

Galatians 1 - Paul Defends His Gospel, Apostleship; True vs False Gospel; Paul Was Taught by the Lord

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Galatians 1

I. Autobiographical (Gal 1:1—2:21)

(1) Introduction (1:1-10)

(A) Greeting (1:1-2)

1 Paul, **anapostle** (not *sent* from men nor through human agency, but **through Jesus Christ** and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

1 Paul, an apostle (not *sent* from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead),

1 From: Paul—an apostle not sent from men or by a man, but by Jesus the Messiah, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead—

1 Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead;)

- This greeting is much different than the opening in his other epistles; Paul gets right to the point here in defending his apostleship

— This was to counter what Paul's opponents were saying, whose goal was to wean these new Galatian believers away from Paul's influence by telling them that they didn't have to embrace Paul's teaching (even though he led you to Christ).

— Their best argument against Paul's authority was that Paul was not one of the original apostles, so Paul jumps right in to defend himself as an apostle ordained by Jesus Christ and God the Father (1 Cor 15:8-9)

— Paul says that his apostleship came through the agency of the resurrected and ascended Messiah, Jesus Christ

- "...apostle" - *apostolos*, "sent one"; Paul prefers to speak of himself as a "servant" ("bondslave") of Jesus Christ

— The NT uses this term in two ways:

1. Someone who received a special commission from the risen Christ (i.e. Paul and the Twelve)

2. Those sent with a message from God (Acts 14:4,14; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25)

— The same word describes Jesus (Heb 3:1)

— In Galatians, Paul always used "apostle" as (1), to describe himself and the Twelve

- "...through Jesus Christ" - Jesus laid His hand upon Paul, called him, and set him apart for the office (Acts 9:15-16)

— Based on what Paul said in Gal 1-2, it is clear that his enemies in Galatia were claiming he had received his apostolic commission from men, specifically the other apostles or leaders of the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1), rather than directly from Jesus Christ.

2 and **all the brothers** who are with me, To the **churches of Galatia**:

2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

2 and all the brothers who are with me. To: The churches in Galatia.

2 And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia:

- "...all the brothers" - the other believers who were with Paul in Syrian Antioch when his wrote this epistle also send their greetings to the Galatian believers

— These brothers likely included Barnabas, who traveled with Paul on his first missionary journey through Galatia; it also likely included other believers present with Paul

— By bringing up these other "brothers" Paul is telling the Galatians that the doctrinal points that he will bring up in this letter are supported by many others at "church headquarters" in Syrian Antioch. Paul is not going rogue in his doctrine...what he will write in this letter is consistent with the apostolic body of truth.

— Paul is making the case that the truth in this epistle lines up perfectly with what the other apostles taught, what Peter and John taught, it was completely consistent with what God had revealed to the other apostles.

- "...churches of Galatia" - churches in the southern Roman province (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, et al)

(B) Gospel (1:3-5)

3 Grace to you and **peace** from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

3 May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be yours!

3 Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ,

- "Grace" - *charis*, the grace of God was directly opposite of what the Judaizers were teaching

— The Judaizers were saying that if you want to grow in Christ, put yourself back under the Mosaic Law, and obey it under your own human power. They preached a works oriented salvation.

— Paul says, No, I'm preaching the grace of God. No one is going to become holy in this life under their own strength, but we must depend upon the grace of God.

— The unmerited favor of God is not available just to get me to heaven, it's also there as a source of empowerment in my fight against sin and my sin nature. It teaches me how to grow as a Christian and live a holy life.

— Grace is the opposite of justice (getting what we deserve); grace gives us what we don't deserve

- "...peace" - *eirēnē*, there are two types of peace:

1. Positional peace - a right relationship and standing before God because of Jesus' sacrifice for me on the cross (Rom 5:1; 8:1)

2. Experiential peace - the work of the Spirit whereby we have an inner calmness during the calamities of life (John 14:27; Phil 4:6-7; Is 57:21)

4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He **might** rescue us from this **present evil age**, according to **the will of our God and Father**,

4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

4 He gave himself for our sins in order to rescue us from this present evil age according to the will of our God and Father.

