



360 DISCUSSION 01.22.17

## WHEN STORIES COLLIDE

GALATIANS 1:11-24



Nothing is more compelling than a great story. It draws you in. It refuses to let you go. It takes you on an emotional roller coaster ride, and brings you to an abrupt end which is either completely satisfying or a total disappointment. Sometimes we walk out of the theatre or lay the book back on the night stand thinking, “I can’t believe I invested all that emotional energy. Loved the story. Hated the end.”

A good story involves rising conflict, a climatic turning point, and a dramatic end.

The Story of Scripture is a great story—not only because it is true, but because it makes sense of every other story. It is a story that involves a majestic creation; a fall from grace and humanity’s misguided attempts to either write God out of the story or reduce him to a bit part. The turn in the story involves a dramatic rescue from the author of life who dies a brutal death on the cross in our place and rises from the dead offering new life to anyone who would receive him. For better or worse, the script of everyone’s life is rewritten at the cross.

That was certainly the case with Paul. He was extremely passionate for the traditions of his ancestors and was a rising star in Judaism, but he encountered the living Christ and that changed everything.

In Galatians 1:11-24 Paul describes how his story and our story collide with God’s story at the cross.

## NOT JUST ANOTHER STORY (vv. 11-12)

Paul begins by reminding us that the gospel is not just another story. Paul's detractors were probably telling the Galatians, "Paul is nothing special. He is just a man. He received his message from other men. He's not even doing a very good job of passing on the message. He left out the most important part. Once you've received Christ by faith you can only be complete in him by embracing the symbols of Judaism—circumcision, a strict dietary code, adherence to the Law, and observing Holy days."

Paul begins to correct the record by saying, "I may be just a man, but I did not receive my message from just any man, I received it from Christ himself."

**VERSES 11-12** *For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

1. All of us need to settle the issue of authority. We live in a world where most of us are our own authority. We all have our opinions, and our opinions usually reign supreme. We cobble together various ideas we gleaned from culture, popular science, self help gurus and our own imagination.
  - a. What are the limitations of human authority?
  - b. Why is it dangerous to be our own highest authority?
2. Where does Paul claim to get his authority?
3. Why is it important that the gospel is grounded in a revelation of Jesus Christ?
4. Why is it important to ground our lives in the gospel?

## THE MOMENT EVERYTHING CHANGED (vv. 13-17)

Paul continues to dismantle his opponents argument by reminding his readers that he was the least likely candidate to abandon the traditions of his ancestors for faith in Christ. He tells his readers, "As Jewish as these guys are, and as Jewish as they want to make you, they were never as Jewish as I was. It would have taken a cataclysmic event for me to walk away from Judaism and that is exactly what happened."

**VERSES 13-17** *For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. <sup>15</sup> But*

*when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. <sup>17</sup> I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.*

1. How does Paul describe his life before Christ?
2. How does Paul describe his encounter with Christ?
3. How would you describe the similarities and the differences between your encounter with Christ and Paul's?
4. When did God set Paul apart for the task he called him to?
5. When did God call Paul?
6. When did God set you apart for the task he called you to?
7. When did he call you?
8. How would you describe the task God has called you to?

## LIVING AND WORKING IN RELATIVE OBSCURITY (vv. 18-24)

While verses 3-5 follow a common pattern for Greek letters, Paul's greeting is no sooner had Paul encountered the living Christ than he started proclaiming the risen Christ. Once he realized who Jesus was the rest of the story immediately fell in place. He did not rush to Jerusalem to find out all he could about Christ, he rushed to his contemporaries to tell them how their story had been completed in Christ.

Paul continues to chip away at his detractors narrative, by reminding his readers not only did he not receive his gospel from Peter and James, he barely even knew Peter and James.

**VERSES 18-24** *Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you. <sup>21</sup> Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup> I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup> They simply kept hearing: "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup> And they glorified God because of me.*

1. What do you think Paul might have learned from Peter?
2. What do you think Peter might have learned from Paul?
3. How was Paul known to the Judea churches?
4. How would you like to be known to your friends and neighbors?



