

**Paul Defends His Ministry and Message - 1**  
**Paul's Claim**

**Sermon Delivered on February 13th, 2022**  
**AM Service**

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**Text:**

Galatians 1:11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12: For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. 13: For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. 15: But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16: To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. 18: Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19: But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20: Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21: Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22: And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24: And they glorified God in me.

**Introduction**

The false teachers known as **the Judaizers attacked Paul's authority and credibility**. They knew if they could undermine Paul's apostolic authority, they could defeat his message. Because **he cares about the glory of God and Jesus Christ, the salvation of men, and the welfare of the church**, Paul cannot help but speak up. Paul understands that **what is at stake is too great** to just sit and remain silent. And so, Paul writes this letter to the churches in Galatia to **expose the false teachers and defends his apostleship and the gospel he preaches**.

In this section, Paul begins to defend his authority as an apostle and the message as the one true saving gospel, namely, a gospel of salvation **by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone**. He must clearly vindicate his apostleship before he can vindicate his message. He sets out to defend his right to preach the gospel of grace. He presents the reasons the Galatians should listen to him and not the false teachers.

Consider with me this section in three major headings, namely, **Paul's Claim (vv. 11-12)**, **Paul's Conversion (vv. 13-16a)**, and **Paul's Contact (vv. 16b-24)**.

## **I – Paul’s Claim** (vv. 11-12)

In [verse 11](#), Paul now begins his defense against those who criticized him and questioned his ministry and message by **affirming the divine origin of his gospel**.

[Galatians 1:11](#) But **I certify you**, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is **not after man**. [12](#): For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but **by the revelation of Jesus Christ**.

‘I certify you,’ that is, “*I assure you.*” Paul used this clear and definite word **to be sure that his readers understand** that the statement he is about to make is the truth. First, Paul declares that his gospel is “**not after man**”. The gospel that he preached did not originate with man. Not only is **his apostleship not of human origin** but also **his gospel is not of human origin**. He did not invent it nor modified it. Paul’s gospel is not invented or developed by man. **The Judaizers’ gospel is man-made. It is man-centered**. It emphasizes human achievement and merit. But **Paul’s gospel is completely dependent on God’s grace and emphasizes God’s glory**.

Second, Paul asserts that **he did not receive his gospel from man**.

[Galatians 1:12](#) For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it...

Paul asserts that the gospel he preached is the pure gospel. The gospel he preached is **not a secondhand gospel**. He did not receive it from any man nor was taught it by some men. **The gospel did not come to him through any human instrumentality**. He had not learned the gospel secondhand from Peter or any other leaders of the early Christian church or any human teacher or human instructor. **Paul’s convert and the rest of us heard the gospel through human messengers**, for that is the “normal” way of communicating the gospel.

[Romans 10:14](#) How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? [15](#): And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

But the way in which Paul received the gospel was not “normal” but “**unique**”. **No one that I am aware of, received the gospel the way Paul received it**.

Now, if Paul did not receive his gospel from any man and he was not taught of man, then how did he receive the gospel and who taught him the gospel?

[Galatians 1:12](#) ... but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Here, Paul declares that the gospel came to him “**by revelation of Jesus Christ**.” The apostle Paul claims that **Jesus Christ is the One who directly revealed the gospel to him**. In other words, it was a direct revelation that Paul came to know the gospel. He did not receive his doctrine from man by a process of teaching or learning but from Jesus Christ by direct revelation. The word ‘revelation’ signifies, ‘**an uncovering**,’ ‘**an unveiling**,’ ‘**a disclosing**.’ It was Jesus Christ who uncovered, who unveiled the truth of the gospel to Paul.

In short, Paul received **his appointment** as an apostle “**by Jesus Christ and God the Father**” ([Galatians 1:1](#)) and **his gospel** “**by the revelation of Jesus Christ**” ([Galatians 1:12](#)). Both **his mission and message are not of man**. Therefore, anybody who corrupts the gospel that

Paul preached is in danger of divine judgment, because both his apostleship and his gospel was given by Jesus Christ from heaven.

## II – Paul’s Conversion (vv. 13-16a)

In verses 13 to 14, Paul tells us how deeply religious he was and how committed he was to the Judaism.

Galatians 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

Paul had a very strict, religious upbringing, and he was familiar with all the teachings, the rites and ceremonies and the traditions connected with the Jews’ religion. Listen to how he describes himself and his religious backgrounds in Philippians 3:5-6, “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

Yet, in spite of all his religious privileges and activities, Paul was an unsaved man. In spite of all his religious background, status, convictions, and accomplishments, he was **still spiritually lost, blind, and dead**. There are many people like that today, religious, but lost.

Paul actually thought that Jesus was an impostor and His message of salvation was a lie. And because of this, he hated and persecuted the Christians for spreading a message that he thought was a lie. In Acts 8:1-3, Paul was so committed to his Judaism that we read Paul consenting or approving the murder of Stephen, a disciple of Jesus Christ, and then went on to “**make havoc of the church.**” He went house to house dragging believers and put them in prison. He really thought by persecuting the church and by seeking to stop the gospel proclamation, he was serving God.

