

# They Glorified God Because of Me

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Pastor Min

Galatians 1:11-24

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*<sup>11</sup> For I would have you know, brothers, that the Gospel that was preached by me is not man's Gospel.<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>13</sup> For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.<sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> But when he who had set me apart before I was born,<sup>[b]</sup> and who called me by his grace, <sup>16</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to<sup>[c]</sup> me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>17</sup> 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.*

*<sup>18</sup> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) <sup>21</sup> Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup> And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup> They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup> And they glorified God because of me.*

## Introduction

Praise the Lord! Thank you for praying, just got back from Kenya/Ethiopia preaching to people there and training the pastors. Thank you for praying. Came back alive, continuing on, starting the book of Galatians together. Second of the series. They glorified God because of me. Now, we'll look at one video, 2 minute video to start off.

[Video]

Well, Happy Valentine's Day. The reason why I show that is because in a sense a conversion story is a love story, and this is a text where Paul talks about his conversion. The conversion moment is the moment you realize the One who has been thinking about you for all eternity has loved you, and your love relationship with God starts. This text is where Paul talks about his conversion story, his story of how Jesus Christ came into his life; therefore, it's a love story in that sense. He's sharing his testimony not to talk about or exalt himself, but tell how he received the Gospel from Jesus Christ. Galatians is about how the church is infested with false teachers

that were discrediting Paul; therefore, discrediting the Gospel he preached. Paul has to talk about himself in defense of his apostleship; in defense of the Gospel, so in the midst of that, he gives his testimony so we can learn lessons about ourselves.

We'll talk about four things: God's Revelation, Personal Testimony, Spiritual Growth, and Glorious Ministry. God reveals Himself to us and becomes *our* testimony, and as we grow, we become the ones ministering to others for His glory, so we'll see the story of Paul as he defends his apostleship and the Gospel, and we see ourselves in the story as well.

## I. God's Revelation [11-12]

In verse 1, Paul defends his apostleship. In verse 12, he defends the Gospel. The two verses are similar because for Paul, the truth of his apostleship and message stand and fall together. The credibility of the person is important as it verifies what he says. If Paul is no apostle, his claim to authority and truth collapses. He talks about how the Gospel he has received from Jesus Christ came as God's revelation. When the Gospel came to him, it was an invasion by God.

### a. The invasion of God [11-12]

He says, it was not man's Gospel he received, but a revelation of Jesus Christ. It is important to understand that the Gospel is not an argument or a worldview, but a revelation. It's not an invention, it's not from a tradition, but a revelation. It is a revelation for God made it known to Paul personally. Paul dared to call the Gospel his Gospel, "It's my Gospel, he says". It was not his Gospel because he made it up, but it had been uniquely revealed to him from Christ. When you receive the Gospel, Jesus Christ comes to you. The Gospel invades you, and you can sense the power of Christ. Christianity is not something that you choose, but something that happens to you because the invasion takes place in your heart, and God invades your life. We become the object of His actions, He is the one who is doing this thing, whatever it may be, He is making a difference in our lives. When the Gospel comes, the internalization of man must also take place.

### b. The internalization of man [11-12]

Verse 12 – "I did not receive it from any man, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ." Some recall the moment of their salvation, while for others, it's a period of time by which it happens. Many can't remember the very moment they receive Christ, but it's different for everyone. At one point, the wall of unbelief would melt. A wall of doubt might disappear. The distance that you felt from God

may decrease and you start to believe, you start to understand, and at times you start to feel the Holy Spirit.

How did Paul receive the revelation of Christ? He knew a lot about Jesus, he knew a lot because he was an expert of the Old Testament. As a Pharisee, he thoroughly knew the Scripture and the Old Testament, and the whole Old Testament is about the Messiah's coming. Paul knew about this but he just didn't know it was Jesus. He had incredible prior knowledge about the Messiah. The moment he met Jesus in Acts Chapter 9, everything clicked. And he started to see it, "WOW. That was Jesus! All the things I talked about, studied on, that was Jesus!"