4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father:

- This is an unusual element in Paul's salutations, evidently included because the Galatians were being told that the Law played a part in their salvation

— Paul kills that thought here, placing responsibility for the sacrifice that dealt with our sins squarely on Jesus

— There is nothing that we can add to the value of His sacrifice. The purpose of God's grace is to deliver us from this present evil world; the source of God's grace is the sovereign will of our Father.

- "...might" - a possibility; the sanctification of the believer is not automatic. Jesus has done what He needed to do, now it's up to each individual believer to follow the instructions Paul gives in Galatians to progress in our sanctification.

- "...present evil age" - the age of time that we're currently living in, between the two coming of Christ, is an evil age

— Paul is explaining that we are currently living on Satan's territory (John 12:31; 2 Cor 4:4; Eph 2:2; 1 John 5:19)

— But wasn't Satan defeated at the cross? Yes, but that was the guilty phase of his trial...he was rendered guilty. Now he awaits the sentencing phase of his trial. His sentencing has not yet taken place.

- So the question arises: How can I, as a Christian living in this "evil age," live my life so that I don't become part of the evil in this world? How can I maintain separation from this evil world, so my life is unstained (James 1:27) by it?

— The book of Galatians answers these questions

- After Paul left Galatia on his first missionary journey, the Judaizers came in to these new churches and taught these new believers wrong doctrine. They taught that the answer to these questions was to put yourself back under the Mosaic Law. Seek to live under the Mosaic Law under your own power.

— Many Christians today are just like this: they are constantly told of the need for them to be holy, but they have no idea how to accomplish it. They are never taught about the

resources of God against sin, that sanctify us and grow us as believers. So their only option is to "white knuckle" it and apply to themselves a set of rules, that they believe if followed, will lead them to holiness.

— However this puts us right into the false doctrine of the Judaizers. Instead of following the Mosaic Law, we follow our own made-up personal laws, that we believe lead us to holiness and sanctification.

— This leads to total frustration on the part of the believer because there is nothing more difficult than trying to fulfill God's purpose for your life under your own power. So we try and we fail. We try again and fail. And after some time, we try so many times and fail so many times that we give up and believe that the Christian life is just not for me. Christianity seems to be working out for everyone around me, but it's not working out for me.

— Paul is trying to rescue us from this problem. He will explain that as we avail ourselves to the gospel, we will obtain holiness in our daily lives. The gospel was not just for us in the past, or something to look forward to in the future, but it is a present reality in our sanctification.

— Paul teaches in Galatians that a believer will develop progressive sanctification when we understand that our pathway/formula is the same pathway/formula that we followed when we first came to Christ.

— The same Holy Spirit that brought us to faith in Christ is the same Holy Spirit who indwells us now and wants to help us. This is the way of escape from this evil age that we're living in. This is what Peter said in 2 Peter 1:4.

— Paul says that there is a way of escape from this evil age, to living a life of holiness, but you're not going to get there through the teaching of the Judaizers. You're only going to get there through my grace-oriented teaching, which by the way the Holy Spirit gave to me because my apostleship in Christ is genuine.

- "...the will of our God and Father" - the will of God is for believers to live/ behave in congruence with our identity/position in Christ. The will of God is that I learn to live consistent with my identity in Christ. That there is a consistency between my position (what God says about me) and my daily life (practice).

2 Peter 1:4: Through these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world on account of lust.

5 to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.

5 to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.

5 To him be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

5 To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- God's purposes in history are not redemptive. His purposes in human history are doxological, meaning God works in the affairs of men in order to glorify Himself.
- We that sounds narcissistic? But we need to understand the character of God, He is perfectly righteous, He is omniscient, He is omnipresent, He is omnipotent. It is not possible for God to err or make a mistake, and it is not possible that God can lie. There are certain things God can't do because His character will not allow Him to do it.
- When we rightly understand who God is and His character, we understand that He has a right to work in human history to glorify Himself
- So what we need to understand is that as we grow in our relationship with Christ, through His resources and the power of the Holy Spirit, we are attracting glory to God Himself because God's purposes are not redemptive, but doxological.

