

Galatians: Freedom Through Christ – Part 2

The Unchanging Gospel Changes Everything – Gal. 1:11-24

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Sept. 21, 2025

Introduction

- This morning, we are going to hear about how the unchanging gospel changes everything as seen in the testimony and life of Paul. Some of the strongest evidence that the message of the gospel is true is how it has changed and is changing our lives.
- If Christ has been revealed to you, and you have received His Spirit by His grace, you too have a testimony that is a powerful reminder of the grace and goodness of God to you, and a powerful witness and light to those you interact with in our world.
- Your story may be very dramatic, like Paul's. You were running hard either away from God or against God, and once you encountered the truth of the gospel and the grace in Christ, you ran hard after God and for His glory. Your story could be all the things that God redeemed you from and all that He is doing through you. Your story and your life matter.
- Your story may not be as dramatic as Paul's. The truth of the Gospel and the grace in Jesus Christ could have come to you as a child, and you received it then and have been trusting and following Him until this very moment. This is a story of all the things He spared you from and the good He is doing in you and through you as He continues to conform you into the image of His Son. Your story and your life matter.
- God's grace redeems us and continues to refine us. God's grace transforms us and continues to conform us into the image of Jesus. It is the greatest story ever told as seen in the lives of all those who receive and follow Him. And transformed and transforming lives, granted not perfect but in process, are compelling evidence of the truth of the gospel and the power of God's grace.
- As we consider our passage for today, Galatians 1:11-24, which contains Paul's testimony of the truth of the gospel and how the grace of Christ has impacted him, I want you to consider your own testimony, and how the truth of the gospel and the grace of Christ has impacted and changed you, so that you will see Christ's grace in your life anew, grow in your love and honor for Him, and be compelled and encourage to continue to live in a way that will cause others in their interactions with you, to praise God because of you.
- Paul starts his testimony with the truth that he is trying to drive home and reestablish with the people in this community, that the gospel is not of human origin, it is not "man's idea" but has been revealed by God Himself.

The Gospel is not of Human Origin

Gal 1:11-12

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

- Earlier in this letter, Paul told us the gospel that he preached, when he wrote: **"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"** (Gal 1:3-5). Or, simply put,

“God rescues us through Christ,” or, more fully, “God rescues us through Christ by His grace for His glory and our gladness.”

- The message of the gospel is not man-made, nor is the Bible just man’s ideas about God. Because if it were, it is one opinion among many, and we could take it or leave it. Paul claimed and proclaimed that the message of the gospel is the word of God through the revelation of Jesus Christ. We must consider this carefully, because if this is true, we must also receive it, believe it, be transformed by it, and lead our lives accordingly by its truth.
- And to back up his claim, he could have used sheer reason and logic as evidence to establish his claim, like he does in his letter to the Romans. However, here in his letter to the people in Galatia, he uses his own story as evidence that what he is claiming is true. By explaining how this message has redeemed and changed his life.
- Never discount your story as a defense for the truth of the power and message of the gospel. Our lives are so often the best evidence of the power and truth of the gospel. Paul’s testimony is in three parts: our life before the gospel, how we understood and received the gospel, and how we are different because of the gospel. All testimonies have these three parts, and yours does as well.
- Let’s read as Paul tells us his testimony, starting out with how the gospel redeems our past.

The Gospel Redeems Our Past

Gal 1:13-14

For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

- Paul describes what he was about and what he had done in the past, in his “previous way of life.” He just names the stuff, and describes himself. In his case, he was “extremely zealous” for his religious convictions, and he “intensely persecuted” the church and tried to destroy it.
- Paul, in the name of “God,” was actively opposing and persecuting God and His people. Luke wrote about the pre-converted Paul (then called Saul) in the book of Acts, saying he “persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it” (1:13). He also wrote that Paul was “breathing threats and murder” against the church (9:1). He was destroying lives, decimating families, and dismantling churches.
- In writing to young Timothy, he said, “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst” (1 Tim 1:15). And he wasn’t wrong; this is absolutely horrible. He was not just breaking God’s law, which is horrible enough. But he was using God’s law to break God’s people and break God’s heart.
- You have probably done some pretty horrible stuff. It happens in our world all the time. Your story has dark passages and damning sentences in it as well, as does mine. It is absolutely “scandalous” and miraculous that God offers grace to any of us, and yet He does, because that is who He is.
- But you can say, “Well, Dave, you don’t know what I have done,” and I might not. However, God surely does; He knows everything about you and everything about it. And He is the one who offers you grace in Christ. He is the one who rescues you from this “present evil age.” God rescues us through Christ. John the apostle wrote, “All who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). “Amazing grace how sweet

the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now am found, I was blind, but now I see.”

- Paul, in his blinding darkness, was confronted with the blinding light of the truth of Jesus and His amazing grace (Acts 9). Paul continues his story this way:

Gal 1:15-16a

But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me . . .

