

A Changed Life

Study #3 Galatians 1:11-24

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The direction of people's lives *can* be changed, even dramatically -- but *not* by the ways most expect it to happen.

Some try to turn their lives around by getting **more money** so they can **live in luxury**.

Others try to become **famous or powerful** so they can be **envied** or **control things** around them.

Some become obsessed with **health**, as if that's all they need **to be really happy** in life.

Some **drown their troubles** in a constant barrage of **music, movies, TV, or video games**.

Sadly some turn to **drugs** as an **escape from their problems**.

But **none** of these really **changes the person on the inside**.

They often find the **same unsatisfied soul** -- inescapably **still there within**.

But when God changes people, it's a dramatic transformation on the inside first.

He **changes** what they **are**, **not** just what they **feel, think, or do**. Those are the **results** of the inner change.

Change was sweeping through the lives of people around the Mediterranean in the first century.

Christianity was advancing, and transforming both individuals and communities.

It **wasn't the first time** God moved that way, and it **wasn't going to be the last**.

This **fulfillment of God's promises** by the work of Christ

included an **advancement** in understanding of **what really transforms us**.

Paul's letter to the Galatians had to do with some **opposition to the Christian message**.

There were **political** and **pagan leaders** who **didn't like** the message of **Christianity**.

They saw the Gospei as **weakening their control** over the people.

Some **Jews** didn't like **Christian-Jews accepting Gentiles** as God's people **without requiring circumcision**.

The historian **Josephus confirms** that these groups became **fierce persecutors** of the Christians.

At first the **Apostle Paul was among the Jewish attackers**.

When he **became a Christian** it was a serious **problem** for these persecutors.

His **careful reasoning** from the Scriptures pointed out **their misunderstanding** of the Bible.

They **focused their attack** on the message **Paul** had delivered to the Galatians.

They **didn't understand** what **Christianity** was really about.

They **didn't have redeemed eyes** to see the **power of God** at work.

There were **problems from within the new Christian churches** too.

Some were told that **Paul was changing the Apostles' message**.

They tried to **discredit** him by implying that at first he **got his authority** from the **Jerusalem Apostles**, **then he turned against them**.

Some were **confused** by false rumors and by not fully understanding Paul's teachings about **God's law**.

These **distortions** were **confusing the members of the churches**.

In this next part of his letter to the Galatians Paul answered back.

Galatians 1:11-12 begins his **explanation** and **warning**.

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the **gospel** that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I **received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ**.

God was the **source** of Paul's message and Apostleship.

He **wasn't just instructed by human teachers**, and he **didn't get his authority from Jerusalem**.

His message came by **direct revelation from Jesus Christ**.

The **story of Paul's conversion** on the road to Damascus was **well known**, though not always understood.

The **great persecutor** of the Christian Gospel became its **primary promoter**.

It was one of the **top news stories** of the day.

Paul evidently **told about it often** in his visits to local congregations.

Paul clearly evidenced a dramatic change in his life because of God's work of grace.

13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism,

how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

14 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.

Paul was **reminding** them about his **former life** as a **persecutor** of the church:

In the early days of the church, a **Christian named Stephen was put to death** for his faith.

Acts 6 tells how **his message** about Christ was **misunderstood** by the Jewish leaders.

They **accused Stephen** of being **against God's Temple**, and **against the teachings of Moses**.

They said in **Acts 6:14**, "**for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.**"

The **same false accusations** were being made **against the Apostle Paul** which is why he wrote *Galatians*.
But **back in the time of Stephen**, when Paul was still known as Saul of Tarsus,

Paul was a supporter of the attacks on that first Christian martyr.

Stephen's defense to those who wrongly accused him is recorded in **Acts 7**.

He **traced the long history of God's covenant**, and

showed that **Moses** and the ceremonies of the **Temple predicted** the coming of **Jesus Christ**.

Stephen pointed out how **many Jews and their ancestors** had repeatedly **confused God's actual teachings**.

He **clarified his support for Moses and the Temple**.

Jesus **didn't come to eliminate** what God said was **true, right and good**.

He **brought the promises of the law to their fullness**.

He told them that their **Temple worship** had become **corrupted** from what God originally said it should be.