(C) Denunciation (1:6-10)

(a) Departure (1:6)

- 6** I am **amazed** that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a **different** gospel,
- 6** I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;
- 6** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of the Messiah and, instead, are following a different gospel,
- 6** I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:
- The Galatians accepted the idea of faith alone in Christ alone for their justification, but they had departed from Paul's teaching and began to buy in to the Judaizer's lie that in order to progress in their sanctification and grow in Christ, they had to obey the Mosaic Law
- After coming to Christ correctly, they began to reverse course and believe that they were sanctified through their own power by putting themselves under the Mosaic Law
- What Paul is describing here is apostasy (*apos* = away from; *histemi* = to stand; so apostasy means "to stand away from"). Apostasy is a departure from known or previously believed truth.
- Believer have the ability to apostatize or move away from the truth that they once believed. The Bible is full of relevant examples:
 1. Solomon
 2. Peter (denied Jesus 3x; later in Galatians, Paul had to rebuke Peter for his behavior)
 3. Demas (2 Tim 4:10)
 4. Five apostate churches are described in Rev 2-3
- "...amazed" - *thaumazō*, marveled, shocked. Paul was amazed by three things:

1. They abandoned the principles of grace ("different gospel")
 2. It happened so quickly - they were new believers, only a few months old in the Lord
 - The interesting thing about apostasy is that it doesn't occur over generations. One of the greatest incidents of apostasy was the golden calf incident when Moses was on top of Mount Sinai receiving the Law from God.
 - Meanwhile, the Israelites were at the bottom of the mountain fashioning a golden calf, which was in abject contradiction to the 10 Commandments and the monotheistic principles that they knew (Cf. Ex 24:18).
 3. The Galatians had left the best doctrine - the same group who had the best senior pastor (Paul) and received the best teaching, and saw the Holy Spirit work miracles through Paul
 - Sometimes is the person or group you least expect falls into apostasy
 - Aaron was the high priest, but led in the creation of the golden calf
 - Jonathan, Moses' grandson (Judges 18:30), introduced idolatry into Israel
 - The church at Ephesus, which received the great promises from God in Eph 1-3, left their first love (Rev 2:4-5)
- "...different" - or "another"; two Greek words: *allos* and *heteros*
- Here Paul uses *heteros*, which means another of a different kind or nature. The gospel that these Galatians now believed was a different gospel than Paul preached to them, it was different in kind and content.
- They had believed a heterodoxy, a different kind of teaching. Orthodoxy is correct teaching, heterodoxy is a different kind (incorrect) teaching. A false doctrine or gospel.

(b) False gospel (1:7)

- 7 which is not *just another account*; but there are **some who are disturbing you** and want to **distort** the gospel of Christ.
- 7 which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
- 7 not that another one really exists. To be sure, there are certain people who are troubling you and want to distort the gospel about the Messiah.
- 7 Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.
- "...another" - *allos*, another of the same kind
- "...some who are disturbing you" - a direct reference the Judaizers/Pharisees who were teaching the Galatians this false gospel (putting them back under the Mosaic Law in order to be sanctified)
- These Judaizers/Pharisees were disrupting the salvation process of these new believers, disrupting their sanctification process, with their false doctrine, changing the rules in the

middle of the game. God rules state that we are saved by faith alone. The Pharisees said, Ok, you're saved by faith alone, but then changed the rules to say that the second tense of your salvation (sanctification) is accomplished by works.

— Paul's response is that this "gospel" that the Judaizer's were preaching was a distortion of the gospel of Christ that he taught them when they were saved. Paul says that they think that they are going to be sanctified by their good works (adherence to the Law), and that might sound good and logical to you, but it is not good news.

