

**Message #4****Galatians 1:10-24**

One of the things that I do enjoy is watching some of the true programs about criminals who police track down. Most criminals think they are smarter than the police, but the fact is God has given those criminal investigators good minds and they are much smarter than criminals. In fact, I just heard one investigator say in every crime, the criminal always makes one major mistake and all we have to do is discover it.

Now one of the first things that investigators do is they interview potential suspects and they form a careful time line to see whether or not the suspect may be eliminated. In other words, to establish whether or not a specific suspect could be responsible, they track down the previous actions of the person and compare it to the time of the crime. This helps them determine whether or not the person is telling the truth. For example, in one case it was established that the individual was at work at the time the crime was committed. This time line immediately eliminated him as a suspect.

When we come to this section in the book of Galatians, **Paul establishes his own time line to prove that his grace Gospel is from God and is the only means of salvation.** What Paul does here is to establish that he is telling the truth about the fact that the only way to be right with God is through faith in Jesus Christ. Some of the religious leaders in Paul's day were saying he is lying. There were religious leaders who were telling people that Paul did not know what he was talking about and the tragedy of this is that some of the Galatians were beginning to doubt Paul and his message of pure grace.

So what Paul does here to establish fact and truth is to establish a time line in order to prove that His grace message was the truth of God. The point of this section is this:

**PAUL'S LIFE BEFORE CONVERSION, AT CONVERSION AND AFTER CONVERSION ABSOLUTELY PROVES THAT HE IS NOT LYING, BUT IS TELLING THE TRUTH WHEN HE SAYS THAT THE ONLY WAY TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD IS BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST APART FROM ANY WORKS.**

There is no evidence that the early church ever doubted the twelve apostles—the eleven plus Matthias. In fact, after Pentecost in Acts 2, the people soaked up the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42). They gave themselves their teaching. But it did not work that way for Paul.

Paul and his grace teaching were under constant attack. Many doubted Paul. They doubted his apostleship and they doubted his teaching. Paul's Gospel of pure grace did not go over well in a religious world of works and O.T. law. As a result, people tried to undermine him and his message. It must have hurt Paul deeply when other ministers were well-received and loved and he was so hated and hounded. So what he does here is establish a time line to show his life and message is truthful and factual. There are six personal facts he brings out:

**PERSONAL FACT #1** – Paul states what he is not doing. **1:10**

Paul starts off by saying I am not interested in pleasing men. In fact, if that were his goal, he would not be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. I love something H. A. Ironside said, “The preacher who speaks with man’s approval as his object is untrue to the commission given to him.” If you can please God and men at the same time by all means do it. But if you must opt for one or the other, please God.

Gary Gilley, in his book *This Little Church went to Market*, made a significant observation when he said most churches think the goal is to please the lost world when in all reality the goal of the church is to please God; and what most churches are doing does please the world but does not please God at all.

Paul says my ministry is not about pleasing men at all. I am not seeking their favor; I am seeking the favor of God.

Now the conjunction “for” which begins **verse 10** connects us to the preceding context. If Paul were interested in pleasing men, he certainly would not say, “let him be accursed” if he presents any other message other than my grace message. You don’t make a lot of friends by saying stuff like this. If you are out to please people and men, you never say anything negative about anyone or anything. If you want to please people, agree with everyone and pat them on the back and tell them their belief and their church is just fine. Never take a stand for anything and people will love you.

People-pleasers don’t rock the boat. There is an entire church growth movement that is based on pleasing all kinds of people including lost people. These churches are out to please the masses. Paul says, “I never operated that way.” I am not out to please the lost world, I am not out to even please the people who go to church; I am out to please God and if I were really interested in pleasing men, I would not be a bond-servant of Jesus Christ.

Men-pleasers want numbers and they want to do physical and tangible things to get those numbers. God-pleasers are given to Pauline grace teaching.

