

An Unlikely Convert—Proof of a God-Given Calling and Message Pt. 7

Galatians 1:11-24, CBC, Wednesday, March 5, 2025 The Goodness of Jesus

First five verses form amazing God-centered introduction followed by spiritual emergency **I. The Problem Defined—An SSA vv. 6-7** We have Signs of Spiritual Apostasy; **II. The Seriousness of the Problem vv. 6, 8-9 A. Danger of Deserting God Himself! v. 6** I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; **B. Danger of Proclaiming a Message Obscuring the Narrow Gate vv. 8-9** if message wrong, doesn't matter intent, MISSING God of grace, no fellowship with God; therefore, vv. 8-9 call to God to bring final judgment on anyone who would tamper with message **we, angel from heaven, any man III. The Proper Center for Living the Gospel v. 10** **10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God?** Paul seeking to please God—sounds spiritual and right, but motives tricky and situations messy, so while he challenged them, they questioned him accusing him of having human motives, human message; **vv. 11-ch.2 not just telling his story, but giving proof that he WAS pleasing God and had true gospel I. My Calling and Message Came from a Direct Revelation from God vv. 11-12** my message can't be from man because the things you accuse me of getting wrong came directly from God, let me push this farther, **II. My Values and therefore Goals in Life were Opposed to God and the Gospel vv. 13-14** I am NOT pleasing man when wrestle for hearts of Galatians against these false teachers b/c I was OPPOSED to this message/teaching from CORE of BEING—I was zealous in DESTROYING this message—it did NOT come from ME; **III. Therefore, only God Himself could set me on This Course with This Calling and Message vv. 15-16a** focus shifts from Paul—his thoughts, motives, goals, and power and actions to bring them about to God **15 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, GOD had hand on MY life, calling me from my mother's womb!** God had plans for kingdom expansion, but NOT a careless use of people as expendable like communist governments, but **called me through His grace, Schreiner—**(summoned in a compelling way—speaks of grace) speaks of effective call that convinces one called **was pleased to reveal His Son in me—delightful, fixed intention of benevolent favor** (Logos exegetical tool definition) what did Pharisee parents think? **know NOTHING of parents—but their intention/ value of child/training dwarfed by God's LOVING intention for Paul who spent early years misfocused and recent years DESTROYING the people of God! STOP focusing on writing your own auto-biography focused on successes, failures, family history! Look to One who creates and calls! Paul's job? Respond to the calling—Acts 26:19—that is not trust in his own righteousness, that is a faith that works, saving faith produces saving fruit; summing up Gal. 1:10-16 shows Paul Grateful to God, secure in His hand over ALL since womb—ALL of new birth and calling from God, not man I Cor. 1:30: What is different about Paul's focus than where we often focus with conversion/calling? Schreiner—does NOT focus on personal benefit, but on mission Grace that called, led to right works like Tit. 2:11-15; for Paul, grace led to commitment to calling so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, why was this so touchy/opposed?** McKnight—3 parts to gospel Paul gave 1. Jesus Christ alone source of salvation; 2. solely by faith and not justified by living in accordance w law of Moses; 3rd part was that this acceptance open as much to Gentiles as to Jews—as saw in Acts 22, THIS is what set Jews off—**what is equivalent today? Where do you think rub comes?** that interpret gospel and how grow/live on own apart from others—**we see people as damaged, hurt, God sees brokenness, but root is sinners who must repent;** WE not center/WE don't set meaningful life, but God does; McKnight noted Paul's specific calling, backed up by community of believers, not merely your own sense of Calling—also, noted honesty of Paul as opponents would tear apart what he said—still said it because it was the truth—we should seek to help people see themselves honestly, fully; calling led to **II Cor. 3:1-3—they were not merely fruit of gospel, but proof of Spirit's work to bring about fulfillment of work God called him to; remember, this testimony part of being so focused on fulfilling calling that doing what takes to defend source so not discredited;** Helpful application from Scot McKnight in his commentary when thinking about personal testimony, **Scot McKnight I might be profitable for readers of Galatians to write out a brief account of their own biographies in which they seek to orient their account around their conversion to Christ. Perhaps they could have three sections: (1) "Previous Way of Life," (2) "Conversion," and (3) "Present Calling." This is how Paul reconstructed his life, and it is a typical paradigm since conversion is the decisive change in every Christian's life. (However, in speaking of a "decisive change," I need to add that I do not think all conversions are alike, as I discussed above. Nonetheless, the Bible teaches that all Christians are converts, whether that conversion was sudden or progressive.) But you can explore your past from more than one angle. You can also write your biography from the angle of how your past, whatever it was, prepared you for your present ministry and life; from the angle of your own spiritual development; from the angle of your encounters with the Holy Spirit; or from the angle of decisive changes that have made significant impacts upon your life. In each of these angles, you need to focus the story in such a way that your encounter with Christ is preeminent. This discipline, however time-consuming it may become, forces each of us to decentralize our own ego and centralize Christ. It teaches us to see our lives as God sees them, as lives that have been transformed by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It teaches us to shape our lives according to biblical categories. One sure result of this discipline will be a quicker facility in giving our testimony. When I was a child, I had a pastor who frequently asked people in our Wednesday evening service to give a "testimony" of something that happened during the week. He also expected (but so far as I know did not demand) all new converts to give their "reconstructed biography" in such a setting. I can remember the joy this generated in the entire church as people declared their allegiance to Jesus Christ and explained their conversion. Perhaps a focus on learning to tell our own story can lead the churches once again into such services. This man's conversion can become a standard by which we can evaluate our own commitments. Are we as committed to Christ, his claim on our lives, and his calling in our lives as we were to our pre-Christian vocation and pursuits?** **Thoughts about shift in focus for personal testimony—or seeing your past through different angles in light of the gospel—how does this guide/give glory to God? helps get away from you, your choices, your past—also from comparing—why is mine not like theirs—why are they "growing" faster—instead of focus on God and work He preparing for—see His hand even when NOT acknowledging Him as look from different angles; Ryken's thoughts sum up this section well—gave first part, here it is W rest—**The great New Testament scholar J. Gresham Machen once wrote a book called *The Origin of Paul's Religion*. Through his study of Paul, Machen reached the same conclusion the apostle himself had reached: The origin of Paul's religion was God in Christ. But this is not simply the origin of Paul's religion. God in Christ is the origin of any true religion. Not surprisingly, the religions that human beings invent end up glorifying human beings. There is some law to keep, some teaching to follow, some ritual to perform, some penance to endure, or some state of consciousness to achieve that will bring salvation. One way or another, we can climb up to heaven and reach God. Christianity is different. What distinguishes it from other world religions is that it actually comes from God. The one true gospel is not man-made, which is why it gives all the glory to God. The good news of the cross and the empty tomb could come only from God because it is about what God has done to save us through Jesus Christ. It does not teach that we can reach up to heaven; it teaches that God has come down to earth. In Christ, God has entered human history and the human heart. We cannot receive this gospel the same way Paul received it. Even if we traveled the Damascus road, we would not find it there. The heavens will not part so we can see Jesus in all his glory. Yet ultimately the good news of our salvation comes from the same place: it comes from God. As Luther put it, "The knowledge of Christ and of faith is not a human work but utterly a divine gift." God is the one who set us apart from birth. He knew us even when we were in our mother's womb. This is part of the doctrine of election, which is "God's gracious choice of certain individuals unto eternal life in consequence of which they are called, justified, sanctified and glorified." Eph. 1:4-5 Then he called us by his grace. It was "by grace" because it was more than we could ever deserve. Nevertheless, and however he did it—whether with the help of a parent, the witness of a babysitter, the message of a radio preacher, or the invitation of someone from work—God called us. And when he called us, he showed us his Son. We read in the Scriptures that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, we heard in a sermon that he is the Savior of the world, and we believed that it is all true. We believed it because God revealed his Son to our hearts by his Holy Spirit. Every Christian's story is different, but the story line is always the same. God chose you and called you to faith. He revealed his Son to your heart. Then he gave you a particular place of service. Do you know what God has called you to do? So much to learn from Paul's testimony—THIS is a work of God—Paul defended his authority so he could continue His calling—remember our authority from God? **True Fruit?** Let's work to strengthen roots of our faith so that this is fruit that comes from our life as we seek to fulfill God's calling for our lives; now continues with case against false teacher's accusations discrediting his ministry; **IV. Though I was WITH the other apostles, they were NOT the source of my Message and Calling vv. 16b-24** 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 what DID he do? but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. **Map—Damascus (133**