- “But when God” – this is the breaking into the story of life where God calls us to Himself by His grace. God reveals Jesus to us, who He really was (the only begotten sinless Son), what He did on our behalf (gave His one and only life for the penalty of our sin), and what He offers to us (grace to cover our sin and power to transform our lives and give us eternal life).
- God set us apart for Himself even before we were born, before we have done anything right or wrong, not based on anything we have done or will do, He called us, He chose us, He designed us, and He desired us to know Him and be a citizen of His kingdom and to be like Him and to do what He has asked us to do until we are safely home forevermore.
- The grace of God is surely amazing, Paul’s story proves there is no sin too dark, no heart too hard, no past too broken for God’s transforming grace, even yet today. When God breaks into our hearts and lives, it changes everything. And God continues to make that offer even up to this very moment, and if you have not placed your faith in Christ, you can do so even now.
- Not only does God’s grace through the gospel redeem our past, but it also rewrites our future.

The Gospel Rewrites Our Future

- Paul continues to tell the rest of his story, that God was pleased to reveal His Son in me . . .

Gal 1:16b-24

so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. 17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

21 Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” 24 And they praised God because of me.

- Paul continues to prove the point that the gospel did not come from men, not even from Peter and James, the Lord’s brother (James was the “half-brother” of Jesus, Mary was his mother, and Joseph was his father). He did not even talk to them until three years after he began preaching the gospel. They sent Him out to continue to preach the gospel as he had been doing.
- Because of the grace of God in the message of the gospel, Paul was transformed from a persecutor to a preacher, from a church destroyer to a church builder. “And they praised God because of me.”

- If God's grace can transform Paul, redeem his past, and rewrite His future, He can surely do so for you. God's plan may not mean that you are or must be a full-time preacher. But what it does include is that whatever vocation, or place, or purpose you have, those whom you encounter and engage that they will praise God because of you. Let this be your new aim. That whatever you do, you do it all for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31).

Conclusion

- The gospel is not man's invention; it is God's revelation. And because it is from God, it is unchanging and unshakable. This gospel redeems our past, no matter how dark, and rewrites our future with a hope that cannot be taken away.
- Paul's story reminds us that there is no one beyond the reach of God's grace. If Christ could turn a violent persecutor into His chosen preacher, He can redeem and transform you, too. Your story may be dramatic, or it may be quiet and steady, but in both cases, it is God's story of grace. And that story has power, not only to remind you of God's goodness but also to shine a light to those around you.
- So, let's live in such a way that people who see us say, "I praise God because of them." Let's be a church that trusts the divine gospel, lives transformed by grace, and points to Jesus with our whole lives.

Communion

Our prayer team is available to pray with you after the service near the "prayer" sign at the front of the sanctuary and also in the prayer room, next to the offices.

Questions for Growth Groups

1. Paul emphasizes that the gospel is not of human origin but came directly from God. Why is this truth so important for our faith today? How does it strengthen your confidence in Scripture?
2. Paul shares his testimony as evidence of the gospel's truth. What are the key parts of your testimony, before Christ, how you encountered Christ, and what is different now?
3. Paul's past was full of darkness and even violence against the church. How have you experienced God redeeming your past, whether through forgiveness, healing, or transformation?
4. Some say, "People don't really change." How would you use Paul's story—or your own—to lovingly respond to that objection?
5. Paul's new mission was to preach Christ, and people praised God because of him. What might it look like for others to glorify God because of your life today—in your family, workplace, or neighborhood?
6. Why do you think God chooses to use imperfect, in-process people like us to display His grace? How does this truth free you from discouragement or fear?
7. As you reflect on your story, what's one practical way you can share your testimony or live it out more boldly this week? End by praying for courage and opportunities to glorify God through your story.

My Testimony Worksheet

(Based on Galatians 1:11–24)

Part 1: My Life Before Christ

- What was most important to me before I encountered Jesus?
- What attitudes, habits, or struggles characterized my life?
- How would others have described me?

(Example from Paul: “I intensely persecuted the church... I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” Gal. 1:13–14)

Part 2: How I Encountered Christ

- How did I first hear and understand the gospel?
- What people, events, or circumstances did God use?
- When and how did Christ become real to me?

(Example from Paul: “But when God... was pleased to reveal his Son in me...” Gal. 1:15–16)

Part 3: My Life Since Christ

- How has my life been different because of Jesus?
- What has God redeemed me from?
- How is He rewriting my future?
- How do I see His grace continuing to transform me today?

(Example from Paul: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” Gal. 1:23)

Sharing My Story

- Write your testimony in 2–3 sentences you could share in a conversation:

Before Christ, I was _____.

Then I came to understand _____.

Now, by God’s grace, I _____.