

# AM Galatians 1:11-24

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Preacher: Mr Thomson McKenzie

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, and it's pleased to be back with you this morning. I see we've got a screen today rather than the visor, so hopefully people can hear us okay.

I'm Thompson McKenzie, and for anybody who wasn't here last month, I'm a student, a second year student at Edinburgh Theological Seminary. The intimations is tonight's service will be at 6pm as normal, and it will be led by myself.

Wednesday at 7pm in the Lower Hall, we will have prayer meeting and Bible study, and that will be led by William Kenyon. Next Lord's Day at 11 o'clock and at 6pm, the services will be taken by the Reverend Robert Dale.

The psalmist says, clap your hands all people, shout to loud songs of joy.

Well, we can't sing and certainly can't shout and clap our hands at the moment, but we can listen, we can join together in worship, and we can listen to the glorious words of the psalmist in Psalm 148.

[ 1 : 18 ] So let's praise the Lord for the wonders of his creation, and just take time to reflect in Psalm 148, and it's from the Scottish Psalter.

The Lord of the psalmist in Psalm 148. The Lord of heaven confess, on high his glory praise, He let all angels bless, in all his armies praise.

Him glorifies, in all his kings and glory praise, Him glorifies, in all his kings and glory praise, From God your beings are, In their four famous names, You all created where, When he the world must say, And from that place where, And from that place, And from that place, And from the place, Where, From that place, And from the place, Where he's still be, Like his degree, You'll come on us. Praise God from earth below, He triumphs and he gives Our faith, God's wind and snow Who may come and he gives Praise ye his name Praise ye his name His greatest name Praise ye his name His greatest name He's low and tall He's small and tame All things that dream or fly Ye kings ye bongers from All princes be our high Both men and her tinge young

In young and old In young and old They sought his name In young and old They sought his name Chant my chisped Should he even and stone Oh, let God's name be praised Above all earth and sky For he his saints hath raised And set their horn on high He knows that we are He knows that we are Israel's race He knows that we are Israel's race In turn is grace The Lord is here

[ 5 : 09 ] Let us pray Let us pray Let us bow our heads in prayer Father, we adore you We bring our lives before you And we come humbly to honour you in love, awe and obedience Though we love you It seems because you first loved us That when we were far from you And ignorant of your love for us You were working out your plan for our salvation While we were still dead By our life of sin and fallen nature You gave your son up Your son up To death That he may pay the penalty Of our sin That in his death We may be freed from the punishment The sin in our lives deserved You are a just God And you demand payment

But you are also a merciful God And in Christ's resurrection We may be brought to a new life In your son That through his intercession We once again May be united in a relationship With you, our Father We thank you for your grace So freely bestowed upon us That our new life in Christ Is by faith alone Not by any Not earned by any deeds Of human kindness Or by ritualistic acts Father we bring our sins before you Now and ask for forgiveness of our sins Of thought And of deed We ask for forgiveness of our sins Through your son Jesus Christ As an earthly father Endeavors to care for his children How much more will your perfect love Provide for us We see in the nature around us How you provide for The creatures of your creation How much more Will you provide for us That you created in your image As you created us in your image Lord Let us bring glory to you And not dishonour We thank you for your provision For our needs on a daily basis And we have the

assurance You will provide what is required To meet your plan for us Lord we pray from your world Far from you Torn apart in suffering Because of our sinful nature We pray for the divisions In our society For rich and poor For privilege We the exploited Give us a heart to care To stand up for the rights Of the oppressed It can be easy To side with the powerful And do what others think is right But let us stand Lord For those Who cannot stand For themselves And in doing so Let us be a witness For your love And care For all mankind We pray for this nation Lord That it will stay united In these Strange days That we will not Become divided Over Covid That we will Be prepared To Make the Necessary Sacrifices Of Freedom To keep This under control And to protect Our fellow man We pray for your governments In Westminster And Edinburgh That They may be guided By you That they

