

Galatians 1:10-24

"The Motive, The Means, The Man & The Message"

We left off last time making clear the good news of the gospel message. That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, He was buried & He rose again the 3rd day according to the scriptures. This is the hope (that is the guaranteed certainty & concrete reality) of salvation that we have by grace through faith in Jesus who has loved us & given Himself for us...

It's what Paul preached wherever he went. Why? Because somehow & in some way God has placed intrinsic w/in that message His power to save (rescue from the penalty & power of sin) all who will believe... If you have *never* shared the death & resurrection of J.C. w/anyone, than you've never shared the gospel w/anyone. You may've shared scripture, promises from God's word (& that's all well & good) but you've never shared the *gospel*. Because the gospel centers in the death & resurrection of J.C.

And Paul was so persuaded unto the sufficiency of the cross of Christ unto salvation that he said, "Listen, even if later on I come to you & say, 'I've really grown & matured since the last time we spoke & I've come to realize that what I said was good, it just wasn't enough, you need to believe on the Lord J.C. & _____'. Fill in the blank (keep the law, be circumcised, read so much a day, say so many prayers, wear these special garments)' than I should be accursed." He said, "Even if an *angel from heaven* gives you a different gospel, than let him be accursed; (devoted to destruction in hell)." That's how critical it is that we rest in the *finished* work of the cross of J.C. Because the moment we add anything (no matter how small the detail) to "believe on the Lord J.C." (as it pertains to our salvation) we cross over from *grace* unto *works*. Now it's not only about what Jesus has done, it's also about what I need to do & that's not good news at all...

So some might ask the question (perhaps the false teachers themselves proposed the question to the Galatian believers), "What gives Paul the right to speak w/such authority about *his* message? What makes what he's saying any more right than what we or anyone else might say or would say?" "What makes your message so special Paul?" That's exactly what Paul addresses in the remainder of this Ch. Look at Vs 10.

Vs 10

We touched on this Vs last week. Paul realized that before any *man* was his audience, *God* was his audience. Therefore his priority 1st & foremost wasn't to please man, but to please God. We're looking here at *motive*.

How many of you realize (as believers) that before you say anything to man, 1st & foremost you're saying it before God? Why did Paul say/do the things he did & said? So that he might be (the idea is) *pleasing to God*. Paul was not in this thing to try & win a popularity contest, it was his aim, his motive to be well pleasing & found faithful to *God*.

I think one of the things we often fail to take into consideration when we study the NT is that the message that the apostles were preaching wasn't a readily received message; in fact it was a very *dangerous* message. In proclaiming Christ as the Messiah they were literally placing their very lives on the line (for more than one reason)!

For 1, the message of the gospel was in *insult* to the orthodox Jew whose own Scripture said quite clearly (Duet 21:23) that whoever hangs on a tree is accursed of God. & You're going around telling them that this One who was cursed of God is the One who is in fact their Savior. **They considered that blasphemy (a crime punishable by death). They couldn't connect the dots that Christ *had to become cursed* for us that He might pay the penalty of our sin.** In NT vernacular we read it like this, **"For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**¹ So though He was never a *sinner* He became *sin* for us... we use the catch phrase, "He paid a debt He did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay." ... **But this message of Jesus dying on the cross & being raised from the dead bringing salvation was insulting, confusing & blasphemous to the Jew & they were *bent* stopping the spread of this message by any means necessary (as we'll see in a minute).**

It was also a threat to the Romans who were the world super power at this time. Because you've got people going around professing allegiance to a "King" who's not Caesar. Another crime punishable by death, so that made this message a very dangerous message to preach, it brought persecution, beatings, torture, & death.

So you don't preach this message if your motive is to please man. You preach J.C. & Him crucified if your motive is to please God... How many of you realize that motive is a critical thing in the eyes of God? It's not only what you do that God is searching, but even more so, why you do it. Paul says that his motive wasn't to please man, but to please God. Now that's not to say that as believers we don't need to concern ourselves w/man. Absolutely we need a heart that's concerned for people, but our *priority* is to please God.