Why is that moment important? I thought about it as a tremendous implication because when you witness to somebody, you want to talk about Christ so they can come to the saving knowledge of Christ. Sometimes we think that we have to somehow convert them or at least win the argument about God, about Christ. But you don't really have to win the argument, just instill information in them: "What do you believe about God? Oh, I believe in God..." This is what I call the time-bomb principle, you plant the word of God in their minds and it will one day explode and cleanse out all the sin in their hearts. One day, Lord can work through the information you planted in there, which is what happened to Paul. It also has tremendous implication as a parent, because when you teach children Scripture and all these things, you wish they were just amazing Christians but they're actually selfish brats and evil beings, and as you instill information, one day it will become a revelation. God's going to work through the information you plante; God can work in their hearts.

Don't worry, those of you who've been going to church all your life, and you've heard all these things, but still question yourself that something, like an invasion, did not happen to you. But as you pray and as you seek and search, it's going to happen, it can happen! Maybe some of you went to church all your life, maybe when you came to CFC, it happened; you had this information throughout your life. For some of you it's a retreat in Junior High or J-Gen in high school or OIL (One In Love) retreat in college. One Sunday you came, today possibly, tomorrow, all the information that's been stored in your heart will become a revelation.

So my question to you is, is the Gospel *your* Gospel? Is it something that has personally happened to you? Is it the power of God in your heart that made a difference in your heart? You become born-again, the Spirit of God is connected to

you, giving you strength. And when you fall down, you have the desire to go back to the Lord, receive strength and be cleansed. Is it *your* Gospel? If not, keep going.

Has the information become a revelation in your heart? Have you personally met Christ? If you're a parent, Sunday school teacher, youth pastor, pastor, or evangelist, somehow you're relating to someone who does not know Christ right now. Don't be too worried with what you teach your children and those you witness to because one day, when you pray for them, the information you instill in them will be used by God and become a revelation in their hearts.

## II. Personal Testimony [13-16]

As Paul talks about himself to defend his apostleship and the Gospel, the revelation of God came into his mind and his heart. We're going to see the process of how it becomes his testimony. In verses 13-16, there are two sides: one is Paul's perspective and the other is God's perspective. We see Paul's story and God's story.

### a. Paul's story [13-14]

*Verse 13-14: for you have heard 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.*

He's saying two things before his conversion. First, he once persecuted the church, which he now knows to be the church of God, and second, he was enthusiastic about traditions of his fathers. Paul persecuted the church of God violently, according to verse 13. It seems to indicate violence, even savagery. We can see that in the book of Acts, he went from house to house in Jerusalem not to evangelize, but to seize any Christians he could find: men, women, to drag them off to prison and have some killed. When these Christians were put to death, he cast his vote against them. (Acts Chapters 8 and 23).

He was not just satisfied with persecuting the church, he was bent on destroying it. He was so fanatical about it: not only was he fanatical about killing Christians and persecuting them, he was fanatical about spreading the tradition of Judaism. He was, in fact, as seen in verse 14, one of the best. *Beyond many of my own age among my people.* He was one of the best among the people who were the best at it. He was a Pharisee is what he's saying, in verse 14, *extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.* And he was the best among the Pharisees, who were

the best among Judaizers. He had been brought up according to the strictest party of the Jewish religion, which is how he lived as one of the best even among the Pharisees in persecuting and spreading Judaism. Such was the state of Saul, his name before he became Paul. He was called Saul of Tarsus before his conversion. He was a bigot, fanatic, wholehearted in his devotion to Judaism and the persecution of the church, of Jesus Christ. And when you think about a person like this, he was like an ISIS member today, men like these do not easily change wouldn't you agree?

Only God could reach them, and God did. When you know a person you believe only God can reach, don't be discouraged, but be encouraged because God *can*; and in this case, God did. And that's what happened in verses 13 and 14, and there's a contrast in verses 15 and 16, now God's perspective is shown.

b. God's story [15-16]

Paul was relentless about Judaism and the genocide of the tribe of Jesus Christ. His relentless rage was no match for the relentless love of God towards Paul. Paul was pursuing Christians to kill them, but God was pursuing after him so he could know the saving knowledge of Christ. That's the perspective we see in verses 15-16, God's story. "He who set me apart before I was born" means God is omniscient. So he knows you now, but He knew you ever since eternity began, before the creation of the world. We were in His mind. We occupy the space in His mind, and He knew us before our birth. He loved us from that moment on; He chose us and thought about us.