Will operate Not in party lines At these times But On what is required For the people Of the nation And we pray for our Queen As the head of state Who continues to serve us In these days We've heard this morning Lord About David Bennett And His life of service That he and his wife Has gave to you And we Bring their memory Before you And we give you Thanks For the work That they have done We pray for their family In their time of grief But as Christians We have an eternal hope That we will be With you in glory Through your son Jesus Christ Who died for us We bring these prayers Before you In the name Of Jesus Christ Your son Amen

[10:17] Excuse me Just a minute Boys and girls It's rather warm in here This morning Boys and girls How many of you Are good at waiting For things?

Are you as good At waiting for things? Or do you get impatient? If you're told You need to wait For something Do you find it easy?

No Neither do I I find it very hard Even at my age And I've had plenty Of practice Even from waiting For a train Although not in these days I become impatient Really quickly If it's delayed And I'm standing there On the platform Walking up and down Wishing that it would Come quickly But you can't wish The train to get Any faster The train will arrive When it arrives Nothing that I do Will change it It's like waiting For your birthday Or Christmas To arrive So you can open All the presents You can wish And wish You can get more And more excited Who gets excited For Christmas? Oh yeah Nobody? Well somebody's Getting excited For Christmas That's good It's only three months away It's only 13 weeks From Friday Because Friday's my birthday So it still arrives Each year At the same time No matter how quickly We want it to come round But you know Boys and girls There's a story In the Bible Way way back In time In the book of Genesis Where somebody Was really impatient He and his wife Didn't want to wait The man's name Was Abraham And his wife Was Sarah And they were Really Really Really old Probably even older Than your grandparents And they really Wanted a son But they couldn't Have one But God said He would give them A son And they just Had to wait But they didn't Want to wait

But they did Try to trust God So at first They waited And they waited And they waited But nothing happened So they thought Perhaps We should go about Solving this For ourselves Now If you're like me Nine times out of ten When I try and do Something for myself It doesn't work out well In fact It's not nine times Out of ten It's all the time If we say to God It's okay We'll do it our way It never goes well The Bible's full of stories Like that But we can share them Another day But Sarah And Abraham Did Eventually have a child They finally realised That God would do What he promised They just had to wait And had a son

[13:40] Called Isaac So at times We may think We don't need God And that's not good Because things Don't work out well But if we trust in God Things will Happen as he promised God knows The whole story And puts it together At the right time In the right order So sometimes We need to wait In God's timing And that's really important He says We need to be patient And to wait for him So remember Although Abraham And Sarah Had to wait For the birth Of their son Isaac God did As he promised And if we're waiting For something From God He will keep His promises We have to be patient And wait Thanks very much Let's just have a quick

Prayer boys and girls Father we bring before you Our young people In the congregation Today And from across Your church May they grow In their knowledge Of you May they learn Patience to wait On your timing May they learn That you have a plan For each of us And that you Will guide us And show us That plan And fulfil that plan When the time Is right So bless our young people In the coming weeks And just be with them And help them To learn about you On a daily basis These things we ask Through Christ your son Amen This morning's readings Are taken From Ezekiel Chapter 18 Verse 19 to 24 And from Galatians So we'll read first

From the Old Testament Ezekiel Chapter 18 Verses 19 to 24 Yet you say Why should not The son suffer For the iniquity Of the father When the son Has done What is just And right And has been Careful to observe All my Statutes He shall Surely live The soul Who sins Shall die The son Shall not Suffer For the iniquity Of the father Nor the Father suffer For the iniquity Of the son The righteousness Of the righteous Shall be upon himself And the wickedness Of the wicked Shall be upon himself But if a wicked Person Turns away