**PERSONAL FACT #2** – Paul states the source of his preaching. **1:11-12**

Paul says I want you to know (ginosko) and completely perceive and understand that the Gospel I am preaching was given to me directly from Jesus Christ (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 92-93).

Paul says this message I have been preaching about God’s grace and that sinners may only be right with God by faith in Jesus Christ apart from any works and apart from any O.T. law is not a message I got from any man. Truth is men proclaim works righteousness, works religion, and keeping the O.T. law religion because man is proud.

**This grace Gospel is so foreign to man's message because grace comes from God, not man and all works systems come from man, not God.**

Now carefully observe how Paul communicated the Gospel—preaching. Preaching God's grace system is God's way of saving people and developing people. Many today are removing pulpits and downplaying the preaching ministry. Paul says my job is to preach.

In **verse 12**, Paul says this Gospel of grace I have been preaching did not come from man; I did not receive it from man nor was I taught it from man. **This grace system came to me as a revelation directly from Jesus Christ.**

The Greek word “revelation” is “apokalupsis” from which we get our English word apocalypse. Now this particular Greek word actually means to reveal or take the covers off or unveil something (*Ibid.*, p. 50). **When it comes to God giving revelation, what it means is God reveals something or unveils something which was not previously known until He unveiled it.**

What Paul is saying here is that Jesus Christ specifically and directly gave him this Gospel of pure grace. **This grace Gospel was not previously known or revealed until Jesus Christ gave it to Paul. So the grace Gospel of Jesus Christ is specifically the God-revealed Gospel of Paul.**

This is not the Gospel of the Old Testament. This is not the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. This is the Gospel of Paul. Jesus Christ gave it to Paul specifically.

Now either Paul is telling the truth or he is inventing a horrible and incredible lie. Either Jesus Christ did give him this Gospel or else He did not. If Paul is telling the truth, then we had better take a very serious look at this Gospel because Paul says this Gospel is the only way one may be right with the Holy God.

**PERSONAL FACT #3** – Paul states facts about his former life before receiving the grace Gospel. **1:13**

Notice **verse 13** begins with a conjunction “for.” Paul is giving a time line of his life and he is doing this to prove what he is saying is irrefutable. The proof that he offers is his own life. Prior to Jesus Christ revealing the Gospel to Paul, Paul was totally dedicated to O.T. law and Judaism. Paul absolutely hated Christianity and his goal was not just to persecute Christians; his goal was to destroy the Church of God. That word “destroy” was used of soldiers who would completely ravage and destroy a city.

Paul's main ambition in life had been to persecute and destroy Christians. **In fact, both verbs “persecute” and “destroy” are imperfect tense, meaning this had been his continual and habitual ambition in the past time.** Now of course the question arises, what changed Paul? What was it that turned this man around?

The answer to the question is “a direct appearance of Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ specifically stopped Paul and saved Paul and ultimately revealed to him the Gospel of His amazing grace. Jesus Christ is in the business of changing and transforming people.

If you want to read an amazing story of a man who became a champion for Grace, read the story of C. I. Scofield. He was an attorney who was a divorced drunk. His life was given to debauchery. God saved him and before he died, he had pastored multiple churches; produced the Scofield reference Bible; developed a Biblical study course to train pastors; he started a mission called CAM missions; he became known as a man of God who understood the dispensation of grace and he influenced Lewis Sperry Chafer, who became a champion theologian of the grace of God.

How do we explain this amazing transformation? Jesus Christ really did save this man and turned his life around. That is exactly what Paul says happened to him.

**PERSONAL FACT #4** – Paul states facts about his former religious focus prior to the grace Gospel. **1:14**

Do not miss this verse. Prior to Paul meeting Jesus Christ, the most important and precious thing to him was Judaistic legalism. He loved the O.T. laws and the religious rules. He loved the religious traditions. In fact, as one commentator said, “he loved his religion more than life itself.”

