

STUDIES IN GALATIANS

Study #2: Galatians 1:10-24

“You Were Running Well”

(Freedom vs. Legalism: The Truth Shall Set You Free)

Key verse 5:7 —“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?”

Galatians 5:7—“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?”

I shared with you last week, that’s one statement that I never want to hear from the Lord. I want to hear from Him “you are running well” not “you were running well” because it indicates the fact that there’s been something that’s gone on that’s caused me not to be as productive as I should be.

Now I use that verse as the key to the whole book. As you know I read the whole book and then try to build the study around it so, that was my key verse.

Every one of the studies then will have “you were running well until.” Last week: “no runs, no hits and a big error.”

In those last two verses Paul basically says that because of the different gospel that these guys were preaching “let them be anathema” or “let them be set aside for judgment, for destruction.”

That was not a very pretty picture but you've got to have those words in your mind as we get ready to launch into the study today.

“You were running well until; you forgot what God was doing in your life.”

And our key verses are going to be verses 11 and 12.

One of my favorite Far Side cartoons is captioned “Superman in his later years.” It shows the elderly Man of Steel perched on a window ledge, ready to leap, as he looks back and says, “Now where was I going?” (March 9, 2010)

Yep, we forget don't we. Tonight is about remembering. That's why I guess that story kind of spoke to me. As you sit there tonight, I pray that as you listen to the study you'll ask the spirit of God to cause you to remember.

I want you to remember that baggage you threw into the fire in a junior high camp telling God that you are willing to go anywhere or do anything. Or that decision you made at the Billy Graham Crusade or that time that you really turned it over to the Lord when you really hit a wall.

What about those times? How long has it been since you really thought all of those things through?

You see, one of the most powerful arguments that the apostle Paul has is the one he is going to give you today. And that is, he's going to tell these Judaizing teachers that he knows the gospel works because it worked in his own life personally. And this story is going to come out in bold relief. It's going to be amazing to you to see in these verses a man who feels deeply, deeply hurt. You couldn't help but read last week's verses and feel he was a different man because he was so upset, so concerned that some of these people who had come to know Christ while he was there in those cities, had now forsaken and were listening to Judaizing teachers. Remember what they were doing? They were twisting the gospel and troubling their minds. And they had been successful in doing so.

I want to read a statement from Eugene Peterson, it's a prayer, as we began our study.

I know, Lord, that it is pride that wants to assert absolute independence and be free from all obligations. I would like never to have to ask anybody for anything, not even you. Forgive my self-righteousness and clothe me in your righteousness. Amen. (*A Year With Jesus*, p. 313)

The focus of these first two chapters is personal.

He talked last week about the fact that he became an apostle, through Jesus Christ. It wasn't something that he initiated or tried to do. God met him on the Damascus Road and he was called to apostleship.

Then he's going to talk a little bit about the message that he preaches and where it comes from tonight. Then in next week's study we're going to talk a little bit about the ministry that he has. Now listen to our overriding statement:

You were running well; until you forgot what God was doing in your life.

Having said that, we've got to get ourselves ready and talk for a minute about remembering and then we'll get into the text.

This Sunday you're going to do what? "This do in remembrance of me." Aren't you? Because it's worldwide communion Sunday on the first Sunday in October.

Churches all over the world will be celebrating with you as we break bread and drink the cup. It's important to Jesus that we remember.

The Scripture makes it clear that the word "remember" comes at very critical places. Do you remember when Jonah was in the belly of the fish? Amazed that he was still alive after going through that storm and being thrown overboard and swallowed by this fish. Listen to what he says:

Jonah 2:7: "When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, Lord, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple."

And of the prodigal son when he began to remember he was so hungry he could feel his stomach aloft his backbone and then

he says “as soon as”—the key phrases—“he came to his senses.” In other words, he started to think and accept reality

At that point he said, “how many servants of my father have more bread than they can eat and I’m perishing here with hunger!” (Luke 15:17) “I will arise and go to my father.”

Now I recognize the fact that it’s just a tad bit awkward in Christian communities and churches to remember.

The reason being, I think, we have created an image that is so successful, and it’s an image we feel so comfortable with but it’s not reality. We each have got to face the fact that if we’re reticent to tell our story or to share those good things that God has done in changing our lives, then probably pride is in the way.

We don’t want to dodge and face the fact that God is calling us to remember.

Jude verse 17 says: “But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 3:3 is another word from the Lord about the business of remembering. If you know the structure of the book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 are the letters to the seven churches, and those are all messages from the Lord.