From all His sins That he has Committed And keeps All my Statutes And does What is just And right He shall Surely live He shall Not die None of the Transgressions That he has Committed Shall be Remembered Against him For the Righteousness That he Righteousness That he Has done He shall Live Have I Any pleasure In the death Of the wicked Declares the Lord God And not Rather He should Turn From his Way And live But when a Righteous person Turns away From his Righteousness And does Injustice And does The same Abominations That the Wicked Person Does Shall He Live None of The righteous Deeds That he Has done Shall be Remembered For the Treachery Of which He is Guilty And the Sin he Has committed For them He shall Die The New Testament Reading is From Galatians Chapter 1 Verse 10 To 24 Galatians Chapter 1 Verse 10 To 24 For For am I Now seeking The approval Of man Or of God Or am I Trying to Please man If I Were still Trying to Please man I would Not be A servant Of Christ For I Would Have you Know Brothers That the Gospel That was Preached By me Is not Man's Gospel For I Did not Receive It From Any Man Nor was I Taught It But I Received It Through a Revelation Of Jesus Christ For you Have heard Of my Former Life In Judaism How I Persecuted The Church Of God Violently And tried [18:43] To destroy It And I Was Advancing In Judaism Beyond Many Of my Own Age Among My People So Extremely Zealous Was I For the Traditions Of my Father Fathers Sorry But when He Who had Set me Apart Before I Was Born And he Called me By his Grace Was Pleased To reveal His Son To me In order That I Might Preach Him Among The Gentiles I Did Not Immediately Consult With Anyone Nor Did I Nor Did I Go Up To Jerusalem To Those Who Were Apostles Before Me But I Went Away Into Arabia And Returned Again To Damascus Then After Three Years I Went Up To Jerusalem To Visit Cephas And Remained With Them Fifteen Days But I Saw None Of The Apostles Except James The Lord's Brother And What I Am Writing To You Before God I Do Not Lie Then I Went Into

The Regions Of Syria And Cilicia And It Was Still Unknown In Person To The Churches Of Judea That Are In Christ They Only Were Hearing It Said He Who Used To Persecute Us Is Now Preaching The Faith He Once Tried To Destroy And The Glorified God Because Of Me Thanks Be To God For The God Has Given Us Those Who Follow In His Ways So Psalm 1 And We Can Read The Words It Is Their Song Psalm 1 There

Is The Man Who Jugs Away From Where The Wicked Go Who Does Not Stand In Sinner's Path Or Sit With Those To Love Instead He Find God's Holy Lord His Joy And Great Divide He Makes The Precepts Of The Lord His Study Day And Night He Prospers

Ever Like A Tree That Planted By Our Sea And In You Season Gilds Its Fruit His Fees Are Always Green Not So The Wicked They Are Like A Child That Will Is Will The Will The Will The Sand When Judgment Comes For With Our Righteous Stay It Is

The Lord Who Who Sees And Knows The Righteous Go Whereas The Way Of Wicked Death The Lord Will Over The Throne Let's Let's us pray Lord May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight We ask through Christ our Redeemer and our Lord Amen.

[23:44] This week we are going to continue our look at the letter to the Galatians from Paul In the letter we hear Paul's response to the false teachers who are questioning the gospel that was preached by Paul and attacking both the gospel and Paul himself In the first part of the chapter of chapter 1 Paul has outlined how he was divinely called as an apostle and how there is only one gospel which he preached. The good news is that salvation is by faith alone which we are brought to by God's grace. There is no place for the work of man in his search to save himself nor a need to follow rituals and customs as the false teachers are teaching the Galatians.

Paul continues with the question about people pleasing or God's blessing or God's blessing or God's serving In verse 1 Paul highlights his mission was divine in origin and in verse 11 he asserts his message is also divine and is no people pleaser and is no people pleaser He says He says for I would have you know brothers that the gospel that was preached by me was not man's gospel and in verse 12 he states and in verse 12 he states that it came by revelation from Jesus Christ himself Paul continues on his quest to defend himself and God's gospel and you might wonder why he is

defending himself and it is simply because if the messenger cannot be trusted neither can the message so Paul uses his testimony to vindicate himself and God's gospel and its power to transform lives he starts by how he had received the gospel from Christ and personal testimony is a strong way of confirming the facts both in biblical times and now both in the life of Paul and in each of our lives today think about it what's more powerful

