

God's Gospel - Pt. 2

Galatians 1:11-24

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Joshua Koura

Camden Valley Baptist Church

www.cvbaptist.com

TRANSCRIPT:

Galatians Chapter 1, and let us read together verse number 11 through verse number 24 this morning. The Word of God 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 to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none other of the Apostles except James, the Lord's brother. Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie. Afterward, I went to 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. Lord, we come before You asking that You would speak to us through Your word and through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Open the eyes of our understanding, help our ears to be open to Your truth, and we pray, O Lord, that You would do for us that which we need this morning, and that is that You would sanctify us, strengthen us, encourage us, correct us. Ultimately, Father, we ask that You would make us more like Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that You would grant me the power of the Holy Spirit, that the things that I say would serve to the edification of the body of Christ, and we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

We've been considering last week, and this week also, Paul's argumentation as to why his gospel is not according to man, but rather is indeed the gospel

of God. That's verse number 12 of this text, for I need a verse number 11, should I say, "The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man." And Paul is instead making pains to show in this portion of Scripture that the gospel that he preached is indeed the gospel of God, received by the Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus by means of revelation. And this is important from the standpoint of the Apostle Paul, particularly because he was under attack and accusations that were happening behind the scenes of the passage that we are looking at this morning. You see, the Judaizers had accused Paul of basically having his gospel taught him by the Jerusalem elders and apostles at Jerusalem, and then basically saying that Paul, having been taught that gospel, has strayed from that gospel and now is changing his gospel and not including circumcision, not including these other parts that were meant to be a blend, as it were, of Judaism and Christianity. And they're basically saying, therefore, he's not a true Apostle, and therefore we have issues with his gospel message of free grace. And we can deduce all that by a study of Galatians itself and see that Paul is addressing these different issues, even in the next chapter. For example, as he goes up to Jerusalem, he goes on to say that I took Titus with me and Barnabas, but they did not compel Titus to be circumcised, as an indicator that the Jerusalem Church did not believe that circumcision was a necessary requirement to be part of the people of God. And so, this is a little example of how you can look at the text of Scripture and deduce certain things that are happening behind the scenes that Paul himself is seeking to address.

But Paul's main arguments here to demonstrate that his gospel is indeed God's gospel and not a gospel according to man is that he first goes on to describe that his gospel was given to him by revelation, and the proof of that was that there is no human explanation for Paul's conversion and for his calling. You look at a man who persecuted the Church of God, who was essentially a terrorist against Christianity, who has now had his life turned around in a moment of time there on the road to Damascus when he meets the risen Lord. And essentially what he's saying is that this is evidence of the fact that I've been called to be an apostle and that what I have received has come from God. There's no human explanation for my call and my conversion. But he goes on to give a second argument, which I'd like to briefly mention and deal with this morning, and that is that there was no human intervention, no human consultation, or no human mediation of his gospel. And what he's simply saying is that what I received, I received from God, and I did not go and try to get that all sorted out by talking to people and saying, "Can you teach me the gospel?" And so, he's basically saying that this was not taught to me; I received this by revelation. And the evidence and proof of that is not only that my life was transformed in conversion and calling by the grace of Christ, but more than this, that you can trace my footsteps and see that I didn't get in touch with anyone at

Jerusalem until several years later down the track. And Paul is basically showing the churches of Galatia that this is an empty accusation made by the Judaizers. I didn't even get to Jerusalem properly and communicate my gospel to them until 14 years after my conversion. Therefore, my gospel is not a gospel that I received from Jerusalem, but rather is a gospel that was communicated to me on the road to Damascus, which is indeed, in the next chapter, we'll look at in another time, the same gospel.

