remained with him 15 days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Now concerning the things which I write to you indeed before God, I do not lie.

Paul says, listen, I'm telling you the truth. I know what these other people have told you. They're lying to you.

I'm telling you the truth. He said, afterward, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And that's what we know from Acts.

After Paul was in Jerusalem for a period of time, things became really intense. And certain Jews there wanted to kill him. Everywhere Paul went, they wanted to kill him because he was so bold and zealous.

And so he fled and he went to Syria and then back to Cilicia where he originally had come from. That's where Paul was born in Cilicia. So he went back to his own country.

And he says, and I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God in me.

He says, they were amazed back in Jerusalem. All they had known about him before was he's trying to destroy us. And now he's preaching the gospel.

You know, isn't that exciting when you hear something like that? Somebody who was a great antagonist or an opponent or somebody who just, you know, hated Christ and Christianity. And then you hear that they got saved. Then you hear that they're preaching the gospel now.

That is always such a thrilling thing. And they were thrilled. They glorified God in me.

Glorified God in me. This is an interesting little statement. You know, it's really easy to glorify God in ourselves.

Man, I love what God's doing in my life. I love to talk about it, think about it, pray about it. I want God to just do all kinds of great things in my life.

But what about God doing great things in somebody else's life? Oh, that's okay, but what about my life? And you know, sometimes in ministry, believe it or not, believe it because we're all human, it's kind of hard to glorify God in others. You go to a conference and somebody's up there speaking, you know, and you're sitting back going, Oh, come on, I could do a better job than that. What's he talking about that for? I wouldn't be talking about that if I was up there.

And instead of glorifying God in them, we're sort of like, you know, what about me? And you know, the Lord challenges me a lot of times. You know, I pray for places, I pray for revival, I pray that God would do a great work. And especially with England, I have to say the Lord's challenged me at times.

I prayed for that and the Lord would say to me, what if I did that without using you? Would you be as excited about it? Ooh, that's a tough one. What if I'd use somebody else? Could you glorify me in them? But you know, that's the way we need to be. We need to glorify God in others.

We need to be able to look at somebody else and say, man, I rejoice in God's work in your life. Even if it overshadows what's happening in my life or through my life. We need to walk in a humility that will glorify

God in others.

Not just we're so excited about what we're doing, what's happening in our little circle. But being excited about what God's doing everywhere. Whether it has any connection with us whatsoever.

And they glorified God in Paul. Then after 14 years, boy, do you actually think we're going to make it to verse 16 in 6 minutes? We will. We'll just read through it real quick.

And then we can come back and touch on it again later. Then after 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and also took Titus with me. So now, a 14 year period of time passes.

So basically what Paul's telling him is, I went to Jerusalem after 3 years. I met with Peter, I spent 15 days with him. I also met with James, the Lord's brother.

You remember, there's the apostle James, the brother of John. Then there's also James who was the head of the church in Jerusalem. He was actually the brother, the physical brother, the half-brother of Jesus Christ.

And Paul says, I met with him. But then after 14 years of ministry, after 14 years of going out and spreading the gospel and planting the churches and all that. 14 years later, Paul comes back to Jerusalem.

And Barnabas and Titus come with him also. And of course, the Galatians would have been familiar with these men. And so now Paul is going to go on and I'm not going to do it.

I'm not going to go through verse 16. Because this stuff is too good. So we need to pick it up next week.

But just remember the flow of thought. I gave you that big lecture in the beginning how we didn't want to break the flow of thought. But here we go.

But it's so exciting. It's intriguing stuff. And especially this stuff right here.

Because this is where Paul really begins to show that his apostolic authority was totally legit. It was even recognized by Peter and John and the others in Jerusalem. And so he's going to go into the details of that in order, as I said, to really just establish his authority as an apostle.

With the hopes of bringing these guys back around to embracing the truth of the gospel. You see, Paul was not... He was upset. But he was more than upset.

