

## *The Study of Galatians - Lesson #3*

### *Christian Liberty*

Galatians 1:11-24

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**Bruce:** Gracious Lord, we need Thee every hour. May You be pleased to draw us closer to Yourself this day. Open our eyes, dear Lord, that we might behold Your truth for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** I encourage you to open your Bibles, please, to the book of Galatians, working our way through this verse by verse through this wonderful chapter on Christian freedom and the grace of Christ. The verses we'll be looking at today will be found in chapter 1, verses 11-24. We'll be reading once again from the English Standard Version. Let us hear the word of the Lord.

*"For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles. I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But I went into Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you before God, I do not lie. But I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, 'He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God because of me."*  
This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and Amen. In the first verses of this particular chapter, verses 1-10, we've seen grace in the gospel. And now we're going to see the grace in Paul's life, looking at verses 11-24.

Francis Asbury was the first bishop in the Methodist Church in the United States. And once he prayed at a deacon's ordination for the Methodist Church. He prayed this way. "O Lord, grant that these brethren may never want to be like other people."

Now his text was Romans 12 verse 2. *"Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."* And basically, what he was saying was that he wanted his deacons to be nonconformists, not to conform to the system of this world.

And that's why it's so important and a good idea for us to meet a man like Paul who dared to be a nonconformist. Because of his freedom in Christ, he was a threat to those

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who found comfort and peace in conformity. Oftentimes we have great peace in conformity. Emerson said that if you want to be a man, you've got to be a nonconformist. And the Scripture teaches us that we're not to conform to the system of this world, but that we're to be transformed by the renewing of our mind and our spirit. And so we're going to talk today a little bit about a man who was a nonconformist and see how God was pleased to use him.

Paul's enemies pointed to his nonconformity as a reason for them to be upset about his activity as an apostle. They said, "You can't be an apostle because you're not conforming to their tradition." And so he stepped outside the lines as a nonconformist. They argued that he did not stand in the apostolic tradition; therefore he could not be trusted because of his nonconformity.

Now it's this misunderstanding that Paul answers in these particular verses that we're going to look at today. The best way for Paul to prove his point is to explain to the Galatian church exactly what his experience with God was on the Damascus road. Paul states that his past life was already known to the Galatian church. Look at verses 13 and 14. They knew that he was a persecutor of the church. He said, "You already know that." But it was obvious that they did not fully understand what these experiences meant to him.

So Paul speaks to these Galatian believers about God's revelation to him, and then reviews how it changed his life. And there is a very good insight, men, about how you and I give a personal testimony. Review what God has done in your life, and then review what has happened to you after the fact of God in your life.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** That's what we're going to look at today. We're going to look at the revelation that God gave him. And then we're going to look at the review of his own life. That's a good way to put together a personal testimony. How was God pleased to reveal Himself to you? And then what is the change in your life as a result of that revelation?

Now I'm not talking about something where God directly speaks to you. But I'm just saying that when God draws you directly to Himself and gives you a regenerated spirit, you can contrast what you used to be and what you are. That's what Paul is going to do for us right now.

So let's take a look at the revelation. You see that in verses 11 and 12.

Paul first of all states that his message and his ministry are of divine origin. He says that he did not invent the gospel. It didn't come from man, and he didn't receive it from the other apostles. But he did receive it directly from God Himself on the Damascus road, when Jesus Christ revealed it to him. So Paul was stating this: that both his message and his apostolic ministry were divinely given to him, very unique. He was a nonconformist. And anybody who added anything to it was in deep danger. They were anathema, in danger of divine judgment, because the gospel was given by Jesus Christ. It was not something that he manufactured himself.

Now he does this in two ways. First of all, look at verses 11 and 12. It says this—that it was not of man, and it was also not from man.

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Now what does he mean when he says that it is not of man and it is not from man? Paul says that the gospel was not compiled by any human authority, human reasoning or human logic. Paul states that the gospel that was preached by him was given to him specifically by divine revelation. It means this—that he was not influenced by any human considerations because it was not of human origin. He says that the gospel is not of human origin. Therefore, if anyone adds anything to it, let him be anathema, divine judgment, because he is playing around with something that is divine in its origin.