— Paul's point in this verse is that there is no other gospel

— If our salvation, whether it's our justification or our sanctification, is not accomplished by the grace of God, then we have embraced a false gospel, even if on the surface it seems appealing and logical

- "...distort" - *metastropho*, twist, pervert; thus, by clever deceivers. It's a strong word, used by Luke in speaking of the sun turned to darkness (Acts 2:20), and by James, speaking of laughter turned to mourning (James 4:9)

— To attempt to change the gospel has the effect of making it the very opposite of what it really is

— One thing we need to understand is that Satan is not a "creator"; he doesn't create things

— What Satan does is take things that God creates and distorts or perverts them. There are many things that God has given to man that is good, but that Satan has distorted or twisted: Scripture, the institution of marriage, the institution of human government, gender, sex, etc., but Satan's crown jewel of perversion and distortion is to twist the gospel. Satan's mission is to distort the gospel because the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe (Rom 1:16).

— The true gospel not only allows a person to enter into a right relationship with God (justification), but the gospel itself will teach that believer how to live the Christian life. If Satan can get ahold of the gospel and pervert it, distort it, twist it around like a pretzel, then a person can't get saved, and if they happen to get saved, they certainly can't live a life fulfilling God's purpose for them (2 Cor 11:3).

— The gospel is simple to understand, simple to believe, and it's simple to proclaim. But Satan wants to take that simplicity and complicate it, and turn it into something that is works-oriented.

Paul consistently referred to the Galatian false teachers in the third person, but addressed his readers in the second person. This suggests that the false teachers originated outside the church instead of within it. Likely they were Jews who were putting pressure on Gentiles to believe and to live as religious Jews.

(c) Test for truth (1:8)

8 But even if **we**, or **an angel from heaven**, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what **we** have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that person be condemned!

8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

- Gee Paul, there is a true gospel that you preached, and there is a false gospel that these Judaizers/Pharisees are preaching...can you help us with how to decipher the truth from the false gospel? Paul says I'm glad you asked...

— Here Paul gives us a standard for truth. Here is what Paul says to do to determine truth from a lie in this realm of the gospel: truth must line up with what God has already said. He tells them that they know they are in the realm of a false gospel when you embrace a gospel of works, because he himself taught them about the gospel of grace.

— When the Judaizers/Pharisees come in and teach you about the doctrine of works to grow in your Christian life, that is completely opposite of what Paul originally taught. This is how they should recognize that they were on the precipice of embracing is false.

— While writing this, Paul probably had Deut 13:1-5 in mind, which is what God said to the Israelites before they entered the Promised Land, to beware of false prophets

- "...we" [2x] - Paul says that if he were to go back to Galatia tomorrow and preach a gospel other than what he had already taught them, his message should be rejected. The test for truth is not even whether or not the teaching comes from the mouth of an apostle.

— The standard of truth is not the speaker himself, but whether or not the teaching lines up with apostolic doctrine and prior revelation from God. If it contradicts prior revelation, it is to be rejected.

- "...an angel from heaven" - interesting phrase Paul added here. There are a number of cults that claim that an angel from heaven provided additional, non-biblical information (Mormonism, through the angel Moroni; Islam, through the angel Gabriel)

— If an angel shows up at your bedside tonight and begins to articulate doctrine that is contrary to prior revelation, as outlined in Scripture, it is false doctrine. Scripture is the sole mechanism by which we evaluate truth.

— An angel showed up to Joseph Smith one night and gave him the doctrine of Mormonism. Earlier, an angel (named Gabriel) showed up to a man named Mohammed and gave him the doctrines of Islam

— So if that happened to you tonight, how can you tell whether or not the revelation by that angel was true or false? You can't tell simply by the experience, because the experience

was very real. Satan can perform experiences; he can perform signs and wonders. The only way you can decipher truth is by comparing it to God's Word.

— The test for truth is not a miracle or an experience you had or who is preaching the message. There are many instances in Scripture where a miracle was performed that was not of God (2 Cor 11:14). Satan is plenty capable of performing miracles. The test of truth is not the miracle, not the experience, and not the angel...it's simply whether or not the message lines up with prior revelation.

— This is the test for orthodoxy. Many today argue about orthodoxy. The test to determine what is orthodoxy and what is not is whether or not the message/teaching adheres to prior revelation.

