

God's Gospel - Pt. 1

Galatians 1:11-24

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TRANSCRIPT:

Galatians Chapter 1, and I'd like us to consider together verse number 11 through to verse number 24. Galatians 1:11-24 reads:

"But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me. But I went to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie. Afterwards, I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.' And they glorified God in me."

Let us pray.

Father, we do ask that You would help us to set our attention and our affection upon You and upon Your word. I pray that You would empower us by the Holy Spirit to hear what it is that You would have for us to hear today. You would also empower me by the same Spirit that the word which I preach would have effect in the hearts of Your hearers, Lord. Thank You that we have this great privilege of being able to open Your word together. And may we love You more and more each day because of it. And may we cherish these moments together in Jesus' name, Amen.

We come to the next section of this chapter, this first chapter in the book of Galatians, where Paul begins to develop his argument as to why he is a true apostle and why it is that the gospel that he preaches is indeed the gospel of God. If you remember in verse number one, Paul mentions that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, and he makes pains to at least briefly express there that he is an apostle not by man nor through man but through God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who raised Him from the dead.

But in verses six through to verse number nine, the apostle Paul continues to develop his argument that he is a true apostle, and he does this in a way that's not so evidently clear by the text. What I mean by that is that he begins to denounce every other gospel, the false gospel that was plaguing the churches of Galatia through the false teaching of the Judaizers, the gospel of works plus grace, but works plus grace and not by grace alone through faith alone. And Paul was concerned about this, but as he goes on to denounce this false gospel, he goes on to say in verse eight and nine, "If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed." And in verse number eight, he says, "Any other gospel to them what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." So verse eight, he says, "Any other gospel that we've preached to you, let that person be accursed." And this aligns with the gospel that I've preached to you, that we've preached to you. And also, if it doesn't align with the gospel that you've received, which once again is the gospel that we've preached to you, let that person be accursed.

And so, Paul basically denounces this other gospel, showing that the gospel that he proclaims is finally authoritative and therefore saying that not only he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, but the message that he brings is not his own, but it is indeed the very gospel of God. And then in verse number 10, he even more boldly declares, "Do I seek to persuade men or God? Do I seek yet to please men? For if I yet please men, I would not be a servant of Christ." And he reminds the church here that he is Christ's servant supremely. And therefore, the very things that he says and the very things that he does do not align with how they feel necessarily but aligns with what he believes to be true.

Now, it logically follows from such bold statements from verses 1 through to verse number 10, it logically follows the question logically follows, well, Paul, can you demonstrate that? Here you're saying you're an apostle of Jesus Christ, not by man nor through man. And you're saying that the gospel that you preach is supremely above all other gospels, the only gospel that every other person who preaches another gospel than the one that he preaches and preached to them at the beginning, let them be accursed. And so, Paul, can you demonstrate? You know, you're saying you're Christ's ser-

vant. How is it then that we are to believe such things?

Now, you can imagine that. And Paul, I'm not saying the question was asked, but Paul often preempts questions and answers them. And this is this form of argumentation. So Paul makes his case. He makes his case in verses 11 through to verse number 24, particularly, and he sets out his thesis in verse number 11. He says, "But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man." And what he's basically saying, everything I'm about to tell you right now is to secure this truth. This is the heart of what I'm about to say. I'm going to demonstrate to you that the gospel that I preach is not man's gospel. It's not according to man. It's God's gospel. That's his thesis, his purpose. Why is he doing this? Verse 11, "I want to make known to you, brethren." He wanted them, the churches of Galatia, the people that he had reached with the gospel, to know and to understand, perhaps afresh, or to know and to understand it, to be secured in their knowledge of the fact that what they have received and what they heard preached is indeed the gospel according to God and not the gospel according to man.

It was obvious here from these statements that the Judaizers were probably undermining Paul's credentials as an apostle and also the fact that his gospel was not God's gospel but his own. And so Paul's purpose comes clear. "I want you to know." And Paul's method is perhaps not what we would expect, but his method is nonetheless important and good for us to understand. Paul's method is that he goes on to give an autobiographical sketch of himself, an autobiography of himself. He goes on to sketch out his experiences, to relay his experiences, demonstrating that his gospel is from God.