360 BIBLE STUDIES 01.22.17

## PAUL'S STUDY NOTES | GALATIANS 1:11-24

**ESSENCE OF THE TEXT:** Paul declares that his gospel was not of human origin and points to his conversion, calling and lack of meaningful contact with the church in Jerusalem to validate his claim.

### ANALYTICAL OUTLINE

#### I. THE ORIGIN OF PAUL'S GOSPEL (vv. 11-12)

- A. <sup>11</sup> For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin.
- B. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

#### II. PAUL'S CALL TO PREACH THE GOSPEL AND EARLY MINISTRY (vv 13-17)

- A. <sup>13</sup> For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism:
  - 1. I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it.
  - 2. <sup>14</sup> I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.
- B. <sup>15</sup> But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles,
  - 1. I did not immediately consult with anyone.
  - 2. <sup>17</sup> I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me;
  - 3. instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.

#### III. PAUL'S TRIP TO JERUSALEM (vv. 18-20)

- A. <sup>18</sup> Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days.
- B. <sup>19</sup> But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.
- C. <sup>20</sup> I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you.

#### IV. PAUL'S CONTINUING ANONYMITY IN JUDEA (vv. 21-24)

- A. <sup>21</sup> Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
- B. <sup>22</sup> I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches that are in Christ.
  1. <sup>23</sup> They simply kept hearing: “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy.”
  2. <sup>24</sup> And they glorified God because of me.

## COMMENTARY

Having set forth the issues and alternatives that would dominate his Letter to the Galatians, Paul now began in earnest to develop the first major section of the epistle, a historical overview of his conversion, call, and ministry prior to his evangelistic work in Galatia. This long autobiographical account runs from 1:11 through 2:21 and is itself divided into three discrete subsections: Paul’s early Christian experience and his first encounter with church leaders in Jerusalem (1:11–24), the summit meeting between Paul and the Jerusalem leaders over the scope and sphere of his missionary work (2:1–10), and the confrontation with Peter at Antioch leading to the central pronouncement of justification by faith (2:11–21). GEORGE

These verses contain the longest and richest autobiographical material we have from the pen of Paul. They supplement in significant ways what Luke said about Paul’s background, conversion, and early missionary activity. This entire section and the prominence it holds in the structure of Galatians, occupying as it does nearly one-fourth of the book, underscore the fact that Christianity is a historical faith. It is based upon certain specific, irreversible, and irreducible historical events. Jesus was born during the imperial reign of Caesar Augustus. He was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he rose again on the third day, and was taken up into heaven forty days later. Christianity is not a philosophy of life, or yet a set of moral precepts, or a secret code for mystical union with the divine. At its core Christianity is the record of what God has once and for all done in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. Among these mighty acts of God, we must include the calling of the apostle Paul, for it too belongs among the foundational events of salvation history. GEORGE

The polemical tone we have encountered in the early verses of chap. 1 continues to dominate Paul’s rehearsal of his life and ministry here. Clearly he was responding to a certain representation of his career that his opponents had disseminated among the Galatian churches. If, as seems likely, these agitators had close ties to Jerusalem Christianity, they may well have represented themselves as the true ambassadors of the mother church there while depicting Paul as a renegade evangelist, one whose authority was wholly derived and subordinate to the Jerusalem apostles. Paul, they perhaps claimed, had totally distorted the message of these great church leaders while they, on the other hand, offered a pure replication of it. GEORGE

But three aspects of Paul’s narrative are notable: its focus on Jerusalem, its focus on contact with the Jerusalem apostles, and (in 1:16b–24) its negative character (“a negative travelogue” [Martyn 1997: 178]):

- “I did not consult with flesh and blood” (1:16b)
- “I did not go up to Jerusalem” (1:17)
- “After three years I went up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, ... but I stayed there only fifteen days, and I did not see any other apostle except James” (1:18–19a)
- “I was unknown to the churches in Judea” (1:22) MOO