I was told by a man who had heard from others about the events that happened in Jerusalem or I tell you I testify that this was my experience the first sounds a little like gossip tittle tattle the second has a degree of urgency about it and Paul immediately emphasizes his claim that there is nothing secondary about his Christian experience he got his message direct from Christ Paul then goes on to simply give his testimony no fancy theological phrases no doctrine, no jargon just simple language that will be understood by the common people Paul simply describes the profound changes in his life we are no different telling of the changes in our lives as our best argument for the truth of the gospel we all have a testimony yes some will impact more than others especially when like Paul the change was against all expectation or any apparent reason but we all have a story to tell and a duty to tell it and this was Paul's situation in his letter to the Galatians and it wasn't a one off event for Paul we it's recorded that he gave his testimony in Acts 22 and 26 and I'm sure if it's recorded twice then it probably happened a lot more he's using it to refute the claims of those who wish to undermine him and to undermine God's message he wants it all to point to God the God of amazing grace

Paul records his life before his conversion in verse 13 and 14 remember he was Saul Saul the Pharisee the fanatic who was all out in persecuting God's church he rooted out and hounded groups of Christian believers wherever they were he sought the destruction of God's church in Acts 3 we learn of how he conducted house to house searches for believers and how he campaigned for the death penalty to King Agrippa for Christians he was such a zealot for the traditions of his fathers that his progress in study and as a Pharisee he was beyond many of his age but why this zealous persecution?

was it out of fear of this new group? possibly although at this stage unlikely the numbers of Christians were still small and many seen it as just another sect of Judaism rather than a separate entity one of the reasons that for his zealous persecution may have been the message of Jesus Messiah was against mainstream Jewish teachings which the Pharisees were trying to preserve the Pharisees were the Jews were expecting a glorious king that would come as a Messiah to free their nation and yet the Christians preached a Messiah crucified on a tree a Messiah crucified on a tree was an anathema to Pharisees whose whose emphasis was on honour and position as a sign of righteousness expecting the Messiah to come as a king in glory to free them instead they are faced with Christians preaching that a person admittedly cursed by the law as seen in the nature of his death had been raised by God from the dead and was being acclaimed in glory in Deuteronomy 21 verses 22 to 23 we read and if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death and you hang him on a tree his body shall not remain all night on a tree but he shall bury him the same day for a hanged man is cursed by God so

[ 30 : 49 ] Christ Jesus is seen along with all who are crucified has been cursed by God the tree is seen as a tree a pole or a cross any wooden structure crucifixion was seen as a form of hanging therefore Paul and other Orthodox Jews Jews could not stomach this Christian message the Messiah the saviour and deliverer of his people suffered a death where he was cursed by God he came not as a triumphant conquering hero or as one to be served but in Mark 10 45 we read the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many for many rather than the glorified conqueror of earthly powers which the Jews awaited we have a Messiah who died in humiliation and agony on a wooden cross taking our sins the sin of all mankind through all ages for their salvation his glory came in bearing that sin for us and in his victory over death the penalty for our sins that we may be free

Paul in these verses demonstrates the falsehoods of the troublemakers and their desire to introduce Jewish customs and religious obligations Paul had been there and bought the t-shirt he has been the zealous Jew following customs and mosaic teachings of the law yet he had not made himself right with God and here is a warning for ourselves today there are many who are religious there are many who see themselves as good people there are many who do good works but are not right with God they have no intimate knowledge or relationship with God our Father, our Christ, our

Saviour Paul's testimony to this point shows the futility of man's self-reliance but in the next few verses