- There is a signs and wonders movement in the future. During the Tribulation period, when the Antichrist is on the scene, he will perform many signs and wonders (2 Thess 2:9). The appetite for signs and wonders will be satisfied among the unbelievers.

— People today believe and buy in to things based on the persuasiveness of the speaker, or the speaker's ability to provide an experience, not based on the content of the message/teaching or whether or not it lines up with prior revelation.

Satanic Miracles in Scripture

1. Ex 7-8: Pharaoh's magicians imitating the early miracles of Moses and Aaron
2. Deut 13:1-3: if a sign/wonder differs from divine revelation, don't believe it
3. 1 Sam 28: Saul and the witch at Endor
4. Job 1:12-19
5. Job 2:7-8
6. Matt 7:21-23; 24:24: unbelievers performing signs and wonders with power outside of God
7. Acts 8:9: Simon the Sorcerer, practicing magic, astonishing the people, claiming to be someone great
8. Acts 16:16: demon-possessed girl following Paul in Philippi
9. Gal 1:6-9: preaching a gospel other than what Paul preached
10. 2 Thess 2:9: describes the miracles of the Antichrist
11. Rev 13:3: Antichrist resurrected from the dead
12. Rev 13:13: calls fire from the sky in the presence of witnesses
13. Rev 13:15: the "image" of the beast acts & talks like a human being
14. Rev 16:13-14

(d) Judgment against false gospel (1:9)

9 **As we have said before**, even now I say again: if **anyone** is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be **accursed!**

9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

9 What we have told you in the past I am now telling you again: If anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that person be condemned!

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

- "As we have said before" - what Paul is saying in this passage is not new information for the Galatians; Paul says that he has told them about false teaching and how to recognize it when he was with them during his first missionary journey

- The unfortunate part of this is that most Christians today are so unfamiliar with the Bible that they have no basis or ability to setup a proper standard of truth. The more you are focused on the Bible and understand what it says, the easier it will be for you to spot a counterfeit gospel.

- "...anyone" - in context, the Judaizers/Pharisees, who were preaching a gospel of works

- "...accursed" - *anathema*, a condemnation to hell; an *anathema* is a statement that a promoter of a false gospel is under the divine judgment of God

- Paul is saying to these Galatian believers, who have accepted Christ and are justified, as you move into sanctification and reject the teaching of grace and embrace the principles of works for your sanctification, you are under a delusion and a false gospel.

- Consequently, those who are teaching you these things (Judaizers/Pharisees) are under God's judgment

- As we read the gospels and see Jesus' interactions with all people, sinners of all types, it's very interesting that He is very patient, merciful, compassionate with all people, with the exception of the Pharisees (Cf. Matt 23:15,33).

- Any tampering with the gospel, either in the area of how one becomes a Christian or how one grows as a Christian, which are both obtained by faith alone in Christ alone through the power of the Holy Spirit, is very severe in God's eyes

Lewis Sperry Chafer said the following about the priceless privilege it is to preach the Gospel [Salvation, pg 118]: *The privilege of preaching the Gospel to one soul is priceless. So, in like manner, any blunder in its presentation may contribute to an eternal disaster and woe. Carelessness in preaching is criminal and ignorance is inexcusable. The Gospel is plain. Earnestness is important, but no amount of earnestness can be substituted for the exact statement of God's message to lost men.*

(e) Response to criticism against him (1:10)

10 For am I now seeking the favor of people, or of God? Or am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of people or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be the Messiah's servant.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

- Paul's enemies (the Judaizers/Pharisees) argued that Paul had made the gospel too easy in order to get people to like him

- In their minds, the idea that you can be saved by faith alone, with no works at all, or the idea that you can grow as a Christian by faith alone and the power of the Holy Spirit rather than submitting yourself to the Mosaic Law was incomprehensible

- They accused Paul of making salvation so easy that he must be in the ministry just to make friends. They accused Paul of seeking to please man rather than God.

- These accusations were the impetus for Paul's rhetorical questions in v10; Paul is defending his motive

- He counters these accusations by saying that he is not in the ministry to win friends; instead, he was in the ministry because he was a bond-servant of Jesus Christ. Paul is basically saying, How can I be in the ministry to win friends when I'm in a slave relationship with Jesus Christ?