Vs 11-12

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [2 Co 5:21] Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ok. What makes *Paul's* message so special? What gives *him* the right to say that *his* message is right & *anyone else's* message is wrong (if it differs from his in any way)? "1st & foremost" (Paul says) "because the gospel which I preach isn't according to man, I didn't receive it *from* man, nor was it taught to me *by* man, it came through revelation of J.C. Himself resurrected & glorified!"

In other words; this message wasn't some man-made religious effort to somehow try & merit salvation through some great thing we do to earn God's favor & receive God's reward. It's not an effort to try & reach up & understand God, it's God's effort to bow down (to condescend) to man & raise him up to life through faith in J.C. ...

This message isn't founded in the wisdom of man, or in the "want" of man. "What do you mean?" There are people who will go around & pole the people in a neighborhood asking them what the top 3 things are that they want in a church & they'll tailor their church to meet those desires... Can I tell you that Paul the apostle's jaw would drop at that kind of thing. **The pastor of the church shouldn't seek to shape his ministry around the "want" of the people, he's to be true to the word of God! Paul's message/ministry wasn't the byproduct of some polling data; he says, it's a revelation from God. & Now more than ever that's what this world needs, amen? We don't need the good advice & well intended wisdom of man, we need a revelation from God! We need to know that God has spoken & to take His word seriously/to heart.**

It's a serious question to consider isn't it? Is this bible, this book (or the words your reading in your electronic device) *really* the word of God? Some would say it's not. Oh they would concede to the fine literary achievement, "Yes, we applaud the bible, it's fine literature & a great achievement of man's moral/spiritual search for God..." **But we need to realize this message, these words are *from God*; I can't think of a more important fact to be settled on in the world! Think about it, if Paul's gospel, if this message is really the word of God in heaven to us, what more important thing could there possibly be? Nothing! We should want to study it, know it, apply it, take it to heart & be changed by it!**

However if these words, the message of the bible is nothing more than a book of fairy tales (a human invention) than it's the most dangerous lie in the world & it's not from God at all.

Now there are no shortage of people who will tell you that they've received a message from God, is there? You've got the Koran, you've got the book of Mormon, the writings of Mary Baker Eddy, on & on it goes, all of which claim to be a revelation from God. So how can we know that the *bible* is from God & not from man?

It's a fair question & let me just give you a few ways that might help you leave here more confident in your bible than when you came in here. #1 The bible is trustworthy & accurate as an ancient document both historically & archeologically. There are literally thousands of copies from all different dates historically & when they compare them they say the same thing. Nothing has changed down through the centuries; it's maintained its integrity. Archeology (secular & otherwise) is constantly uncovering evidence of cities, events, peoples & people groups that only undergird the biblical record. Do you know how much archeological evidence has been unearthed to support the book of Mormon? None. Yet there's never been so much as a single archeological discovery that has in *anyway* contradicted the biblical record.

But one might argue, "Well there are lots of historically accurate ancient documents." That's true, but the bible is unique. It's unique in it's continuity. Do you realize that the bible was written over a time period of 1600 yrs? Let that sink in for a minute, one thousand six hundred years. It was written by 40 different authors, over a period of 60 generations on 3 different continents by people of different social/political, economic statuses in 3 different languages. Compound that w/the fact that what it contains is information on the most controversial of subject matters. Morality, spirituality, eternal life, who God is, ethics & it speaks on all of them w/one united voice in agreement. Let me tell you something, that's a *unique* book... I would challenge you to find writings ranging over a time period of 1600 yrs, from 40 different people, in 3 different languages, from 3 different continents from people of every class of social/political & economic status, compare their writings on controversial subjects & see if they agree... The bible agrees... because it really has but One Author doesn't it? 40 separate instruments, One Author, the Holy Spirit of God, God Himself is the Author, giving the revelation of His word, His will, His ways...