And He set him apart from the birth, and secondly "who called me by His grace." This is the moment he started to realize the love and that care that attention that God had for him. God called Paul by grace. That's the moment he realized this.

Thirdly, "revealed the Son to me." The content of how we realize that, we were revealed with Jesus. Jesus came into our minds and hearts and we realize God's grace and love for us. When Paul realized His grace, Jesus Christ was revealed to him and his purpose is given.

Fourthly, "I might preach him about the Gentiles." So God revealed His son to Paul so that He could reveal Christ through Paul. During the first century, the world was never the same again when Paul was called to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. Most of us are Gentiles, and we receive the Gospel because of His call.

Here is a four step historical progression of Paul's life and it's ours as well. God knew us ever since eternity began, and we realize that when we receive Christ as Savior and Lord, we have our calling. It may not be something great or something far away (it may be for some of you) but in our daily life, with every person we meet, we're called to minister to them and show Christ to them in our lives.

Just thinking about what had happened to Paul: can Paul become Christian? If we knew Paul, we would ask this question: can he become Christian? When we say to people looking at this passage, anyone can come to know Christ. From God's perspective, He can save anyone, we need to have this perspective in our mind and heart and say to people, "Can God love someone like me?" We can say God can save anyone in Jesus Christ, great is the Lord. He is worthy of our praise, God can save anyone and anyone can come to know the saving knowledge of Christ.

### III. Spiritual Growth [17-21]

This was the period of time when Paul grew in his relationship with Christ. In verses 17-21, transformation happens so that he can be prepared to serve the Lord. Now we'll see a couple of things here, we'll see three pieces of evidence as Paul is defending his apostleship. He gave three pieces of evidence to show that he did not receive the Gospel from humans or apostles, but directly from Jesus Christ. There are two lessons we can gain from it.

#### a. Evidence

##### i. 3 years in Arabia [16-18]

After the conversion, he did not go to the apostle to receive the Gospel, for three years he was in Arabia by himself. In verse 16, "was pleased to reveal the son to me in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles." "I did not immediately consult with anyone," he clarifies that. Verse 17, "Nor did I go to Jerusalem where the apostles are." "To those who were apostles before me", to talk about the fact that he did not receive the Gospel from any human being, including the apostles. In verse 18, "Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas", who is Peter, "and remained with him for 15 days." So after 3 years, he was in Arabia. This is the first piece of evidence: after conversion he did not go to *people* to receive the Gospel.

ii. 15 days in Jerusalem [18-19]

The second piece of evidence is shown first in verse 18, “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him for 15 days.” Actually he went to the apostle for a little over two weeks, he’s being honest. You can see the validity of what he’s saying, he could’ve just skipped it if he was lying. In fact, for two weeks, he names two apostles he saw, Peter, Cephas, and then in verse 19, the brother of Jesus Christ, James, who actually spent time with Jesus for many years. Then, James realized that Jesus was the messiah, and becomes an apostle. He’s saying, “Hey, I was only with them for 15 days, there’s no way I could receive all the things I know about Jesus in two weeks”, so he’s giving the evidence that he did not receive the Gospel from the apostles.

iii. 14 years away from Jerusalem [21]

Verse 21 says, “Then I went to the region of Syria and Cilicia.” He means that he wasn’t in Jerusalem to receive the Gospels from Jerusalem, in fact, he went north away from Jerusalem. Throughout those 14 years (we don’t know if it’s 14 years from his conversion or 14 years from then on), while he did ministry, he says he did not receive the Gospel from the apostles, he received it from Christ. So then after 14 years, he went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with him. He’s giving three pieces of evidence in this short passage to say that he received the Gospel from Jesus Christ.