Listen to what the Lord says in Revelation 3:3:

Be remembering, therefore, in what way you have received and heard; and be guarding it, and have a change of mind. If, therefore, you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

Well Paul is going to recount his personal experience. Not because he wants to give you the feeling that he needs to do this for his own ego. That's not the issue. The most powerful thing about the gospel is your changed life. It's focusing on your journey of faith. You don't have to spend all your time on the gory details of your ugly past. But let God loosen your tongue and speak of your journey of faith. How you came to know Christ as Savior on the Damascus Road. Talk about the loneliness you felt in Damascus and on the desert in Syria and about the rejection that you got in Jerusalem and back in Tarsus when the family thought that you were just playing games.

Those are the kinds of things that bring glory to God and is a powerful witness. And these Judaizing teachers are not going to have an answer for a changed life.

And so that's where we're going today. We're going to let him talk to us and tell us his story.

Now remember what he just got through saying. He says let those guys who are "teaching a different gospel be Anathema" or set aside for judgment. That's the last verse we had together.

v. 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God or am I seeking to please men? If I still were pleasing men, a bonds slave of Christ I would not be.

Okay, now all of these verses right at the beginning of the passage begin with the word “for.” Reason—Reason—Reason—Reason. “For”—and you’ve got two questions—“am I now seeking the favor of men or of God or am I seeking to please men? If I still were pleasing men, a bonds slave of Christ I would not be.”

So right away he hits them with two questions. They’re going to have to make a decision and answer. “Am I seeking the favor of men or of God or am I seeking to please men?”

Then I love the way the text goes because right away he gives you the answer to the question. “If I still were pleasing men, a bonds slave of Christ I would not be.”

Martin Luther was passionate to use this book in blowing the trumpet in the Reformation. Listen to what he says about this at the beginning of this passage.

To this day you will find many who seek to please men in order that they may live in peace and security. They teach whatever is agreeable to men, no matter whether it is contrary to God’s Word or to their own conscience.

Paul has lived the life of a Pharisee. He’s lived the life of a Jew and he’s going to tell you that. But basically everyone of

us sitting here have made a choice or we're making choices of who we're going to please. How comfortable do you feel to be able to say "I am passionate about pleasing God in the remaining days I have here in this earth? Or have I made a more comfortable choice to be a little bit distant and dabble here and dabble there and not get real serious and specific about it."

That's a choice. Luther is saying you know many people make choices because it pleases people. You cannot please men and be a bonds slave of Christ, so he wants to be a bonds slave of Christ.

Why can't you please men and be a bonds slave of Christ? The Lord said "No man can serve two masters, for either he will love the one and hate the other, or hold the one and despise the other." (Matt. 6:24)

"Show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed." (2 Tim. 2:15)

"Suffer hardship with me as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." You have a single mind in the military. You do what you're told and so Paul uses it in the same way that when we're called into ministry, we have a choice to make.

I think the reason he's a bonds slave of Christ is for two reasons.

#1: He wants to finish the race.

Those last words in 2 Timothy, “I fought a good fight, I finished the course, I kept the faith.” That was a goal. That was an objective that he wanted to accomplish.

#2: He wants to hear “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

So if you’re going to be a servant, you’ve got to be a bondsman to get on the way.

Now, I understand and I’m sure a lot of people feel horrendous pressure from so many different sources. We’ve got pressure on the horizontal level from our peers, from our parents (if they’re still alive), from our pastor every time he quits preachin’ and goes to meddlin’.

And on the vertical we’ve got the problem of pleasing God. Am I really wanting that to be number one? The top priority? I’m making it first and foremost in what I would like to do.

How about in the upper room when everybody’s arguing about who’s going to be Secretary of State in the kingdom? And there’s nobody that’s humble enough to take the towel and the basin and began to wash each of the other’s feet to get ready for dinner.

He waited to do that just before He went to the cross. He was less than 24 hours from death and here He is humbling Himself before these men that He has disciplined and trained and guided and lived with for three years. And He’s the one

washing feet.

You see, I think humility and brokenness has something to do with the choice as well. As well as being willing to let the witness of how Christ has changed your life to give glory and honor to Him.

Wuest was a professor of Greek at Moody Bible Institute. He died in his 40s of a heart attack. He's done so many paraphrases of the Greek New Testament. I treasure his expanded paraphrase of the Greek text, and his study of words. "For, am I at this present moment seeking to win the favor of men rather than the approval of God? Or, am I making it my business to be constantly pleasing men? If I still were pleasing men, in that case, Christ's bondsman I would not be."

