

Galatians 1:11-24

- I. The Point of the Passage 1:11-12
- II. Paul's Life prior to Conversion 1:13-14
- III. Paul's Conversion 1:15-16a
- IV. Paul's Life after Conversion 1:16b-24

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is real; it must produce real changes in the lives of those who believe it.

- I. The Point of the Passage 1:11-12
 - A. Compare these verses with v.1. Paul's message and his role as a messenger were both given to him by God.
 - B. Why does he bother to say this? It is a response to the "troublers" in v.7.
 - 1. They are calling his apostleship into question – not one of the original 12.
 - 2. They are calling his gospel message into question – not in agreement with what the apostles in Jerusalem preached and taught. This was a lie, but it seems to be what they were saying.
 - C. The gospel Paul is talking about is found in a quick summary in 1:3-5.
 - 1. Consider, first of all, the consequences of not believing this message.
 - 2. Consider secondly, the plausibility of the message.
 - a) Is the age we live in evil? Not much question on that.
 - b) The message of the Bible is that our sin (rebellion against God) is the root of this problem.
 - c) The good news is that God has provided a remedy for our sin.
 - (1) Forgiveness for sin committed in the past (Sin's Punishment)
 - (2) Divine power to avoid sin in the present (Sin's Power)
 - (3) The promise of complete transformation in the future. (Sin's Presence)

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- II. Paul's Life prior to Conversion 1:13-14
 - A. The implausibility of his conversion. If God didn't change Paul, what possible motive might he have had to so radically depart from his former life?

1. He had his people's history and heritage behind him.
2. He had the approval of his people's elite.
3. He was still relatively young and advancing beyond his contemporaries. In other words, Saul of Tarsus had a bright future ahead of him.
4. He was angry. He hated Jesus and he hated the church.
 - a) Hatred fueled by religious zeal is an intoxicating mixture. You might, in rare instances, be able to stop someone like this. You will not suddenly turn that person into the world's most glaring example of the very people he hates.
 - b) This is not just stopping the big bad wolf; it's turning him into the fourth little pig – and the world's greatest scholar and spokesman on piggishness. Without the very intervention of God, it's hard to explain how this might have happened.

B. As Paul does here – it's important for us to remember who we were before Christ, or consider who we might be without Christ. The contrast should be visible.

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III. Paul's Conversion 1:15-16a

- A. Paul understood that God had set him apart for his ministry before he was born. This is a theme we see running through the Bible.
1. Abraham was promised a descendant – in fact a bunch of descendants – a full 25 years before Isaac was born.
 2. God told Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 1:5 NKJV “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.”

- B. We believe that God has a plan for each person – and that it's our privilege to live out that plan He has for our lives.
- C. We should make it a point to pray “Thy will be done,” just as Jesus directed us.
- D. This is also why people who believe the Bible have traditionally been pro-life rather than pro-choice. We believe that life is sacred and not ours to take.
1. Our culture first devalued sex. Then we devalued the life of the resulting unwanted children. The result is a lot of hurting people.

2. Biblical values do not lead to consensus in American politics today, but there is a good non-biblical argument in favor of a pro-life stance. (Thanks to Norman Geisler, for stating the case in a similarly.)

a) Both the right to life and the right to liberty are important values for people on both sides of the issue. The controversy is really only over which value applies.

b) The question hinges on whether the unborn child (fetus) is a person. For the sake of argument, let's say the question is up in the air and we're uncertain. Maybe it's a person and maybe not. Therefore, an abortion may kill a person or it may not. We don't know.

c) There is ample reason to believe that an unborn child (or fetus) is a person. For example it has its own:

- (1) Unique genetic code at conception
- (2) Blood type is determined genetically at conception
- (3) Gender also at conception
- (4) Body: heartbeat and brainwaves can both be detected by 3 and 6 weeks, respectively.
- (5) Fingerprints by 3-4 months.

d) Many would agree that such details make the unborn child (fetus) a unique person. We must at least all agree that it seems difficult to prove otherwise. For example, can anyone really *prove conclusively* that this genetically unique creature with a blood type, gender, brainwaves, beating heart and fingerprints, is simply part of the mother's body? And no real person at all? People might believe that, but to prove it to be true is another thing entirely.

e) But let's say we still don't know, because so many remain unconvinced. What if we say the odds are 50-50 that abortion kills a person.

f) In that case it should be outlawed because it is reckless to do anything that has a 50-50 chance of killing a person. (Reasonable people don't shoot unless they are absolutely sure they won't kill an innocent human being.)

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IV. Paul's Life after Conversion 1:16b-24

A. Compare with Acts 9:20-30

B. Paul was a changed man. As it happens, the church in Jerusalem had very little to do with that. Still, they were in no way opposed to Paul. They glorified God because of him.

- C. How has the Lord transformed you?
1. Who are you because of Jesus?
 2. How is your thinking different? Your motives? Your desires? Your goals? Your behavior?
- D. One of the great weaknesses of the church in the USA today is the lack of apparent transformation in the lives of Christians.
1. We cannot settle for anything less than a life-changing faith.
 2. Horizon Central cannot be a part of the problem; we must be part of the solution.

Conclusions:

- We've seen how God radically impacted and transformed Paul. His life was completely changed as a result of what did to him.
 - He was no longer the person he used to be.
 - He was now fully believed that God had a plan for his life, a plan that would bring glory to God and not to Paul.
 - We also see that God was fulfilling that plan in Paul's life as the years went on.
- Now let's examine ourselves:
 - Consider who you would be if you did not know Jesus.
 - Consider how God might want to use you.
 - Begin to pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done" with respect to God's will in your own life. He wants to bring glory to Himself through you.
 - Be ready to submit your thinking, motives, desires, goals and behavior all to Him.
 - Again, one of the great weaknesses of the American church today is the lack of apparent transformation in the lives of Christians.
 - We cannot settle for anything less than a life-changing faith.
 - Horizon Central cannot be a part of the problem; we must be part of the solution.