***<sup>11</sup> For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. <sup>12</sup> For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.***

These verses introduce the theme already alluded to in the introduction and more fully developed in the following narrative, namely, that the gospel Paul preached to the Galatians was not devised by any human contrivance but came directly from God himself. In order to impress the truth of this thesis upon his readers, Paul introduced it with a solemn disclosure formula, “I want you to know.” This expression, along with its negative counterpart, “I do not wish you to be ignorant,” occurs numerous times in Paul’s writings (cf. Rom 1:13; 1 Cor 12:3; 15:1; 2 Cor 1:8; Eph 1:9; 1 Thess 4:13). This was Paul’s way of saying, “I want to make this perfectly clear.” GEORGE

Verse 11 commences an autobiographical and apologetic defense of the Pauline gospel that extends to the close of 2:21. The narrative character of the text is indicated by the temporal words that link the various sections together: “when” (ὅτε, 1:15); “then” (ἔπειτα, 1:18); “then” (ἔπειτα, 1:21); “then” (ἔπειτα, 2:1); “when” (ὅτε, 2:11). SCHREINER

How can Paul verify that his gospel is not merely human? He answers this question in 1:12, using a “for” (γάρ) to support his claim. The gospel he proclaimed was not transmitted to him by a human being, nor was he taught it by another human being. Instead, he received the gospel supernaturally when he saw Jesus Christ on the Damascus road. Therefore, there is no doubt about the divine origin of his gospel. SCHREINER

The kata in v. 11 harks back to and encompasses the twin negatives in v. 1—Paul’s apostleship and his gospel was neither from (apo) nor by (dia) any human source. Paul elaborated this denial by adding two additional negative qualifications concerning the nonhuman character of his gospel: he neither received it through tradition nor was taught it through the ordinary means of instruction. These two additional denials both point to the same reality and are nearly identical in meaning. “‘I did not receive it from any man’ refers to the initial reception of the gospel, while ‘nor did anyone teach it to me’ refers to his growing understanding of its contents.” GEORGE

The independence of Paul’s gospel does not lead to the conclusion that he learned nothing from the other apostles or that none of the Jesus traditions were conveyed to him by others. Such radical independence is not the point Paul makes here. Rather, he asserts that the fundamental truths of the gospel and his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles took place on the Damascus road. SCHREINER

But the language of “revelation,” or “apocalypse,” suggests a stronger antithesis with the beginning of the verse. What had been planned by God, yet hidden from human perception, now comes onto the scene of human history, revealing by the very fact of the event the purposes of God. The word also has eschatological connotations, as Dunn (1993a: 53) indicates: “To describe this event as an ‘apocalypse’ not only underlined its heavenly authority but also implied that it had eschatological significance, that is, as the key which unlocked the mystery of God’s purpose for his creation, the keystone of the whole arch of human history.” MOO

Is the genitive “Jesus Christ” (Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) objective or subjective here? Was the revelation given to him by Jesus Christ or did Paul see Jesus Christ? The relationship of genitives to nouns is imprecise and must be discerned by the context. It is possible that the genitive should be construed as both objective and subjective. In this instance, Jesus gave the revelation and is the object of the revelation.. SCHREINER

If it is subjective, then it means the revelation Jesus Christ himself disclosed, the revelation by Christ; if objective, then it means the revelation whose content is Jesus Christ, that is, the disclosure about Christ. Neither reading does grammatical or theological violence to the text, and some have taken it as both subjective and objective, the ambiguity perhaps being intended by Paul himself. Clearly both are true. On the Damascus Road, Jesus Christ himself appeared to Paul as the revealing one; what he disclosed was the true nature of the gospel, the content of the message Paul was commissioned to preach. Two other texts in the New Testament help to illumine this passage.