Now we can say this in another way, that God has revealed the gospel to us in another way. We have received the gospel in a way that's beyond the power of man to convey it to us. In other words, men brought it to our ears, but the Lord Himself applied it to our hearts.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** The Lord may have brought it to our ears—through a preaching message, through a tape, through the reading of the Scripture—He may have brought it to our ears, but the one thing that men cannot do is bring it to our hearts. God did that Himself. He applied it to our hearts. And so the best of us could not have brought it home to the heart in order to regenerate us, to convert us, or to sanctify us. That can only be done by the Lord Himself. Now there is the distinct act of God the Holy Spirit in which the message was given to an individual and made effectual in your life and applied to your life personally.

So in one sense we can say this. It was not of man, because a man could not penetrate our hearts because of our sinfulness. Only God could do that. Man might bring it to our ears. We might hear it by the ear, but God applies it to the heart.

So he says this. The gospel is not of man. But he also says this. It is not from man. Take a look at verse 12. Now he's talking about the mode by which it was communicated. The gospel was communicated to Paul by none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Paul saw the risen Christ in Acts chapter 9. And he received his commission to preach to the Gentiles and the message of the gospel by direct revelation from Him. And this experience qualified him to be an apostle.

But Paul was never meant to be the twelfth apostle to replace Judas. That was not his design, because God set him apart specifically. And one of the reasons He set him apart specifically was this. If he had gone and had gotten his authority from the other eleven apostles, they would have said that he was borrowing the message that they had given to him, and that it wasn't the message of his own. And so Paul makes it very, very clear that this was given to him by divine providence. And so he did not get it from the other apostles. He got it directly from Jesus Christ Himself. It is not of man. It is not from man.

Now let me give you some considerations. Paul was saying this. "I received the gospel as a direct revelation from Jesus Christ." It is divine in its origin. It is not humanly created. Therefore, anybody who adds anything to it is anathema. He is in trouble because they are messing around with something that is divine in origin. The origin of it was divine.

Now let me give you some considerations. Just think of this. Let's look at some things about the gospel being divinely appointed.

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Now here are some considerations I would just offer for you to think about, as to why the gospel is not of man, from man or by man. That's what Paul is saying. It is not of man. It is not by man, nor is it from man.

Consider this. *The gospel is beyond the creation of human thought.* Did any of the great intellectual Greek or Oriental minds think of the doctrines of free and sovereign grace? Could they think of that? Did they guess at the Incarnation? Did they make up the sacrifice of the Son of God for a lost world? Has there ever been any man-created resource that has taught a system of grace in which God is glorified in His justice, in His love or in His sovereignty?

You see, the first thing we need to understand very practically is this. The gospel is beyond the creation of human thought. It is divinely appointed.

Secondly, I would say this. *The gospel is immutable.* It is unchangeable. And nothing that man produces can so be described. We can't say that about anything other than the gospel. It's immutable, unchangeable. The religions of modern man—Yes, Don?

**Don:** You may be answering my question now, even as you speak. But what would you say to somebody who says, "Well, Muslims claim that their message is from God. Mormons claim that their message is from God." What would you say to that? Maybe what you're going to say will help clarify that.

**Bruce:** Well, may I give it a shot and try?

**Don:** Yes.

**Bruce:** Then we'll see. The religions of modern man are like the changing of the weather. Consider how often science corrects itself. Science corrects itself. Scientists are notorious for being the most meticulous in changing their minds about the things they said were once indestructible or unchangeable. Science has the greatest effort of re-knowing things because everything is changeable.