There are two lessons here.

b. Lessons

- i. First of all, as we think about his personal life, we see that we need time to grow and prepare to be used by God. Remember, for three years he was in Arabia. So if Paul’s conversion was about 33 AD, then the first Jerusalem visit was in 36 AD. For three years he was by himself. Now we believe that in this period of withdrawal, as he meditated on the Old Testament Scripture, on the facts about the life and death of Jesus, the Gospel of the grace of God was revealed to him in full.

A while back, we went through the book of Romans for several years here at CFC. When I preached about Romans, I was amazed at how much Paul knew about the Scripture, the Old Testament, redemptive history,

theology; I was amazed at how one man can know this much about everything. I believe all those things happened because he knew so much of the Old Testament. It happened over 3 years from his meditating, all the things he knew came from Jesus. He reinterpreted all the things he knew from the Scriptures; he reinterpreted it all from a Christ-centered perspective. He was probably going, “Isaiah 53, that was about Jesus! Wow, when Moses talked about the prophet that’s coming, that’s Jesus! When Elijah did all this miraculous work, it was pointing forward to Jesus! In fact, their names point forward to Jesus.” I believe all those things happened in the three years. Some people even suggest those three years Paul spent meditating were used as a deliberate compensation for the three years of instruction, which Jesus gave to the other apostles. For those years of instruction from Jesus that Paul did not receive, he had Jesus all to himself in the wilderness for three years of solitude. It was three years with Jesus in reinterpretation of the Old Testament Scripture. Even Paul had to prepare himself for three years to do ministry.

A lot of young people, especially in this generation, want to do something right away; they don’t really want to prepare. But as we look into the Scripture, ministry is not about the quantity of time, but it’s about the quality of the person. You need to prepare yourself; you need to grow, you need to have the Word of God in you, you need to pray, you need to be disciplined, you need to build character, persevere, and learn how to fight through hardships in your life. In this “highlight generation”, we always see “highlights” on YouTube; we don’t really think about what goes on behind all those people who have prepared themselves to create their “highlights”. Often, as young people, when we want to do things, we become like empty cans: make a lot of noise but there’s nothing inside. We may do a lot of things, say a lot of things, but there’s no substance inside of us. We need to prepare ourselves to be able to serve God.

ii. We need others to grow in the church of Jesus Christ

Paul, even with all his preparation and knowledge and understanding, he still goes to Jerusalem to submit himself to Peter, who was the authority of the church at the time. Barnabas, in Acts 9:27, searches for Paul so he could introduce him to Peter and James. When Peter met Paul, it was a

historic moment as Peter was someone who preached the Gospel to the Jews and Paul was going to be the one who preached the Gospel to the Gentiles. The world was never the same again when the two met and discussed their callings, and then went their separate ways to their prospective callings. The world was never the same again. God had been preparing himself to convert Paul. If God can use someone like Paul, who persecuted all those Christians, to change the world, we have to realize that everything we do in life will confirm and support the purpose of God. God's going to do it, God's going to fulfill His will.

#### IV. Glorious Ministry [22-24]

In verses 22-24, God's going to use us to glorify Himself. There are three things in three verses.

##### a. We need to earn credibility from others to serve God [22]

Paul had to do that because verse 22 says that he was relatively unknown at the moment. He needed to build his credibility. Some say that a pastor with a scandal is a bird without wings. Credibility from people is important because it opens their hearts so that they can listen to the ones that they are ministering to. He was unknown at the time. No doubt Paul could've been an instant Christian celebrity, but instead he worked for long years in relative obscurity. It was only after a very long period that Paul began his famed missionary journey in response to the call of the Holy Spirit through the Christians at Antioch. He had his testimonies and talents, and we might have our testimonies and our talents. We might talk with eloquence or display impressive characteristics, but it won't go far unless you prepare yourself with character. Unless you earn your credibility through your character, it will not go far because people will eventually get to know you - that's why we need to prepare ourselves with character and earn credibility, *then* minister to people.