In other words, he's expanded it for you. Now, the next two verses are the key verses to this particular study of forgetting what God was doing in your life, verses 11 and 12.

v. 11 For I am making known to you, brethren, the message which was preached by me, that it is not after man.

"For"—starts again with the word—"I am making known to you, brethren."

Isn't that a wonderful word after what he got through saying to them last week? You know, isn't that amazing how the

Spirit of God just kind of, once you let off a little steam, you kind of come back to the sweetness that's there. You've had that in your marriage and in your life if you're normal. When you blow off and then you get sweet and tender again.

He uses the word "brethren." Now "sister-en" you're also included. I love the way the NET Bible, the NET Bible is a paraphrase, I mean, it is a translation by a number of Greek scholars. They have over 67,000 notes at the bottom and they've got satellite maps of the Holy Land in the back but it's a great Bible to study with. The NET Bible translates this 11th verse, "Now I want you to know brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. It's not after man."

The reason he's doing this he wants them to deal not with whether the Law and grace are in conflict. He's not going theologically. He is going to use his own personal witness of how the Spirit of God has transformed and changed his life and that's just going to wipe out the Judaizing teachers. They don't have any argument any more when you look at a changed life.

What does that tell you and me? We've got to be those who are willing to tell people that we read the Word.

We are passionate about getting to know Jesus and we have seen Him dramatically change our lives, replacing it with the fruitage of the Spirit Galatians 5:22 & 23. What a testimony that is. That verifies what the Lord is doing.

So verse 11: “For I am making known to you, brethren, the message which was preached by me, that it is [what?] not after man.”

Remember what I told you last week? All that he was came through Jesus Christ. His apostleship came through Christ. All that he has to say came through Jesus Christ. His message. And he is going to tell you how all that happened. He’s a bonds slave of Christ and the message he speaks is “not after man.” He doesn’t have to defend his position in this particular situation. Because the Spirit of God is giving him the message.

Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote the *Systematic Theology* that is used at Dallas seminary. He said:

The Bible is not such a book as man would write if he *could*, or could write if you *would*. (p. 22)

The miracle of the story itself is absolutely amazing.

Now the false teachers have come in.

John MacArthur says:

The gospel Paul preached was not human in origin or it would have been like all other human religion, permeated with works righteousness, born of man’s pride and Satan’s deception. (p. 1659)

Now he tells you where it came from in verse 12.

v. 12 For neither did I receive it from man nor was I taught it but through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

“For neither did I receive it from man nor was I taught it but through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

What he’s telling them is everything that he learned after that Damascus Road experience, that the Lord Jesus became very real to him and he sat at the Savior’s feet inspired by the Spirit to even write the text of Galatians.

The NET Bible translates verse 12, by the way:

“For I did not receive it or learn it from any human source; instead, I received it by a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

I love it when God does some really neat things like this because Revelation 1:1. What does it say?

Revelation 1:1: “A revelation of Jesus Christ, which God (the Father) gave to Him to point out to His bondservants, the things which must shortly take place; and He made them known, having sent them by His angel to His bondservant John.”

Talk about a chain of command! It goes from the Father, to the Son, to the angel, to the servant and then to John. Finally,

he receives the message from the Lord. So, John had the same experience and the book of Revelation is the fruitage of it. So in summary, the apostle says negatively: “This message that I’m preaching is not after man, neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it by man, but [positively] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Now, all that he was came through Jesus Christ. All his words came through Jesus Christ.

Next week I’m going to put the third part of the tripod on there and basically you’re going to see the apostle Paul is totally focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what is the greatest argument for the defense of the gospel? I’ve already tried to spell it out to you. It’s your personal witness of what Christ did in your life to change you and put you on a trail of enriched, deep, loving relationships with your brothers and sisters. You’ve wept together, you’ve laughed together, you’ve had such joy and such opportunity. Paul is going to tell you that now as he begins to let these Judaizers know that the gospel makes the difference.

The question that you bring to this is, does it really work? Does a relationship with Christ really change my life? That’s the question that we’re going to answer in these verses before us.

Wuest translates that twelfth verse:

“For as for myself, neither did I receive it directly from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation given me by Jesus Christ.” (p. 201)

The evidence of a sovereign work in a person’s life is a life that’s been changed through a relationship and that’s what we’re talking about here in this particular study that we’re looking at today.

v. 13 For you heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism that beyond measure I was persecuting the church of God and I was bringing destruction upon it.