Paul changes his emphasis from him being the focus to God being the focus and how he has been preparing Paul throughout his life for service and the fulfilment of his purpose in verse 15 and 16 we read but he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him amongst the Gentiles and I did not immediately consult with anyone God is now at the centre of Paul's life the reason for his being God created him God's mercy had found him and God's grace had called him the reversal of Paul's experience moving from being a man looking for his own salvation to one who sees his salvation in Christ alone leads to his frustration with the Galatians who are being led astray by false teachers if we compare Paul's experience via the Galatian actions we see Paul a Jew of high standing a Pharisee turns from his preoccupation with a distinctive Jewish life with all its rules and regulations he turns from that to serve the risen Christ the Galatians were turning from the freedom of our life the freedom of our life focused on Christ to a life preoccupied with a Jewish life way of life burdened with rules and obligations they are going their own way from a life of freedom to one of bondage and death in verse 16 Paul is clear in God's plan for him and for each of us in different measure it reads he was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him amongst the Gentiles in verse 15 and 16 Paul words sort of mirror those of the psalmist in Psalm 139 just a few of the lines from that psalm are

Lord you have searched me and you know me where can I go from your spirit all the days all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be God knows everything about us he is everywhere around us and he has a plan to use us these two verses that Paul wrote in Galatians highlight that there was no way that Paul's conversion or the gospel he preached was a product of his own thinking his conversion was the direct opposite of where he was going Paul did not sit down and weigh up the pros and cons of following Christ it was not a carefully pondered business deal if it were he would have remained with the Pharisees and the privileges his position brought no Paul sees that God's sovereign grace was working his life before he was aware of it God had set him apart from birth the grace of God had been shaping him all his life for what God was going to lead him to do this was not Paul's plan it was God's

Paul when he looks at himself in the light of his conversion sees himself unworthy of his calling he writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 and 9 for I am the least of the apostles unworthy to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God in the words of Alistair Begg the wonder of God's saving worth is that he comes to unlikely people in unlikely contexts to perform unbelievable transformations so that he so that he God will receive all of the glory when hearts are changed God uses the most unlikely characters to testify to his glory he doesn't use great leaders and presidents but raised up a farm boy whose only desire was to be a professional baseball player who heard the gospel preached as a 16 year old in a country Bible meeting and went on to counsel 9 presidents can anybody think of who I am thinking of?

[ 38 : 03 ] or speaking of? Billy Graham Billy Graham an ordinary dairy farmer son who went on to preach to millions and bring people to Christ for some 60 years he doesn't use great leaders from great backgrounds he uses common people God uses ordinary everyday men and women filling them with his Holy Spirit to share his message if we look at the other apostles we see the same sequence of events Jesus calls not the great and the good to follow him and become fishers of men there are no princes or rich people who are looked up to by society and his apostles Jesus calls rough fishermen he calls Matthew a tax collector despised by society and he says he will build his church on the flawed character of Simon Peter who promises never to desert him and hours later denies knowing him three times

God takes fallen sinful people like you and I bestows his grace upon them and uses them for his glory and to spread his gospel and the grace of the gospel at work in our lives is the most powerful argument that we can have for the reality of the gospel here is highlighted the difference between the Christians and others in society the Christian has more than an intellectual knowledge of God and Christ we have a personal relationship Paul and many Christians are aware of God before their conversion Paul was a religious man seeking to praise God and earn his salvation through his own efforts he was a Pharisee zealous for the traditions of his fathers but only came to relationship with God and accepting Christ as his Lord and Saviour to have knowledge and to believe in God and to believe in God and to believe in Jesus Christ is not enough even Satan does that he believes in

God and in the power of his son rather we must make an active decision to have Christ in our lives and have a personal relationship with him in our natural state we are sinful far from God but God from the fall of Adam has had a plan for our redemption and he has worked that plan out throughout human history to the death of his son on the cross and with God's grace we must make a decision to accept Christ as our Saviour and so be saved by faith alone

