

### PAUL DEFENDS HIS MINISTRY (1:11-24).

#### A. The Persecutor (1:11-14).

For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. **12** For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

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

1. In Gal. 1:11-12, Paul states his theme: his message and ministry are of divine origin. He did not invent the Gospel, nor did he receive it from men; but he received the Gospel from Jesus Christ. Both his message and his apostolic ministry were divinely given. [WWW]
2. Paul begin with his past conduct as an unconverted Jewish rabbi. He was persecuting the church and profiting and progressing in the Jewish religion. Everything was "going his way" and he was rapidly being recognized as a spiritual leader in Israel. [WWW]
3. His reputation as a zealous persecutor of "the sect of the Nazarenes" became known far and wide (see Ac. 9:13-14). Everybody knew that this brilliant student of Rabbi Gamaliel (Ac. 22:3) was well on his way to becoming an influential leader of the Jewish faith. His personal religious life, his scholarship (Ac. 26:24), and his zeal in opposing alien religious faiths, all combined to make him the most respected your rabbi of his day. [WWW]
4. Exceedingly zealous ...  
Ac. 9:1 and Ac. 22:4 reveal the murderous and fanatical persecution Paul mounted against Christianity, resulting in the death of "both men and women." Paul's hatred of the church sprang from the vivid accuracy with which he saw the true nature of Judaism, the typical forms and ceremonies of which are simply irreconcilable with Christianity. [JBC]
5. In these two verses, "Paul was saying that no human persuasion could ever have been able to impart the gospel to such a confirmed and ferocious persecutor. Only the power of God could have done such a thing. And what was that power? It was noted above that the Spirit of God through the enabling of power to work miracles had confirmed the fact of Paul's having the revelation from Christ (1:12); for that was done personally by Christ. [JBC]
6. Then something happened: Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the church, became Paul the Apostle, the preacher of the Gospel. This change was not gradual; it happened suddenly and without warning (Ac. 9:1-9). Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the Christians; a few days later he was in Damascus preaching to the Jews that the Christians are right. How could the Judaizers explain this sudden transformation? [WWW]
7. For the Judaizers to deny Paul's apostleship and Gospel was the same as denying his conversion! Paul's argument is conclusive: his past conduct as a persecutor of the church plus the dramatic change that he experienced proves that his message and ministry are from God. [WWW]

#### B. The Believer (1:15-16b, 24).

But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased **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,... **24** And they were glorifying God because of me.

1. God did it (1:15a-16a).  
Whenever Paul spoke or wrote about his conversion, it was always with emphasis on the fact that God did the work. [WWW]
2. God did it by grace (1:15b).  
Paul's experience reminds us of young Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-10) and also of John the Baptist (Lk. 1:5-17). Salvation is by God's grace, calling us by the gospel (2Th. 2:13-14). [WWW]