And so, Paul, in his second argument, basically tells us to follow his foot-steps and see that his time after that revelation in no way at all had human intervention involved in the shaping of his gospel. I want us to look then briefly at verse number 16. He starts with a few negatives along his journeyings to help us understand this. Verse number 16 said, "To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles," and that's what we looked at last week. "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood," because I did not immediately, after receiving that revelation, confer and consult with flesh and blood. Then he goes on in verse number 17, it makes a very specific statement, "Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me." So two negatives: he said, "I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who apostles before me," neither did I consult with flesh and blood as to the gospel which I received. Verse number 17, here's some positives, "But I went to Arabia, and returned then again to Damascus." He's on the road to Damascus, he goes to Damascus, he goes to Arabia, he returns to Damascus, and he says in verse 18, "Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and remained with him for 15 days." What he's basically saying is this: before I even ever saw the Jerusalem Apostles, 15 days I only went there for, but even three years had transpired prior to that time, and that was a gospel that I was preaching. And he goes on to say, even when I went to Jerusalem for a short time, just 15 days to see Peter and the other Apostles, he says in verse number 22, he says this, "And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ." And he's basically saying, even though I was there, it was such a brief time to Jerusalem that it wouldn't even shape my gospel. Even the people in that vicinity did not recognize, well, didn't know me by face, most of those people there. And then in verse number, chapter 2, verse 1, he says, "Then after 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and also took Titus with me." And verse 2 of chapter 2, "And I went up by revelation and communicated to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those were reputation, lest by any means I might run or had run in vain." And so, Paul basically says it was actually 14 years that transpired from the time that I met the Lord on the road to Damascus to the day that I actually consulted in any way, shape, or form with the Apostles at Jerusalem regarding the gospel that I preached to the Gentiles. And what his basic argument is this: that the origin of my gospel was not the Apostles at Jerusalem. There is an independence that proves

my apostleship, that it was not shaped by the people around me; it was given by revelation, and that time transpired between was 14 years before I even arrived at Jerusalem with any kind of significant discussion concerning my gospel. And he basically says all this in a very constructive, wise way because he's basically saying this: guess what happened in those 14 years? The churches of Galatia happened. So he's saying, I received this gospel, I've preached this gospel for 14 years after my conversion, and then I go up to Jerusalem to consult with the Apostles about the gospel that I preach. It is 14 years of transpired, that same gospel that changed me, given to me by revelation, is the very same gospel that has impacted you, O churches of Galatia, and has saved you and was well established long before I went down to up to Jerusalem and communicated that gospel to the Apostles.

Now, why is Paul taking up so much of his epistle, like we're talking about almost half a chapter, to just explain this? You think to yourself, maybe like, what on earth are you doing here, Paul? You know, like, it's alright, just say you're an apostle, we believe you. Well, obviously, there were accusations that were happening there, but there is a more significant thing that we have to understand here. If Paul's gospel is according to man and was not given to him by revelation of Jesus Christ, then we must conclude that Paul is a fraud, that the Galatians therefore are not saved by the gospel of God, and also we must conclude that what we have in the rest of this epistle is not the revelation of Jesus Christ given to us by an Apostle approved of Christ, but rather just the thoughts and opinions of men. Why does he take pains in the first half of chapter 1, or the second half of chapter 1, to make his case, to as it were ascend to the platform in the courtroom and say, "I'm not lying before God"? Because if the people did not receive Paul's word as a revelation and did not receive him as an apostle who received revelation, then they would ultimately be destroyed. That means the gospel that they received was not from God, and the Judaizers then would just be equal in authority to Paul, and these poor Galatians would have no authority by which they can establish their hearts upon. But Paul is saying, "My gospel is not according to men, but by revelation."

You know, if it was not given by revelation, we must reduce all Paul's words as simply good advice. But, my friends, the Bible was not given to us as good advice; it was given to us as the commandments of God. You see, the Bible is not a collaboration. The words of the Apostle that we have here is not a collaboration of the thoughts and sayings of men, or even the idea of the Apostles and Christians coming together and say, "Hey, what should we write here? And let's just, you know, have a little discussion about good things that we can write." This is not how the Bible was put together. It's not the thoughts of men, neither is it just merely the interpretation of man's interpretation of certain events, and nor is the scriptures just a compila-

tion of traditions that were given to the Apostles that thought, "This will be helpful for whoever comes after us." No, what the Bible says about itself is this: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It is not given to us as mere good advice by which we may choose certain parts and other parts, or pit Jesus against Paul, and Peter against Paul, and take the parts that we like and leave out the Old Testament, or whatever it may be. It is indeed the revelation of God to men.

