

Galatians 1:11-24

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to Galatians now, to chapter 1, Galatians chapter 1, and that section we read, the second section we read, from verse 11 through to the end.

Now, as I say, we've been looking at this chapter, the first chapter in Galatians, as I say, I'm not planning to go through this letter at this particular juncture. But the Apostle Paul was struggling with this church, and the great struggle that he had, the great problem that he had with it was he couldn't understand how here was a church that had embraced the liberty and the freedom that is found in Jesus Christ.

And very quickly, they had begun to mingle the gospel of Jesus Christ with the old traditions and the old ways and all the rituals that was attached to Judaism.

And Paul was seeing that they were moving further and further and further away from the grace of the gospel, and they were being tied down and bogged down in all the old rituals.

And that's why later on he calls them all foolish Galatians. And he's saying, who bewitched you, who tricked you into abandoning the freedom that you knew to get entangled again with these things?

[1 : 27] Now, Paul was, wherever he went, he was so frustrated by these Judaizers that followed, who were always saying to people, look, you cannot be a Christian.

Yes, we can accept this about Jesus Christ, but it's far more. You cannot be a Christian unless you follow the dietary laws, unless you obey the loads of commands that were man-made, that were built on top of the Ten Commandments, unless the men were circumcised, unless the men were circumcised, there were all sorts of things that went back to the old days.

And they would say, you cannot be. And this used to just so get the Apostle Paul down. And some of his greatest arguments, his strongest arguments, have been to the different churches, have been in response to the way that people were being trapped by legalism.

But the wonderful thing about the Apostle Paul was, he knew all about legalism. There was no passion who was more legalistic than Saul of Tarsus before he became the Apostle Paul. He had a master's degree in legalism. He had a PhD in legalism. He was head and shoulders, really, above anybody regarding legalism. He knew it inside out.

[2 : 45] He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. He was steeped in all the Judaistic laws. He knew them back to front. But he had been saved by God's grace.

And so he became the great Apostle. And he understood where people were at. And he understood the incredible snare of legalism. And he was wanting, above all, that people would grasp the wonderful free grace of God's glorious gospel.

And that's something that we must lay hold upon as well. Because, you know, there is a legalistic aspect to our makeup. And sometimes it's hard for us to fully grasp how awesome, how wonderful, how liberating, how free God's grace is.

It's sometimes hard for us. It's hard for us. Really to live by grace. Because there's something within us. That somehow thinks, because of who we are.

And sometimes what we do. That through these things. We might not vocally say it. But somehow that God owes us something. God owes us nothing.

[4 : 01] There is nothing about us that we have inherited. There is nothing about us by birth. There is no virtue or quality within us that will in any shape or form qualify us for heaven.

Nothing that we can do. As the Apostle said, supposing I gave my body to be burned. It wouldn't do anything. The only way is through God's provision of grace in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And that is how we are to live. We are to live by grace. By grace you are saved through faith. Now that of course doesn't mean that with grace then obedience disappears.

Not at all. Still, it is an obedience of course that comes out of love. It's not an obedience. Not a legalistic obedience. It's an obedience that works by love.

Because faith works by love. So this is a totally different thing altogether. So again, Paul of course he was so outraged by what was going on.

[5 : 08] And he was saying if any person preaches anything else. We saw this before. If any person preaches anything other than the free grace of God.

In and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Let that person be accursed. If a person adds to the scripture. Or takes away from the scripture. Even supposing he says. That's what he says earlier on.

Supposing an angel from heaven came. Let that angel be cursed. That's how strongly the apostle felt about it. And so Paul then goes on to give his own testimony.

And one of the reasons he's giving his testimony. He's trying to defend his position. Because some of the people. We've looked at this already. Thought he's not a real apostle. And he was showing yes I am.

I am as much an apostle as Peter and John. Because one of the qualifications of an apostle was seeing the risen Christ. That's why the apostle Paul said elsewhere.

[6 : 06] That he was an apostle born out of time. In other words. He didn't see the risen Christ on earth. Because Jesus only revealed himself in his resurrection state.

To his followers. But Jesus revealed himself from heaven. As a resurrected glorious Jesus to the apostle.

And that was a necessary sighting. A necessary revelation in order to be an apostle. One of the qualifications for the apostle. So Paul gives his testimony.

