

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 11, 2017 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

freedom
THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN GALATIANS

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF GALATIANS A Radical Transformation – Part 2 *Galatians 1:11-24*

We began our study on the book of Galatians several weeks ago by looking at some of the background information and laying the ground work for this important book. Just for review let's remind ourselves of at least four important background facts that we need to keep in mind as we proceed.

4 Important Background Facts on the Book of Galatians:

- (1) **Written by the Apostle Paul** – Paul wrote a large portion of the New Testament. This particular book/letter may have been his first letter. Also interesting to note is that some scholars believe that Paul have penned this letter himself, with his own hand (all of his other letters/writings were done through/with a personal amanuensis [scribe, secretary, recorder]).
- (2) **Written as a circular letter** – Most of Paul's letter that we have in the New Testament were written to individual churches (i.e. Ephesians, Philippians) or to individuals (i.e. Timothy, Titus). This letter is different because it was written to a number of churches, and was meant to be passed/shared or "circulated" to each of these churches.
- (3) **Written to churches in the region of Galatia** -Galatians is written to a number of different churches that Paul established during his first missionary journey in the region of Galatia in Asia Minor, which would be located in present day Turkey. This area was particularly important in the advance of the gospel and the New Testament church because it represented the movement of the good news/gospel further toward the west and to the rest of world, something Jesus had commanded from the very beginning of the New Testament church in Acts 1:8, "⁸ But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- (4) **Written to oppose and expose false teaching of the Judaizers** – After Paul had left the region of Galatia, following his first missionary journey and the establishment of these new

churches, false teachers came in and began to expose these churches and new believers/Christians to false teaching. These false teachers were known as “Judaizers” and they taught a “work-righteousness” system of salvation. Their teaching essentially said that in order to become a Christians you must first be circumcised and become a Jew, by obeying and following Jewish laws and customs. This was in direct contradiction to the good news/gospel Paul preached, which was salvation by grace, not by works.

Now, last week began a study entitled “A Radical Transformation.” Remember that we said that one of the things the Judiazers had done in these church in the region of Galatia was to try to attack Paul personally. Hence, the first part of Paul’s letter to the Galatians finds Paul seeking to establish himself as an apostle and he begins this letter by defending his credentials. His credibility had been questioned and threatened by the Judiazers. Remember we said, if you can destroy the messenger, you can destroy his message. Silencing the messenger, silences his message. So the first part of Paul’s letter to the Galatians find’s him establishing himself as a credible apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in Galatians 1:11-24. Follow along with me as I read our passage (**READ: Galatians 1:11-24**)

You can see, from our passage that Paul was establishing his call to “apostleship” by Jesus Christ and his defense not only of himself, but also the gospel... the good news he preached to the Galatians and their acceptance and salvation through it. Not last week we looked at the first part of this study and talked about Paul’s defense of himself and his work. This week we want to finish up this part of our study on “A Radical Transformation” in the first chapter of Galatians by looking at **the transformation of the man** and **the gospel message behind the man.** This is so important in launching into our understanding not only what Paul’s letter was about, but it is the heart of the what salvation is all about... how we are saved... what it means to be saved... what saves us.

CASE STUDIES – *Listen as each case study is shared. You play the counsellor/adviser/witness to each study. What would you say first in each case? Do you feel that this person is or is not a “Christian”? Based on what? What would you share with the person to help him or her?*

Case Study 1: I was born into a long generational Christian family, and I would say I have been a Christian my whole life. I can never remember a time when I wasn’t a Christian. From the cradle roll on my name has been on the church membership roll. We were one of those families that was in church every Sunday. I know all the songs of the church, all the prayers, all the great Bible stories. I have served in nearly every capacity in my church and am a very generous benefactor to my church. My family has been instrumental in our church keeping it doors open and serving the community for generations, and someday they will hold my funeral in that church and I will be buried in the church cemetery back behind the church. It’s all just a part of my heritage and I have never had a doubt I was a Christian.

Case Study 2: I’ve been a Christian for many years, and I hear this question asked from time to time, “Do you know for certain that you have eternal life and that if you were to die you would go to heaven?” I don’t like that question. I think it is arrogant, presumptuous, disrespectful and

in bad taste to ask such a question. I think the question presumes upon God. I'm not sure anyone can really know for "certain" that they will go to heaven when they die. I prefer to say, "I hope so!" And, "I am trusting in a merciful God, and praying that He accepts me!" I don't think anyone can really know if they are saved or not. That's God's business, and we can't know that for sure. Only He can!