But while he was on the road to Damascus, “**breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord,**” persecuting God’s children, a miracle took place! God intervened and everything changed for Paul.

Galatians 1:15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16: To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

Here in verses 15 and 16 tell us how the Lord graciously saved Paul. This is sheer grace! After all what Paul has done, God set him apart, and called, him and saved him. **God graciously saved Paul and even commissioned him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.** God saved the man who sought to destroy the church and sought to destroy the gospel. What grace is this?

What a wonderful conversion story. **Who would have thought that it is possible for a man like Paul to get saved and not to mention served God?** How can a man like Paul who was deeply blinded by his religion turned around and be saved? This is impossible, right? **With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible (Matt 19:26).** Just to remind us that **we should**

**not give up on people.** Don't give up on your lost loved ones and friends. Keep praying for them and witnessing to them. If Paul the chief of sinners got saved, surely your loved ones and friends can be saved too. **The grace of God which saves and transforms Paul, is still available and is still at work today. Amen!**

### **III – Paul's Contact** (vv. 16b-24)

Paul goes on to tell his readers what he did immediately after his conversion to Christ.

Galatians 1:16 ... immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: 17: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

After his conversion, Paul writes, he did not confer, that is, **he did not consult or communicate with anyone.** He did not even go up to Jerusalem to meet those who were apostles before him. By these words, "before me" Paul is asserting his apostleship. **He is an apostle just as those in Jerusalem, and the only difference was the timing or the date of their calling** of their apostleship. Robertson adds "*The Jerusalem apostles were genuine apostles, but so is Paul. His call did not come from them, nor did he receive confirmation by them.*"

Instead of going to Jerusalem, Paul went to Arabia. No, he did not travel to Saudi Arabia, **Arabia here means desert**, "*an arid, thus a sparsely populated place.*" Paul probably lived in some quiet desert place outside of Damascus and he lived there alone for three years. Now, during that time he also "*preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*" in Damascus (Acts 9:20)

Now, why does Paul tell us this? The apostle **Paul is emphasizing that his call and his message were not of man but of God.** What Paul did in the desert alone, we cannot know for sure. But maybe, he just needed time and to be alone with God and to think. As Spurgeon wrote, "*The best thing we can do, sometimes, is to get away from the voices of men, and listen only to the voice of God*".

Wuest also adds that Paul "*needed to be alone with God. He needed time and isolation in order to think. The revelation of the Son of God had blasted away the foundations of the Pharisaic thought structure which he had been building up with such consummate skill and zeal, and it had come tumbling down in ruins about his head. This revelation also furnished him with another foundation upon which to build a new theological structure. But the replacement of the ruined structure with a new one could not be the work of a day or a month. There in Arabia, isolated from all human contact, alone with God, the great apostle restudied his Old Testament scriptures, not now with the Pharisaic traditions vitiating his thinking, but, led by the Holy Spirit, with the central fact of the Cross of the Lord Jesus as the controlling factor in his meditations. Out of all this study emerged the Pauline system of doctrine as we have it presented in Romans.*"

Then after three years of prayer, meditation, and preaching in Damascus, Paul went up to Jerusalem. We are told this in [verse 18](#) and following verses.

Galatians 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19: But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother. 20: Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not. 21: Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; 22: And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23: But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24: And they glorified God in me.

Finally, after three years, he went to Jerusalem and met and fellowshiped with Peter and James. Then later, he met other believers in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **The believers rejoiced to know that Paul who persecuted them in times past now preaches the faith which once he tried to destroy.** And in Paul's word in [verse 24](#), "[And they glorified God in me.](#)" The Jewish believers who didn't know Paul personally, gave glory to God because of Paul. This shows that these churches did not doubt the authenticity and integrity of Paul's calling and message. John Calvin wrote, "*This was an evident proof that his ministry was approved by all the churches of Judea, and approved in such a manner, that they broke out into admiration and praise of the wonderful power of God.*"

### Closing Thoughts

I love how this chapter closes in [verse 24](#), "[And they glorified God in me](#)". The apostle Paul rejoices to know that his fellow believers glorified God because of him. **Notice they did not glorify Paul, but they glorified God because of how God saved and transformed Paul**, they glorified God because of how God saved and changed Paul from a violent persecutor of the believers in Christ into a brother in Christ. C. H Spurgeon, "*Brothers and sisters, may you and I so live that Christian people may glorify God in us! May they often wonder at the mighty grace which has wrought such a change in us; and as they see us zealous and fervent, may they marvel at the amazing grace of God which has brought us to be so consecrated to Christ!*"

[Matthew 5:16](#) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Now, let me speak to those who have not repented and believed the gospel. The gospel that the apostle Paul is the gospel we preach here at Grace & Truth BBC. It is called the gospel of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died on the cross to save those who believe in Him. There is no other gospel. If you are going to be saved, you are going to be saved through believing this gospel. This gospel emphasizes **not** human efforts and human accomplishments, **but a gospel that emphasizes God's grace and power.** The grace that saved Paul and transformed Paul is still available and is still at work today. I pray that you would come to Christ today, trusting Him and as you do so, you will experience and enjoy His grace, His mercy and His forgiveness and salvation.

**AMEN!**