(2) Paul defends his apostleship (Gal 1:11—2:21)

(A) Independence (1:11-24)

(a) Thesis (1:11-12)

(i) Revealed directly from Christ (1:11)

11 For I would have you know, brothers *and sisters*, that the **gospel** which was preached by me is not of human invention.

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

11 For I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

- "...gospel" - "good news"; the gospel doesn't just tell a person how to get saved, it also tells them how to live now that they are saved

- Paul says that he got this "gospel" directly from Jesus Christ, not from man (v12)

- Paul was "raptured" to heaven after his conversion and given revelation about the nature and purpose of the Church Age (2 Cor 12:4-5; Eph 3:3)

(ii) Not revealed through traditional educational methods (1:12)

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a **revelation of Jesus Christ**.

12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

12 For I did not receive it from a man, nor was I taught it, but it was revealed to me by Jesus the Messiah.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

- Paul is saying that he received the same gospel that he proclaimed to the Galatians by direct revelation from Jesus Christ Himself

— Paul did not learn the gospel through the conventional methodologies of that day. No educational curriculum, he was never a student in any sense to obtain this gospel, but he received it from God (Cf. Acts 9).

- "...revelation" - *apocalypsis*, unveiling; a disclosure. It's a description of what John received while exiled on the island of Patmos (Cf. Rev 1:1).

— Paul is saying that the same thing that happened to John in Rev 1 (although it was many years in the future) also happened to him

- "...of Jesus Christ" - a subjective genitive, emphasizing the *source* of the revelation, not merely the content of the revelation

— Paul wanted the Galatians to understand the source of the revelation of the gospel that came to him, not merely the content. He did not receive this gospel through education or human transmission, but completely by divine disclosure.

(b) Before conversion (1:13-14)

(i) Persecution of the early church (1:13)

13 For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I used to **persecute the church of God** beyond measure and tried to **destroy** it;

13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

13 For you have heard about my earlier life in Judaism—how I kept violently persecuting God's church and was trying to destroy it.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

- Paul's first argument against the charge that he received the gospel from men (v11-12) was that, before his conversion, he was under no Christian influence whatsoever, but was instead a violent persecutor of the gospel.

- "...persecute the church of God" - Paul continually reminded his readers that he persecuted the church of God (Acts 8:1,3; 9:4; 22:7; 26:9,14; 1 Cor 15:9; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6)

- "...destroy" - devastate; as the ravaging wolf of Benjamin, he was engaged in laying waste the Church (Acts 7-9)

— Paul would have lived and died as an advocate of Judaism but for the miracle of grace (Acts 26:5)

(ii) Advancement in Judaism (1:14a)

(iii) Zeal for religious traditions (1:14b)

14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely **zealous** for **my ancestral traditions**.

14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

14 I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries, because I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

- "...zealous" - religious fervor; Paul says in Romans that his zeal was not according to knowledge (Cf. Phil 3:4-6)

— You can be extremely zealous or energetic about something that is not true. This is where Paul was at before his encounter with Christ.

— He was advancing in rank among other Jews more so than anyone else; he was rising faster through the ranks of the pharisaical system than anyone else in his age group. If the Pharisees had a 40 Under 40 list, Paul would've been at the top. He was on the fasttrack to being an expert in pharisaical Judaism.

- "...my ancestral traditions" - notice the placement of Paul's zeal, not for the Word of God but instead for his Jewish traditions

— He was zealous for the "fence around the Law" that the Pharisees had created, documented by the Mishnah and the Talmud

(c) Conversion (1:15-16a)

(i) God set him apart from conception (1:15a)

(ii) God called him (1:15b)

15 But when **He who had set me apart***even* from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace was pleased

15 But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

15 But when God, who set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace, was pleased

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

- Paul's point by bringing up his past history is to use himself as an example: how could he, being a devout Jew and follower of the Law, even to the point of persecuting the church and imprisoning and murdering believers, turn around and become a follower of Jesus Christ?