Case Study 3: If you were to ask me if I am a Christian, I would simply point to my life and point to the evidence. I go to church every week. I read my Bible. I pray regularly. I tithe to my church. I try to always serve when asked. I'd say I am an active church member and Christian. I treat others as I would want to be treated and I think that I am a good neighbor and friend to others. I think most people would say that I am a good person, with high morals and character. I'm a good family man and I'm respected in the community. So, yeah! I'd say I'm a Christian! What do you think? I think a Christian is someone who does "Christian things."

I. THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE MAN (Galatians 1:13-24)

The man and his message is intricately tied together. It really is!

➡ Have you ever heard the saying, **"Your life speaks so loud, I can't hear what you are saying!"**? What does that saying mean and is it right or wrong, do you think? How might this apply to Paul in this case? What does that saying say about our lives as believers? (*that how we live, living out our faith, being consistent in our own walk with the Lord before the world lends credibility to our message and witness*)

For Paul, in defending himself against his detractors (critics, enemies, hecklers, attackers), the Judaziers, Paul testified as to how the gospel message he preached to the Galatians brought sweeping change to his own life. It brought transformation to him. Paul's comments in verses 13-24 do two things for us:

2 Things Paul's Word in Galatians 1:13-24 Do For Us:

1. **Paul's comments give much-appreciated insights into his life** – There is no way we can't be moved by Paul's testimony, even the "cliff-notes" version he gives in verses 13-24. Again, the most powerful witness you have to a lost world is your own personal story/testimony of what God has done in your life... of how you were saved. What a watching world wants to know is, is it real and does it work? Every Christian/believer ought to sit down and prepare their testimony of how he or she met the Lord. And by the way if you don't have a testimony, well, that is an indicator of no salvation.


➡ **"No testimony, no Jesus, know Jesus, know testimony!"**

2. **Paul's comments provide a practical guide for forming a personal testimony useful in declaring Christ to others** - Be sure to observe both. He actually give us a good outline for sharing our faith (writing and sharing our own testimony with

others). We will talk about this more in a moment, but first let's look at how Paul lays out his own story/testimony of God's grace.

BEFORE CONVERSION (vv.13-14) – The work of God's grace within the human life is equally powerful and thorough for all who submit to Christ. Yet, our human perception of its work is enlarged when the grace wraps around one who has run from God, leaving behind him much injury to others... or has even taken up active cause against His Son and His people. Perhaps our surprise results because such a person seems to be an unlikely candidate for transformation (conversion). Paul's life "before Christ" heightens our respect and appreciation of God's grace.

Two Things We Know About Paul Prior to Conversion:

- (1) **Paul was among the church's worst persecutors (v.13)** – Paul writes in verse 13, *"¹³ For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it."* Paul loved religion, but hated Christians. As a matter of fact, it was religion which kept him from Christ for so long. **Can "religion" actually keep someone from Christ? How?** 
- (2) **Paul was a zealous defender of Jewish traditions (v.14)** – Paul says about himself in verse 14, *"¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers."* He loved Judaism, but despised Jesus

AT CONVERSION (vv.15-16a) – The conjunction Paul used at the beginning of verse 15 ("but"), signals God's intervention in his life. Abruptly, his defense of Jewish tradition and persecution of Christians halted. His encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus turned him a perfect 180° from the ways he'd previously known... socially, politically, and religiously. He summarized his conversion with these words in verses 15-16, *"¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb (think Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.") and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood."* An additional dimension of God's revealing acts is mentioned here. In verse 12 God "unveiled" (revealed) His message to Paul. But here in verse 16, God "unveiled" (revealed) or disclosed His Son within him. In other words, God put His Son on display in Paul's inner man. The ramifications of this is significant... at salvation, Christ is unveiled in the believer's life.

SEE: Read Acts 9:1-9, *"Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. ⁴ Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" ⁵ And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." ⁶ So he, trembling and*

astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ⁷ And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. ⁸ Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank."