Paul demonstrates that in his righteousness as a Pharisee that no one is so good that they don't need the saving grace of the Gospel nor is anyone so bad that they cannot receive the Gospel we look at Paul's life in verse 13 and also in the book of Acts and we see how bad his life could be and we look at the thief on the cross with Christ in Luke 23 verse 42 and 43 you read and he said Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom and he said to him truly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise we all require the saving grace of God and we can all receive his saving grace Paul continues with his testimony in verse 16 and 17 to rebuke the accusations that the Gospel he preached had simply been copied from the apostles in Jerusalem

Paul gives three quick points to dispel this accusation first he couldn't have been indoctrinated by Jerusalem apostles as he initially went and spent time in Arabia these were hidden years of quietness no doubt vital for listening to God and reorientating his preaching Paul needed time to grow and deepen his faith for the trials he would endure when he did visit Jerusalem it was for 15 days little time to be indoctrinated by the apostles about a man made Gospel he also only met two apostles Cephas and James Jesus' brother finally his God given Gospel was not different from the message given to the other apostles by Jesus we hear of meeting Peter in verse 18 James in verse 19 and in verse 22 we hear of the churches of Judea praise God for what God had done for Paul and for the message he had given Paul if it had been short in content as the troublemakers had said surely

Peter or James or others in the churches would have pointed it out verse 24 verse 24 ends the chapter in a triumphant note not for Paul but for God and the glorified God because of me glory was not because of any work that Paul had done but the transformation God had brought about in Paul and the use he had made of Paul if we reword verse 23 he took the persecutor and turned him into the preacher of the faith he once tried to destroy in Paul's case the change was dramatic it was real and undeniable it was a witness to the power of God's grace and the Gospel message God can transform lives against all odds in fact he loves to do so because it is powerful proof of the truth of the Gospel the good news and remember

[ 44 : 42 ] God desires union with us giving his only son that we may be saved our lives and our testimonies also are a powerful justification for the reality of the Gospel we are to let it shine that others see it and glorify our Father in Heaven Matthew 5 verse 16 reads let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven John Newton author of Amazing Grace composed his own epitaph shortly before his death it reads John Newton Allison once an infidile and libertine a servant of slaves from Africa was by the rich tooid of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ preserved restored pardoned and appointed to preach to them he had long labour to destroy

Newton's life was Life was a powerful argument for the truth and the power of the gospel. And the best argument for or against the gospel message is Christians themselves.

A superficial, hypocritical life is a strong case against the claim that the gospel saves. But a transformed life, lived to the glory of God, is a powerful testimony to the truth of the gospel and God's grace.

So, in the words of Matthew 5, 16, Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Amen. Let's finish our service this morning with another piece of music.

[ 46 : 55 ] It's a hymn by Peter Townsend called The Power of the Cross. Let's just take some time to reflect on the sacrifice and suffering of Christ as he pays the price for our sin.

He becomes sin for us and we, through that, stand forgiven at the cross. Nothing else alone is required than to repent and accept Christ as our Saviour.

So, final piece of music. The power of the cross. Amen. The power of the cross.

The power of the cross. The power of the cross. Christ we care.

Christ we care. For us. For us. The power of the cross. The power of the cross. It's power of the cross. For the wrath.

[ 48 : 27 ] We stand forgiven at the cross. Oh, to see the pain.

Written on your face Bearing the awesome weight of sin Every bitter thought Every evil deed  
Crowning your blood-stained brow This upon the cross Christ became For us For the wrath we  
stand For given at the cross Now the daylight flees  
Now the ground beneath Wakes as its maker Bouts his head Curtains torn in two Did our race to life  
Finish the victory cry This upon the cross Christ became Christ became For us For the wrath we  
stand For given at the cross Oh to sing my name Written in the wounds  
For through your suffering I am free Death is cross to death Life is mine to live Worn to your selfless  
love This upon the cross Christ became Christ became For us For us For us For the wrath we stand  
For given at the cross This upon the cross Son of God  
Son of God Wait for us What a love What a cost We stand For given at the cross May the grace of  
the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Go with you all And the  
Christian said Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen