

Sermon Discussion

1 May 2022

Read Galatians 1:11-24

Dig Deeper

Paul begins an autobiographical section here (1:11-2:14). It fills **one-fifth of the entire epistle**. In it, he goes to great pains to prove that both his gospel and his commission to preach it came directly from Jesus Christ on the Damascus road. It did not come to him from any intermediary. Paul clarified the source of his gospel message to convince his readers that the gospel he had preached to them was **the true gospel**. What the false teachers were presenting was heresy.

Paul was converted in order to preach primarily to non-Jews (*see Acts 9:15*). This was **revolutionary** because God's dealings in the OT had been focused on Israel as His chosen nation. Now, with the coming of Christ, there was no distinction (*see Galatians 3:28*).

The journey to Arabia and back to Damascus takes place in the gap between Acts 9:25 and 9:26. Roman Arabia included much of what is **modern Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and southern Syria**.

In v. 18-19, Paul gives a "consecutive" account of his movements omitting no essential steps. He did so to show that he had functioned as an apostle before contacting other apostles. His critics seem to have been saying that the other apostles had really sent Paul.

If Paul's conversion was in A.D. 33 (an approximate date), then this places the first Jerusalem visit c. A.D. 36. It probably **corresponds to the stay in Jerusalem** in Acts 9:26-29.

"None of the other apostles except James" almost certainly implies that James is counted among "the apostles," even though he was not one of the original 12. Acts 9:27 refers to Barnabas introducing Paul to "the apostles" in Jerusalem. Paul's statement here means that "the apostles" in Acts 9:27 refers to Peter and James.

The phrase *"preaching the faith"* in v. 23 is the Greek verb **"euangelizetai"** which is where the word "evangel" or "good news" comes from.

1. In this week's passage, Paul iterates that he did not receive the gospel he preaches from man, but from Jesus Christ. How can we know if this is true? If you are unfamiliar with the conversion story of Paul, consider taking some time to read Acts 9:1-19. Why is it important to remember that salvation always starts with God and His invitation to us?
2. Some people today claim that they have received a direct message from God. How should you respond to them? What makes this different from trusting Paul's account?

3. Re-read verses 15-16. What are the three things God did for Paul when He intervened in his life? In your own words, what do each of these three things mean?
4. Does Paul attribute his conversion to his own efforts or to God's grace? Explain.
5. Read Paul's description of his salvation story found in 1 Timothy 1:12-17. What similarities does it have to his account in Galatians? What stands out to you? What does his story tell us about the extent of God's grace?

Application & Prayer

- Paul shares his story in three stages. He talks about who he was before Christ, how he encountered Jesus, and who he became after he met Jesus. This is a great template for sharing our own stories. It can be tempting to assume only radical or dramatic conversion stories are worth sharing, but God gave you your specific story and circumstances for a purpose. There are people God wants to use your unique story to reach.

Using the three stages of Paul's conversion story, take some time to write out your own story and share it with your Community Group or family.

- a. What was your life like before Jesus?
 - b. What happened that led you to follow Him?
 - c. What changes have you seen in your life since?
- Paul's testimony in this week's passage reveals the power of the gospel to radically transform anyone. Take some time today as you conclude to pray for those in your life who seem furthest from God. Ask the Holy Spirit to do a miraculous work in their lives, confident in the knowledge that no one is beyond the reach of the love of God.