Now, this section does not end at verse 24. It actually goes all the way to the end of chapter 2, verse 21. But if I did that, I'd bore you to death, and you only can take so much in one sermon. So we're going to space this out a little. But what he's saying here is that his method that we see here anyhow is that he gives a testimony of how it is that that gospel came to him. And he does this by using connecting phrases. You'll see right throughout this section, "when," "then," "I," "we went here," "did this," "did not do that." And he goes on to explain his testimony as to how he's ended up where he is today so that the churches of Galatia might understand that he is not who he is today by anything else but the grace of God, and therefore the gospel that he preaches is none other than the gospel of God. This is what he seeks to make known to them.

And in verse number 20, he says, "So in many ways, we should see this as if Paul is taking his stand in court. He is testifying, as it were, taking the stand before God in answer to the Galatians and in answer to the ac-

cusations of the Judaizers. And Paul is here before God. 'I'm not lying. I'm testifying to you, Galatians, before all these threats and perhaps accusations regarding my ministry as an apostle and the gospel that I preach, and I'm just going to tell you what happened to me.' And in many ways, he's saying, 'You be the judge.'"

And so, let's examine Paul's claim in verse number 12, what he says here. He says, "And this is his claim." He is claiming that he received the gospel through direct revelation from Jesus Christ and was not mediated to him by man. He wasn't taught by man. He received this revelation directly from the Lord Jesus Christ. It was not received from man, nor was he taught it by man. This is his claim. His claim is essentially that I am no different from the other 12. They walked with Jesus. They heard Jesus teach and speak. They received their message from Him directly. And just because I was one born out of due time, one that had an untimely birth in relation to the other apostles, I am nonetheless an apostle of Jesus Christ because that very same Jesus who walked with His disciples and taught them that gospel that they proclaimed, that very same Jesus, raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, appeared to me on the road to Damascus, and gave me the gospel that I proclaim to you. And this is his claim.

Now, let's follow his argumentation. He says, "I received it by revelation." He is saying this was not taught to me. This was disclosed to me by another, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's follow his argument. And we only have time to look at his first argument. But his first argument is this: There is no human explanation for my conversion and my call to be an apostle. He says, "I received this by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He appeared to me on the road to Damascus." And although there may be questions regarding my apostleship and the message that I bring by these Judaizers, I want you to understand this, and I want you to be reminded of this, and to know this, that there is no human explanation for my call and my conversion.

He goes on to say to these people, "I want you to remember who I was." In verse number 13 to verse number 14, he says, "For you have heard of my former conduct. He's saying it's not that you just heard what I said before, but you know, you've heard of my former conduct. You haven't just heard the words that I said, but the life that I lived, you've seen the way that I conducted myself before I met this Jesus." He said in verse 13, "You have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." He says, "You know my former conduct. You've heard of my former conduct. In fact, everyone knows of my former conduct. I was a persecutor of the church of God, a persecutor of the church of God." And he uses the words "beyond measure." I mean,

there was hardly any limitation that was set upon how I would persecute them. I was bent on trying to destroy them. And both these words are given in the imperfect tense, which means this was a continual thing that he did in his past life as a Pharisee. He was bent and set on the destruction of the church of God.

Saul of Tarsus, one of the church of Jesus Christ, to be utterly annihilated. And he did everything in his power to achieve that end. He goes, "You know, you've heard of my conduct." And the conduct of Paul that we have written in the text of scripture, particularly in the book of Acts in several places, describes what he was doing as making havoc of the church, entering into every house, the house of Christians that is, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Paul was breathing threatenings and murder against the disciples of the Lord. And he would use the power of the high priest to get letters and sanctions to go into the synagogues and to arrest Christians because they would be there also. And he would drag them out, and he would put them into prison. He says in another place when recounting his testimony to the Jewish people there, as was read to us this morning, he said, "I persecuted the way, that is, the Christian way, this was another name for Christianity, to death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." He says when he speaks to King Agrippa, "Many of the saints I shut up in prison. When they were put to death, I cast my vote against them, and I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme, and exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even in foreign cities." He was a man who was on the hunt, and he would hunt down Christians, and he would take them and cast them into prison, men and women, families broken, separated because he was zealous for the traditions of his fathers, and he was anti the gospel of Jesus Christ and anti the Christian faith.

