

Introduction

Opening Scripture: [1 Thessalonians 1:2-5](#) “2 We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, 3 remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.”

Preview

How do you come to faith in Jesus? [Galatians 1:1-10](#) makes the point that our faith is in God, not men. [Galatians 1:11-24](#) continues that theme. Paul writes about his own life and coming to faith. First, the gospel he believed and preached was from God, not men. Second, his conversion to faith in Christ was a work of God, not men. Third, God receives the glory for his faith.

This passage does not condemn learning the gospel from teachers. It does not deny the human responsibility to the gospel. It does not deny calling people to faith in the gospel. In fact, Scripture encourages all of those things.

This passage simply makes the point all of those things are **a work of God**. We can learn the gospel from men, but the gospel comes from God. We should respond to the gospel in faith and obedience, but faith and obedience come from God. We should call men to respond to the gospel, but God alone gets the glory for changed hearts and lives.

Context

The letter of Galatians was written to churches in the region of Galatia who struggled with men in the church who wrongly taught the gospel. The letter opens with a defense of the authority of the letter. Paul was appointed **an apostle by Jesus, not men**. Galatians (and the whole canon of Scripture) is inspired by the Holy Spirit; it is the **word of God, not men**.

Paul introduces the gospel in the greeting of the letter. We are not reconciled to God by our works. **Redemption is a work of God, not men**. He then warns the Galatian churches to avoid other gospels. Any gospel message besides what we read in Scripture is not from God and does not reconcile us to God. **There is only one gospel of Christ**.

The main idea of [Galatians 1:11-24](#) is that **the gospel is from God, not men**. We can trust the gospel message because it is from God. We can believe the gospel of Christ because of God's call. We should glorify God because of our faith in the gospel.

Revelation of the gospel

*Why should we trust the gospel message? There are countless ideas of how we can know God. Why can we dismiss all of those ideas and fully trust the gospel in Scripture? We can trust what we read in Scripture because **God revealed the gospel.***

Not from men

The gospel is not from men. Remember in [Gal 1:6-10](#) that Paul warned these churches about false teachers. [Galatians 1:8](#) “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.”

In verse 11, Paul gives the basis for that warning. The gospel he preached, the gospel they believed **was not from men**. [Galatians 1:11-12](#) “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 ...” The gospel is **not from men**.

*Why do we need to know that the gospel is not from men? **Our faith is not in men.*** Our faith is in God. Paul confronted this issue in the church at Corinth. Some within the church said they were followers of Apollos, some of Paul, some of Peter ([1 Cor 1:12](#)). God has given the church leaders, but we are **servants of Christ**, not men. **Our faith is in Christ**, not men. The gospel is **not from men**.

Revelation of Christ

*How do we know the gospel? We know the gospel because **God revealed the gospel in Christ.*** [Galatians 1:12](#) “... I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In [Acts 9](#), Paul traveled to Damascus with letters from the high priest, giving him authority to arrest Christians and bring them to Jerusalem ([Acts 9:1-2](#)). Jesus, who had been publicly crucified and resurrected, appeared to Paul. [Acts 9:3-5](#) “3 Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. 4 And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 5 And he said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am **Jesus**, whom you are persecuting.”

No one here came to faith because Jesus appeared to them in a visible form or spoke to them in an audible voice. That is not even what we should expect. Jesus appeared to the apostles because he appointed them as His apostles (cf. [Gal 1:1](#); [1 Cor 15:5-9](#)). God reveals Christ to us in Scripture. Scripture is the word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. **No one comes to know God apart from faith in Christ as He is revealed in Scripture.** [Romans 10:17](#) “17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” God has revealed Christ to you through Scripture.

Your confidence in the gospel is not based on the one who **proclaims** it. Your confidence in the gospel is based on the One who **revealed** it. We can trust the gospel because **God revealed the gospel. The gospel is from God, not men.**

God calls

*How **do** we come to faith in the gospel?* Scripture is clear that people do not come to faith in the gospel because of greater morality, greater intellect, or greater persuasion. Paul describes his conversion in [Galatians 1:13-16](#). He makes a clear distinction between his work, which kept him separated from God, and God's work, that brought him to faith. **God calls people to faith in Jesus.**

Before Christ

What was Paul's life before God revealed Christ to him? **Paul opposed Christ.** [Galatians 1:13](#) "13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it."