It was Jewish **abuses** that brought **God judgments** down on them in the **past -- and will again**.

But they **still didn't understand** what Stephen was telling them,

so they **stoned him to death** for what *they* understood as attacking their historic beliefs.

Acts 8 tell us about **Saul of Tarsus**.

He **supported these attacks**, and the **killing of Stephen**.

He **persecuted** the church relentlessly, and **tried to silence the message** of Christ.

Though he was **trained by the great Rabbi Gamaliel**

he'd **misunderstood God's law**, what it **actually represented**, and **it's teachings** about the **Messiah**.

Then Acts 9 tells about the **conversion of Saul**, whom we now know as the **Apostle Paul**.

Before that, his zeal was for the **traditions and customs** that **distorted God's law**.

But **in Christ** he came to **defend God's teachings as they were originally intended**.

When he wrote this letter, **these same distortions** that had confused *him* before his conversion,
were now **troubling the Galatians**.

The change in Paul was caused by God's work of grace in his heart:

15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who **called me by his grace**,

16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,

I did not immediately consult with anyone;

17 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**.

18 Then **after three years** I went up **to Jerusalem** to visit Cephias and remained with him fifteen days.

19 But I saw **none of the other apostles except James** the Lord's brother.

20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)

It wasn't the influence of the Apostles that transformed him.

Paul **didn't go to consult first** with any the **church leaders** in Jerusalem to be **indoctrinated** by them.

After his transformation by God's grace, he went to **Arabia** then returned to **Damascus**.

It was **three years later** that he went to Jerusalem to see **Peter** for 15 days.

It wasn't men. It was the **same God** that gave him **physical life**, who then gave him **spiritual life** through Christ.

God's call of grace brought him to **know Christ**, then **called him to declare Christ to the Gentiles**.

Since he was **directly called by the Savior**, this made him the **last** of the **true Apostles**.

The **only other Christian leader** he saw then, was **James**, the Lord's brother.

The churches were amazed when Paul came proclaiming the faith he once attacked:

21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

22 And I was still **unknown** in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

23 They only were **hearing it said**,

"He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

24 And they glorified God because of me.

You can **imagine the uncertainty** of the persecuted believers at first.

The one who had **legal orders to arrest and abuse them came to church on Sunday!**

They **had heard the reports**, but **hadn't yet actually seen** these things for themselves.

But he came and **showed them the change** few thought was possible.

That **former persecutor** had without question **really changed**.

Now he *promoted* what he **once tried to destroy**.

It was **like the change** in that old sea captain and slave trader **John Newton**.

He not only became an **opponent of slavery** and an **Anglican minister**,

he **fully credited** it all to **God's Amazing Grace** - which became the **title** of the **famous hymn** he wrote.

When the people **met** and **got to know** the **converted Saul of Tarsus**,

they **glorified God** for what was seen in Paul's life.

It's a fact -- God changes people.

Paul wrote about this **often** in his letters which became books of the *New Testament Scriptures*.

2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**."

The old has passed away; behold, **the new has come**."

Galatians 6:15, "For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a **new creation**."

Ephesians 4:24, "and to put on the **new self**, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."

Colossians 3:10, "and have put on the **new self**, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."

These are **just some of the passages** where Paul tells about the **change Christ brings about**.

It's all there, **compelling evidence** of the power of God.

The Gospel of Christ isn't just a theory or cultish fad.

It's a **fact** that **fits with** what God **had promised and said** all through human history.

We're changed supernaturally when we're regenerated by the unmerited grace of God.

Our lives should grow to show the work of the Gospel. Others should be able to see it at work in us.

It's not going to be perfect, but there **should be a fundamental change in attitude and values**.

People **should see that evidence of change** in us.

They **may not understand** the change right away, and might **attribute it to other causes**.

So, it's **important** that we **obediently explain what God has done**.

The change is a work of **God's grace** which **alone implants an inner confidence** in the promises of the Gospel.

We come to **trust** that **God is reliable** and **has done** and **always will do** what he says.

We accept that **his ways** are always the **best ways** -- even when **human wisdom** prefers something else.

Our deliverance from guilt, and the **promise of eternal rest in glory**,

were **secured for us on a cross** about 2000 years ago.