— The answer is that some kind of supernatural move of God, something much larger than himself, came into his life. He was going in the complete opposite direction that unless God had touched him, there's no way in himself that he could become what he became.

— Many Christians today believe that because of what they have done in their past, that God can't use them now. But the story and the lesson from the life of Saul of Tarsus, who became the Apostle Paul, is that *no one* is outside of the grace of God.

— It doesn't matter who you are, what you've said, where you've been, or what you've done...the grace of God is such an all-encompassing concept that God takes the vilest of people and turns them into instruments for His glory.

— Paul tells the Galatians that it's obvious that his apostleship came directly from God because look at the change in his life, from what he was to what he became. Paul readily admits that there was no way he could have orchestrated this change in and of himself; it could only come from God's grace.

- "...He who had set me apart" - God is the sole actor/noun here

— God in His omniscience set Saul of Tarsus apart for His glory even before Paul was born

— Paul is probably thinking about how his calling correlated very close with that of the prophet Jeremiah (Cf. Jer 1:3-4)

(iii) God revealed Himself to him (1:16)

(d) After conversion (1:16b-24)

(i) Paul did not confer with anyone (1:16b)

16 to **reveal His Son in me** so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

16 to reveal his Son to me so that I might proclaim him among the gentiles, I did not confer with another human being at any time,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

- "...reveal His Son in me" - again, God is the sole actor here

— God revealed Christ in Paul so that Paul might preach Christ to the Gentiles

- God initiated the process by which Saul, the great persecutor of the church, became Paul, the great promoter of the church (Cf. Luke 19:10)
- Paul is saying that men had no influence upon his reception of the gospel message
- The message that he has been preaching to the Gentiles came directly from God. He did not get his talking points or message from the other apostles, his education or a teacher, or some other human intermediary.

(ii) Paul did not go to Jerusalem (1:17)

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me. Instead, I went away to Arabia and then came back to Damascus.

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

- After his experience meeting Christ on the Damascus Road, Paul did not go back to Jerusalem (then the headquarters of the early church) where the other apostles were, but instead he went to Arabia for three years (v18)

— Why did God convert Paul, then take him to an undisclosed location for three years? Because God will not use someone before they go through a "breaking process." God had to break down Paul's pride, sense of accomplishment, and his ego.

— This is one of the hardest things that a new Christian can go through. A new Christian is often fired up to get out there and do things for God, but often God will slam on the brakes. He knows better than anyone that there are things we need to learn first, and character that He needs to begin to develop within us, before He can use us.

— We think these things happen instantaneously, because that's how our salvation happened, but character development and reorienting someone's thinking is a process. For Paul, that process happened over a period of three years.

- Paul also had a lot of theology to learn. His theology had not evolved after the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. He had to have a top-to-bottom reshuffling of his thinking. His theology needed some recalibrating. First off, he had to learn that Christ was the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law.

— If God would've sent Paul out immediately, he would have depended on his own abilities and talents to do God's work. He had to learn that God's work is only done as we avail ourselves of God's resources. If Paul tried to do God's work in his own power, he would've only had a very minimal impact for God, and he certainly would not have been able to bear eternal fruit.

— Before you can be used by God, we often have to go through the "silent years" where you don't feel useful, you don't get a lot of attention or accolades, you're perhaps assigned to some menial job that you feel over-qualified for.

— And as new Christians, we cry out Where is God? And we think because God is not active, He is not involved. We think we're not useful to Him because He's not using us. In reality, these are some of the times in your life where God is the most active because He is developing in us Christ-like character. He has a purpose, a vision for your life, a mission for you, but you're not ready for it yet because it requires that our character be developed in the right way. Thus, God launches us out into the process.

— We see this same thing throughout the Bible. Before God uses someone, He sends them out into a "silent" or "wilderness" time: Joseph (age 17-30); Moses (age 40-80); Jesus (age 12-30)

Gal 1:11-17 is one of six passages that describe Paul's conversion and calling (Cf. Acts 9:1-7; 22:6-10; 26:12-16; 1 Cor 9:1-2; 15:3-11).

