

# Life Application Notes

Galatians 1:11-24 - 21st February 2021 "God's Amazing Grace"

Last week we started our journey into Paul's letter to the Galatians. This week we will be looking at the second half of Chapter 1, where Paul continues his defence of the Gospel. We're going to be continuing our way through the passage a couple of verses at a time to really dig into what the passage says, what it meant to the Galatian churches, and what it means for us today.

- **Read Gal 1:11-24 together**

**Here Paul continues his defence of himself and of the Gospel.** Verse 10 from last week shows us Paul's perspective on challenging the issues present in the Church. He is focussed on serving God faithfully, rather than compromising and trying to please others.

In these verses we see almost Paul's 'résumé' as he justifies his calling to preach the Gospel.

- **Do you notice any common themes continuing on from the first half of the Chapter?**
  - *(Uniqueness of the Gospel, Paul's authority to rebuke and teach as an apostle, GRACE!)*

## Verses 11-12:

Paul continues to defend the Gospel that he has been faithfully preaching. He reinforces that it isn't something he has invented or conjured up himself, or something he has changed to fit his own agenda. **He is making it abundantly clear that the Gospel is fully given by God** - untainted by human interaction.

- **What way of thinking is Paul shutting down here?** (That his Gospel is just like the other 'gospels' being preached)

Note: This is in contrast the Jewish teachings and traditions which compounded human-influenced rules on top of the God given commandments.

- **How might this idea affect how we approach sharing the Gospel today?**
  - The gospel is like no other message around - it wasn't 'made up' or 'discovered' or 'reasoned' into being by human minds.
  - In a world with so many 'good ideas' it is good to be reminded to approach the Gospel humbly - God's rescue mission is all God's idea - the credit is his!

(Paul then references his own revelation that is recorded in Acts 9, of his conversion on the road to Damascus.)

## Verse 13-14:

Paul doesn't hide his past actions that were in direct opposition to the Gospel. He also gives evidence on his ability to understand the Jewish teachings.

- **Why do you think Paul includes these details?**
  - It may have been to counter any questions of his authority to question the other teachings and to show his intellectual qualities. The reference to 'fathers' links Paul with the family of Abraham and the Old Covenant. Verses 15-16 give us another indication of why Paul brings up his former persecution of Christians.

## Verses 15-16:

Paul puts all of the credit on God for his calling to salvation. **Paul uses the example of his own transformation and calling to demonstrate the vastness of God's grace! This is the uniqueness of the Gospel.**

- v15 - 'Set me apart in my mother's womb'
  - This indicates that the grace Paul has been given can't be because of anything he's done - He wasn't even born yet!
- V15/16 - 'was pleased to reveal his Son in me'
  - God doesn't love us as a result of something we've done or because we are useful – he loves us because he loves us!

Paul states his calling to preach to the Gentiles (non-Jews).

## Verses 16-17:

- **What do you notice about Paul's actions described in v16-17?**
  - Paul doesn't check in with the other apostles to get some more answers (you might have expected him to want to have a chat?)
- **What do you think your response might have been to a new revelation like Paul received?** (Eager to check with someone else? Worried friends/teachers/family might not be so keen on your new found mission? Confused? Scared? Excited?)

Paul was so focussed in his calling and the Gospel message that he doesn't clarify his calling with the other apostles in Jerusalem. He makes it clear that the message wasn't a result of research or human wisdom - but from God. He didn't seek human approval to share a heavenly message!

Paul's thinking here is similar to in v11-12, "*why would he need to consult human minds when he has been given the Gospel straight from God?*" (**Consider the relevance of Proverbs 3:5-6**)

#### **Verses 18-20:**

Paul again reinforces that the Gospel he is preaching is not influenced by human discussion and motive. Whilst he consults with Peter in Jerusalem he doesn't stay long and doesn't interact with the other apostles. (Note: Cephas is Peter)

#### **Verses 21-24:**

Here we read that those who didn't know much about Paul and his background still praised God in hearing of his transformation.

- **Those in v23 praised God for the transformation in Paul's life, are you seeing God's transformational power at work in your life? Are you seeing fruit and growth in your life?**
- **Are you allowing him to continue to work in you from the inside out, and are people around you seeing the fruit of this? Or are you relying on your own strength, or adding things in addition to God?**

Paul's transformation is just a single example of the transformative power of the Gospel. The Gospel is all God's - those who glorified God because of Paul did so because only God could have transformed the persecuting Saul into Paul!

**Summary:** Through this passage we are reminded that the Gospel and the gift of grace are all God's. It prompts us to consider Paul's transformation and how the Gospel completely changed his goals in life.

- **Reflect/Discuss: Have you considered what your calling from God is?**
- **What barriers may prevent us from pursuing our calling with an 'all-in' approach like Paul's?** (Fear?, Clarity?, Confidence?, Faith?)

**Pray together that we would be reminded of the transformative power of the Gospel, the free gift of grace, and just how vast the love of God is!**

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#### **Helpful timeline of Paul's visits mentioned here:**

1. Conversion – AD34
2. 3 years in Arabia and Damascus – AD34-37
3. Initial visit to Jerusalem (just 15 days) – AD 37
4. Went to Syria and Cilicia – for approx. 10 years – AD37-47
5. Second, longer visit to Jerusalem 14 years after his conversion (AD47)
6. From there Paul was sent on 3 missionary journeys – first was to Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) – Acts 13:4 – 14:26. Set up the Galatian churches (approx. AD48)
7. Visited Galatian churches again two more times at the beginning of his second and third missionary journey.