

Galatians 1:18-24
Paul's Relative Obscurity in Judea
(Parallel to Acts 9:26-30)

Paul's first meeting with Christian leaders was later on and brief—1:18-19

- 1) When did Paul go?—1:18a ¹⁸ *Then/Next* [ἐπειτα] *after three years* (after his conversion, Paul stayed summer of 35 - summer 37 in Damascus) *I went up* [aor. act. ind. ἀνέρχομαι] *to Jerusalem*
 - a) Not all the believers accepted the reality of his conversion—Acts 9:26 “*And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.*”
- 2) Paul had limited contact with Peter—1:18b *to get acquainted with* [aor. act. inf. ἱστορέω] (root of our word “history”) *Peter/Cephas*,
 - a) *and I remained* [aor. act. ind. ἐπιμένω] *with* [πρός] *him fifteen days.*
 - i) To share their stories of what God was doing in and through each one
 - b) Why such a short visit? Because some were attempting to kill him—Acts 9:29 “*And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.*”
- 3) Paul had limited contact with Pastor James—1:19 ¹⁹ *But* [δέ] *I saw* [aor. act. ind. ὀράω] *none of the other* [ἕτερος] *apostles except Jacob/James, the Lord's brother.*

Paul takes an oath of honesty—1:20

- 1) ²⁰ (*Now* [δέ] *the things I am writing* [pres. act. ind. γράφω] *to you*^{pl}, *behold* [aor. mid. impv. ὀράω], *before* [ἐνώπιον] *God that* [ὅτι] *I am not lying* [pres. dep. ind. ψεύδομαι].)
 - a) Perhaps a play on words with ὀράω used in 1:19 & 1:20?
- 2) In other words, anyone who claims other than what I have said is a liar.
- 3) Another argument against those who claim Christians should not take oaths.

Paul spends an additional nearly 6 years away from the apostles—1:21-24

- 1) Paul was isolated from them—²¹ *Then* [ἐπειτα] *I went* [aor. act. ind. ἔρχομαι] *into the regions* [κλίμα] (root of our words “climes” and “climate”) *of Syria and Cilicia.*
 - He seems to have remained in his home area of Tarsus for 5 1/2 years, in the autumn of 37 – the spring of 43 (cf. Acts 9:30). Thus he could not have heard the other apostles teaching the gospel.
- 2) Stated **NEGATIVELY**—Paul had limited contact with the Judean Christians—1:22 ²² *But* [δέ] *I was still unknown* [periphrastic impf. mid. ind. εἰμί + pres. pass. ptc. ἀγνοέω] *by face* [πρόσωπον] *to the congregations* [ἐκκλησία plural] *of Judea that are in* [ἐν] *Christ.*
 - a) There were other congregations in Judea apart from the one in Jerusalem itself.
- 3) Stated **POSITIVELY**—two aspects

- a) Paul had limited contact with the Judean Christians—1:23 ²³ *Now [δέ] they* (the congregations in 1:22) *were only hearing* [periphrastic impf. act. ind. εἰμί + pres. act. ptc. ἀκούω],
- i) “*The one who formerly [ποτέ] persecuted [pres. act. ptc. διώκω] us is now [νῦν] evangelizing [pres. mid. ind. εὐαγγελίζω] the faith he was formerly [ποτέ] destroying [impf. act. ind. πορθέω].*”
(1) Remember how Paul admits to attempting to destroy the church in 1:13.
- b) The Judean Christians had a Godward response—imperfect verb # 3—1:24 ²⁴ *And [καί] they were glorifying [impf. act. ind. δοξάζω] God in [ἐν] me.*
- i) In Paul they found the occasion and reason for praising God.
- ii) There is value in hearing personal testimonies of salvation. The appropriate response for the Church of Jesus Christ to any such transformation can only need to glorify the God of grace and mercy, who brings light out of darkness and causes the dead to live.
- iii) The fact that they glorified God for the work of this gospel shows that it was identical to what was taught by the other apostles.
- iv) If such an enemy of Christ as Paul can be saved, then who could possibly be excluded?
- After this time in relative obscurity, Barnabas tracks him down and takes him to Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:19-26).

Take-home truth: Recall to yourself and tell others how God changed you.

- 1) If such change has not taken place, then genuine conversion has not taken place. Remember the words of 2nd Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*”