The bible is unique in its circulation. There's never been a book as widely circulated as the bible. It's unique in it's translation, never has a book been translated in so many languages as the bible. It's unique in its survival. It's survived thousands of yrs w/the integrity of the original manuscripts despite the violent attacks of skeptic men, criticism, persecution & people who've made it their sole goal in life to destroy the truth you hold in your hands today. It's unique in its honesty, never has there been a book so transparent about the failures of its heroes.

It's unique in its influence, you'll never find a book that's changed lives & influenced all of human history more than the bible... So we agree, the bible is a pretty great book, isn't it? But how can we know it's from God?

There's still yet another way. That's the way of the miracle of predictive prophesy. For example the bible gives more than 300 prophecies concerning the Messiah. *Not* general prophecies like, "He'll be a great man, w/lots of wisdom, & do good for the people." But very specific prophecies concerning where He'd be born, miracles He'd perform, how He would be betrayed, when He would come into Jerusalem & in what fashion, the manner of His death, burial & His resurrection. All of which were exactly & literally fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth. The bible describes the rise & fall of world empires w/such pinpoint accuracy that skeptics have tried to say the information must've been penned *after* the fact.

Family, there's no other book on the planet that dares to stake it's veracity, it's legitimacy on the fact of it's ability to speak prophetically & if it ever misses once you can throw the whole thing out... But the bible does... So there's an element that we take on faith, we'll give you that it can't be proven in a laboratory. But it's not a blind faith, it's a very intelligent & informed faith.

Paul declares that the gospel he penned didn't come *from* man, nor *through* man. It came through the revelation of J.C. That's the *means* through which he obtained it. Jesus was made known to him in dramatic fashion one day on the road to Damascus & his life was changed forever (you can read of it in Acts Ch 9 & again in Acts 26 Vs 12-18). So as to where everyone else hears the gospel through means of another person, or a book or what have you. Paul was unique in that it was given to him by J.C. Himself. Not just once, but over a period of 3 yrs Paul was mentored by the risen Lord through Divine revelation. The other apostles spent 3 yrs w/Jesus before the cross. Paul (as an apostle born out of due time [he says of himself]) spent 3 yrs w/the Lord after the cross, how would you like that?

But it wasn't going to reach Paul in any other way. He wasn't interested in Jesus at all. However Jesus was interested in him (isn't good news)? You may not've been interested in Jesus either, but Jesus was interested in you & so here you are today... Paul gives us a snapshot of his life B.C. (before Christ).

Vs 13-17

Paul says, "Look it's no secret how I met J.C., you all know what kind of man I was before Jesus made Himself real to me."

Family I want you to realize how important & how powerful your personal testimony is. Anytime Paul was sharing w/a group of people for any amount of time at all he made sure that they all knew his testimony... Because that shows the power of the gospel & the way the word of God works to transform lives.

I would encourage you to learn how to share your testimony (how you came to J.C., how He saved you) w/others. Be able to get it out clearly & concisely. Learn to share it in 10 min, 5 min or 3 min. Now you might have a radically dramatic testimony, or you may've been saved during a VBS camp as a kid. People need to know that Jesus can work in the lives of every kind of person from every walk of life. Share your story, keep it honest & be clear about the gospel.

Paul says, "You've heard my story. You know that I wasn't pro-Jesus. I wasn't a *preacher* of Jesus, I was a *persecutor* of Jesus. Therefore you can know that I didn't start sharing the message of Jesus outside of direct, Divine intervention."

Before surrendering to J.C. Paul was really a terrorist against the church. He *relentlessly/continuously* persecuted & sought to destroy the church (he says) "beyond measure". He sought to bring the church of God to extinction, considered it his personal mission. He excelled in his religious zeal beyond all of his friends & was quickly rising to the top as a religious leader of the nation of Israel in opposition to J.C.