##### b. Our change will powerfully minister to others [23]

In verse 23, when Paul was unknown, people heard that he who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. So because of his testimony, they were blessed. So these are the moments when we who grew up in church and been there all our lives and don't have exciting testimonies wish for great testimony like Paul's. Whenever you think like that, it's most likely a desire to exalt yourself. Think about it, what's so great about Paul's testimony? It's that the testimony is great or

impressive: it's not the content of the change, but the content of the Gospel. It's not the power of the testimony itself, but the power of the Gospel for the Gospel is the power of God. We need to talk about Jesus; it's the Gospel that has power, not our change in itself. It's not because of our greatness, but in fact, it is our smallness, our littleness that God uses.

#### Deuteronomy 7:7

If you think about the Israelites, that's what God says, "it was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set His love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all people." Though some of you might be thinking, "I'm so small, I don't have a great testimony, I'm not that great or talented," but God can still use you for His glory because the Gospel is the power of God. It's not your talent, not your change, and not even the things you do, the Gospel is the power of God.

c. We are the means that God is glorified through [24]

As it says in verse 24, "And they glorified God because of me," I love this verse. We are the means that God is glorified through. God could have been glorified through so many ways, He could have written the words in the sky or spoken to them with His voice. God could have used animals, donkeys (in fact he does that once in the Old Testament); God could have used ants. But for some odd reason, God chooses to use us to glorify Himself. Verse 24: "And they glorified God because of me." Wow, you have to understand they cannot see God because God is a spirit, but they can see God through us. It's like the words of John the Baptist in John 3:30: "I must decrease, and He must increase." When we become small, He becomes great so that He could be seen. "Paul" means little, which is exactly why God used Paul. Inside of him was a Big God, and he was a little Paul. So, when we read the verse, "they glorified God because of me," sometimes we want to think, "they glorified God because of **ME**". But it has to be "they glorified **GOD** because of me".

We must decrease so that He can increase; so they can see Him; not me, not us. They did not glorify Paul, but it was God in Paul who recognized that Paul was a signal trophy of God's grace. God is working in your life to use you, because we are the ordained means of God to His glory. God can use everything that happens in our lives, even the things which we don't understand. I believe that God uses all those things to glorify Himself. C.S. Lewis talks about a time when he was weak in faith.

When he was an atheist, he knew another atheist who really trained him; this guy really had incredible intelligence and he trained C.S. Lewis on atheist logic. After he became Christian, he used all the things he learned about atheism, which is why he became one of the greatest apologists in 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was because of the training he received before he became Christian.

So everything that God is doing in our lives, I believe, will be used to glorify Him. Let me ask you, in what ways can you see God work in your life? Even before your conversion, how did he work to equip you to serve Him after? God's going to use everything. Everything you do in life will confirm or support the purposes of God. Satan does all these things to tempt us, but God will use even the temptations of Satan to strengthen and refine us so He would be greater inside of us. Everything you do in life will confirm and support the purpose of God.

Keep on having a personal relationship with Christ and hang around the people who will help you to grow. And all those things lead us to the praise of God, so that God would be glorified. His work is inside of us, our personalization of the revelation; the progression of sanctification will lead to glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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[Video: Host of "The Tonight Show" Johnny Carson notifies the audience that his guest, famed pianist Horacio Gutierrez had a minor accident and wasn't able to attend the show. He asks for a replacement performer from the audience, and a man enthusiastically volunteers to perform. He plays "Memories" from the musical "Cats".]

I like this video because it's funny; I like this video because Christian life is like this. We don't know at which moment God might call us to be used. And of course that's every moment, in different ways. It does not have to be this great moment, but he can use you in any moment. It might be ministering to a child, it might be testifying to your coworker who's going through a tough time and needs to talk. God might be calling your name.

But in this "highlight" Christianity, we think we could do it right away. But think about how much that guy (man who performs) did, how much he had to have

practiced to get there. In every moment, we need to prepare ourselves, because in any moment, when he calls our name, we'd be able to do it.

Let's keep on growing, preparing ourselves to the Lord, let's pray to the Lord.

Let's think about the life of Saul who became Paul. Saul used to be great, but he became little, Paul, so that God will be great in him. Jesus was so visible, so big, in this little Paul. It's hard not to see God through him.