It is consistent. The God who made the heavens and the earth has not given us the creation without a witness. He has spoken. You see, we must understand that what Paul is ultimately saying to these Galatians is, God has spoken to me in His Son on the road to Damascus, calling me as an Apostle, establishing my gospel which I give to you now, which you must not turn away from. You see, the God of the Apostle Paul was the God of the Bible, but our view should be equal to Paul's view and the Bible's view. And the Bible begins at the very beginning with these words: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." So that's fine, God's Creator, but it's not enough for God to be Creator if God is a creator who never communicates and never speaks. And how shall we know Him? But our God is the God who reveals; He is the God who speaks. And so very early on in the chapters of Genesis, we have these words come through, and it says, "And God said..." He didn't have to say, but He did say, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God continued to speak, and what the authors there are showing us here is that this God who made the heavens and the earth is a God who speaks. He's a God of revelation. He is a God who does not leave Himself without witness. He has not just created the world and disappeared off to a far country to let us fend for ourselves, but He has continued to speak throughout history and still speaks to us today.

The Bible teaches us very early in the chapters, even of Genesis, of this God appearing to Abraham in the plains of Mamre and says, "Abraham, I am the God who calls you. Go, get you up out of your country and your kindred, and I will show you a place where you must go." He didn't have to speak, but He chose to speak. We go all the way to Moses, and we have in the book of Exodus, Moses ascending the Mount. What for? Because God was speaking. "I want my people to live this way. I want my people to worship me this way. I want my people to behave this way, to see my mercy in this way, and my gracious acts in this way." And all God was doing was revealing Himself over the course of the history of mankind. And He says in Hebrews Chapter 1:1-2, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He's saying this: God that has revealed Himself, who made the worlds, who upholds the worlds by the power of His

might, this very God of gods has not been silent. He has communicated Himself through the prophets, and in these last days, through His Son, whom He appointed as heir of the entire world, or of the universe. We have a God in Scripture showing us that this God communicates, and He communicated all the way from Genesis through to Revelation. He gave the revelation of His Son in types and figures and shadows in times past in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament, He has sent His very own Son as the revelation of Himself, the full and final revelation of Jesus Christ, so that we see in the end of the book of Revelation, or the last book of the Bible, this is the revelation of Jesus Christ which God revealed unto His servant John when he was on the island of Patmos, the things which must shortly come. And He basically has given us the entire understanding of the history of mankind. God has spoken, and John finishes off his epistle by saying, "If anyone adds to this word or anyone takes away from this word, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book." What is God saying by all this to us? Well, it says something like this to us: the fact that God is a God who reveals Himself means that He's a God that wants to be known. Why did God speak? God spoke for relationship. God spoke for relationship. Why did God reveal Himself? Because He wanted His creatures to know Him, to understand Him, to worship Him, to reveal unto us this great God who made the heavens and the earth.

You see, God has given revelation to His apostles, to His prophets, and continues to reveal things unto His servant by means of His Spirit, in accordance with the Scriptures and in accordance with the Word of God. He continues to reveal to us the Lord Jesus Christ personally, as we looked at last week, that this God speaks into our hearts through the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. He speaks into our hearts by opening the eyes of our understanding and communicating that revelation to us, even in this hour. In that sense, as we just sung before, we sing, "Speak, O Lord, as we come to You, to receive the food of Your holy word." He revealed Himself fully and finally in the Scriptures, but He continues to communicate His life and power and His word to our hearts, so that we do not need to sit in darkness any longer, but that we might know the God who made us.