In fact, so much so that he compelled those Christians to deny their faith and to blaspheme the very Lord that brought them. He was enraged against them. He drove them out of their houses to foreign cities, and he would keep on going without end. And when they would be put to death, especially the ones that he arrested in prison, he would cast his vote against them and say, "Yep, they are worthy of death, put them to death." And this was Saul of Tarsus, and he is saying this is what described me. I was a persecutor of the church of God.

Now, Paul did not do these things in his own estimation at the time, thinking that these things were sinful. He did them because he believed that they were the right things to do for the glory of the God which he served. And he believed that this would be pleasing to the cause of Judaism in the world, and this would be pleasing to God, and he was zealous for those traditions of his fathers, and therefore he set out to kill Christians and to put

them into prison. Stephen, the martyr, was one example of that, where he was there consenting to his death. And Paul says, "You know my conduct."

And not only was I persecutor of the church of God, but he says in verse number 14 that "I was advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers." He goes, "Just in case you think that I had a soft spot for Christianity, or maybe I wasn't going too well in Judaism, and I thought maybe I'll have a change and join Christianity because I wasn't really climbing the ranks of Judaism." He goes, "I want you to know that I was advanced in Judaism. But many of my contemporaries, the people that I was, my as it were colleagues or the people that I served with, I was as it were head and shoulders above many of them." He says, "This is who I was. I was trained under Gamaliel. I was zealous for the traditions of my fathers, and I was therefore a persecutor of God."

And in one sense, everything was going well for me with regards to my religion, with regards to climbing the ranks in my religion, and also in my goal being fulfilled, which was the destruction of the church of Jesus Christ. And I was bent on doing that. And Paul says, "You remember who I was, remember who I was."

But then he goes on in verse number 15 and 16 to consider, he says, basically, what happened to me. In verse 13 and 14, he says, "That this is who I was. You better remember who I was." And then he says, "But," in verse 15, a very abrupt word, "but," a contrasting word, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." And what Paul says here, "Consider what happened to me, mark my trajectory, look at the way that I was heading. Here I am, a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ, bent on annihilating Christianity, and I'm setting out to do that with the authorities giving me the sanction to do such things. And I'm advancing in Judaism. Think about it. That's the path that I was heading on. No one could have influenced me to become a Christian. Absurd. In fact, if I met any Christian, I was going to put him in prison anyway. They wouldn't have had an opportunity to tell me."

He says, "But God," he says, "but when it pleased God." I love what John Stott says about this. He says, "In verses 13 and 14, Paul is speaking about himself. 'I persecuted the church of God. I tried to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.' But in verse 15 and 16, he begins to speak of God. 'It was God,' he writes, 'who set me apart before I was born. God who called me through His grace, and God who was pleased to reveal His Son in me.' In other words, in my

fanaticism, I was bent upon a course of persecution and destruction. But God, whom I had left out of my calculations, arrested me and changed my headlong course. All my raging fanaticism was no match for the good pleasure of God."

Paul says, "This is who I was, but God changed that. But when it pleased God," the one he describes him as "who separated me from my mother's womb," he goes, "I am what I am because God planned it to be so. Before ever I took my first breath, as I was still yet in the womb of my mother, God had purposes and plans for me regarding my salvation, regarding my call to be an apostle, and nothing was going to thwart those plans and purposes." He says here in this passage of scripture that God separated me. He set me apart. He marked me out before I was even born. He foreknew me. He predestined me, just like Isaiah and Jeremiah and Jacob. He set me apart as an apostle and not only as an apostle, as one of His own, that He might, as it says in the next part of this verse, call me by His grace.

He says, "When the fullness of the time was come," essentially, he says in this verse here, in verse 15, "but when it pleased God," there's the timing element, "when it pleased God," the one who separated me from my mother's womb before I was born, "but then He calls me," that is in time. "He calls me when He appears to me and shines the light of the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ into my heart. He calls me by His grace." Paul is helping us understand and helping the church understand here that my calling and my salvation was set in the counsel of God, but more than this, there was a time when God set out to make that real in time in my life. He calls me, he says, by His grace.