1. The first is Jesus’ comment about Peter’s surprising confession at Caesarea Philippi, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,” to which Jesus replied, “This was not revealed to you by men, but by my Father in Heaven” (Matt 16:16–17). Obviously Peter was well acquainted with Jesus before receiving this great insight. He knew well the bare facts of his earthly ministry. He had heard Jesus teach and had seen him do great miracles. None of this sufficed, however, to bring him to a true awareness of who Jesus really was until the veil was lifted in the

moment of divine disclosure. From this we learn that only God can truly reveal himself. We may preach, teach, and share the good news of Christ with others; but only God can soften a hardened heart and bring the light of divine truth to a darkened mind.

2. The second passage is Paul's own description of how "the mystery of Christ," unknown in earlier generations, was "now being revealed (apekalyphthē) to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Eph 3:5, RSV). Though Paul considered himself the very least of all the saints, he could not deny that this great mystery had been unveiled to him by Jesus Christ. Thus what had been hidden in ages past was now being displayed, publicly and universally, for all peoples to hear and receive. GEORGE

Before leaving this verse, we must ask about the exact content of the mystery of Christ supernaturally revealed to Paul in such a way that he could claim and proclaim it as "my gospel." We will have to return to this theme as Paul develops his argument throughout Galatians, but let us note here five essential elements of the gospel made known to Paul.

1. God has raised from the dead Jesus, the crucified Messiah, vindicating his claim to be one with the Father.
2. Jesus has been exalted to the right hand of the Father but is still vitally connected to his people on earth. The shattering insight Paul saw on the Damascus Road was this: in persecuting the Christians, he was in reality torturing Christ himself. Paul's doctrine of the church as the body of Christ undoubtedly grew out of this profound insight.
3. The risen Christ will come again in power and glory to fulfill all the messianic prophecies of the old covenant, bringing history to a climactic closure in a display of divine judgment and wrath.
4. In the meantime, God has opened the door of salvation for Gentiles as well as Jews. Paul himself had been commissioned to herald this good news to all persons, but especially to the Gentiles.
5. The basis for acceptance with God, for Jews and Gentiles alike, is justification by faith apart from the works of the law. The futility of legal righteousness is seen in a true appreciation of Christ's atoning death on the cross. The revelation of Jesus as Messiah requires a radical reorientation in how the law is seen and applied in this "dispensation of the fullness of times." GEORGE

***<sup>13</sup> For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.***

Throughout the account Paul focuses on the Jerusalem apostles, those he calls "the pillars" in 2:9. He insists that his understanding of the gospel did not depend on the pillars (1:13–24), that the pillars themselves agreed with his version of the gospel (2:1–10), and that he defended the gospel when it came under attack from one of those pillars (2:11–14). We can therefore surmise that the agitators were accusing Paul of having learned his gospel from the Jerusalem authorities—"the apostles before me" (1:17)—but then departing from it (or deducting from it) in his preaching to the Galatians. There is good evidence that these agitators claimed to be teaching the "authentic, original Jerusalem gospel" and accused Paul of departing from it. MOO

The temporal notes in the phrase τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ (tēn emēn anastrophēn pote en tō loudaismō, my former way of life in Judaism) suggest that he has left this way of life behind (ἀναστροφή; elsewhere in Paul in Eph. 4:22; 1 Tim. 4:12; see esp. 1 Pet. 1:18: ἀναστροφῆς πατροπαράδοτου [anastrophēs patroparadotou, way of life handed down to you from your ancestors]) MOO

Paul contrasts his past life in Judaism with his call and conversion. Some scholars argue that Paul was called on the Damascus road but not converted. Such a view is attractive in that Paul believed faith in Christ fulfills what the OT promised. Still, it is clear that Paul was both called and converted when Christ appeared to him. The first piece of evidence in support of Paul's conversion and call surfaces here. He describes his pre-

Christian life as his “former conduct in Judaism.” The term Judaism should be defined in terms of following Jewish beliefs and practices, especially as they are codified in the Mosaic law and in traditions developed from the Torah (see 2 Macc 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; 4 Macc 4:26). SCHREINER