(iii) Paul's minimal contact with the apostles (1:18-19)

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to **become acquainted** with Cephas, and stayed with him for fifteen days.

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.

18 Then three years later, I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and I stayed with him for fifteen days.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

- "Then" - *Epeita*, next; this introduces the next event in Paul's experience

— Paul has given a chronological account of his early ministry, in order to show that he functioned as an apostle before ever coming into contact with other apostles

- "...three years" - it was three years after his conversion that he revisited Jerusalem and visited Peter and James (v19). Between the time of his conversion and three years later, Paul had no apostolic contact or influence.

— The reason Paul went to Jerusalem was so he could become acquainted with Peter, not to get information from them or ask questions. He had no need to validate his message with Peter; rather, he was validating that the apostle's teaching matched what God Himself had revealed to him while in Arabia (Cf. v11-12).

— If Paul had felt uncertain about his message, a journey to one of these centers would have been natural and necessary. But he was an apostle as truly as were the Twelve, fully in possession of the truth of the Gospel directly from the Lord himself.

- "...become acquainted" - they didn't have enough time to become best friends, since Paul was only there for 15 days. So Paul could not have received his theology or the gospel from Peter.

Acts 9:26-29:

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried *repeatedly* to associate with the disciples; and yet they were all afraid of him, as they did not believe that he was a disciple.

27 But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus at Damascus.

28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death.

His visit of two weeks with Peter came after Barnabas endorsed Paul to the suspicious disciples in Jerusalem while he was preaching in the city. It was a delightful experience, but Peter did not start Paul upon his apostleship. He visited him as an equal. Peter no doubt had much to say to Paul.

19 But I did not see another one of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

19 But I did not see any other apostle except James, the Lord's brother.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

- The only other person Paul saw during his 15 days in Jerusalem was James, who wasn't even one of the original apostles

(iv) Paul's testimony (1:20)

20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

20 (Before God, what I'm writing to you is the truth.)

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

- Paul is so certain of this chronology that he is giving here of the early days after his conversion that he swears by it

— His point is that he did not need to obtain apostolic blessing because the gospel came to him directly from God, not from any of the apostles

— He is defending himself to the Galatians against some of the criticisms (lies) of the Judaizers, that he was not a "true" apostle. Paul says don't cast aspersions on my

apostleship...while it is true that I didn't receive my message or the gospel through the apostles, I am still a true apostle and even though he was the least of the apostles, he had direct contact with God Himself.

— God Himself disclosed the gospel to me in Acts 9, and He specifically trained me in the Arabian desert

(v) Paul's agreement and limited contact with the Judean churches (1:21-23)

21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

21 Then I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

- Paul now goes on to explain that he didn't even spend any time in Judea, the area surrounding Jerusalem, where he could have heard the gospel preached by the apostles
— Instead, he went north into Syria, away from Jerusalem where the original apostles were

22 I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which are in Christ;

22 I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;

22 But the churches of the Messiah that are in Judea did not yet know me personally.

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

- The churches in Judea, in and around Jerusalem, didn't even know who Paul was. They wouldn't recognize him if he knocked on their door. He was known to them only by reputation because God had him on a divine program whereby He directly disclosed Himself to Paul.

23 but they only kept hearing, "The man who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

23 but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."

23 The only thing they kept hearing was this: "The man who used to persecute us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy!"

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.

- They only knew him by reputation, and thanked God for what He was doing through Paul, the exact opposite response from Paul's Judaizer critics

— Certainly the Judean Christians would not have been pleased to learn that Paul was teaching a different gospel from the other apostles

24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

24 And they were glorifying God because of me.

24 So they kept glorifying God for what had happened to me.

24 And they glorified God in me.

- When the Judean churches heard what had happened to Paul, they didn't doubt, they didn't complain, they weren't in fear of him...they simply glorified God

— The reason why these churches rejoiced is because the message/gospel that Paul preached lined up with the apostolic message/gospel perfectly

— Paul's point is, How in the world could this have happened if God wasn't involved in and orchestrating it?