What Happened at Paul's Conversion?: *This is how we too are saved/converted. This is how every man really comes to Christ.*

- (1) **His heart was arrested by God (He got his attention) (v.3) –**
- (2) **His life was spoken to by God (v.4) –**
- (3) **He sought the Lord (v.5)**
- (4) **He surrendered his life to the Lord (v.6)**
- (5) **He followed the Lord (v.8)**

AFTER CONVERSION (vv.16-24) – Unless we keep in mind the criticism being leveled against Paul, we might forget his reason for detailing the results of his change (conversion). Notice what Paul says in verses 15-25, ¹⁵ *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) ²¹ Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³ But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God in me."* Let's note both the events which followed his highway encounter with the Lord and the mindset of other believers regarding him.

Three Events that Followed Paul's Conversion:

- (1) **No one indoctrinated or told him what to say (v.16) –** Paul wasn't brainwashed, coached, as he said in verse 16, *"I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood."* Some may have tried to attack Paul and his message by trying to discredit him with the rationale that he had been suddenly threatened and brainwashed, and was just saying what others told him to say. Paul traveled first to Arabia... then on the Damascus; he consulted with no one. **NOTE:** *This support the truth that Paul was trained, taught, disciplined by none by the Lord Himself in Arabia*
- (2) **His contact and influence from the disciples of Christ was brief and limited (vv.18-19) -** Three years later, after his conversion, he met Cephas (Peter) in Jerusalem and stayed with him slightly more than two weeks (15 days). The only other apostle he met there was the Lord's half-brother, James, who was not even a believer himself when Jesus had suffered and died on the cross only become a

believer after his brother's resurrection from the dead. *NOTE: Paul was to be a unique and specialized operative of the Gospel, different than the other disciples/apostles because of his past. While they had walked with Jesus and of course could spout their teaching, Paul had not. His message came from God Himself.*

- (3) **He went home to tell his story and minister in his home area (v.21)** – Paul said in verse 21, “²¹ **Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.**” Paul traveled through Syria and Cilicia for an unstated length of time. This area included his home town of Tarsus. He was preaching in that region for several years (no contact with the disciples v.22).



Three Parts to Practically Writing Your Own Testimony:

- 1. Before conversion... be brief and don't glamorize sin and Satan** – Some spend more time on how bad their life was before Christ, and spend more time talking about their sin than they do about Jesus. You don't have to be graphic, or glamorize either Satan or his work in your life to simply say I was not following God's way or plan for my life. I was far from God. My life was a mess. I was searching for something. I felt hopeless.
- 2. At conversion... be thorough and Biblical at how you were saved** – You don't have to be a Biblical scholar to share what happened at your conversion. Paul stated it simply. I met Jesus and hear him speaking to me. I confessed my sin of going against him and I accepted him as my Messiah and Lord, and I followed him (gave my life to him).
- 3. After conversion... what difference has it made in your life** – Glorify God and the difference He has made in your life. It is also a good idea to share what you have done to help you grow in your faith (i.e. church, baptism, Bible study, prayer, etc.), but don't overwhelm with much religious work that follows.

3 More Important Things to Remember in Preparing and Sharing Our Personal Testimony:

1. **Keep it brief** – Paul covered fourteen years in ten to twelve verses. He could have told his story in two minutes or less without any significant point being lost.
2. **Follow a logical progression** – Include descriptions of life before Christ, moment of conversion, life since Christ.
3. **Glorify God... not self** – Nasty details of one's past can easily focus too much attention on the man and not the "Man-Changer." Keep credit placed where it is due, with Jesus Christ alone and to God's glory. He is the one who saves and changes lives. It's all about Him.

***Homework: Prepare your personal testimony for next Wednesday! Seriously! We are going to be sharing these (if you are willing) over the span of the remainder of our study. These should be brief. 5 to 10 min. at most.**

II. THE GOSPEL MESSAGE BEHIND THE MAN

The first chapter of Galatians is sprinkle throughout with the gospel message that Paul was literally willing to give his life to and ultimately for, and one that dramatically changed the course of his life. Although the first part of Galatians is not doubt about Paul's defense of himself, the truth and message his is proclaiming comes across loud and clear. Before we leave this first chapter let's establish what that "gospel message is." Paul uses the word "gospel" at least five times in this first chapter. Here is a good working definition of the "gospel" he is referring to.

Defining the Gospel: "The gospel of Christ is the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone."