Paul remained Jewish ethnically, but he no longer considered himself to be part of Judaism. In this respect Paul differed from the opponents, who believed that faith in Christ was compatible with adherence to the Mosaic law. Paul, by contrast, pronounced an anathema (1:8–9) on anyone who proclaimed a gospel other than the one he preached in Galatia. Obviously, Paul did not proclaim freedom from the law before he met Jesus on the Damascus road, and hence up until that time he was destined to be cursed on the last day. SCHREINER

The church of God” that Paul was persecuting may refer to a local church, such as the one in Jerusalem (e.g., Bruce 1982b: 90; de Boer 2011: 87). But Paul’s usage of the phrase elsewhere (1 Cor. 1:2; 10:32; 11:22; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:5, 15) along with the parallel in 1 Cor. 15:9 (I persecuted the church of God] suggests rather that Paul is referring to the “universal church” (e.g., R. Longenecker 1990: 28). The phrase is probably a deliberate echo of the OT “assembly [קְהָל, qāhāl] of Israel” (e.g., Deut. 31:30; 1 Kings 8:14); cf. “assembly of the Lord” (e.g., Deut. 23:2, 3; 1 Chron. 28:8) or “assembly of God” (Neh. 13:1; God’s people are now to be found in those “assembled” around the risen Lord Jesus. SCHREINER

Paul was a young and rising star in the Judaism, advancing beyond many of his fellow students. We learn from Acts that Paul was a pupil of Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3). He was trained as a Pharisee and ardently sought to please God in every arena of his life (23:6; 26:5; Phil 3:5). The term “Judaism” is again used (see 1:13) to denote Paul’s past, describing what occupied him before he met Jesus Christ on the Damascus road. SCHREINER

Doubtless Paul, before his conversion (Acts 22:3; Phil 3:6), conceived of himself as part of a venerable Jewish tradition that stood for observance of the law. For instance, Phinehas, by slaying the Israelite man and Midianite woman engaging in sexual relations, displayed his zeal for the Lord (Num 25:11). So too Elijah demonstrated his zeal for the Lord in the slaying of the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 19:10, 14). Matthias also manifested the same zeal when Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 BC) tried to repress the Jewish religion. Matthias slew the Jew who was about to offer an illegitimate sacrifice along with the king’s officer and then proceeded to tear down the altar (1 Macc 2:23–25). Matthias and those who followed him clearly saw themselves as exercising the same kind of zeal as Phinehas and Elijah (1 Macc 2:24, 26, 27, 50, 54, 58). The persecution of the church and the slaying of believers was, to Paul’s way of thinking before his conversion, not an indication of his sin, but revealed the depth of his commitment and piety. Paul probably saw himself as a new Phinehas or Elijah, and a modern-day Hasmonean. SCHREINER

Before Paul was converted, he was convinced that his persecution demonstrated his zeal for God and his righteousness (Phil 3:6). But he came to understand that what he thought was righteousness was actually the climax of his sinfulness, so that he was unworthy to be called as an apostle (1 Cor 15:9; cf. Eph 3:8). He designated himself as “a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man” (1 Tim 1:13) and as the “worst” of sinners (1 Tim 1:15). Hence, God demonstrated his merciful grace in saving him (1:13–16) and calling him to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. SCHREINER

This phrase may refer to the OT law per se (e.g., Martyn 1997: 155), or to the “oral law,” what Jesus called “the tradition of the elders” (Matt. 15:2; Mark 7:3, 5).. But it is likely that these were not separated in the mind of Paul and other “zealous” Jews like him: they understood the written OT law to have received crucial and definitive interpretation in the oral law (Betz 1979: 68)—just as today, passionate advocates of a certain theological position will decline to distinguish between Scripture and its (for that person) definitive elaboration in a system of belief. MOO

***<sup>15</sup> But when God, who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup> to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.***