And before that, it was determined *eternally* by the **love of God**, **NOT** by the **things we do ourselves**.

Our failures to be conforming to Christ-like behavior - take place **because we trust in the wrong things**.

We don't mature in Christ by just attending church, or by doing good things to help the needy.

It's not by anything we can do to earn God's blessings.

Our trust needs to be **in the completed work of our Savior** who died to pay for our sins.

We need to be **trusting in God's providence**, whatever he brings into our lives each day, the rough times too.

We need to **handle the challenges** by facing them **as we're instructed in God's word**.

Squeezing in a little time for God in our lives isn't enough,

The fact is -- it's not your life! You were **bought** with the **price of Christ's life**.

You now **belong to him**. We are **his** to live for his glory by trusting in his promises and resting in his care.

God calls us to **put off the old ways, the old man**, and **suit-up** in the **new man**.

We can **live joyfully in Christ**, and be a **shining light** to those around us, **regardless** of our **past** or **circumstances**.

We can be a **blessing** to others and **servants** of God

by simply **living with a full confidence** in the **Savior**, and **obediently trusting his teachings**.

There's **no secret formula**, or **special work we have to do**.

It's **all been done** by Jesus Christ, and it's **applied** by the living Holy Spirit.

By trusting his promises, we can **discover** a change that transforms us into **joyful children of God**.

It will make us **hungry** to **know his word better**. It **compels us** to want to **live for his glory**.

It **assures** us of our **eternal place in the family of God**.

Note: Bible quotations are from the *English Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

Gal 1:1 Paul, an apostle--not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead--

Gal 1:2 and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

Gal 1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Gal 1:4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father,

Gal 1:5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Gal 1:6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel--

Gal 1:7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

Gal 1:8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.

Gal 1:9 As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

Gal 1:10 For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Gal 1:11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

Gal 1:12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

Gal 1:14 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.

Gal 1:15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,

Gal 1:16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;

Gal 1:17 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.

Gal 1:18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

Gal 1:19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

Gal 1:20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)

Gal 1:21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

Gal 1:23 They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

Gal 1:24 And they glorified God because of me.

Gal 1:1 Παῦλος ἀπόστολος οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων, οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Θεοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν,

Gal 1:2 καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοί, ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας·

Gal 1:3 χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

Gal 1:4 τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ὅπως ἐξέληται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος αἰῶνος πονηροῦ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν,

Gal 1:5 ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

Gal 1:6 Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτω ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον,

Gal 1:7 ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ τινὲς εἰσιν οἱ ταρασσόντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Gal 1:8 ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ εὐαγγελίζηται ὑμῖν παρ' ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

Gal 1:9 ὡς προειρήκαμεν, καὶ ἄρτι πάλιν λέγω· εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐαγγελίζεται παρ' ὃ παρελάβετε, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

Gal 1:10 ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν Θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν; εἰ γὰρ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἤρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην.

Gal 1:11 Γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθὲν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι κατὰ ἄνθρωπον·

Gal 1:12 οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον αὐτὸ οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Gal 1:13 Ἦκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, ὅτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν,

Gal 1:14 καὶ προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων.

Gal 1:15 Ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

Gal 1:16 ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσι, εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι,

Gal 1:17 οὐδὲ ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους, ἀλλὰ ἀπήλθον εἰς Ἀραβίαν, καὶ πάλιν ὑπέστρεψα εἰς Δαμασκόν.

Gal 1:18 Ἔπειτα μετὰ ἔτη τρία ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἱστορῆσαι Πέτρον, καὶ ἐπέμεινα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡμέρας δεκαπέντε·

Gal 1:19 ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον, εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Κυρίου.

Gal 1:20 ἃ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι.

Gal 1:21 ἔπειτα ἦλθον εἰς τὰ κλίματα τῆς Συρίας καὶ τῆς Κιλικίας.

Gal 1:22 ἦμην δὲ ἀγνοοῦμενος τῷ προσώπῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν Χριστῷ·

Gal 1:23 μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἦσαν ὅτι ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει,

Gal 1:24 καὶ ἐδόξαζον ἐν ἐμοί τὸν Θεόν.