Paul contrasts "the gospel of Christ" with the false teaching of the "works-righteous" oriented gospel of the Judiazers, which Paul calls *"a different gospel which is not another"* (vv.6-7) meaning it is not a gospel at all... it is not "good news." It's bad news because no matter how many "works" we do, or how religious we are, or what kind of religious works we do, how moral we are, how good we are... it can never be "good enough" to get us to heaven. As the Prophet Isaiah says in *Isaiah 64:6, "... all of our righteous acts are like filthy rages."* In other words our very best good works don't match up to the holiness of God and could never get us to heaven and a right standing with him. As the Psalmist says in *Psalm 14:3, "They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is none who does good, no, not one."* And Paul echoes this in *Romans 3:10, "10 As it is written: 'There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.'"* Scripture makes it abundantly clear that if we are looking for our good works to make us right with God and get us to heaven... even our best "religious" efforts (for the Judiazers, circumcision, laws, feast, customs, traditions)... we will fall far short. What you do, good works, work-righteousness can never, never, never save you! That is why Paul

write this letter (Galatians) and why he was passionate about what had happened in these church.

In our understanding of the “gospel” that Paul preached, the true gospel of Jesus Christ, that is interlaced throughout this first chapter we get an important and foundational look at what will be the building blocks for the gospel position from which Paul will argue throughout his letter. Let’s look together at what the true gospel does... the true marks of the true gospel.

3 Things the Gospel Does: (Three Marks of the True Gospel)

1. The true gospel is always based on grace and never works (Gal. 1:6-7) – Paul says to the Galatians in verse 6-7, “⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.” The word “grace” is not only a favorite word of Paul’s in his biblical writing, but it is in his thinking of paramount in importance in understanding the gospel. And he knows what he is talking about according to the first chapter of Galatians because if anyone knew that religious works and efforts could never make you right with God, it was Paul (formerly Saul). I suggest to you that if anyone could have been made right by religious effort, it would have been Paul. Again the definition of “the gospel of Christ” that we have already mentioned is “... the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.” Is there a more beautiful word in all of Scripture to compare with the word “grace.”

What is Grace? 3 Good Definition of Grace:

- (1) **The unmerited favor of God** – “Unmerited” equals the idea that we did not earn it or work for it, God just chose to give it.
- (2) **The free and undeserved gift of God** – In other words we didn’t do anything to deserved it, and we didn’t pay for it, or work for it, or earn it. It a gift that God has given to us.
- (3) **God doing for us what we could not do for ourselves** – In other word’s we could have never done enough, worked hard enough, spent our efforts enough, been religious enough, holy enough, sinless enough, to ever make ourselves right before God, so God took the initiative on our behalf and did the work for us through His Son, Jesus Christ on the cross. He did all the work necessary.

It is this same Apostle Paul who give us that great verse on grace in **Ephesians 2:8-9**... listen closely to his word... he just couldn’t make it any more clear. Paul said, “⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

2. The true gospel always comes from God and never from man (Gal. 1:11-12) – This is so important to understand, and a fundamental of the faith. As a matter of fact, this is what separates “Christianity” from all other religions in this world. The gospel, “Christianity” didn’t come from man, it didn’t originate with man. It comes from God. It is God coming... reaching down to man, whereas, “religion” is man

trying with all his might to reach God, which will never be accomplished. Paul says in verses 11-12, *¹¹ But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.* In other words the gospel Paul preached was not human in origin or it would have been like all other human religion, permeated with works righteousness. All other religious systems are based on “work”... what man does. By the way “Christianity” is not a “religion” unless a man makes it so, and then it is not genuine “Christianity.”

“Christianity” is God reaching down to man.

“Religions” is man trying to reach God.

3. **The true gospel always transforms the life it touches and never leaves it the same (Gal. 13ff)** – Of course Paul give his own testimony in verses 13 and following of the transformation that Jesus Christ and the good news of Jesus Christ... the gospel made in his life. The true gospel always transforms. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:17, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all thing have become new.”* Changed! When a person encounters Jesus Christ, and Christ comes to indwell the believer we will be changed by it! We can’t help but be changed.

“No change, no Jesus, know Jesus, know change!”

III. TWO PRACTICAL FACTS WHICH STAND OUT

2 Practical Facts Which Stand Out:

1. **When a person does battle with God, as did Paul, God always wins, thus humbling the man** – I actually believe that a person that has been genuinely saved and changed by the Lord will be broken before God and it will leave him or her characterized by humility
2. **When God transforms a life, there is always a change, thus glorifying Himself -**