Everything human changes with each generation. But the gospel doesn't. The word of God doesn't, because it is not of man, it is not from man, it is not by man. It is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Now the question Don asked is a great one. How would I respond to that? I would basically say this. Why don't you go read the book of John. Read the entire book of John. Then come back to me with the questions you have. I would try to direct them to the Scripture, because the first thing that I'm not going to be able to do is to convince them in one conversation that the Book of Mormon is not correct or that the Koran is not correct. If they already have those mindsets, they're not going to understand that at all. So I would take them to the Scripture and trust that the Holy Spirit will do something with them.

So I would take them to the book of John, because the book of John reveals what? Jesus is God. That's what they need to know. Jesus is God. Then hopefully they will come back with some questions, and we can have some dialogue.

But I would have to say, Don, when somebody asks me that question, I would probably say to them that the answer I'm going to give them at that very moment spontaneously is not going to do anything for them. I think the only One that's going to do something for them is the Holy Spirit. Yes, please?

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**Participant:** One of the things that has astounded me over the last ten years as a trained scientist, is that over the last ten years they organize everything you study at college and university. Now this is preposterous to people of our age. But to the young people, they believe it. You have letters over here, divided into seven categories. Over here in science, you might have thirteen things—you know, medical, physics and all this stuff. But do you know what's at the top today? A parallel universe. Now to us that would seem ridiculous, especially to anybody over 45 or 55 years of age. But to the younger people, they say, "Oh, yeah. I get that." A parallel universe! Imagine that!

**Bruce:** You see, science is so interested in reconstructing itself because everything changes. Anything that is created by human beings and mankind always changes in every generation. Look at our morals. (*Laughter.*) Our morals change every forty years. Every forty to fifty years things change.

So one of the things I'm trying to suggest is that not only is the gospel not of human thought, but the gospel is something that is immutable. It's unchangeable. When you compare that with science, you understand that the Scripture is the same today, tomorrow and forever. So this is just another consideration as I was thinking about this.

A third one would be this. Not only is the gospel beyond the creation of human thought. Not only is the gospel immutable. *The gospel is opposed to human pride and does not give sin a reprise.* Now think about something we create. We would create a system of thought that flatters mankind. The gospel doesn't do that. Whenever man creates something, it always flatters mankind. The self glorification of human nature is always foreign to the Scripture.

The grand object of the glory of God is the theme of the Scripture. God is everything in the gospel. Man could never have invented and devised a message which would expose himself so low, and secure to God all the glory and all the honor. That is not something that man is going to create, because the gospel is opposed to human pride and does not give sin a reprise.

I would say that another thing to consider, men, would be this. The reason that the gospel is not by man, of man or from man is because *mankind doesn't take to it very quickly.* They don't believe it very quickly. If you preach a gospel which makes allowances for human nature and treats sin as if it were a mistake, and not a crime, you're going to have many willing followers. If you provide absolution at a small cost, and can ease a person's conscience by denial and self-justification, you're going to become very, very popular in the message you preach.

But our gospel declares that the wages of sin is death, and that we can only have eternal life as the gift of God. And that gift always brings with it sorrow for sin, Hatred for sin and the avoidance of sin. Our gospel tells a man that he must be born again, and that without the new birth he would be lost eternally, and that with the new birth he will have eternal salvation. Now that's not a message that man is going to create. Mankind is just not going to create that message. Our gospel offers no excuses for sin. It condemns it utterly. That is not a message of mankind.

Men must be made to feel the evil of sin before they will prize the great sacrifice of the Lord Jesus at the cross.

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**Participant:** Come on, sir!

**Bruce:** The gospel is for those who have done their best and failed.

**Participant:** Amen. There you go.

**Bruce:** And so the message of the gospel is not one that appeals to the tastes of our age or of previous generations. One of the considerations as to why I think it is not of man, by man or from man is because mankind doesn't take to it well. It has to be a work of the Holy Spirit.

These are just some considerations of what Paul was teaching the Galatian church. The gospel is not of man. It is not by man. He's saying that he got this by direct divine revelation from Jesus Christ Himself. And that's why nobody can add anything to it, because it's divinely inspired in its origin. It is divinely inspired.

