

Galatians 1:11-17
Paul's Gospel Originated with God, Not People

Introduction: This is the first of three sections detailing Paul's early Christian experience.

We need to realize that the Gospel is from God alone—1:11-12 ¹¹ *Now [δέ] I am making known [pres. act. ind. γνωρίζω] to you^{pl}, brothers, that ...*

- 1) The claim—1:11 *the gospel [εὐαγγέλιον] that was announced [εὐαγγελίζω] by [ὑπό] me is not according to [κατά] a person,*
 - a) The Gospel is of human origin.
 - b) It is not man's invention of good news about God; it is God's gracious revelation of the good news of what God has done for man.
- 2) Proof of this claim—1:12 ¹² *for [γάρ] ...*
 - a) Negatively—no human channels (by his previous teacher Gamaliel, or Ananias or Barnabas)
 - i) *I (emphatic) did not receive it [aor. act. ind. παραλαμβάνω] (handed down by tradition) from [παρά] a person,*
 - ii) *nor was I taught [aor. pass. ind. διδάσκω] it,*
 - b) Positively—only a divine channel
 - i) *but [ἀλλά] (strong contrast) it is through [διά] revelation [ἀποκάλυψις] (from God the Father) of (about) Jesus Christ. (cf. 1:16)*
 - (1) Jesus is the object of the revelation from God the Father.

We are unworthy to receive the revelation of this gospel from God—1:13-14 ¹³ *For [γάρ] you^{pl} have heard [aor. act. ind. ἀκούω] of my former [ποτέ] way of life [ἀναστροφή] in Judaism, that [ὅτι] ... [3 imperfects]*

- 1) As a persecutor and destroyer—*I was excessively [κατά ὑπερβολή] persecuting [impf. act. ind. διώκω] the congregation [ἐκκλησία] of God (in a generic sense) and destroying [impf. act. ind. πορθέω] it.*
- 2) As a man of rapid self-advancement—¹⁴ *And I was advancing [impf. act. ind. προκόπτω] in Judaism (under Gamaliel's teaching) beyond [ὑπέρ] many of my contemporaries [συνηλικιώτης] in my nation [γένος],*
 - Paul's parents could have had a bumper sticker on their chariot that read, "Our son is an honor student with Gamaliel."
 - a) *while being [pres. act. ptc. υπάρχω] far more [περισσώς] a zealot [ζηλωτής] for the traditions [παράδοσις] of my fathers [πατρικός].*
 - i) The **oral** traditions of the elders (Mark 7:1-13) known as the Halakah, and is **written** in the Talmud (containing both the Mishnah and Gemara). One Jewish tradition says: the Scriptures are water; the Mishnah, wine; but the Gemara, spiced wine. (The Gemara is a commentary on the Mishnah, which is itself a commentary on the Scriptures).

In spite of Paul's unworthiness, God the Father was pleased to reveal Christ inwardly to Paul personally—1:15-17

¹⁵ But [δέ] when God (the Father) was pleased [aor. act. ind. εὐδοκέω], ... ¹⁶ to reveal [aor. act. inf. ἀποκαλύπτω] His Son in [ἐν] me (internally) ...

- 1) When did this revelation take place? Acts 26:13-18 shows it occurred in Acts 9:1-18, directly from God and confirmed through Ananias.
 - a) There is no human reason why this dramatic change should take place.
 - b) God took the initiative to reveal His Son, emphasizing His sovereignty.
- 2) What did God the Father do for Paul?—1:15
 - a) He set Paul apart before he had done anything worthy of earning God's favor—the *One who separated* [aor. act. ptc. ἀφορίζω] *me* (to Himself) *out of* [ἐκ] *my mother's womb* [κοιλία] (i.e. before Paul was born)
 - i) Similar to OT prophets Isaiah 49:1 and Jeremiah 1:4-6 (the humanity of the unborn). God providentially prepared the authors of Scripture from the moment of their conception.
 - ii) Shocking grace in light of 1st Timothy 1:13
 - b) He successfully summoned Paul through His grace—and *called* [aor. act. ptc. καλέω] *me through* [διὰ] *His grace*,
 - i) Paul did not volunteer for salvation.
- 3) Why did God the Father reveal Christ to Paul?—1:16
 - a) *so that* [ἵνα] *I might announce* [pres. mid. subj. εὐαγγελίζω] *Him* (His Son) *among* [ἐν] *the Gentiles* [ἔθνος], (not just among his own people)
- 4) So, what did Paul do next?—1:16b-17
 - a) Negatively—1:16b-17a
 - i) No human consultants—I *did not immediately confer with* [aor. mid. ind. προσανατίθημι] *flesh and blood*,
 - (1) He did not hurry off to ask others about the legitimacy of this revelation, such as his former teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).
 - (2) If Paul's theology and especially his methodology were already fixed, he had only to begin his ministry. But it is clear that there is a need for a major break.
 - ii) No authoritative verification from the apostles—¹⁷ *nor did I go up* [aor. act. ind. ἀνέρχομαι] *to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me*,
 - iii) This is not an excuse to avoid college and seminary training for pastors,
 - b) Positively—1:17b *but* [ἀλλά] (strong contrast)
 - i) *I went away* [aor. act. ind. ἀπέρχομαι] *into Arabia*
 - ii) *and returned again* [aor. act. ind. ὑποστρέφω] *to Damascus*.
 - (1) In Damascus he was threatened with arrest because of his preaching and teaching (cf. Acts 9:23-25; 2nd Corinthians 11:32-33).
 - (a) We know King Aretas ruled over Damascus from 37-39/40 AD.
 - iii) Paul stayed far away from the influence of the apostles for some time (summer of 35 through the summer of 37 AD)
 - iv) Paul had much to learn, if not re-learn, about the way he had understood and approached the Scriptures. So does every new Christian.

Take-home truth: The true Gospel originates with God alone, comes to us according to God's pleasure, and is for the glory of God alone. This God calls to you today. How will you respond?