He was heartbroken. He was grieved. He was saddened that they had turned away.

And it's always a sad, sad thing when people turn away from the Lord. I was talking to a friend yesterday. He called me from the East Coast.

A friend who pastors out there. And we have a mutual friend who used to work with us who committed suicide a couple weeks ago. And he said to me, he said, you know, I just... He said, I'm so grieved.

They were very close. They ministered together years ago. And he said, I just, you know, I'm so sad over this thing.

And he said, but you know, as I look around. He said, I'm even more saddened by the fact that so many people from back in that period of time. As I look around, they're no longer standing with us.

They've fallen away. They've drifted. They've gone off into other things.

And, you know, I thought, man, it's so true. There's nothing more heart-wrenching to a pastor than to think of people that you've invested time in. And prayer in.

And love. And all of those things. And then to see them just wander away.

Turn away. Sometimes even turn against you. It's a sad thing.

But, you know, even more than that, of course, the great tragedy is that they turn away from the Lord. And they turn sometimes even against the Lord. And so Paul, he's heartbroken over this.

It's not that he's angry because they're not accepting his apostleship. He's pleading with them all because he loves them. And we'll see at a certain point he's going to say to them, he says, you know, I wish I was with you.

Because I want you to hear my tone of voice. I want you to know that this isn't anger that's speaking. This is love.

You know, God loves us. And when we wander away from him, when we turn our backs on him, it's not anger. It's grief.

It's sadness because of his love for us. When we get diverted by other things, whether a sinful lifestyle or caught up in some foolish doctrine or whatever it is, God's grieved by that. Because he wants us to be in the right relationship with him so he can pour out his blessing.

So he can do in and through our lives all the good things he wants to do. God loves us. He saved us by his grace freely.

But he didn't save us just so we would not go to hell. He saved us so we could walk with him and experience his presence and his blessing. And so we could serve him as well and enjoy a life of purpose in the will of God.

And so as we close tonight, I just want to encourage you, anyone tonight that's not receiving the grace of God, that he is freely offered to you, just to open your heart and receive it tonight. And let him really come in. Let him just take your life because he made you.

He knows what's best for you. He's got the plan. And as long as you hold on to any bit of it, you stay out of the plan.

And once you let go, you get in the plan. And man, life starts to mean something and it starts to click. And it's right.

It's salvation. It's being reconnected with God. That's what we were all created for, to be connected with God.

Sin disconnected us. It broke the connection. But Jesus Christ came and he made a way for us to come back.

He reconnects us. And so as we just receive that grace, as we just say, Lord, I receive it. Cleanse me.

Forgive me. Come into my life. He comes.

And he does that beautiful work that he had begun among the Galatians, but that they were distracted from. God help us that that doesn't happen with us. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this great letter. And continue, Lord, to burn into our hearts your truth. And we thank you, Lord, for this man, Paul.

Although he's been here and gone a long time ago, yet his life lives on through the pages of Scripture. And the many wonderful things that you teach us through him. We just want to receive all of that tonight.

And Lord, tonight I would pray for anyone that has not fully received your grace. I pray that they would open their heart this hour. And Lord, that they would experience Christ coming into them.

Living in them. And fulfilling your plan and purpose for them. Through them.

So just touch, Lord. And just tonight, while we're praying, if you'd like to open your heart and receive Christ. Maybe you've done that before, but it just didn't seem to click.

The change hasn't really occurred yet. But now you're ready. You want all that God has.

I just want you to slip your hand up, because I want to pray for you. That God will really, really touch you tonight. Anyone else? That's great.

Lord, thank you for these that have raised their hands. And now, Jesus, just touch them. Lord, you said it.

You said if we just believed in you. Simple as that. Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Lord, we just call out tonight. Jesus, save us. Fill us with the Holy Spirit.

Take our lives. And Lord, make them count for you. Bless these, I pray, Lord.

Amen.

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