Next he does this. In verses 13-24 he takes a look at a review of his own life. He reviews his personal experiences with Christ and the message of the gospel. And notice that he does this in two ways. One is his pre-conversion experience. He lets people know what he was like before he came to Christ. You'll see that in verses 13 and 14.

Paul begins with his past conduct as an unconverted Jewish rabbi. You'll notice that in Acts, chapters 22 and 26. Those would be good references for us to read—Acts, chapters 9, 22 and 26.

So in this historical background and this historical flashback, Paul points to his relationship to the Galatian church, that they know about him being a persecutor of the church. He was persecuting the church and profiting from it. He tells us that he was advancing in the Jewish religion. Everything was going his way. He was rapidly being recognized as a spiritual leader in the nation of Israel.

Now I find it very interesting, men, the word that is used to describe Paul's change in his attitude, to describe Paul's activities when he was Saul of Tarsus, before he became Paul the apostle. Listen to some of the verbs that describe that in the book of Acts.

He consented to the murder of Stephen. That's Acts chapter 8, verse 1. He then proceeded to "make havoc of the church"—Acts chapter 8, verse 3, by breaking up families and putting Christians to death. The very atmosphere that he breathed was, as the Scripture says in Acts chapter 9 verse 1, "threatening and slaughter."

Now Paul is describing himself. "This is what I was like prior to coming to Christ." So bent on destroying the church was Paul that he voted to kill the believers. (Acts chapters 22 and 26.) He mentions these facts in his letters to the churches at Corinth and Philippi, and to Timothy.

The idea is always this. "Go back and look at my history, with all the things that I used to do. I'm just amazed that God could save a sinner such as I." He always does it in the context of saying, "This is what I used to be, but this is who I am now." And every time he talks about what he used to be, and what he did to the church, he always does it with a mindset that says this. "I just don't understand how God could save me, being such a sinner as I was."

And here is what Paul actually thought prior to his conversion. He actually thought that Jesus was an impostor and that the message of salvation was a lie. He was so sure that God only spoke through Moses. Steeped in his Jewish tradition, young Saul of Tarsus

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championed the Jewish faith. His reputation as a zealous persecutor of the sect of the Nazarene became known far and wide. (Acts chapter 9.) This means that he persecuted the church. People knew about that.

Everybody knew that this brilliant young student of Rabbi Gamaliel was well on his way to becoming the influential leader of the Jewish faith. His personal religious life, his scholarship and his zeal in opposing alien foreign religions, such as Christianity, all continued to make him the most respected young rabbi of his age. That's what Paul was like prior to his conversion.

Then something happened to Paul. Saul of Tarsus became Paul the apostle. The persecutor of the church became a preacher of the church. And this change was not gradual, men. It was a sudden act of God's divine grace. Look at Acts chapter 9, verses 1-9.

**Transcriber's Note:** Acts 9:1-9. *"Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 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. And as he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'"*

*"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.'"*

*"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.' And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. 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. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank."*

**Bruce:** And the question was this. How could these Judaizers explain Paul's conversion, because it was sudden. He went from what he was to what he was now.

And so then Paul contrasts that with his post-conversion experiences. You'll see that in verses 15-24. He reviewed what he was like before his conversion. The people knew that. Now he says, "Something miraculous happened to me. And let me tell you the rest of the story." And he does that by telling of his post-conversion activities in verses 15-24.

Just ask yourself the question. Was Paul's remarkable about face caused by his Jewish friends?

**Participant:** Nope.

**Bruce:** Unthinkable! The Jews were encouraging Saul in the program of persecution. And his conversion would be an embarrassment to them. They were not the ones who caused his conversion.

The other question would be this.

Was Paul's conversion from the Christians he was persecuting? No. No doubt they were praying for them. But notice, from Acts chapter 22, that Stephen's glorious testimony had an impact upon Paul. You'll see that the stoning of Stephen had an impact upon Paul. But it wasn't the church that changed his life.