3. God did it through Christ (1:16a).  
Saul of Tarsus had religion, self-righteousness, as well as reputation and recognition; but he did not have Christ! Later he realized what he was missing (Phil. 3:7). [WWW]
  4. God did it for the sake of others (1:16b).  
Paul's conversion was of God; for certainly a prejudiced Jewish rabbi would never decide of himself to minister to the despised Gentiles! [WWW]
  5. God did it for His glory (1:24).  
As a fanatical rabbi, Saul had all the glory a man could want; but what he was doing did not glorify God. Man was created to glorify God (Isa. 43:7) and man is saved to glorify God (1Cor. 6:19-20). Bringing glory to God was ever a compelling motive in Paul's life and ministry (Rom. 11:36; 16:27; 1Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:6; 3:20-21; Phil. 4:20). [WWW]
- C. The Preacher (1:16c-23).  
to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, **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.  
**18** Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. **19** But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. **20** (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) **21** Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; **23** but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy."  
Even the best biblical scholars are not agreed on the chronology of Paul's life. Fortunately, the details of history do not affect the understanding of what Paul has written: we can disagree on chronology and yet agree on theology! [WWW]
1. He went to Arabia (1:17b).  
Paul gave himself to study, prayer, and meditation, and met with the Lord alone. He may have spent the greater part of three years in Arabia (Gal. 1:18), and no doubt was involved in evangelism as well as personal spiritual growth. [WWW]
  2. He went to Damascus (1:17c).  
Apparently the "basket incident" of Ac. 9:23-25 (see 2Cor. 11:32-33) took place at this time. The return to Damascus and the danger it brought to Paul's life are further proof that the Jewish leaders considered Paul an enemy, and therefore his experience with Christ was a valid one. [WWW]
  3. He finally visited Jerusalem (1:18-20).
    - a. This visit took place three years after his conversion, and his main purpose was to visit Peter (Ac. 9:26-28). [WWW]
    - b. This and the following verses were added by Paul as an explanation of what he had just said and to checkmate any denial of it by anyone who might have known about the trip in view here. So Paul went to see two of the most distinguished persons in the early church in the same way one would go to see any celebrity. John Wesley also insisted that the word "implied the desire to see a celebrity." That so busy and distinguished a person as Peter would have devoted an entire fifteen days to Paul shows that he received and entertained him as an equal, and not merely as some appellant seeking a favor. [JBC]
  4. He returned home to Tarsus (1:21-23).
    - a. As Paul went through Syria, he preached the Word, and when he arrived in Cilicia, his home province (Ac. 21:39; 22:3); he began to evangelize. Historians have concluded that he remained there perhaps seven years, until Barnabas recruited him for the work in Antioch (Ac. 11:19-26). A few believers in Jerusalem knew Paul, but the believers in the churches of Judea did not know him, though they heard that he was now preaching the very faith he had once tried to destroy. [WWW]

- b. Nothing in the NT more emphatically nails down the fact that Paul did not "bring a brand-new way of salvation." The gospel he preached was exactly the truth he persecuted. The conflict which underlies Paul's extensive writings on faith vs. law is not a conflict between two ways of understanding the gospel; but it is a conflict between the one faith vs. the Law of Moses as interpreted by the Judaizers who made keeping it necessary and essential unto salvation (Ac. 15:1). [JBC]

#### **APPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.**

- A. Applications:
  - 1. In reviewing Paul's conversion in Galatians, what parallels can you draw with your conversion?
  - 2. What things did you have to lay down in order to become a Christian?
  - 3. Share how you believe God is being glorified in your life.
- B. Discussion Questions:
  - 1. Do you think some brethren today are "set apart from their mother's womb"?
  - 2. Why do you think Paul mentions being with Peter for 15 days?
  - 3. List some blessings that come to mind by the phrase, "in Christ."

- C. Grace defended in Paul's ministry (2:1-21).
  - 1. Before the church collectively (2:1-10).
  - 2. Before Peter personally (2:11-21).

**II. Doctrinal: Grace and the Law (Chapters 3-4).**

- A. The personal argument (3:1-5).
- B. The scriptural argument (3:6-14).
- C. The logical argument (3:15-29).
- D. The historical argument (4:1-11).
- E. The sentimental argument (4:12-18).
- F. The allegorical argument (4:19-31).

**III. Practical: Grace and the Christian Life (Chapters 5-6).**

- A. Liberty, not bondage (5:1-12).
- B. The Spirit, not the flesh (5:13-26).
- C. Others, not self (6:1-10).
- D. God's glory, not man's praise (6:11-18).

**NEXT LESSON.**

09-19	03	2:1-10	The Council at Jerusalem
09-26	04	2:11-21	Peter (Cephas) Opposed by Paul
10-03	05	3:1-14	Faith Brings Righteousness
10-10			Gone to Texas, substitute teacher and lesson
10-17	06	3:15-29	The Intent of the Law
10-24	07	4:1-20	Sonship in Christ
10-31	08	4:21-31	Bond and Free Allegory
11-07	09	5:1-15	Freedom in Christ
11-14	10	5:16-26	Walking by the Flesh; Walking by the Spirit
11-21	11	6:1-10	Bear One Another's Burdens
11-28	12	6:11-18	Closing Remarks; Review of Epistle