Now he begins his testimony. It starts with the word “For” again, doesn’t it.

“For you heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism that beyond measure I was persecuting the church of God and I was bringing destruction upon it.”

You heard about how avid I was in my resistance to the church and what I did to people. I’m sure every time he would close his eyes he would think of some of the horrible things that had happened in his life. But isn’t he the guy that wrote to the Corinthians: “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17)

Then let’s focus on that! And the victory and the joy and the

blessing that is ours because we have that relationship.

That's what's going to win people to Christ quicker than anything you can say or do. Just by letting your light shine, a changed life. And when people ask you, you have a chance to tell them. Now Paul turns to the past and is giving you some of the things that happen.

I'll tell you where I think this testimony started. I think he was so impacted when he was sitting in the Sanhedrin and he heard Stephen give that powerful message starting with the book of Genesis and going all the way through to the crucifixion of Christ. Remember they got so mad at him, they gnashed on him with their teeth. They drug him out of there and took him to the rock pile, laid their garments at Saul's feet and they stoned him to death.

I don't think it was so much the horrible part of the stoning that really hit him. I think it was the shining face of the man who was telling him that he saw heaven opened, and that the Son of Man was standing on the right hand of God the Father and he was praying for forgiveness on the guys who were throwing the rocks.

That had to be the beginning of some significant things happening within the Sanhedrin itself by what they saw in a man who was just telling their story to them from the Scriptures, but added Christ, the Messiah, to the story and that offended them with such hatred, they took his life.

You know why I feel that way? When sometimes you get under deep conviction about stuff is when you just go off the deep end and you just go on a toot. It's kind of like when you failed, drink it. You just call get soused big time or when you do something little you just go overboard. I think Paul did that.

Listen to Acts 8:1-3:

Then on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria; except the apostles. And some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

But Saul kept on ravaging the church, entering house after house, dragging off both men and women. Handing them over to prison. He went crazy with hatred. Then he goes down to the authorities, are there any Christians in Damascus? Have you got a list?

And he gets a list and so he is going 130 miles north to do everything he can to ravage and stop, this new uprising, this religion. So these former days of Judaism for him were days of being consumed with a passion of hatred for Christians.

Listen to Oswald Chambers from *My Utmost For His Highest*:

Have you been wondering why you are going through certain circumstances? In fact, it is not that *you* have to go through

them. It is because of your relationship with the Son of God who comes, through the providential will of His Father, into your life. You must allow *Him* to have His way with you, staying in perfect oneness with Him.

The life of your Lord is to become your vital, simple life, and the way He worked and lived among people while here on earth must be the way He works and lives in you. (*My Utmost For His Highest*, 8/7)

And that's what's going to make the impact on people around you. Now, he's still talking about the past when he gets to verse 14.

Now, look what he says in verse 14:

v. 14 And I was blazing a pioneer path (advancing) in Judaism beyond many of my own age in my race being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

“And I was blazing a pioneer path (advancing) in Judaism beyond many of my own age in my race being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”

What I did with this, because this is his past, I wrote the hot words down. These are the things that make the text jump out at you.

First, Persecuting—“I was persecuting the church of God.”

Secondly, “I was so bringing destruction upon it.”

Thirdly, “I was blazing.” That means striking forward. That means tearing up the path. Getting out in front of everybody. Being the one who was in first place. Intense passion to perform and to be ahead of everybody else. That helps me understand why he talks about running so much and the Christian life because that was part of it.

“beyond many of my own age in my race being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.”

I was opposed to the program of the church and “the traditions of the father.”

Now, do you understand the word “traditions”?

The word “traditions” refers to everything that the scribes and Pharisees committed themselves to when they became part of that. These were the meticulous additions to the Law that became traditions and he says I not only followed the text but I went along with the whole deal. I was passionate about what I was going to do.

Paul was passionate about religion. He slept it. He ate it. He drank it. He lived it every day passionately.

Listen to Marcus Luttrell from *The Lone Survivor*:

Remember the philosophy of the U.S. Navy SEALs: “I will never quit... My Nation expects me to be physically harder and mentally stronger than my enemies. If knocked down, I will get back up every time. I will draw on every remaining ounce of strength to protect my teammates ... I am never out of the fight.” (p. 235)

Of course that story is such a tear-jerking story of him being the only one left and miraculously was retrieved from Afghanistan where they had been dropped. At the cost of several other lives, by the way, in order to make that rescue.

v. 15 But when it was the good pleasure of the one who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me.

