

## L 2 ... Being an Enthusiastic Christian

Galatians 1:11-24

Would you like to be a more enthusiastic Christian? If so, you cannot have any doubts about the Gospel. In this passage, Paul continues explaining to the churches in Galatia why they should listen to him rather than the Judaizers. He does so by sharing his spiritual credentials, removing any doubt about the authenticity of the Gospel he preaches. Understanding this passage reveals **four** actions required for becoming enthusiastic Christians.

### Remember the Gospel Is God's Revelation (1:11-12)

Paul writes: *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man (1:11).* In fact, the Gospel of the New Testament is not something humans would invent. We would tend to flatter ourselves, imagining we are searchers of God with the ability to earn a right relationship with Him. We would invent a gospel through which we could work our way to heaven. That is the human way. However, what does [Titus 3:5a-b](#) declare?

---



---

If the Gospel is not something man would make up, then where did Paul get it? He writes: *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:12).* The Judaizers were probably claiming Paul got his Gospel from Peter, John, or some other apostle and then perverted it. However, the source of Paul's Gospel is *by the revelation of Jesus Christ.* The word **revelation** means to "reveal or unveil."

The word "**revelation**" refers to the Word of God, or message from God, going into the mind of a biblical writer. The word "**inspiration**" refers to the writer sharing or writing down the revelation as led by the Holy Spirit.

How does [2 Peter 1:21](#) describe this divine action?

---



---

To be an enthusiastic Christian, **remember the Gospel is God's revelation** and...

### Rely On the Gospel's Power of Transformation (1:13-14)

Paul proves he received his revelation directly from Jesus Christ by pointing out the radical transformation in his life. He writes: *For ye have heard of my conversation [way of life] in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it (1:13,).* In his former life, Paul was one of the most committed Jews of his day.

He was part of militant Judaism, which was committed to destroying the church. By his own testimony, Paul says he put *many of the saints... in prison*, on the authority of the chief priests ([Acts 26:10a-c](#)). Even more shocking, what does he also say in the last phrase ([26:10d](#))?

---

Because of his zeal, Paul was advancing *in the Jews' religion above many Jews* of his own age ([1:14](#)). If the Lord could transform a fanatical, militant person like Saul of Tarsus, He can change anyone. When we forget this truth, we lose our enthusiasm for inviting people to church and for sharing the Gospel. By the power of the Gospel of Christ, the most difficult, crude, rude, irreligious person you know can be transformed into a devoted believer. The same Jesus who changed Paul can change any lost person you or I know.

How does [Hebrews 13:8](#) remind us of this fact?

---

To be an enthusiastic Christian, **remember the Gospel is God's revelation, rely on the Gospel's power of transformation**, and...

#### **Reflect On the Gospel's Call for Separation (1:15-16a-b)**

Jesus not only transformed Paul, but also separated him to preach the Gospel. Paul puts it like this: *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and who called me by his grace* ([1:15](#)).

**Separated** refers to the divine action of separating a believer from the crowd for a special work. Paul did not **choose** to preach; he was **separated** before he was born. This is not unique to Paul.

What does God tell Jeremiah happened before he was *formed* in the womb ([Jeremiah 1:5c](#))?

---

Does God have "pre-birth" plans just for prophets and apostles? And does He have such plans for you and me? The Bible teaches God also had a plan for each of us before we were born ([Psa. 139:13-16](#)).

Paul also writes that God wanted *to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen* [Gentiles] ([1:16a-b](#)). It is not enough for Jesus to be revealed to us; He must also be revealed through us. Like Paul, we are all saved to share.

This is because of what fact in [2 Corinthians 5:14a](#)?

---

The word translated **constraineth** can also be translated "**compels**." The love of Christ compels us to share the Gospel.

To be an enthusiastic Christian, **remember the Gospel is God's revelation, rely on the Gospel's power of transformation, reflect on the Gospel's call for separation, and...**

### **Receive New Believers with Celebration (1:16c-24)**

Paul now shares more details about his call to apostleship by writing: *immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: <sup>17</sup>Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus (1:16c-17)*. Paul was taught directly by the Lord for three years and then went to Jerusalem to see Peter (1:18). He did not go to Jerusalem to get authorization for his message but to become friends with Peter, the leader among the apostles. He makes it clear it was **to see** Peter, not be taught by him.

To further reject the Judaizers' claim he needs the apostles' approval, Paul writes: *But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother (1:19)*. Paul does not go to Jerusalem to get the Gospel from them, but to have an apostolic summit with Peter. He only stays fifteen days and does not see any of the other *apostles*. Since Paul had been taught directly by the Lord for three years, he could fellowship with Peter as an apostolic peer, not as a pupil.

The only other person Paul sees in Jerusalem is James. This is not the James who was one of the twelve apostles. It is James, the half-brother of Jesus, who during Jesus' earthly ministry did not believe in His deity.

However, after Jesus' resurrection, what caused James to become a believer, according to [1 Corinthians 15:7a](#)?

---

Paul assures the Galatians he is writing the truth about his message coming directly from Jesus Christ (1:20). Then, he writes that after getting acquainted with Peter, he travels *into the regions of Syria and Cilicia* [sih-lish'-ih-uh-] (1:21) in modern southern Turkey. His hometown of Tarsus was in Cilicia ([Acts 22:3](#)). While in these *regions*, Paul no doubt continues to preach and teach. However, in these remote areas there is no one to teach him or to oversee his ministry. Therefore, he is led entirely and directly by the Lord.

Paul continues, *And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ (1:22)*. Although Paul had visited with Peter and was known in Jerusalem, he was still *unknown* personally to believers in the rest of Judaea. He explains, *But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed (1:23)*.

However, what was their reaction when they heard of his conversion (1:24)?

---

Therefore, believers in and around Jerusalem recognize and accept Paul's apostleship, even though they do not know him personally. The Judean churches are celebrating and praising God because this once-fierce persecutor has become not only a believer, but also a preacher. In contrast, the Galatian believers, whom Paul has never persecuted and who are personally acquainted with him, are rejecting his authority and apostleship and following a false gospel.

Sometimes, people with bad reputations become believers. Like the Galatian believers, we may be reluctant to receive and celebrate these new converts. No matter their past reputations, there is something we should do when anyone is saved.

What is it, according to [Romans 15:7](#)?

---

---

This also applies to non-believers and believers who visit our Bible studies or worship services. The word translated *receive* can also be translated "accept." Christ is our Model of what it means to accept others. As we ponder how He received us when we were spiritually sinful and immature, we will be much more accepting of other believers.

To be an enthusiastic Christian,

**REMEMBER THE GOSPEL IS GOD'S REVELATION,**

**RELY ON THE GOSPEL'S POWER OF TRANSFORMATION,**

**REFLECT ON THE GOSPEL'S CALL FOR SEPARATION,**

**RECEIVE NEW BELIEVERS WITH CELEBRATION.**