It's amazing how he says "when" in that passage as well. What he's basically saying is, "Don't look at verse 13 and 14 as an entire waste, as it were, of my past life. Yes, I was bent on doing evil, but as I was doing all these things, God had a time, and His time was perfect when He had set me apart from my mother's womb, but He called me at a certain time by His grace." And verse 13 to 14 and all this craziness that we see in the life of Paul was part of that plan of God in the timing in which would transpire before the calling by His grace as an apostle of Jesus Christ and as to be His own. He accomplished what He planned for me by His gracious call, and what He did is that He revealed His Son in me. Now, the word "in me" has been disputed by some. The ESV translates it as "to me," but the rest of the modern translations that I've looked at have it as "in me." I believe it's more accurately translated as "in me" because I think it is indisputable that Christ appeared to Paul, and I don't think that's what Paul is necessarily trying to emphasize, although it is the same thing, that He appeared to me, but more than just to me, He appeared to me and in me.

And I think he wants these readers to understand that although his salvation and calling happened by this risen Lord who appeared to him, these were inward realities that this risen Lord communicated to him and called him internally. There was an internal work by the One that appeared to him. In other words, it could be said that the Jesus who met him took occupancy in him as the Spirit of Christ. The outer light, as it were, that blinded him became an inner light also that illumined him into the knowledge of the Son of God. So that what Paul experienced was not merely external—of course, it was external, otherwise, it'd be mere mysticism—but what he experienced externally had an internal effect on his life that changed his course forever. The Son of Christ, the Son of God, was revealed in him.

It was Chrysostom that said this, "But why does he say 'to reveal His Son in me' and not 'to me'? It is to signify that he had not only been instructed in the faith by words but that he was enrichedly endowed with the Spirit, and the revelation that had enlightened his soul, his whole soul, and that he had had Christ speaking also within him." And I think it is important to recognize this, that there was an experience that Paul had on that road to Damascus that went beyond the external frame of his body but it affected the inward parts of his heart and mind. The Son of Christ, the Son of God, was revealed in him.

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Saul of Tarsus, one of the church of Jesus Christ, to be utterly annihilated. And he did everything in his power to achieve that end. He goes, "You know, you've heard of my conduct." And the conduct of Paul that we have written in the text of scripture, particularly in the book of Acts in several places, describes what he was doing as making havoc of the church, entering into every house, the house of Christians that is, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison. Paul was breathing threatenings and murder against the disciples of the Lord. And he would use the power of the high priest to get letters and sanctions to go into the synagogues and to arrest Christians because they would be there also. And

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In fact, so much so that he compelled those Christians to deny their faith and to blaspheme the very Lord that brought them. He was enraged against them. He drove them out of their houses to foreign cities, and he would keep on going without end. And when they would be put to death, especially the ones that he arrested in prison, he would cast his vote against them and say, "Yep, they are worthy of death, put them to death." And this was Saul of Tarsus, and he is saying, "This is what described me. I was a persecutor of the church of God."

Now, Paul did not do these things, in his own estimation at the time, thinking that these things were sinful. He did them because he believed that they were the right things to do for the glory of the God which he served. And he believed that this would be pleasing to the cause of Judaism in the world, and this would be pleasing to God, and he was zealous for those traditions of his fathers, and therefore he set out to kill Christians and to put them into prison.

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Why was all this done? Verse 17, it says in verse number 16, sorry, that "I might preach Him among the Gentiles." That I might preach Him among the Gentiles. "It pleased God to separate me from my mother's womb, to call me to salvation by His grace, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, that He might set me apart as an apostle to the Gentiles, that I might make Him known."

And what Paul is saying in this passage from start to finish is simply this: the gospel which was preached by me, verse number 11, is the gospel which is the preaching of Him. Look at verse number 16, "to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him." And look with me in verse number 23, "but they were hearing only that he who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." And what Paul is saying is this, this risen Lord that was revealed in me, and yes, to me, called me as a preacher. Therefore, I preach my gospel to you, which was the gospel of Him, which is the message which is could be called the faith of Jesus Christ, the Chris-

tian faith, which I once tried to destroy.