And as we read in Acts chapter 9. It was a very dramatic confession that the apostle had. And of course sometimes people think that to become a Christian.

That you have to have an equally dramatic conversion to the apostle Paul. Well I would say that the dramatic conversions are sort of in the minority.

[7 : 07] The vast majority of people come to faith. Everybody comes to faith in the same way. It is by faith. You are born again. That you receive the Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

You come in repentance to the Lord Jesus Christ. Even although you might not be realizing what's going on. But it is very often people will say that. As far as they see it from their side.

That it was a process. And very often people will say like the blind man. We have said it so often. I once was blind. But now I see. There is a growing awareness.

A realization. Coming to understand something. Of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Coming to an assurance of that faith. Some people will have dramatic conversions.

Some people will be converted just like that. And will have gone from darkness to light. In the most amazing way. But many people. It appears that from their side.

[8 : 09] Much slower. Or much more gradual. And Paul kind of sums up what has happened to him. In verse 23. Where he says. They only were hearing it said. He who used to persecute us.

Is now preaching the faith. He once tried to destroy. So as Paul highlights his life. He highlights two or three things. And the first thing that really we highlight here.

Is the wickedness. Of Paul's past life. Now everybody has a past. And that's one of the things. Of life. Everybody in life.

When I talk about a past. Everybody in life. Will have done things. And said things. And thought things. That they wish they hadn't. Don't believe that. And if there's any person here.

Who says of their life. You know. I've never done anything. Never said anything. I ever regret. Then I would say. You've got a very very hard conscience. Because most people.

[9 : 04] Even people who. Have no interest in the Christian faith. Are often troubled. By things that they've said. And things that they've done. And such like. Well the apostle was somebody.

Who had regrets. More than most. You put yourself. Into the apostle's shoes. Here is this man. Who has now. Got the most incredible.

Passion and love. For the Lord Jesus Christ. I wonder how many nights. He would reflect. On the people he killed. The men and women. That he.

Rough handled. And chained. And threw into prison. Because he gave all his energy. All his life. To killing. To murdering.

To imprisoning. Men and women. Who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. And he had to live with that. That is why Paul. On another occasion. Says. That he was the chief of sinners.

[10:01] Now. Again. All of us. At different times. When we're convicted. Of our sin. We will say like Paul. You know. I'm the chief of sinners. When the Lord opens our heart to us.

A wee bit. And we see something. Of what we're really like. And we say. Oh woe is me. Like the. Like the prophet Isaiah. Woe is me. For I'm undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. But. The apostle. The apostle. Was at another level. All together. And he had blood. In his hands. And he had a past. That was quite awful.

But yet. One of the wonderful things. About the apostle. Is this. He gloried. Despite his past. He gloried. In the forgiveness. That he had received. From God. And. That is why the apostle. With a past. Like his. Was able to talk about. A contentment.

[10:57] In all things. He was able to talk. About peace of conscience. Because God. In Christ. Had wiped away. All his sin. Had washed the slate clean.

And so. Paul was able. To glory. In where he was. Despite. The awful. Things. That he had done. And really.

It is only. Somebody. Who knows. Through forgiveness. Of sin. In Jesus Christ. That can really know. Peace of conscience. So. The apostle. Was. Somebody. As we say. Who persecuted. The church. But. The worst of it all. This is why. He really said. He was the chief of sinners. Is that he sinned. In the knowledge of light. Paul wasn't somebody. Who had been born. In another country. Paul was somebody. Who was born. Of Jewish parentage. Who had all the privileges.

[11:55] Somebody who grew up. With the word. He had. In fact. He had sat under. The best teacher. He had sat at the feet. Of Gamaliel. The best tutor. Paul.

Saul then. Knew the scriptures. Inside out. And if any person. Should have recognized. Jesus Christ. And recognized. The cause of Christ.

It was Saul of Tashasar. The apostle Paul. So his sin. Was all the worse. Because he was sinning. In the knowledge. Of light. So the two things.

That Paul highlights. About his former life. And the first of these. Is like in verse 13. We've touched on it already. For you have heard. Of my former life. In Judaism. How I persecuted.

The church of God. Violently. And tried. To destroy it. The first meeting. We have of Paul. Or Saul.

[12:49] As he was first. Was at the execution. Of Stephen. Remember those who were. Stoning Stephen. They laid their clothes. That would be their outer garments. At the feet. Of this young man.