Scripture introduces us to Paul in [Acts 7:58](#). Stephen, a member of the church in Jerusalem, was arrested for his faith in Jesus. Stephen told his accusers that they were just like Israel of the Old Testament who had killed the prophets. They had killed the Christ. In response, "58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named **Saul**" ([Acts 7:58](#)). This passage calls him Saul. We are sometimes mistakenly told that Saul **became** Paul, meaning he had a name change at his conversion. However, Saul was his Jewish name; Paul was his Greek name.

Paul agreed to Stephen's execution for his faith in Jesus. He continued that persecution. [Acts 8:3](#) "3 But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison."

By his own admission in [Gal 1:13](#), Paul's goal was to destroy the church. *What was Jesus's view of the church?* [Acts 20:28](#) "... care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood." [Ephesians 5:25](#) "... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Paul sought to **destroy** the church that Jesus **died for**. Paul was an enemy of God.

Notice that Paul's opposition to Christ gained approval from men. [Galatians 1:14](#) "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." Rebellion against God and approval of men go hand in hand ([Jam 4:4](#)).

Paul's conversion

What changed Paul's life? How did he convert from a persecutor of Christ to a proclaimer of Christ? Paul converted to faith in Christ the same way all believers convert. **Conversion is a**

work of God. [Galatians 1:15-16](#) “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;”

Three things contributed to Paul’s conversion. God set him apart before he was born. God called him in His grace. God revealed Christ to him. Notice what is lacking - Paul’s actions. Paul has already described his actions in [Gal 1:13-14](#). He fought against God’s church. Paul came to faith because **God called him**.

[Romans 9:10-13](#) says the same thing about Jacob being set apart before birth and states “... not because of works but because of him who calls” ([Rom 9:11](#)). Paul’s works did not contribute to his conversion; he was set apart before he was born. In the same way, **your works** do not contribute to your conversion to faith in Christ.

This has implications for how we share the gospel as well. Notice in verse 16 that God revealed Christ to Paul so that he would preach Jesus among the nations. In [Gal 1:8](#), Paul wrote that he preached the gospel in Galatia. But in [Gal 1:6](#), he wrote that **God called** the believers in Galatia. These two things go hand in hand. Believers share the gospel and God calls people to faith.

When you share the gospel with a person, you cannot change his heart. People do not come to faith in Jesus through persuasive words ([1 Cor 2:1-5](#)). People come to faith because the Holy Spirit convicts them of sin ([John 16:8-11](#)); He convinces them of the truth of the gospel ([1 Cor 2:10-14](#)); He enables them to respond to the gospel in faith ([1 Cor 12:3](#)). **We proclaim** the gospel to people, but **God calls people to faith in the gospel. The gospel is from God, not men.**

For God’s Glory

In the final verses of [Galatians 1](#), Paul emphasizes his separation from the apostles and the church of Jerusalem. This all supports his statement in [Galatians 1:11](#) that the gospel he preached was not from men. **God revealed the gospel** and **God calls people to faith**. The gospel is a work of God from beginning to end. For this reason, **God receives glory for our faith**.

Arabia and Damascus

Notice the timeline of [Galatians 1:17-24](#). Paul came to faith in the gospel of Jesus on his way to Damascus. Before going to Jerusalem and meeting the apostles, he spent time in Arabia and then preached in Damascus. [Galatians 1:17](#) “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.”

This time-period is described in [Acts 9:19-22](#) “... For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus. 20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the

Son of God.” 21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, “Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?” 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.”

Notice that Paul’s reputation for persecuting the church continued even as he began to proclaim Jesus. It was unbelievable that such a change could happen. *How could an enemy of Jesus devote himself to Jesus?*

Jerusalem visit

Paul eventually fled Damascus because of persecution. [Acts 9:23–25](#) “23 When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him, 24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night in order to kill him, 25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.”