And what is Paul saying here? That from start to finish, my conversion and my call was because of the revelation of Jesus Christ and nothing else. Look at verse number 24, when the people heard in Judea that he who formerly persecuted us, that's verse 23, now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy, the Bible says in verse 24, "and they glorified God in me." And Paul gives, as it were, one final proof under this main argument that it was to help us understand that there was no human explanation for his salvation and for his calling. And that is this, that the fruit of my call and my conversion resounded to the praise and glory of God.

See, a gospel marked by the power of God resounds to the praise of God. It is Him who saves sinners by His glorious, glorious grace. And it is this same God who gives that gospel to the apostle Paul, who revolutionizes his life, who meets the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, and now his life is so utterly transformed that as the people in Judea have heard of this transformation, they were glorifying God because of him. They looked at his life and said, "Wow, the power of the risen Lord through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is incomparable to any other power." And the churches of Judea, the believers in Judea, all they could do was not glorify Paul for how well he changed himself and made himself some great guy now that was doing good things and became a great philanthropist. No, they glorified God in me because of me because they saw what God did in me. And therefore, all they could say is, "Glory be to this God who reigns forever and ever, who by His grace redeems sinners to Himself."

You see, if Paul's gospel was from man, through man, it would lead to the glory and praise of man. But while Paul is saying from start to end that my gospel is from God, He saved me by His grace. Therefore, my life is a witness to the glory of His mighty power with which He saves even the chiefest of sinners.

You see, a man-centered gospel gives man cause for boasting. A man-centered gospel considers salvation from man's perspective as to what man does and attributes praise and honor to man, even without necessarily saying it. In a gospel according to man, there is no praise of the glory of His grace. There is no separating from the mother's womb. There is no calling according to grace. In the final analysis, a man's gospel rests upon the power and the will and the strength of man.

But what Paul is saying here is that the only hope for a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ like me is not me. The only hope for a persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ, who is advancing in the cause of Judaism, who had all these people behind me pressing me on in my work against God,

the only thing that could stop me in my tracks was God. If it depended on me, there would be no Apostle Paul, there would be no churches of Galatia, there would be no, as it were, preacher to the Gentiles. If it depended on me. But what you see in me is nothing but the sovereign grace of Almighty God.

And so, Paul's first argument, as it were, is summarized. Is there any human explanation for my salvation? Is there any human explanation for my call? He says, basically, the plan was God's, the timing was God's, the gracious calling was all according to God's good pleasure, and at a time when it pleased Him. And it all resulted in the glory and honor of His name. Do you really think my gospel is according to man? Do you really believe that it is according to man? He goes, "There's no man in it. It was revelation, the revelation of Jesus Christ that appeared to me on the road to Damascus in power and in glory. Nothing else could have turned me. Nothing else could have made me who I am today."

And what Paul is helping the Galatians also to understand, and they should be resonating with this, is that this same grace, although it may have been communicated somewhat differently to Paul, should also be understood by them. This gospel that saved me, that was given to me by direct revelation of Jesus Christ, this is the gospel that I've preached to you. Now, if that's the gospel that I've preached to you, should not something of that power that was manifest in me be also in you? And should you not, in one sense, recognize this thing that I'm speaking of? Should you not be able to identify with it, that there is this risen Lord who saves sinners and communicates grace to them? Why would you turn to another gospel? It came to me by revelation. It came to me by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's been communicated to you in the power of that same grace, and you, in some way, should know the truth of this grace in your lives.

You see, one of the evidences for the Christian faith is that it is a divine demonstration of God's power. You see, the gospel self-authenticates itself, as it were; it's self-authenticating because of its own power. It speaks to itself. It may not satisfy the high intellectualism of people that are skeptics, but it does serve as an undeniable evidence if one is honest with themselves that cannot be reduced to simply a psychosis. What are you going to say? Paul had a psychotic episode on the road to Damascus, and therefore he's changed his course of life? You'd be kidding yourself. Whatever psychotic episode that may have been, if you think such things, you should see how he would be crazy in every other part of his life. In fact, the gospel made him more sane than ever. It made him sane. He met God. His life change was transformed for the good of others and for the glory of God. This was no psychotic episode. This was a manifestation of the miraculous power of God.