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The amazing change in Paul's life was not caused by the Jews or the church. Then who caused it? Paul makes it very, very clear that it could have come from nothing but God Himself. God is the one who changed him. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Yes. And I think that that's very important, because, although obviously God has to change his heart, the question I would pose to an unbeliever is this. How do you explain the sudden change that happened to Paul? How do you explain the sudden changes that happened to the rest of the apostles after Jesus' resurrection, who before were cowards and ran way and denied Christ, and then gave their lives, if it weren't for the fact of the supernatural nature of the gospel?

**Bruce:** Amen to that. You see, that's what Paul was doing. He's revealing his life prior to his conversion.

When you and I start thinking about giving a personal testimony, that's a good way to start. This is what I was like before I came to saving faith. And the second thing he does is that he reviews his post-conversion activity, which is what we'll go through right now. And there's a wonderful contrast. If somebody asks you about your own personal conversion to Christ, think about the way Paul did it. He reviewed his previous experiences and his post-conversion experiences. That's a good model for us to follow.

Now that doesn't mean that it has to be as glamorous or glorious as Paul's. But the principle is the same. You were this before you were in Christ. Now you are this after you were in Christ. That's a good way to remember that.

**Participant:** One caution, though, of how we have to take this. I've seen a lot of people who, instead of preaching the gospel, they give their testimony. And it's not our testimony that saves, because there have been plenty of Mormons, plenty of Hindus who say dramatically, "I used to be an alcoholic. Now I'm this." There are a lot of different testimonies out there. So my encouragement to us all is to give your testimony, but preach the gospel. It's not a replacement of it.

**Bruce:** Amen. Good point. Excellent point. What you need to do when you're talking about your pre- and your post- is to bring the gospel into the pre- and the gospel into the post. You do that. It's very, very important that you give Biblical truth, and not just a wonderful experience.

So Paul gives us a very good model of how to do this. Now notice that Paul didn't confer with the apostles after his conversion. Had he immediately gone to be with the Twelve, people would have said that he borrowed the message and received his authority from them. So he wants to make sure that people know that God gave him the message and gave him the commission to be an apostle to the Gentiles.

It would have been impossible for Rabbi Saul to become the apostle Paul apart from the miracle of God's grace. That's what we see in this passage. And the same God who saved Paul also called him to be an apostle and gave him the message of the gospel.

Now Paul's argument is rather conclusive. His past conduct as a persecutor of the church plus the dramatic change that he experienced proved that the message and ministry was from God and not from himself.

Now let me give you a quick analysis of this. I'm going to walk you through this.



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Paul makes it very, very clear. Look at the beginning of verse 16. Here's how Paul describes it. It's a good model for us. God did it. God did it by grace. God did it through Christ. God did it for the benefit of others. And God did it for His glory. Now that's what you're going to see in Paul's description of his conversion, his post-conversion experiences. God did it. God did it by grace. God did it through Christ. God did it for the sake of others. And God did it for His glory. Now that's what we want to talk about. That's the illustration that Paul gives us in his own life, looking at verses 15-24. Let me walk you through that.

Look at verses 15 and 16. The first thing is that *God did it. "But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by His grace was pleased to reveal His Son to me."* God did that. That is something God alone did.

**Participant:** Before he was born.

**Bruce:** Before he was born. Absolutely. That's all part of it. God did it. Before he was born God had singled him out to do something unique for the Gentiles. So the first thing that Paul reminds us of is this. God did it. (Verses 15 and 16.) Every time that he preaches, he always preaches this: that the work of salvation is the work of God.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** He always preached that God does the work of salvation. Look at Jonah chapter 2, verse 9. *"Salvation is of the LORD."* Paul always preached this. Salvation is of the Lord. Brian, that's where we bring in our testimony. We bring in the fact that God did it, and that this is not of human nature.

Next, notice verse 16. *"He was pleased to reveal His Son to me in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles."* The second thing is this. *God did it by grace.* Salvation is by God's grace, not man's effort or man's character. Grace and call go together. For whoever God chooses in His grace, He calls through His word.