We have a God who speaks, and what Paul is doing with the revelation of Jesus Christ is a lesson for us. What was Paul doing with all this? Was he saying, "Jesus Christ appeared to me on the road to Damascus, and I've received revelation of Jesus Christ, so now I am just got a really big head, and everyone should worship me, and I'm just this special prophet"? Look what Paul does with the revelation of Jesus Christ. Look what he does with revelation. Verse number 16, he said, "To reveal His Son in me," and he uses these words, "that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles." Look at verse number 23. What does the same verse 23 say? "But they were hearing only that he, that is

Paul, who formerly persecuted us, now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." What do we have here? We have a man that receives revelation not for it to be bottled up within his own heart and to make his head, as it were, big, but rather that the God who speaks might speak through him in the proclamation of that truth.

Turn with me in Acts chapter 20, except the 9, sorry, let's just turn there for a moment. In Acts chapter number 9, verse number 20, Paul the Apostle is saved on the road to Damascus. Three days he's blinded, he's led to Ananias, and he there has his hands laid on him, he receives his sight, he's filled with the Holy Spirit. Look what it says then in verse number 20, verse 19. "So when he had received food, Acts 9:19, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus, and here we go, immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God." You see that there? Immediately he preached the Christ, he preached the revelation of Jesus Christ, he preached that gospel which he received by revelation, immediately made it known to those that were around him in his vicinity, even though he was meant to be primarily an apostle to the Gentiles. He begins right where he is, in the synagogues, making Christ known.

What are we saying? Verse number 22, "So Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ." And what do we have in verse number 29? Verse 29 says, "And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him." What we have here in the scripture given to us is that from the time of the revelation of Jesus Christ to Paul at the road to Damascus, he began proclaiming the revelation he received. And he says to King Agrippa, "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting for repentance."

You know, a lesson we learn from all this is that revelation is for proclamation. That God has revealed Himself to make Himself known to others through those that He has revealed Himself to. And in a similar sense, you and I also have received revelation of Jesus Christ if we have met the Lord Jesus Christ in our own way on the road to our own Damascus, as it were, when we were against Him in one sense, persecuting Him and His cause in the world, when we were yet in darkness. God shined the light of the glorious gospel into our hearts and gave us, as it were, a revelation of Himself, that we might receive the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts, as the Bible says, and He's given us the knowledge

of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ. And what Paul says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may not be of us, but of God." And what we see right throughout Scripture is that God has not revealed Himself so that He might have that message buried under there somewhere, but He wants to make it known. And what Paul is simply saying is, what Jesus did with His disciples for three and a half years, He also did with me, just a little bit later in time. And how do we know this? Well, Jesus spent time with His disciples for those three and a half years, three years, and then He died, He rose from the dead, and what did He say to them at the end of the Gospel of Matthew? "Go you therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you." You hear that? Words teaching them to observe, not the opinions and thoughts of men, no, all things whatsoever I commanded you, what I revealed to you. "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." And what Jesus has done with His disciples, He essentially did with Paul, who was one born out of due time, which He also communicates to us, that the light that we have received concerning Jesus Christ must be made known to the world. We have received revelation of His Son revealed in us, and therefore we should be taking Him to the nations. We should be taking Him to the Gentiles. We should be preaching the faith which we once, as it were, tried to destroy.

You see, for Paul, this was in one sense an immediate response to his conversion. And I think it's consistent with the conversion of many other people in the Scriptures. Paul, converted, immediately preaches Christ. The woman at the well, converted, immediately preaches Christ in her own way, which we would say may not have been the most articulate demonstration and explanation of the gospel, but all she had to say was this: "Come, see a man who told me all things that I ever did. Is not this the Christ?" And you find a pattern right throughout the Gospels where you have Jesus healing people and saving people, and they want to speak in His name, and they want to tell people about Him, and even Jesus says, "No, no, not yet. My time is not yet come. Now is not the time exactly right now." And what that shows us is that when Jesus reveals Himself in us, it is ordinary, and it should be, as it were, a proper response to the revelation of Jesus Christ that we desire to make Him known to those around us.