Verse 15. Oh listen, you are going to be so glad you came. Everything I’ve had to say is leading up to the biggie. Here it comes. This is the most awesome verse in the whole of the Bible. I never read it without just getting the warm fuzzies inside. I hope you will join me now.

Now look, the little word “But” starts it, doesn’t it. He’s been telling you all the bad stuff. Everything that he did religiously in his background, but here it comes. “But when it was the good pleasure of the one who set me apart”—who was that? God the Father, the Lord Jesus—“from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me.”

Now is that good or is that good? Amen!

Look at three keywords here in this verse but then the fourth one is going to be in verse 16:

#1: “set me apart”

#2: “called me through His grace” and

#3: His purpose in doing that was “to reveal His Son in me”—Christlikeness.

And the fourth and final one will be in the next verse.

Now, you’ve heard of my former way of life, than the conversion takes place in Acts chapter 9: “That which you persecuted, now he cherishes, that which he hated, he now loves, what he abhorred, he now adores. When it was the good pleasure of the one who set me apart from my mother’s womb.”

That’s God’s foreknowledge. Is there anybody else that would experience that same thing? How about Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. Listen to what the Lord says to him: Jeremiah 1:5: “before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart, I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

And he had the privilege of watching the demise of the southern kingdom. And Nebuchadnezzar, and the forces of Babylon came in and literally burnt the city to the ground.

Jeremiah was part of that. He pled with people. But he was set apart for that special purpose.

All right, I homilitized the 4 things so that you won't forget. That just means you start every word with the same letter okay.

Chosen,

Called,

Changed and

Charged.

Every one of us sitting in this room have got to face those four things. As believers, God knew that you were going to receive Christ way back there or just recently, whenever it happened. He knew it. Or if you're going to tonight He's going to know it. He knows when you've come to know Him because you have been chosen in Him.

Secondly, you are called. Called by the Spirit of God into that relationship. That is your conversion time. That is one you're compelled by the Spirit to make it right and to do it right.

The minute you come to know Christ, the Spirit of God starts changing you into Christlikeness. And the change is revealed in the fruitage of the Spirit—Galatians 5—when we get over

there. And then we are charged with a unique ministry.

This is where it breaks down sometimes. We have talked about spiritual gifts. We've talked about finding what passion it is that God has for you and what does He want to accomplish through you and in your life.

Rick Warren wrote a great little book called *The Purpose of Christmas*:

There is nothing you can do that will make God stop loving you. You could try, but you'd fail—because God's love for you is based on his character, not your conduct. It's based on who he is, not what you've done. The Bible says, "Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that love." (p. 23)

If we don't know that love tonight, there is a word, Surrender. We've got to come to the point where we quit trying to run things on our own and we surrender to what He wants us to do that.

Maybe you have already done that. But do you do it every day? Say when you show up for work? I'm here and available. I want to do and be what you want me to be. I want you to change me in my life where I need to be changed in order to bring You glory and honor.

John Ortberg wrote a book called *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You* and in the book he says:

Many people find Jesus pretty handy to have in the passenger's seat when they require his services.

*Jesus, I have a health problem, and I need your help.
Something hard is going on at work, and I'd like it to be different.*

I'm feeling anxious, and I want you to give me peace of mind.

I'm feeling sad, and I'd like a little hope.

I'm facing death, and I want to make sure I'm going to heaven.

But these people are not so sure they want Jesus driving, because if Jesus is behind the wheel, they are not in control anymore. If he is driving, they are not in charge of their wallet anymore. They no longer can simply say, "I'll give sometimes when I feel generous, but I reserve the right to keep what I want." Now it is Jesus' money.

When I let Jesus drive, I am no longer in charge of my ego. I no longer have the right to satisfy every self-centered ambition. Now it is his life. I am not in charge of my mouth anymore. I don't get to gossip, flatter, cajole, condemn, lie, curse, rage, cheat, intimidate, manipulate, exaggerate, or prevaricate anymore. Now it is not my mouth-it is his mouth. (p. 61)

"You need to surrender. You are sinful, stubborn, and stiff-necked. You are self-centered and self-promoting, your own desires are very often self-serving, your ability

to perceive your own sin is blinded by self-deception, you need to bend the knee, you need to submit your heart, you need to confess your sin, you need to *surrender*. (p. 63)

Then I love how he wraps up something like that that is so hard.