He fled from Damascus to Jerusalem. [Galatians 1:18–21](#) “18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas 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!) 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.”

Cephas, here is Peter. Peter is a Greek name that means “rock.” Cephas is an Aramaic name that means “rock” ([John 1:42](#)). Peter was an apostle that had followed Jesus even before His crucifixion. James was Jesus’s brother, who rejected Him until after the resurrection.

Why did Paul only stay 15 days in Jerusalem? [Acts 9:26–30](#) “26 And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples. And they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus. 28 So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. 29 And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists. But they were seeking to kill him. 30 And when the brothers learned this, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.”

The Christians in Jerusalem did not believe that Paul, the persecutor of the church, was a follower of Jesus. These are the same doubts Paul experienced in Damascus. Barnabas defended him, and Paul began to proclaim Jesus boldly. Therefore, Hellenists in Jerusalem planned to kill Paul. This is why Paul remained only 15 days in Jerusalem.

Churches of Judea

Paul’s point in recounting his travels is to show that he did not learn the gospel second-hand through the apostles. He had been in Arabia and Damascus for three years, before going to Jerusalem for 15 days. The churches of Judea, including Jerusalem, did not know him.

[Galatians 1:22](#) “22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.”

Notice what those churches heard about Paul. [Galatians 1:23](#) “23 They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” This was Paul’s ongoing reputation. *How could Paul, the persecutor of the church, proclaim Jesus?*

[Galatians 1](#) explains how this persecutor of the church came to faith and began proclaiming Jesus. **God revealed the gospel in Christ to Paul** and **God called Paul to faith in the gospel**. Paul did not come to faith because of his intellect. Paul did not come to faith because of persuasive arguments. Paul came to faith because **God changed his heart**. You and I are no less enemies of God than Paul was. We do not come to faith because we are good people. We come to faith in Jesus because He is a good God.

Faith in Jesus is miraculous. It was a **miracle** that Paul, the persecutor of the church, came to faith in the one whom he persecuted. It is a miracle that you and I, enemies of God in our sin, came to faith in Jesus.

Notice the reaction of those churches when they learned about Paul’s change. [Galatians 1:24](#) “24 And they glorified God because of me.” They did not praise **Paul** for his faith in the gospel. They did not praise **Barnabas, Ananias, or Peter** for leading this unlikely believer to faith. They praised **God** for Paul’s faith in the gospel. **God alone receives glory for our faith. The gospel is from God, not men.**

Conclusion

Reflection

If you do not know God, I want to be clear that any desire you have toward faith in Jesus or a relationship with God is the work of God on your heart. My goal today has been simply to explain what Scripture says. My words do not convict you of sin. My words do not persuade you to faith in Jesus. Any desire you have to respond to the gospel is from God. **Listen to Him.**

Church, what we see taught in [Galatians 1:11-24](#) shapes how we think and speak of the gospel. *Do you want your friends and family to know God?* Don’t rely on how persuasive you may or may not be. Don’t focus on discovering the right **method** for sharing the gospel. Share the truth of the gospel in love. Pray earnestly for God to change their heart. **The gospel is from God.** He reveals; He calls; He is glorified.

This passage also shapes how we think of church ministry. So many churches are concerned with being “seeker sensitive.” They primarily ask, *how can we get people into church?* First, as we discussed last week, the church’s goal is not to reconcile people to the church. Our goal is that people would be reconciled to God. Second, **we** do not reconcile people to God. God

reconciles people to Himself. We do not need to be a “seeker sensitive” church. We need to be a church that glorifies God by exalting Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit by preaching the truth of the gospel in love.

Summary

[Galatians 1:11-24](#) explains that the gospel is from God, not men. We can **trust** the gospel because **God** reveals the gospel. We are able to **believe** the gospel because **God** calls people to faith in the gospel. God receives **glory** for our faith, because faith in the gospel is a **work of God**.

Closing Scripture: [1 Corinthians 3:5-7](#) “5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.”