Saul. And so. They did that. In order to give them. More freedom. To throw the. Throw the stones. And rather than. Being filled with revulsion. And disgust.

At what he was seeing. The execution. In the most horrific way. Of this beautiful. Christian Stephen. Whose very face. Shone. With something of.

The beauty. Of Jesus Christ. Because it tells us. As they looked. On his face. That his face shone. Stephen's face shone. In the face of death. But they still. Battered him to death.

With stones. And as they did so. And they laid. The clothes. At the feet of Saul. The fires of. Hell.

[13:43] Burned. In Saul's heart. It was like. Something ignited. And he thought. Yeah. This is how you deal. With a Christian. This.

Is how. Every follower. Of the Lord. Jesus Christ. It was like. Something happened to him. At that moment. And so. Saul. Became this. Violent. Hater.

And persecutor. Of the Christian faith. And you know. It's still going on. To this day. Because all over this world. Christians. Are suffering.

Appallingly. Terribly. And often. In the name of religion. You know. It's an extraordinary thing. How much goes on. In the name of religion. A lot has gone off.

Gone on. Say for instance. In the. In the fires. Of persecution. Through communism. Which is atheism. Against. Against. The Christian faith. Which went on. In places like.

[14:40] Russia. And Romania. And so on. Terrible. Atrocities. Against. The Christian. But also. In the name of religion. Because you'd go to the Middle East. Today. And all these awful.

Executions. And stonings. And beheadings. And beheadings. And crucifixions. Towards Christians. All in the Middle East. In the name of religion. And it's in the name of religion.

The Spanish Inquisition. Ireland. It's in the name of religion. All these things. But we don't even need to leave our own country. If you've ever stood.

In. Greyfriars. Churchyard. In Edinburgh. And going down to the grass market. Where many of the covenanters. Were executed.

And hung. There's a great monument. In Greyfriars. Churchyard. To the 22,000. Men. Women. And children. That were shot.

[15 : 36] Beheaded. Hanged. Drowned. Stoned. Executed. For their love of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was here in Scotland. In the 16. In the end of the 1600s.

In the covenanting times. So again. In the name of religion. These were Christians. That gave their life.

Many of them preachers. Like James Guthrie. And Hugh McHale. And Richard Cameron. There's things. You remember how. Even like the two markets. Drowned in the Solway.

At the stake. One a young girl. The other an older woman. That was the order of the day. Because they loved the Lord Jesus Christ. That was here in Scotland.

And it's part of our history. That is by and large forgotten. Or distorted in our history books. But an integral part. And as they say. The blood of the martyrs.

[16 : 33] Is the seed of the church. And rather than eradicate. The Christian faith. The Christian faith grew. And became stronger. And stronger. And stronger. And unfortunately today.

We are in a place. Where once again. It is. It is under assault. In a huge way. Well anyway. Saul was this type of persecutor.

He hated. The Christian. But the other thing. That Saul highlights. In verse 14. And I was advancing. In Judaism. Beyond many of my own age.

Among my people. So extremely. Extremely. Extremely zealous. Was I. For the traditions. Of my father. Here Saul is saying. You know. I wanted to be the best.

Jew possible. He would have been. An incredibly. Arrogant. And proud man. Because. That was the nature.

[17 : 30] Of those. Who were striving. To be the best. Because. They were filled. With self-righteousness. And they all thought. That God.

Was well pleased. With them. A classic example. Of the Pharisee. Who prayed in the temple. And remember. His prayer. It was all about. Telling God. How good he was.

Lord. I've done this. And I've done that. I've given. And I. I'll tell you Lord. What I haven't done. The bad things. And I'll tell you.

All the good things. I've done. And Lord. I thank you. That I'm not like that. Sinner. Over there. Proud. Arrogant. Did he go home justified?

No. He was justified. In his own heart. In his own thinking. But he wasn't justified. Before God. That was a man. Riddled with legalism. Riddled with self-importance.

[18 : 24] Riddled with self-righteousness. And that's the kind of passion. Saul of Tarshish was. And he thought. He was the best. He strove. To be the best. And in his day.

The hierarchy Jews. Would be looking at Saul. And they would say. Hey look at that man. That. That's a really good man. So.