Surrender is a tough word.

I will name one person who I know for sure doesn't like to hear that: *Me*. (p. 63)

And it does, doesn't it. It just makes us feel like when we turn it over we're letting go of something that we've been so used to controlling. And I think that's the bottom line.

Now, verse 16. Here comes the fourth and final one. Why did all of that happen in verse 15? That he was chosen, that he was called and then he discharged and he is being changed.

v. 16 In order that I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles, at once I consulted (communicated) not with flesh and blood.

“In order that”—here's the purpose—“I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles, at once I consulted (communicated) not with flesh and blood.”

His ministry is going to be to the Gentiles. Now do you understand that word Gentile? That's anybody that's not a Jew.

It's the nations of the world. Paul is a Jew being sent to the Gentiles. Peter is a Jew being sent to the Jews. And so they're going to have a little encounter here in just a minute because I've been reading ahead there a little bit.

Would you notice what it says? "I consulted (or communicated) not with flesh and blood."

There is no reason to be talking to anybody right now other than the Lord because He's the one that did the calling. And He's the one who's doing the changing. He's the one who's commissioned me to this ministry. So therefore, through His grace, I'm being changed, but I'm also going to be submissive and obedient to what He wants me to do. And I want to be charged with this ministry and so I need to get away and spend some time with Him. And you will notice now in Acts chapter 9, after he is there and receives Christ, he takes a trip off into Arabia and he's going to tell you that right now.

v. 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and again returned to Damascus.

"I consulted (or communicated) not with flesh and blood. Neither went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went a way into Arabia and again returned to Damascus."

Okay, there's three years here. I think that probably 50 to 75

miles out of Damascus is a place like Palm Springs in the desert of Southern California. A place where they could retreat and be by themselves. Paul did not want any encounter with human beings. He needed to be with the Lord. He needed to understand how all of his Jewish background could come alive and be meaningful to him in this new ministry. He had to understand why the Lord was calling him to the nations rather than to the Jewish people because he's so trained and that's his background.

And so all those questions had to be answered there in Arabia and they were. So a three year period. He was out there for a period of time, but he came back to Damascus and he really upset the apple cart in Damascus.

Remember, he went right to the synagogue and started preaching Jesus Christ and those Jews got offended. They got so mad they tried to plan to kill him. The Christians in Damascus had to let him down in a basket through the wall at night so that he could make his way back to Jerusalem.

So he's already tasting some of the price that's going to be involved in him serving the Lord. Now, is there anybody else in the Bible that had to go away for a little retreat for a while?

Well, Moses had to do it for 40 years. Elijah had to do it on his own choice, but he was out of the will of God while he was doing it. Jesus had to do it for 40 days and 40 nights as Satan tempted Him. And of course, David had to do it because he was forced into fleeing from Saul. All of that time living out

there by himself.

Those times alone prepare you to speak with God so you can speak to men. The message comes from Him when you learn to allow that to happen in your life.

v. 18 Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and I remained with him fifteen days.

“Then”—verse 18— isn’t this kind of like a travel log?

“Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and I remained with him fifteen days.”

Cephas is Peter. He goes from Damascus to Jerusalem for a two-week retreat with Peter. Now, he says that I spent this time with him there “to become better acquainted,” get to know him, and I remained there two weeks.

You’ve got the chief propagator and the chief persecutor coming together and both of them are now propagating the same Christ. That’s the change that he wants to get across to these Judaizing teachers. That he has had time with Peter himself, Mr. Legalist, Mr. Not So Lord! I won’t eat anything coming down out of that sheet! For love nor money. You can never say that. You cannot ever say in the same sentence, “Not so, Lord,” but he did.

And then you've got the apostle Paul, he the brand-new kid on the block. He's just absorbing all this stuff. And don't you know those 2 weeks had to be rich. And I don't think they had time to sleep.

v. 19 But another of the apostles I did not see except James the brother of our Lord.

“But another of the apostles I did not see except James the brother of our Lord.”

What's the phrase that just [gives] you warmth?

“Our Lord.” Don't you love that? “James the brother of our Lord.”

When did you meet him? Do you remember the book of Jude? There were three Judes and three Jameses. You had to get the Jameses all straight so you understand which one was which. Two of them were disciples. James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus, the brother of Matthew. Those were the two disciples.

The other James is the James who wrote the book of James and he is the James that's mentioned here. He's the head honcho at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. He is the one that Paul goes to.