Now notice. *"But when He who had set me apart before I was born, who called me by His grace."* Whenever God calls you, He will save you by His word and testimony.

Look at 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verses 4-5.

**Transcriber's Note:** 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5. *"Knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake."*

**Bruce:** Thirdly, we see this. *God did it through Christ.* God did it. God did it by grace. God did it through Christ. God revealed Christ to Paul. He was the One who brought him to saving faith. Being exposed to the Person and work of Jesus Christ was the thing that triggered Paul's mind. He went from being Saul of Tarsus the rabbi to being Paul the apostle, the preacher of the church. It was done by God. It was done by grace. It was done through the Person and work of Christ. You see, when we give the gospel, we're talking about who? The Person and work of Christ. We're always talking about that. That's our testimony.

Fourthly, I would say this. *God did it for the sake of others.* Take a look at verse 16. *"That I might preach Him among the Gentiles."* God chooses Paul not only to save Him

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personally, but also to use him to witness and to bring other people to saving faith, primarily the Gentiles of his age.

Election involves responsibility. Friends, the doctrine of election is never designed to bring pride or selfishness. With the doctrine of election comes responsibility. When God was pleased to choose you before the foundation of the world, He chose you not only to save you personally, but to benefit other people because of your witness to the Person and work of Christ. Election always involves responsibility.

So God did it. He did it by grace. He did it through Christ. And He also did it in order to benefit other people. You have been saved for the benefit of other people—not only just for yourself, but for the benefit of other people. And that is the witness that you're going to bring to the Person and work of Christ. God is still drawing people from around the world, the masses of humanity, because of people like us, to whom God gives the ministry of reconciliation.

**Participant:** There you go.

**Bruce:** He saves us not only for ourselves, but for the sake of other people. Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** Bruce, you know, some people will say that the doctrine of election kind of makes it useless to do evangelism. We don't need to. God will take care of it. It's like this speaks right to that.

**Bruce:** Oh, it absolutely does. That's the point I wanted to make. What Paul tells us is that God saved him not only for himself, but for the sake of other people. And notice how he phrases this in verse 16. *"So that I might preach Him among the Gentiles."* That's one of the reasons that God saves us, so that you and I can preach the Person and work of Christ to a lost world of humanity. Election carries with it responsibility, not selfishness or pride.

**Participant:** There you go. Amen.

**Bruce:** That's the point Paul is making very clearly. And lastly, I would say this. It is not only that God did it. God did it by grace. God did it through Christ. God did it for the sake of others. But *God did it for His glory*. Notice verse 24. *"And they glorified God because of me."*

Now can we honestly say that? Is our life lived to such a degree that there is a contrast between what I used to be and what I am? Can we say this, that God was glorified because of me? That's what Paul is saying. All of this was done for God's glory. If Paul had been interested in glorifying himself, he would have remained a Jewish rabbi.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Because he had everything going for him that way. He was going to be the successor to the rabbi Gamaliel. But it was the glory of God that motivated Paul. And this ought to be what motivates you and me.

So when you're going to give your testimony, friends, this is what we need to think about. How can you say this? God did it. God did it by grace. God did it through Christ. God did it for the benefit of others. And God did it for His glory. That's what Paul is teaching us in this particular passage.

Now there are several things in which I think we can draw conclusions to this and make some applications. First of all—and we touched on this already—when you're

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giving your testimony, think clearly of how you can talk about what you were before you came to Christ and what you now are after Christ. Show the contrast of what you were before and what you are now because of God's grace.

And then look at those five steps. Think about how you can integrate those five steps. How can you communicate that this is something God did? Now it may not be a Damascus road experience.

It may be a long period of time of hearing Biblical preaching. It might be the witness of a friend. It might be the reading of a book or listening to a tape. Whatever that is, that's something that God did, because remember this. Man will bring it to your ears, but only God can apply it to your heart. Let people know that God did this.

Second, let them know that it's done by grace. We're saved by grace through faith. Thirdly, talk about the Person and work of Christ.