You can read a bit of his story in the book of Acts Ch 7-8 when he was consenting to the death of Stephen, holding people's coats for them as they stoned him to death. We read in regard to Paul (at that time named Saul), "*he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*"² When you get to Ch 9 it begins by saying that Saul was still breathing threats & murder against the disciples of the Lord... He wasn't a nice guy when it came to Christ & those who sought to follow Him...

He was the last guy anyone expected to see come to the saving knowledge of J.C. But that's how God rolls isn't it? He loves to take the least like candidate & save them & hold them up as a trophy of His grace & mercy. If God can save that man, He can save anyone. That's the story of Paul's life. Write it down, look it up 1 Timothy 1:15-16.

Look at **Vs 15-17** (read).

I love that phrase, "But when it pleased God..." Did you know that God didn't *reluctantly* save you? It *pleases* God to bring us salvation.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Ac 8:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul says that God separated him from his mother's womb. The idea here isn't that of a physical separation. He's saying that God had a plan for him since before he was born & when the time was right God brought Paul into the fullness of that which He'd prepared for him. It wasn't because of anything God saw in Paul, He'd determined it before he was born, it was (the words Paul uses are) *through His grace*.

God told Jeremiah, "*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.*"³ We see the same thing in Samson's life, J.B.'s life. Paul reiterated this principle in Eph 2:10 & applied to *everyone who believes*. That God has a plan for you, He's prepared it beforehand that you should walk in it & be busy about it.

God has "set you apart" separated you, & He's called you by His grace that He might use you & be glorified in you. He wants to (notice) "reveal His Son *in* you." Not just *to* you, but *in* you. Yes, God wants to reveal Jesus *to* you. But even more He wants others to see Jesus *in* you. Jesus said that like this; He said, "You are the light of the world." "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*"⁴ God wants to reveal Christ *in* you.

Yet even w/all these radical elements to his conversion Paul didn't go bounce anything off the other apostles. He didn't need to, Jesus Himself was ministering to him. So he went out to the desert for 3 yrs to just spend time w/the Lord & sift through these things. He was in the company of guys like Moses, J.B., Jesus, no doctorate of divinity, a doctorate in the desert. Maybe you're in a "dry time" or "difficult days", God could be preparing you for a fresh revelation of the Person of J.C. Don't drift *from* Him, seek & cry out *to* Him.

Vs 18-24

You see Paul didn't get the gospel from John or James or Peter, it was 3 yrs before he saw any of them & at that it was just as a tourist to Jerusalem he spent a couple weeks w/Peter.

But notice in Vs 22 that Paul for many yrs lived in relative obscurity as a simple Christian. Yes, he shared Jesus was people, but he went from a high profile person in Judaism to a nobody on the fields of Christianity. Today when a high profile person comes to Jesus we want to get them on the platform as fast as we can. Paul didn't do it that way.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Je 1:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Mt 5:16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says, “Really no one even knew me, all they’d heard is that I’d been saved in dramatic fashion & the persecutor had become the preacher of the faith he’d previously tried to destroy, & for that they glorified God.” Paul was completely content to live in relative obscurity as a believer in J.C.

But that didn’t stop him from “preaching the faith.” That was his message, “amazing grace.” That God could take the most pious self righteous individual, or the lowest, most vile person on the planet & save them by grace through faith in J.C. who bled & died upon the cross & 3 days later defeated death, rising from the grave.

Whether it was Peter the denier, or Paul the persecutor, there’s room for all at the cross of J.C. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your Wisdom in affirming the revelation of Your Word, the revelation of the gospel. That it’s a message that didn’t originate in man’s heart, but Your heart. That You love us & gave Yourself for us in the Person of Your Son who has suffered for us that we might be made whole in You. We love You, we praise You, we give our hearts once again *to* You. Reveal Jesus *in* us. Be glorified *through* us.

God wants you to experience the gift of life through His only begotten Son, J.C. Believe upon Him, submit yourself *to* Him unconditionally, He’ll forgive you of your sin & make you new.