



SERIES: GALATIANS

## **GALATIANS 1:11-24**

November 30, 2009

*11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

In this section, Paul continues to defend himself from personal attack that is happening in Galatia. His critics are saying that Paul's teachings are not binding because they are man-made and not from God; Paul either invented them or got his teaching from others. Paul refutes this by saying he did not receive the gospel from men but as a direct revelation from Jesus Christ, and thus the gospel is universal and authoritative. Today, a similar thought process exists that states Christianity is no different from any other world religion because there is no such thing as truth and all religions are valid. This, however, is not accurate. Christianity is truth because its roots are not in man but in the direct revelation of God.

*13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 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.*

Paul begins by referring to his testimony. We know from Acts that Paul (formerly known as Saul) hated Christians and was imprisoning and even killing them. Like many young men, he was zealous—the problem was that he was zealous for the wrong things (the traditions of his fathers).

Traditions are extra-biblical rules that can be either helpful or harmful. When a tradition is elevated to the level of Scripture, then there is a problem. This was the case for Paul. In Matthew 15:1-9, Jesus rebukes religious people for making man-made traditions equal to Scripture. As Christians, we should hold fast to Scripture and be flexible with traditions, because God's rules are above man's rules.

*15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 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;*

God is sovereign and timeless. As such, he has called us all before we are even born. Paul recognized that Jesus had him targeted as missionary to Gentiles before his birth.

*17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas [Peter] and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. 20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie! 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*



In seeking to prove that his gospel was not taught to him by men, Paul explains that after his conversion he didn't even meet the apostles for several years, during which he was already preaching the gospel of Jesus. This is proof that Paul truly did receive his teachings as a revelation from Jesus and not from men, for Paul had not even met the other men who also were preaching the good news. Additionally, we find in 2 Peter 3:14-16 that the apostle Peter confirmed Paul's teachings as from God, since he calls Paul's letters "Scripture".

*22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God because of me.*

God's grace can reach even the worst of sinners. Paul, who was clearly a vehement enemy of God, was shown mercy by God. This amazing grace then changed Paul into a new person, who turned his zealousness for evil into zealousness for good. This shows that God loves all of us and he can forgive even the worse of sinners. Not only that, but he has a purpose and calling for each of us. This reveals the goodness of God's character and causes us to rejoice and praise and glorify God.

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### **REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

1. What does it mean for you that the Bible is God's very Word? What does this mean for other world religions/worldviews?
2. What traditions do some people commonly hold on to tighter than they should? What traditions do you ascribe too much value to?
3. Think of someone who is far away from God as Paul was, someone who hates Jesus and Christians. What role would God have you to play in extending grace to that person?