He was so dedicated to the religious system that he advanced far beyond his contemporaries. He was a top notch missionary zealot for his religion. Carefully understand this point: many people, who do not have a real relationship with Jesus Christ, love their religion. They love the Old Testament laws. They love their religious traditions. But they do not love the grace of God.

Many love their religion. Many love their denomination. Many love their church. That does not mean they love Jesus Christ. People will shave heads, crawl down streets, sell things and live in a compound. People will carefully follow their religious traditions. That does not mean they are right with God. Paul did all of that. Paul advanced in legalistic religion beyond his contemporaries. He followed the religious traditions that had been handed down for generations.

But here is the question. How did it happen that this man, who was so devoted to religion and laws and traditions, turn around and say no keeping of O.T. law will ever make anyone right with God? How did a man like Paul turn his back on religious traditions and say, “man is only justified by faith apart from any works?” What did this? Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ stopped Paul and revealed to him the Gospel of the grace of God and that is what turned him completely around.

How does a Roman Catholic monk named Martin Luther turn from the Roman church to becoming the grace Reformer? Luther said before he was enlightened to the Gospel of grace, he was as zealous for Papistical law and traditions of the Roman church as ever any were (*Galatians*, p. 35).

He said he fasted more, he disciplined his body more and deprived himself to the point that his health was in danger. What was it that changed him? The grace of God found in Jesus Christ. That is what changed him. That is what changed me and that is what will change you.

The more you are being changed by God's grace, the more you will move away from law and legalism and will move into pure grace. You will move more and more into a relationship and farther and farther away from religion.

**PERSONAL FACT #5** – Paul states how God changed his life. **1:15-16b**

Notice how **verse 15** begins “but when God.” Paul gives God the credit for everything that happened in changing his life. He did a complete 180 and he is nowhere to be found in that which caused it. This man, devoted to his O.T. law and religious works, was now crediting God for delivering him. There are four divine actions for which Paul credits God:

**Divine Action #1** - God set Paul apart for the grace Gospel from the day he was born. **1:15a**

This is like reading what Jeremiah said, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jer. 1:5). God had his hand on Jeremiah and he had his hand on Paul before they were born. God knew that Paul was the man He would select to reveal this grace Gospel through.

The interesting thing is God let Paul wander around in religion for 30-35 years before He put a stop to it. You certainly cannot deny the doctrine of God's election in this. The doctrine of God's predestination was something Paul experienced. God sanctioned his physical life and he sanctioned his spiritual life.

Every woman who is thinking about having an abortion should think about this fact. God may have a powerful plan for your baby. He sure did for Jeremiah and He sure did for Paul. Even though it would be years before they knew the plan of God, He had the plan. Paul was God's specific elective choice to reveal the Gospel of the grace of God.

**Divine Action #2** - God called Paul to salvation through grace. **1:15b**

The preposition “through” (dia) is one that means the intermediate agent that God used to save Paul was grace. The Godhead decided to work through an undeserved, unearned, unmerited, free grace gift to save Paul. Certainly Paul did not deserve this.

God, in His grace, called Paul to salvation when Paul was not even looking to be saved. God called a man to salvation who was trying to destroy His church. This is all of God's elective grace. Paul did not deserve to be saved; he was trying to kill those who were saved. Paul did not merit this or earn this; it was all of God's grace.

God calls all kinds of people into His work who should not be there. But that is His elective grace. Truth is no one should be in a relationship with God.

**Divine Action #3** - God revealed His Son in Paul. **1:16a**

God unveiled the truth about Jesus Christ “in” Paul. It does not please God to just reveal His Son “to” a person; but it does please God to reveal His Son “in” a person. Many people know about the historical Jesus who lived and died and arose; but few have Him in their lives. Paul did. In order to have Jesus Christ in you, God must reveal or unveil or take the covers off the blinded heart and mind. That is what God did to Paul.