You see, it is unnatural for a baby to be born and to come out from the womb and not make a sound. I think we can learn from that illustration, at the very least, that those of us who have been born again by the Spirit of God from above, is it not natural that we only but cry out to show that there is life in us, to make a noise, as it were, unto this Lord, whether it be by prayer, sure, but application also in terms of the witness of this truth that He made me alive, and you who are dead in trespasses and sin may

be made alive by the gracious God who saves. It's unusual for Christians not to speak in His name. It should be unusual for those of us who have tasted of the revelation of Jesus Christ to not tell of His love. It is unnatural for us to remain silent if we have recognized and understood and come to grips with the fact that our sins, though they were red like scarlet, have been made white as snow, and that we who were wretched sinners have been saved by the merciful grace of God. Would it not be only natural that we would share this love and this salvation and this cure for sick souls? Would it not only be natural that we say to others, "Come and hear this Savior. Come and see Him who revealed Himself to me"? I think it's only natural. The Bible actually teaches us that it's something that should be, at least in this sense, should be communicated in whatever way. You may not stand on a street corner and preach Jesus Christ. You may not physically hand out gospel tracts or whatever it may be, but God has situated you in a certain place, among a certain group of people, and you can make Jesus known to those around you by your life and by your testimony. You can speak in His name. You can speak into a sinner's dark soul in a particular circumstantial trouble that they're going through. You can step in with love and kindness and say, "Let me tell you about Jesus who can heal the brokenhearted. Let me tell you about Jesus who saves, delivers, rescues from that bondage of addiction that you're under. Let me tell you about Jesus who forgives your guilty heart and troubled soul. Let me tell you about Jesus who ascended into heaven and who can give life to you and make you live and truly worship Him. Let me tell you about this God who spoke, who created the heavens and the earth, and has spoken in His Son. Let me tell you about Him, that He's speaking to you now, saying, 'Repent and turn through the gospel of Jesus Christ.'"

See, Paul goes on to say that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, but He says He has committed unto us both the word of reconciliation and both the ministry of reconciliation. He basically says, "You plead with others as if God was speaking through you, 'Be reconciled to God.'" You know what he's saying? In one sense, we are like little prophets proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, the revelation of Jesus Christ, saying, "Here He is. Here He is. Be reconciled to God. Be reconciled to God."

You see, brothers and sisters, God has not given us mere good advice. He has given us His Son. Because He has given us His Son, He therefore commands all men everywhere to repent. And the way that He does that is through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Oh, and He says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come."

Have you believed the revelation of God? Have you believed the gospel that

Paul has preached? Has your soul and heart rested in this one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus? Have your eyes been opened to see that He and He alone saves? Have you heard the word of Peter who says, "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved"? Have you heard the words of Jesus who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except by Me"? Have you heard the word of God's prophets and His apostles and His messengers that He has sent and He's still sending through the proclamation of the gospel through His church to the world, to be reconciled to God? Have you laid your sins upon that Lamb of God? Have you believed in this Savior sent from heaven who is speaking to us of the mercy of God found in Himself? If you come to Him, the Bible teaches He will in no wise cast you out. If you believe on His name, you will not be put to shame, for "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

You look at your life, and you think, "What hope is there for me?" Well, I tell you what hope was there for Paul, a terrorist of the Christian faith, a terrorist against Christianity. But God revealed His Son in him. The same God can reach down to the deepest recesses of your corrupted heart and spread the light of the glorious gospel of His Son right now into your life and make you alive. He can give you mercy for your sin. He can give you life for death. He can give you forgiveness for your corrupted record that stands against you on the day of judgment. And this God has determined to show mercy, and He has not been silent, but as Jesus said to His disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, so I say to you this morning, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him."

You see, God has spoken, and what the Bible teaches us is, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" If the blood of Abel cries from the ground for justice, it's the blood of Jesus Christ, the book of Hebrews says, that speaks better things than the blood of Abel. It speaks mercy. It speaks peace. But are you hearing His voice? Are you subjecting yourself to the gospel of Jesus Christ this morning? Is your faith and hope built on nothing less than Jesus's blood and righteousness? And if not, I encourage you to come and be made right with this Savior because His arms are outstretched wide to forgive you, to change you in just a moment of time.

Let us pray.