That's. That's. The old Saul. But you know what I love above all. Is in verse 15. Here we have. Verse. Verse 13. The violent.

Persecuting Paul. Saul. Verse 14. The self-righteous. Legalistic. Saul. Verse 15. Read it. But when 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.

[19 : 21] Among the Gentiles. See. For all these. Early years. Of Saul's life. To all intents. And purposes. He hated.

The Lord Jesus Christ. With a passion. Little did he realize. That just down the road. Few years later. He was going to become. The greatest defender.

Of the faith. The faith. That he once. Tried to destroy. He now. Had a passion. To preach. And what. Saul. Has come to realize.

Is this. And this is what we love. This wasn't. A spur of the moment. Decision. By the Lord. God. Saying. You know. I think. I'll make this man.

Saul. One of my own. No. He said. Way back. Before ever. I was. God. Had set me apart. For this work. Oh yes.

[20 : 14] There were years. That were lost. Years. Where I was going. Totally. In the wrong direction. Years. Where I hated. The very name. Of Jesus. But all the time.

God. Had his eye upon me. His purposes. For me. And in due time. At his time. He is going to come. And reveal. Himself.

To me. And this is what I love. Is that. God was using. All. Paul's. Or Saul's. Previous. Experiences. To work.

A. For his conversion. And B. For his future ministry. And you know. That's. I love that. Because it means to us. That all our life.

You know. Sometimes we say. Oh my life. Oh. If I could relive my life. All these things. And particularly. Particularly if you become a Christian. Later on in life. And you say. Oh. Look at all the time. I wasted all the things.

[21 : 12] That. You know. God is going to use. All these things. It's not that God. Accepts your sin. In any shape or form.

But God. Uses. Everything. Even the bad things. Even the sinful things. And he turns it all around. And he makes it part of his purposes.

For your good. For his glory. For the furtherance. And the development of the gospel. God is always. Winning. Even although we don't realize it.

You look at Joseph. Joseph is a classic example. Of where. You would say. Everything has gone wrong. Joseph's brothers. Tried to get rid of him. And as far as they knew.

They had. But God was overruling. Because God was going to use. Joseph. As a great deliverer. Of his people. But in order to be that.

[22 : 07] Deliverer of his people. He had to go to Egypt. And God allowed. And permitted. The evil of the brothers. And yet. He worked. All things together.

For good. Not only in Joseph's life. But also for the good. Of his people. The apostles. And acts. Are saying that very thing. That.

Those who tried. To oppose Jesus. Served. Only to further. God's purposes. Isn't that wonderful? Those who tried.

To oppose. The work. Oppose Jesus. Only serve. To further. God's purposes. And at the end of the day.

Every single. Opposition. Will actually. Pale away. And we will see that God. Has worked everything. Together. For good.

[23 : 01] And so for. The apostle Paul. God was pleased. To reveal his son. In order to me. And that was a moment. Saul would never forget. All his pride.

All his bravance. All his self-righteousness. Crumbled in a moment. When he saw something. Of the glory. And the power. And the majesty. Of Jesus.

Who are you Lord? Oh Lord. Saul. You. Have been. Persecuting me. What an awful moment. And yet. What a glorious moment.

For the apostle. And you know. When you look at all this. We have to say. Ask ourselves a question. Why did the Lord. Save Paul.

Or Saul. Why did he save you. And me. You know what it tells us. For his own. Good pleasure. I find that.

[23 : 55] Incredible. That's us. That's as far as we can go. That's what God tells us. That his purposes. And his plans.

And his salvation. Is for his own. Good pleasure. And you know. We have to leave it there. That it pleases.

God. So to do. And if that's not humbling. To us. I don't know what is. That God. Has taken pleasure. In saving you.

It pleases him. He delights in it. His people. Alone. Are his portion. In this world. And it's wonderful. But as we.

Highlighted already. The Lord is working. Everything. For good. In the bulletin. There's a quote. From. C.S. Lewis. And.

[24 : 49] It was C.S. Lewis. When he was in school. He talks about this. In the book. Surprised by Joyce. It's kind of. Autobiography. He had a teacher.

Who was a. Raging atheist. But this man. Was. Brilliant. At logic. And brilliant. At. Debating. Furious. Debater.