miles north of Jerusalem—6 days by foot, 2-3 horseback???), Arabia, then returned to Damascus; I need to do bunch more homework to get chronology correct but Arabia AD 32/33 according to Schnabel Schreiner, p. 102 Lightfoot notes “a veil of thick darkness hangs over St. Paul’s visit to Arabia” P. 21 in Stott; Arabia may have meant surrounding desert countryside around Damascus—not sure how far into Arabian Peninsula Paul went; many think Arabia refers to Nabatean kingdom whole area seemed to be under Aretas IV, King of Nabatea 9Bc-40AD; don’t know where went or why; some say went to evangelize a barbarous and savage people who lived there—others say went for quiet/solitude Acts 9:19-25 seems to encompass this period, II Cor. 11:32-33; sought to arrest b/c of preaching in Arabia; points to preaching gospel BEFORE Jerusalem influence; Acts 9:22 doesn’t imply person who was trying to figure it out—perhaps preaching the whole time? Then to Jerusalem after 3 years; 18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. Time could be inclusive like Jesus’ death—Paul converted 31/32 AD?? May have visited Peter 33/34—Schreiner says this fits w Acts 9:26-30 15 days (a fortnight) is not very long—got to know Peter just a little bit; Dodd’s famous words “At that time he [Paul] stayed with Peter for a fortnight, and we may presume they did not spend all the time talking about the weather.” Schreiner, p. 109 “Surely Paul asked Peter during these two weeks for information about the historical Jesus and was grateful to learn more about the traditions of Jesus’ words and deeds.” Schreiner agrees w Bruce here, Schreiner, p. 109 can you imagine the conversation as exchanged notes—Paul learns of Peter’s encounter w risen Christ I Cor. 15:5, Peter also learns more about Paul’s encounter w Christ & ministry for 3 years; Peter didn’t seem to have problem w Gentiles come to God/justified by faith alone; 19 But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord’s brother. James brother of John executed by Herod Agrippa I in AD44 Acts 12:2, but most agree this is James, brother of Lord—slow to believe in Jesus while He was on earth (Mk. 3:21, 31-35; Jn. 7:1-9 came to get Him b/c “He has lost His senses”); (Acts 1:21-22 tight definition of 12 apostles) Bruce—apostleship for Paul is mission, w implication of direct commissioning p. 94; I Cor. 15:5, 7 seen Lord were apostles—also special commissioning by risen Lord, so not “the five hundred” of I Cor. 15:6; whatever else apostles were, they were objects of Christ’s sending Mark 6:7—12 James seems to have pre-eminent role as leader in church in Jerusalem (diff. group then Peter—Peter not over everyone, pretty prominent as will see in Gal. 2) Acts 12:17, 15:13-21, 21:18-25; likely wrote book of James; Luke in Acts seems to say that Paul saw many of apostles??? maybe only talked to two significantly; Stott notes others absent, too busy, or frightened; note that Acts has him preaching here in Jerusalem as well 20 (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) oath formula as must have sounded unbelievable to those told otherwise—but Paul’s honesty shows here as they could verify all this; Seems that Judaizers saying that source/Mecca of truth in Jerusalem where they were; HAD to get it from the apostles and that he distorted message, so yield to their rightness; Before throw this out, think about things that have been central to helping determine if solid/wrong—what happens if those are rattled? What are these “HOME BASES” that give stability/help process? Think about even the different focuses of reading Scripture, knowing God’s will, conquering sin, etc. —which of these have you had rattled?? Scott McNight While all of this may seem irrelevant to each of us, what we have once again is a sociological crisis. Washington, D.C., is crucial to American politics (what comes from Washington is final); there is no place like that for Western Christianity (though Wheaton, Illinois; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Nashville, Tennessee; and Fort Worth, Texas, have each made their cases). For earliest first-century Christianity, Jerusalem was home, and from it all good things were supposed to come. We are surely aware of the critical role Jerusalem played in ancient Judaism; the same holds true for earliest Christianity. There resided all the authorities and knowledge needed for the development of Christian thinking. The apostles were centered there for much of the time, and the knowledge of the Bible was explored there. The crisis was simple: Was Jerusalem the mother church or not? Were the Jerusalem leaders the authorities or not? Who would set the agenda for the Christian movement—Diaspora Gentile Christians or the traditional leaders in the homeland? Would the gospel of Jesus Christ eliminate its heritage in Judaism or would it stay true to the covenant established with Abraham? The crisis was whether or not Israel would have a privileged existence and status in the new movement. The issue then became Jewish distinctives as opposed to the heterogeneous and, often enough, non-Jewish life of the Diaspora. Paul countered this by demonstrating that his gospel was not simply Jewish; rather, it came from Jesus Christ and comprised all people. Therefore, it did not demand the nationalization of Gentiles. What Paul opposed was a cultural imperialism that presented itself exclusively in religious attire. Interesting problem that fits with Sunday School search for common identity and purpose—what holds us together/SHOULD hold us together? As Paul battles for roots of authority to carry out mission, NOT seeking to get away from apostles; Gal. 2:2, I Cor. 15:1-11 John Stott summarizes by saying, “Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem was only after three years, it lasted only two weeks, and he saw only two apostles. It was, therefore, ludicrous to suggest that he obtained his gospel from the Jerusalem apostles.” In Ryken.

Acts 1:21-22 “Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.”

Acts 12:17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said, “Report these things to James and the brethren.” Then he left and went to another place.

Acts 26:19 “So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

1 Corinthians 1:30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

2 Corinthians 3:1-3 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? 2 You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

2 Corinthians 11:32-33 In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, 33 and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

Stott —“The Christian life is living in this age the life of the age to come.” P. 8