

## Scripture (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. <sup>12</sup>For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

<sup>13</sup>For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

<sup>15</sup>But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, <sup>16</sup>to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, <sup>17</sup>nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

## Commentary - The Making of an Apostle of Jesus, Part 1

The wayward Church at Galatia alarms Paul as they turn to embrace a gospel outside the one of Grace in faith. Apparently adrift with competing authorities leading them, Paul, after setting them back on their heels in vs. 6-10, establishes himself in the authority of an Apostle of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-24 is a summation of his exposure and experience leading up to the engagement of his missionary ministry after v24.

As a slave of Christ (v.10), Paul has had no choice but to serve the One Whose Spirit commands him from within. And in choosing His vessel of deliverance of the Gospel to us Gentile sinners, our Lord is a most gracious Task Master, meeting every need of those in His charge. And so, the Lord made known to Paul everything he would need to carry out his task. Paul needed at least two things – the authority of an Apostle of Jesus who would be responsible for the establishment of foundational Truth in the Church, and the divine knowledge and understanding to support, convey, and propagate his ministry, to spread the Gospel of Christ.

### *A Foundational Source*

Verse 11 is a most central anchor point to both Paul, and to us now as inheritors of God's Word, because here he claims the point and source of origin for the Message he expounds as an Apostle. He makes it clear that his Gospel is at the most foundational level, and is in nature unattainable in origin to anyone else, unless they too had direct and special instruction from God's Son. – **'the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.'** Those who know of the ways of God through His Word are not of that same foundational level, but instead have built upon It under the instruction of men conveying God's Truth through their revelation, made useful through the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Paul however, was not enlightened by any man's teaching, but received his understanding from direct revelation from the Source – **'For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.'** also (**Acts 22:14-15**).

### *His good use of our old and new lives*

The Lord's making of Paul for good use is no different than how He deals with us today. Paul's life before conversion was made every bit useful by God, even though he was still His enemy at the time. He was an enemy long before his campaign of persecution of the Church. Though he strived to satisfy God and His Law to be at peace with Him, he was never Reconciled until the Lord Arrested him on the road to Damascus. Even so, the Lord used Paul's previous life of religious piety to His great advantage in Paul's new life. Because of Paul's background, he was especially equipped to defend the Gospel to the Jews, but more importantly, to grasp how the Christ brought everything together under the whole of God's revealed Will. The Lord used Paul as an appropriate vessel to bring the Truth of the Salvation of the Gentiles, as children of Abram, to bear upon the scope of the Gospel. As well, the Lord, having the opportunity to choose among perhaps countless scholars with a thorough understanding and practice of His Law, chose to Save and use none other than the most feared pursuer and antagonist of the Lord's Church. And why? Is not the Lord's Grace exhibited in making a most notable disciple and child out of a prior terrible enemy?

### *Savior of His enemies*

Every child of God was once His enemy. Likewise, all who are not or will not be Saved are His enemy too. Our hearts are black with sin and in hateful, willing rebellion towards our Maker, right from our inception, through Adam's inheritance. Such is Christ's active, serving love in making Sacrifice of Himself on our behalf for the Glory of God, though all the while for those hating Him, yet scheduled to one day love Him. Who of us was not also a persecutor of the Lord? Who else was not an offense to Him, by choice? Who could say he had a heart that loved God, before God gave him the faith in His Grace to even recognize Him as Lord? No one, of course. God made a mighty working example of his transforming power in the miracle of Paul's converted life, and so too He does again and

again in us whom He transforms. And in both cases, both in Paul and in all believers, God is credited with all of the Glory for His Work. His Work always shows the dramatic nature of the before and after, the old man and the new, the old life of persecution and the new life of service. Praise God for choosing an educated man of the Law of the Jews, and a man once white hot with hatred towards His Church! What a telling picture of every last one of us! What a revelation of God's patient love for a hateful sinner like you and me!

## ***The ingredients of Salvation***

**'But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace'** – The story of Paul's predestined Salvation, and that of every other person to see Justification. While Paul continues on in v 16 to speak of the Lord's special use of him, all of the brethren share in this same story. Verse 15 contains the ingredients of every believer's miracle of Salvation; **'who separated me from my mother's womb'** – God knowing us, as an original and new physical creation, who has been awaited by the Creator until our appearance in the flesh, are already known and expected to be set aside from those who will not see Salvation. **'Called me through His grace'** – and knowing us, one day chooses to Arrest us by His undeniable Call to turn to Him, in our recognition of our sin and His Lordship, to call on His Name for Safety and Forgiveness. **'But when it pleased God'** – God's timing is always perfect, never out of His Plan, always under His control as a Sovereign God. The Lord chose the perfect and appropriate time to seize Saul for His own. Life, existence, creation, circumstance; are all choreographed in perfect harmony under the watch of a Perfect God, of Whom no detail escapes.

## ***Saved for good works***

And for what purpose, all of this work in seeing Saul Saved? Verse 16a – **'to reveal His Son in me, that I may preach Him among the Gentiles'**. Notice **'His Son in me'**, not 'to me'; Saul's Salvation wasn't for his benefit, but for the Lord's and His benefactors, the Gentile Church. Paul is most certainly a special vessel made by the Lord, in that he, through the Lord's Work in his preparation, Salvation, and service, would take God's Plan beyond what any Jew on his own would have ever understood or expected. A Gentile becoming a child of God, aside from coming under Judaism and the Law, was unimaginable before the Christ. But again, in his preparation, Paul was shown the complete Work of God through Christ in the spreading encompassment of the Gospel of Saving Grace. Paul was made to understand the impact of God's Christ, but only through His Grace. In persecuting the new Church, he had opportunity to hear of what was being preached, but his hard, dead heart saw nothing but the hatred he harbored. However, once confronted and delivered to Damascus, 'immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God', 'confounding the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.' (**Acts 19:20, 22**) Once Grace was conferred, the Lord, using Saul's previous life to His advantage, had created a new man who immediately recognized, embraced, and expounded the Truth about Jesus in the very context he had formerly used in ignorance. Such is God's Grace, the empowering ingredient, the main missing link, the One Thing that can transform hatred into love, folly into wisdom, persecutor into Apostle!

## ***The Apostle's preparation***

And so wisely, Saul, surely recognizing the gravity of what had been conferred to him, was led away for a time to Arabia. This was wise, be it either the decision of the Lord or Saul himself, because this would protect his understanding as well as his credibility, which he has referred to back in v 12. Saul's preparation under the Holy One's tutorage was the special, foundational work on which the Church of the Gentiles would be laid. As in Peter's confession of Matthew 16:16, Saul's revelation was sourced in the Holy Spirit's deliverance of God's Truth, not having anything to do with man's thoughts. Saul was taken away to Arabia so as to receive his instruction from the Lord Himself, just as the other Apostles had enjoyed, without any pollution from a man's teaching. This way, the Apostle's teachings would remain foundational, and be to us, the Church, an instruction through the Holy Spirit and not a mere man.

## **Study Questions**

**Why is Paul writing this letter to the Church at Galatia?**

**What is the overall reason for his writing of his life prior to this letter?**

**How is Paul's responsibility in and to the Truth of the Gospel different than other believer's?**

**How might God make use of our lives before being Saved, as we still hated Him? What of your previous life has He used?**

**What is so amazing about God's Grace in Saul's Salvation?**

**For what reasons might Paul have gone away from, rather than to, the Apostles in Jerusalem?**