Paul sets the stage for the narration of his contacts with Jerusalem by reminding his readers of his own radical conversion from persecutor to apostle. Particularly striking in his narrative is Paul's emphasis on the divine initiative in the whole matter. Far from being "prepared" for his conversion by a time of soul-searching, Paul testifies that he was a convinced and indeed "zealous" Jew until God called him "through his grace" (v. 15) and revealed his Son to him (v. 16). MOO

In this very text Paul suggests that the revelation of God's Son to him led him to contrast his new faith with his earlier "Judaism" (vv. 13–14). To label Paul's experience simply a "call" drastically underplays Paul's own claim about the dramatic change that his conversion involved. The "Judaism," as it was then practiced and in which Paul was raised, was clearly something that he left behind when Christ was revealed to him. The word "conversion" is appropriately applied to this thoroughgoing change, and only a difference of fundamental importance can explain why Paul would have persecuted the early Christians and then gone to suffer persecution himself after embracing Christianity. When God revealed his Son to Paul, he was both converted and called: "conversion and commission came together." MOO

Paul continues to emphasize that his transformation was wholly the work of God, for God had destined him from the time he was in his mother's womb to be an apostle, and he called him to be such at a particular time in history, i.e., on the way to Damascus. It has been noted previously that Paul was both called and converted on this occasion, but the emphasis here is on Paul's call as an apostle, since the teachers in Galatia questioned the legitimacy of his apostleship. SCHREINER

The language Paul uses here alludes to the calling of Isaiah and Jeremiah as prophets. Isaiah declares that the Lord called him from the womb of his mother (Isa 49:1). Further, the Lord knew Jeremiah before he was in his mother's womb, and he appointed and set him apart as a prophet before his birth (Jer 1:5). Just as Isaiah and Jeremiah were called to be prophets, so too the Lord appointed Paul to be an apostle. Paul emphasizes that he was divinely appointed, for the Lord had appointed him to such a task before he was born (cf. Rom 1:1). SCHREINER

The dramatic change in Paul's life can only be ascribed to God, for there was no human reason why Paul, who was an ardent opponent of Jesus of Nazareth, would suddenly embrace him as Lord and Christ apart from God's supernatural intervention. Paul's call and conversion, therefore, find their explanation in God's will and his good pleasure. The infinitive "to reveal" (ἀποκαλύψαι) hearkens back to "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) in 1:12, supporting the notion that God revealed Jesus Christ to Paul on the Damascus road. SCHREINER

Neither of these two prophetic texts on which Paul probably depends uses the verb ἀφορίζω (set apart), so they provide no help in determining how Paul relates his being "set apart" to his "calling." He might view them as two ways of describing the same thing. But it is also possible that he views them as two separate stages: being "set apart" before birth and "called" when God revealed his Son to him. Perhaps the parallel Paul suggests between his own experience and that of the Galatians (1:6) favors the latter. It is, in each case, God's grace that is the dominating force. MOO

The word "calling" here clearly means a call that is effective, a call that convinces the one who is summoned. The reference to grace confirms such an idea. Paul did not volunteer to serve as an apostle, but he was summoned by God in a compelling way. Hence, his service as an apostle can be ascribed only to the grace of God, pointing to the forgiveness of his sins committed before his conversion. SCHREINER

This verb, which means basically "to take pleasure in," "be pleased with," often has an additional nuance: "take pleasure in and so decide to do." See, for example, Ps. 68:16 (67:17 LXX), "the mountain on which God has chosen to dwell" and 1 Thess. 2:8 (NRSV), "We determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own souls." This is clearly its sense here (see also, in Paul, with God as subject, 1 Cor. 1:21; Col. 1:19). MOO