When you're giving your testimony, the two things we can talk about are these—the revelation of how God was pleased to reveal Christ to you—how that happened—and secondly, review your per- and post-conversion experiences to show the contrast of what you were and now what you are in Christ.

**Participant:** Amen!

**Bruce:** See how that works? It's very, very simple. Yes, Carl?

**Carl:** Hey, Bruce, it just goes to show, just quoting it short, "it's not how you start, it's how you end up."

**Bruce:** Amen.

**Carl:** And when we look at it, Paul is the express example of, if you will, rebellion, repentance, and then regeneration.

**Bruce:** Excellent.

**Carl:** That's what it is.

**Participant:** Actually, you would say rebellion, regeneration, and then repentance.

**Second Participant:** There you go. *(Laughter.)*

**Bruce:** You're right.

**First Participant:** Snuck in there.

**Bruce:** That's right. Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** One of the things that Calvin says is that when it comes to repentance, the point of salvation actually is regeneration, because without regeneration we wouldn't have the ability—

**Bruce:** To repent. That's right. Somebody asked me in my church the other day, "Is Jesus teaching a new way of salvation when He says, "Do good works to please God?" He asked if Jesus is teaching a new means of salvation.

I said, "No."

He said, "Well, how can you say that He isn't, when that's exactly what it says. Do things that please God.

And I said, "Can a dead man do anything to please God?" A dead man can't do anything. There has to be regeneration before you can do something that pleases God.

**Participant:** Amen.

### *The Study of Galatians - Lesson #3*

**Bruce:** You're dead in your trespasses and sins. A dead man can't do anything. So there has to be regeneration before you can do anything that pleases God, including our repentance.

**Participant:** *"No one can come to Me unless the Father draws him."*

**Bruce:** Amen to that. The second thing is this. Another point of application I would make with this particular passage, men, would be this. Notice. What did Paul do right after his conversion? He didn't get up and give his testimony. What did he do? He went off for three years and studied. That's a great point for us. We should not be speaking for God until we know God.

So if the Lord has brought you to saving faith, one of the things that you need to do is to make sure of who God is before you start talking about Him. Paul went off and spent three years studying as God revealed His plan for Paul's life, of what He wanted him to do. And I think that the principle for us is to understand this. Give yourself time to know God before you speak for God.

Now I used to be the vice president of the ministry of The Fellowship of Christian Athletes. And the Lord was pleased to use it as a ministry in my life and the ministry of other people, so I'm not bad-mouthing it. But I did struggle oftentimes with this. Somebody would say, "Oh, he's a pro athlete. He's a Christian. Let's get him up in the front and have him give his testimony."

Now I used to try to talk to some of these guys, sort of inquiring what they were going to say, because most of the time they had nothing to say that was of any value. But we sure liked it because they were public figures. We would get a public figure on the stage right away because we thought that was going to draw people to saving faith just because of who they are.

Now I think that there's a great principle here that Paul teaches us about his own experience. Get to know God before you start speaking about Him. That requires that we have to do some study.

It's a very interesting passage that Paul gives us, helping us to understand that the message and the commission he got was directly from Christ Himself. The gospel was not of human origin. It was strictly the divine appointment of God before the foundation of the world. That's something we can tell the world, because God saved us not only for our own salvation, but for the benefit of others. And may it be so that we will give a clear message of the gospel when we have the opportunity. And may it be so for Jesus' sake and for God's glory.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for this wonderful historical event in the life of our brother Paul. We can learn so much from this. We pray, Lord, that we would get to know You more before we start talking about You. And may it be so, Lord, that You would give us a learner's heart and the desire to study Your word, because that is the primary means by which You reveal Yourself to us. Father, we want to thank You for the fact that You did it. You did it by grace. You did it through Christ. You did it for the sake of others. And You did it for Your glory. And all of us can say, "Thank You for our salvation in Christ Jesus." And all the Brave Men said, "Amen!" (*Applause.*)