Now I believe Paul is saying that God revealed Jesus Christ in Paul and He also revealed all grace doctrines that pertain to grace salvation found in Jesus Christ to Paul. So God unveiled the full dimensions of grace truth concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ in Paul.

**Divine Action #4** - God made Paul a grace preacher to the Gentiles . **1:16b**

Paul says God literally called me out of Jewish legalism and He revealed this grace Gospel to me and then He made me the premier preacher of this grace Gospel to the Gentile world. If you are a non-Jewish believer in Jesus Christ and if you understand grace, God used the Apostle Paul in your life.

What an amazing transformation. Paul, a Jew who hated Christianity and hated Christians and Gentiles, becomes the great preacher who tells people that if they will believe in Jesus Christ they can be right with the Holy God.

In over 30 years of ministry, I have personally known of people who were drunks, drug addicts, prostitutes, strippers, gamblers, criminals, and thieves who met Jesus Christ and He changed their life. I know of a woman who was divorced several times and had actually had multiple abortions; Jesus Christ saved her and she is a great faithful woman of God today who loves the Lord and loves the Word. I have seen doctors and lawyers and bankers and policemen and military personnel who believed in Jesus Christ and He changed their lives. I have seen people who were steeped in denominations experience God’s grace and they walked away from it. That is exactly what happened to Paul.

**PERSONAL FACT #6** – Paul states the time line events of what happened in his life.  
**1:16c-24**

Paul factually traces nine events of his life that happened after he met Jesus Christ:

**Event #1** - Paul did not immediately consult with any human . **1:16c**

**Event #2** - Paul did not immediately go to Jerusalem to report to the other apostles. **1:17a**

**Event #3** - Paul did immediately go to an Arabian desert to be personally taught by Jesus Christ. **1:17b**

There is a stretch of Arabian wilderness east of Damascus that extends down to the Sinai peninsula. Paul spent three years in that wilderness being taught the grace Gospel directly by Jesus Christ.

**Event #4** - Paul did eventually travel from Arabia, back to Damascus, then to Jerusalem. **1:17b-18a**

Paul was not afraid to face the big names of Christianity. He knew what God had done in his life and he knew what Jesus Christ had taught him.

**Event #5** - Paul did eventually meet the Apostle Peter and stayed with him 15 days. **1:18b**

Notice we have the exact number of days, 15. Paul spent 15 days sharing with Peter what Jesus Christ had revealed to Paul. It must have included all doctrines connected to grace because Peter referred to Paul's deep teaching (II Pet. 3:15-16). Paul probably gave Peter a 15 day intense course on the subject of the grace of God.

**Event #6** - Paul did also meet with another apostle, James, the brother of "the Lord." **1:19-20**

Paul also met with James, who he identifies as being the brother of "the Lord." Paul identifies Jesus Christ as "the Lord."

In **verse 20**, Paul says these are the facts and I am not lying. False teachers were trying to convince people that Paul was not an authoritative apostle and these facts here prove them all wrong.

**Event #7** - Paul did travel to regions of Syria and Cilicia. **1:21**

What we learn here is that Paul branched out from a Jewish focus to a Gentile focus, which was exactly the plan.

**Event #8** - Paul was unknown by sight to the "in Christ" true churches of Judea. **1:22**

There is a big difference between having a church and having an "in Christ" church. The "in Christ" churches were churches filled with true believers. While all this was going on in Paul's life, those believers had not seen Paul. Paul could have slipped into a church and no one would have ever recognized him. Apparently false teachers were alleging if Paul were truly of God, they would have known it and seen it. Paul said they had not even seen him when this was happening.

**Event #9** - Paul's reputation was he was a changed man to the glory of God. **1:23-24**

What a great reputation to have. People kept hearing about this preacher named Paul, who is out preaching pure grace. Many of those believers were rejoicing over what God had done in Paul's life.

This timeline of events proves Paul is the apostle God selected to unlock grace. Paul's message is the only way you may be right with God is by believing on Jesus Christ. Faith plus nothing.