Can I tell you something? This is kind of cool. The only two people that Jesus had a private interview with after He was

resurrected from the dead was Peter and James.

Peter, to deal with his big blow-up of denial and get him back on track again, and James his brother who did not believe along with Jude and the rest of them that he was really the son of God, and now he does. And it's because of that, that he can write in the book of James "The Lord of glory!"—referring to Christ.

So Jesus had a reason for seeing those two guys. I think Paul's reason for seeing those two guys was "Peter, you needed to know. I have been called to a ministry to non-Jews." To James, it's like every missionary, you want to get all the prayer support you can. James was Mr. Camel-Knees, he was on them so much.

He was a powerful prayer warrior. And he describes that in James chapter 5, as you know. And so here he meets with these two guys. And these are the only two that he meets with while he's there on these two weeks.

v. 20 But the things which I am writing to you, behold in the sight of God, I am not lying.

Then don't you love verse 20? It's like you're getting ready for court case. "I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the help truth, so help me God." There it is.

"But the things which I am writing to you, behold in the sight of God, I am not lying."

“Herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.”

It’s not what men say we are, it’s what God knows we are. And so he wants to make it clear that things “I am writing to you, behold in the face of God, I am not lying one bit!”

John Ortberg talks about lying in that book on being the best version of you [*The Me I Want to Be*]:

True confession: Have you ever spoken about someone, in their absence, with words you would not have used if they were present? Mark Twain was once riding a train home from Maine after three weeks of highly successful fishing—even though the state’s fishing season was closed. He bragged about his huge but illegal catch to the only other passenger in the club car. The passenger grew increasingly glum during Twain’s story. When Twain finally asked him who he was, the stranger explained he was the state game warden.

“Who are you?” the warden asked.

“To tell the truth,” Twain said, “I’m the biggest liar in the whole United States.” (p. 133)

v. 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Now, would you notice where he goes from here. Paul, I love it. He’s like the missionary who said “I don’t feel called to any field but I want the hardest one you’ve got.”

He went back to Damascus after the time of the Lord. Hard city and assignment. Goes from there to the center of Judaism in Jerusalem. Then leaves there and the last place you want to go is home, and that's where he's going.

He's on his way to Tarsus, the regions of Syria and Cilicia. This is about a 120 mile trip there. He goes over there and he has some ministry.

v. 22 And I was still unknown by face to the assemblies of Judea which are in Christ.

“And I was still unknown by face to [those] assemblies of Judea which are in Christ.”

Some of them couldn't believe it.

v. 23 Indeed they were only hearing from time to time that the one who used to persecute us at one time now is proclaiming the faith which at one time he was ravaging.

“Indeed they were only hearing from time to time that the one who used to persecute us at one time now is proclaiming the faith which at one time he was ravaging.”

There is another hot word, by the way, if you want to describe what he was doing in relationship to the church. You can just drop that word back in the text back there where we're working on that verse.

“Persecuting,”

“bringing destruction,”

“blazing a trail, blazing a pioneer path,” and

“ravaging” is the next word.

A. W. Tozer says:

In the meantime he will have attained a place of soul rest. As he walks on in meekness, he will be happy to let God defend him. The old struggle to defend himself is over. He has found the peace which meekness brings. (*The Best of A.W. Tozer*, p. 31)

It’s a beautiful description of the apostle Paul.

Gary Thomas said:

I sensed God saying, “I have waited forty-two years for this day.” (*The Beautiful Fight*, p. 123)

The Spirit of God is saying that to us tonight. “I’ve been waiting all this time for you to really get serious, really put Me first.

v. 24 And they were glorifying God [for that which they found] in me.

Verse 24: “And they were glorifying God [for that which they found] in me.”

Anybody glorifying God today for what they have found in you and your witness for Christ?

Is there anybody glorifying God for what they found in me as a person?

What was it they found in him? The fruit of the Spirit, Galatians 5: Love, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control.

The beauty of Christ living in him.

Tozer says again:

The true believer owns Christ as his All in All without reservation. He includes all of himself, leaving no part of his being unaffected by the revolutionary transaction.