Only here (and indirectly in 1:12) does Paul use "revelation" language to depict his Damascus Road encounter with the risen Christ. Not only that: his claim that the Son was revealed "in" him is also surprising; we would have expected Paul to say that God revealed his Son "to" him. To be sure, some interpreters think that the ἐν could have this meaning here (BDF §220.1; Martyn 1997: 158). But this is doubtful. Paul elsewhere uses

the dative (Eph. 3:5) or εἰς (Rom. 8:18) after ἀποκαλύπτω (apokalyptō, reveal) to designate the recipients of revelation. His choice to use ἐν here is likely intended to denote that the revelation of God's Son had a transformative power "in" his very being: "the revelation had enlightened his whole soul, and ... he had Christ speaking within him." God broke into Paul's life as a Jew and indeed persecutor of the risen Christ and his people, through an "apocalyptic" transformative event. We should also take note of the object of the revelation: "God's Son." Sonship plays a critical and indeed central role in Galatians: Paul tries to convince the Galatians that they become and remain "the sons [or children] of Abraham," and thus "sons of God" through faith in Christ alone (3:7, 26; 4:4–7; cf. 4:22, 30 and 2:20). Note particularly 4:4–5, where Paul connects the sending into the world of God's Son with Christians' attainment of "sonship." Paul's choice to identify the one who was revealed in him as the Son of God therefore implies that his experience has been, in a certain basic sense, similar to the Galatians: in both cases, God worked in grace through his Son to make them his sons. MOO

This clause does not mean that Paul views his Damascus Road experience as a call and not as a conversion: it is a logical error to think that because Paul speaks of his calling as a purpose of the experience that it is the only purpose of that experience (contra Dunn 1993a: 65). Indeed, the transformative revelation of God's Son in itself suggests the idea of conversion. Of course, Paul typically associates his encounter with the risen Christ with his distinctive call to preach the gospel to Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:15; 26:17–18). But here he does so because his focus, from this point forward in his autobiography, is on his mission and its relationship to the Jerusalem apostles. Perhaps Paul wants to make clear that his calling ultimately rests on God's revelation, not with, for example, a human "commissioning," either at Antioch (cf. Acts 13:1–3) or, as the agitators may have alleged, at Jerusalem (Mussner 1988: 87). MOO

Together, the two assertions—positively, that God "revealed his Son in me" and negatively, that he did not immediately consult human beings—substantiate his claim that he received his gospel, not from a human source, but from a "revelation of Jesus Christ" (vv. 11–12) MOO

***17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.***

Many scholars postulate that Arabia refers to the Nabatean kingdom. Most likely Paul also proclaimed the gospel in Arabia, for there is no reason to think that he preached the gospel immediately in Damascus and then ceased to do so when he arrived in Arabia. The account in 2 Cor 11:32–33 confirms such a reading as well, for Aretas IV was the King of Nabatea (9 BC to 40 AD), and the governor under Aretas attempted to arrest Paul in Damascus. Such an arrest is best accounted for by Paul's preaching of the gospel in Arabia. Therefore, the view that Paul went to Arabia merely to study the OT Scriptures in light of the revelation given to him on the Damascus road is likely mistaken. Instead, Paul verifies the truth of the gospel given to him by appealing to his preaching, without consulting anyone, both in Arabia and Damascus. SCHREINER

***18 Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days.***

The chronological indicators in 1:18 and 1:21 mark out the next stages in Paul's travelogue. Two specific movements are noted, each introduced with ἔπειτα (epeita, then): a visit to Jerusalem (1:18) and a move to "the regions of Syria and Cilicia" (1:21). Paul spends no time describing his ministry during these years (the events he narrates in this paragraph may have covered as many as ten years). He concentrates, rather, on the negative point that he introduced in verse 17a: his minimal contact with Jerusalem and the apostles resident there. MOO

This visit to Jerusalem, which is the same as the one recorded by Luke in Acts 9:26–30, thus probably took place in AD 36–37 (dating Paul's conversion in 33–34). In fact, however, the precise chronological significance of this phrase has little bearing on the meaning of the passage: for our purposes what is important is that some time intervened between Paul's conversion and his "consultation" with the Jerusalem apostles, thereby proving his point that his gospel was not derived from human beings (1:12). MOO