And wonderful. At setting out arguments. And he saw something. Of the brilliance. Of C.S. Lewis. In school. And he took him under his wing. Because C.S. Lewis. The young C.S. Lewis. Was atheistic. In his own thinking. And he saw here. A kind of prodigy. And he. He taught Lewis. How to build arguments. And how to break down. Opposition.

What was God doing. With C.S. Lewis. He was using this. Atheistic teacher. To teach.

[25 : 43] Lewis. The most. Brilliant way. Of applying logic. And defending an argument. And then he saved.

C.S. Lewis. And C.S. Lewis. Became. In the 20th century. One of the greatest. Defenders. And apologists. Of the Christian faith. Being taught.

By a. Raging atheist. See how God takes. All the glory. To himself. He works. Everything. Together. For good. And that's one of the. Wonderful things.

That the scripture. Teaches us. Over and over. And over again. And that's why we mustn't ever write off anybody. There's no point in looking at somebody. And saying. Oh well. There's no point speaking to him.

Or to her. Have you ever thought. Oh. Is there any point praying. Anymore. For. That person. I wonder.

[26 : 36] I wonder in the church. Were people actually praying. For Saul of Tarshish. Because remember. Ananias. When the Lord told Ananias. Ananias. I want you to go and see Saul.

Saul. I've heard terrible things. About that man. That's a man who's persecuting the church. Oh no. The Lord says. He's a chosen vessel.

For me. He is going to become a great preacher. Are we continuing. To witness. To work.

To pray. We don't know. Who the Lord. Might have his hand upon. And might be. There might be in this town. People today.

Who mock the Christian faith. Who laugh at the Christian faith. Who are atheistic in their thoughts. And the Lord is saying over them. They're going to be mine.

[27 : 31] I have set them apart. Time hasn't come yet. So we need to pray. We need to. We mustn't write anybody off.

Because we don't know. And the wonderful thing. With regard to Saul's conversion. And his preaching was. It tells us in the very last verse. And they glorified God.

Because of me. The church. They glorified God. Lord. Lord. This is amazing. Amazing. And that's how the reaction of every single Christian ought to be.

When we see God at work. In people's lives. Let us pray. Oh Lord our God. We give thanks for. The wonderful story that we have. The testimony that we have.

Of the apostle Paul. Of the amazing grace. That was displayed in his life. And Lord we give thanks that. There are no defeats with you.

[28 : 30] That you are the God who rules and overrules everything for good. Grant us a faith to see this. And to believe it. Lord give us the insight. So that we will be delivered from ourselves.

For sometimes our wrong way of thinking. Even wrong opinions that sometimes we can have. May our lives be shaped and fashioned by your grace. Lord do us good we pray.

And all who are in need. We commit them to your care. Take us all to our homes in safety. Bless a cup of tea. Coffee in the hall after. For giving us our sin in Jesus name. Amen. Our final singing is from Psalm 86.

The Scottish Psalter. Psalm 86. From the Scottish Psalter. And we are going to sing verses 10 to 13. And the tune is Evan.

Psalm 86. That is on page 341. Psalm 86. 3, 4, 1. Because thou art exceeding great and works by thee are done.

[29 : 44] Which are to be admired. And thou art God thyself alone. Teach me thy way and in my truth. O Lord. Then walk will I. Unite my heart. That I thy name may fear continually.

O Lord my God. With all my heart. To thee I will give praise, and I the glory will ascribe unto thy name always. Because thy mercy toward me in greatness doth excel, and thou delivered hast my soul out from the lowest hell.

10 to 13, Psalm 86, Because thou art exceeding great. Because thou art exceeding great, and works by thee are done, Which are to thee, and my God, the heart of thyself alone.

Teach me thy way, and in thy truth, O Lord, let hope be thy.

You light my heart, and I light it, make me continually.

[31 : 19] O Lord, my God, with all my heart, to thee I will give praise.

And I, the glory will ascribe unto thy name always.

Because thy mercy toward thee, and greatness doth excel, and thou delivered hast my soul.

Lord, from the lowest hell. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. on, Holy Spirit rest and practise.

[32 : 50] Amen. understands, especially for you not always, and to note where you can't be sifted in. That truly God of ■■■■■■■■ ■■■■, but of course is not to be a greater feeling. You're struts and all the world through it, and to your spirit, this even more person, because of your TON vedas and murder.