(The Best of A. W. Tozer, p. 103)

Spurgeon says:

What a marvelous life it is! It brings with it new perceptions, new emotions, new desires. It has new senses: there are new eyes, with which we see the invisible; new ears, with which we hear the voice of God, before inaudible. Then have we a new touch, with which we lay hold on divine truth; then have we a

new taste, so that we “taste and see that the Lord is good.” This new life ushers us into a new world, and gives us new relationships and new privileges. 1946. 7 5 (*Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers*, p. 46)

Listen to Philip Yancey in his devotional called *Making God Visible*:

On a 2004 visit to South Africa I met a remarkable woman named Joanna. She is of mixed-race, part black and part white, a category known there as “colored.” ... Joanna next decided to tackle [that after freedom that she would take] the most violent prison in South Africa, a prison where Nelson Mandela had spent several years. Tattoo-covered gang members controlled the prison, strictly enforcing a rule that required new members to earn their admittance to the gang by assaulting undesirable prisoners. Prison authorities look the other way, letting these “animals” beat and even kill each other.

Alone, this attractive young woman started going each day into the bowel of that prison. She brought a simple message of forgiveness and reconciliation, trying to put into practice on smaller scale what Mandela and Bishop Tutu were trying to effect in the nation as a whole. ...

I met Joanna and her husband, who has since joined her work, at a restaurant on the waterfront of Cape Town. Ever the journalist, I pressed her for specifics on what had happened to transform that prison. Her fork stopped on the way to her mouth, she looked and said, almost without

thinking, “Well, of course Philip, God was already present in the prison. I just had to make him visible. (p. 316)

And that’s what we’re saying today. All that’s going to be necessary is for you and I, by our walk with Him to make Him visible.

There are 10 lessons that come out of it and I hope you’ll take time and I hope you’re half as excited as I am about studying the book of Galatians.

You were running well; until you forgot what God was doing in your life. He chose you before the foundation of the world. He’s calling you and He’s changing you and He’s charging you with a ministry.

Are others glorifying God for what they have found in you?

Father, may we let the Spirit of God do His good work in our lives in helping us to study these verses and to apply what the Spirit of God is saying to us today. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

STUDY NUMBER TWO – UNTIL: YOU FORGOT WHAT GOD WAS DOING IN YOUR LIFE
– GALATIANS 1:10-24

KEY VERSES 1:11, 12

v. 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men or of God or am I seeking to please men? If I still were pleasing men, a bonds slave of Christ I would not be.

v. 11 For I am making known to you, brethren, the message which was preached by me, that it is not after man.

v. 12 For neither did I receive it from man nor was I taught it but through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

v. 13 For you heard of my manner of life formerly in Judaism that beyond measure I was persecuting the church of God and I was bringing destruction upon it.

v. 14 And I was blazing a pioneer path (advancing) in Judaism beyond many of my own age in my race being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

v. 15 But when it was the good pleasure of the one who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me.

v. 16 In order that I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles, at once I consulted (communicated) not with flesh and blood.

v. 17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia and again returned to Damascus.

v. 18 Then, after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas and I remained with him fifteen days.

v. 19 But another of the apostles I did not see except James the brother of our Lord.

v. 20 But the things which I am writing to you, behold in the sight of God, I am not lying.

v. 21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

v. 22 And I was still unknown by face to the assemblies of Judea which are in Christ.

v. 23 Indeed they were only hearing from time to time that the one who used to persecute us at one time now is proclaiming the faith which at one time he was ravaging.

v. 24 And they were glorifying God [for that which they found] in me.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Galatians 1:10-24 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. Who was the Apostle Paul trying to please, according to verse 10?

3. Where did Paul get his message, according to verses 11 & 12?

4. What kind of life was Paul living before he became a Christian?

5. Describe God's purpose for the Apostle Paul, according to verses 15 & 16.

6. What did the Apostle Paul do after he became a Christian, according to verse 17?

7. Who did Paul see when he went to the city of Jerusalem?

8. How did the assemblies of Judea respond to Paul's conversion, according to verse 24?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: Have you forgotten what God has done and is doing in your life?

LESSON #2: You cannot please men and be a bond-slave of Christ.

LESSON #3: Can you say that you are consumed with the cause of Christ?

LESSON #4: Are you aware that you have been chosen, called, in the process of being changed, and charged with a ministry?

LESSON #5: Have you sensed God's obvious direction in your life?

LESSON #6: Are others glorifying God for what they see in your life?

LESSON #7: Are you living by Proverbs 3:5, 6? "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

LESSON #8: Is Christ living in you so that others are rejoicing in what they see?

LESSON #9: "In view of this, I also am doing my best to be having a conscience which does not cause offense to God and to men at all times" (Acts 24:16 DAV).

LESSON #10: Are you telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

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