Dunn rightly cites Dodd's famous words. "At that time he [Paul] stayed with Peter for a fortnight, and we may presume they did not spend all the time talking about the weather." Surely Paul asked Peter during these two weeks for information about the historical Jesus and was grateful to learn more about the traditions of Jesus' words and deeds. Doubtless, Paul learned from Peter, but it is also probable that Peter learned much from Paul about the gospel given to him by Jesus. SCHREINER

Indeed, the gospel for the Gentiles given to Paul on the Damascus road remained untouched. Peter did not counter Paul's insistence that the law was not required for the salvation of the Gentiles. Paul specifies that he and Peter spent fifteen days together. Why does he mention this detail? Presumably to emphasize how limited the time period was. He did not see Peter for three years after his conversion, and when he did see him, the time was relatively short. Both temporal references, then, underline the independence of Paul's gospel. SCHREINER

***<sup>19</sup> But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.***

Most scholars agree that the person in view here is James, the brother of Jesus. James played an important role in the history of the early church. His ministry was to the Jewish people in Palestine, and he became the leader of the Jews in Jerusalem as Acts attests (Acts 12:17; 15:13–21; 21:18–25). This same James is likely also the author of the letter of James in the NT. He did not believe Jesus was the Messiah during the latter's earthly ministry (Mark 3:21, 31–35; John 7:1–9). Presumably he came to faith when Jesus appeared to him after he was raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:7). James's prominence in Israel is attested by Josephus's account of his death in AD 62 (Ant. 20.9.1 §§197–203). James plays a central role in Paul's argument in Gal 2:1–14 as a representative of the church in Jerusalem and as one of the pillars of the church. SCHREINER

***<sup>20</sup> I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you.***

Elsewhere Paul uses oath formulas where he wants to underline the importance of what he says (Rom 1:9; 9:1; 2 Cor 1:23; 11:10; 1 Tim 2:7). In particular, Paul interjects statements regarding the truthfulness of what he says when he thinks it will be disputed or doubted. Thus, we have further evidence that the Judaizers questioned Pauline authority, and he was compelled to offer an account defending his calling and commission. SCHREINER

***<sup>21</sup> Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia.***

According to Luke, Paul's first postconversion Jerusalem visit ended when his attempts to evangelize Hellenistic Jews stirred up persecution against him. To save his life, the Jerusalem believers "took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus" (Acts 9:30). It was after some time—probably around eight years—that Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch to join him in ministry in that key city (Acts 11:25–26). Tarsus was one of the major cities in the Roman province of Cilicia. So Paul's claim here in Galatians that I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia must describe his move to Tarsus. However, since Paul follows up this notice of movement with a description of activity during that period, the combination ἤλθον εἰς probably has the sense "Then I came into" (cf. KJV). Paul's use of the two provincial names, Syria and Cilicia, shows that Paul has in mind the entire period of time from his move to Tarsus until his next journey to Jerusalem for the council described in Gal. 2:1–10. Assuming, as we argue, that this council took place during the visit to Jerusalem described in Acts 11:27–30, this period of time includes ministry in Tarsus for around eight years and ministry in Antioch for at least a year: see Acts 11:26: "So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church [in Antioch] and taught great numbers of people. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." MOO

***<sup>22</sup> I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup> They simply kept hearing: “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy.” <sup>24</sup> And they glorified God because of me.***

The plural “churches” here (see Gal 1:2) is modified by the phrase “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ). The words “in Christ” may simply mean “Christian” here, but it is likely the meaning is deeper, pointing to union with Christ, to incorporation in him. SCHREINER

Usually in Galatians the word “faith” means “trust in God,” but that meaning does not fit here. Instead, the term is perhaps best defined as “the Christian religion” or “body of doctrine,” referring to the Christian faith as a whole. If we compare the construction to 1:11, where Paul also uses a verbal form of the word “preach the gospel” (εὐαγγελίζω), there the thing preached is the “gospel” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) itself (cf. 1 Cor 15:1; 2 Cor 11:7). It seems, then, that “faith” here falls into the same semantic range so that it refers to the gospel in terms of what one believes in. SCHREINER

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