And we must understand, therefore, that the gospel contains a subjective element in it that we are too quick to ignore. That the gospel of Jesus Christ, when it comes to us, should produce in us a testimony. You see, Paul brings out his first argument not by going through the deduction of logical reasons that come from mere doctrines necessarily, although that is not a wrong way to defend the faith. But what Paul's argument here, at least, is, is "Look at my life. Look at my life. I have a testimony. God has done something in me that I can't explain other than grace, and you can't explain it other than grace. See for yourself. Come see a man, as it were, who told me all things ever that I have done. Is this not the Christ?"

What Paul is simply showing us here is that there is a subjective reality to Christianity that we must not ignore. In other words, the question comes to us, do we have a testimony? In one sense or another, it may not be exactly like Paul's. It may not be as dynamic as Paul's, as grand as Paul's. Our past may not have been like Paul. Can we ask you this question: Has His Son been revealed in you? It's a fair question.

Jesus said to him, said in his gospel of Matthew, "I thank the Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Do not think that that sense of revelation is only restricted to Paul. Yes, it's only restricted to Paul as an apostle and only restricted to Paul in the way in which it came to him, but there should be something in us that can identify with the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Son being revealed in me.

Can we say as he says, "I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"? You see, there was a subjective reality; there was a transformation. It may be simple in your case, I don't know, but can you at least say, "I once was blind, but now I see"? Can you say that this is who I was in time past, but I met Jesus on my road to Damascus, in whatever it may have been, in my bedroom, in a church service, or when the gospel was communicated to me, and after I met with Jesus, things changed in my life? I may not know the day, I may not remember the hour, and I may not have seen the fruits of it immediately in my life, but one thing I know, that He who is risen from the dead lives, and He lives in me. A subjective reality to our Christian faith.

You see, if God is real, our Christianity cannot be merely intellectual. It must translate into our experience. The divine power must reach us through that gospel because this God who set Paul from his mother's womb has set

sinner also from their mother's womb, and He is still calling people by His grace even this hour, so that they themselves might also share in such a testimony. You see, God's sheep hear His voice, and they follow Him, and He gives to them eternal life, and they will never perish.

It is important for us to ask ourselves this morning, has Christ been revealed in me? Is my religion merely a zeal for the tradition of my fathers, or is it rooted not only in the objective revelation of the Scriptures, which is the truth of Jesus Christ, but has that Scripture been shined into my heart through the knowledge of the power of the Holy Spirit when the gospel has come to me? Paul says it that way. "The light of the glory of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, has shined into our hearts." That is not merely just having a mental understanding and assent of the truths of the gospel. The gospel is a power that saves and changes.

If our gospel is according to man and crafted by man and is not according to God, then we will fall short, as it were, of its power. Our life ought to be a hallelujah, a praise to the Lord. The power of the gospel does things in people's lives in such a way that they which hear who we once were and now know that we are, they glorify God because of us. And it should be seen in us as the church of Jesus Christ that when people look at our lives, they praise God, they glorify God, they see the work and handiwork of God.

And this is what we need to consider this morning. Has my faith really rested in Jesus Christ, and has He truly been revealed in me? So many people today say, "I was brought up in a Christian home, therefore I am a Christian. I was born a Christian. I was baptized, or I attend church every Sunday." They are describing experiences that are merely external, that have no comprehension of the revelation of Jesus Christ inwardly. No illumination. The power of the gospel changes us. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things are passed away; behold, all things become new." The power of the Holy Spirit resides in us, and therefore there are changes by which others look on and say, "There is something here that has happened to this man that he only can be explained by God." And they glorify God because of us.

In the same manner also, we realize that we ought to have a testimony. And I just want to leave it there for this morning and help us think on these things. That our Christianity must have that subjective reality also and should not be undermined, no matter how much of the truths we may be able to recite in our hearts because we've memorized them. Let us pray.