

In this passage Paul is proving that the gospel that he preaches is not a man-made gospel. The evidence he offers is the fact that he never consulted with apostles or other church leaders to learn the gospel after his conversion to Christ. It was not until years later that he met Peter and James, the half-brother of Jesus. He also had no contact with any of the believers in the churches of Judea.

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11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. 12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

**“But I certify [to make known to] you, brethren”** – Paul wants to make it clear to the Galatians that he has not been preaching a man-made or man-pleasing gospel. He is continuing the thought he began in v. 10 (“do I seek to please men?”) where he is making the point that he was not preaching the gospel of grace in order to please men but to please God.

**“that the gospel which was preached of me is not after [according to] man”** – Paul continues by emphasizing that the gospel he preached to the Galatians was not conceived by man nor formulated according to man’s way of thinking. If it had been conceived, designed or modified by man then it would be a man-pleasing gospel, which it is not. The gospel of grace humbles man by portraying him as being a sinful creature that is helpless to redeem himself. Jesus rebuked Peter for tempting Him to follow a human conceived path instead of obeying His Father by going to the cross (**Matt. 16:23** “*But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men*”).

**“For I neither received [to accept] it of man”** – Unlike most people who hear the gospel from another person, Paul did not get saved after hearing the gospel preached by men. He may have heard while he was persecuting believers in Christ but he rejected and fought against it (v. 13, **1 Tim. 1:12-13** “*And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief*”). Paul did not accept the gospel until he was personally confronted by Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-20).

**“neither was I taught it”** – The gospel that Paul preached was not formed from the teachings of men. He could not have received instruction from the apostles because, as he tells us in vs. 15-19, he did not see any of them until years later.

**“but by the revelation [disclosure of truth; instruction; manifestation] of Jesus Christ”** – Paul’s understanding of the gospel came directly from Jesus Christ. Paul may be referring to his Damascus Road experience (Acts 9) and/or his time in Arabia (v. 17) as being the period of time when Christ revealed the particulars of the gospel to him.

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13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

**“For ye have heard of my conversation [behavior; manner of life] in time past in the Jews' religion”** – Either Paul had already given the Galatians the testimony of his life before he was saved or else it had become common knowledge. To prove that what he preaches about Jesus Christ was of God and not his own idea, Paul reminds the Galatians of the time when he was fully involved and invested in Judaism.

**“how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted [to destroy; overthrown] it”** – He reminds them that he was definitely hostile toward the gospel of Jesus Christ and was attempting to destroy the church and eliminate all faith in Christ.

**“And profited [advanced] in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation”** – Paul was becoming a stand-out among his peers and was advancing rapidly in respect and position in the Jewish religion. If God had not intervened, Paul may have eventually become known as a great rabbi and Jewish leader.

**“being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”** – It may be significant that Paul didn’t say that he was zealous of God’s law. In Paul’s day the “traditions of the fathers” (which were based on teachings of rabbis of the past) had become more binding and authoritative than the scripture itself. The most of the Jewish religious practices of Paul’s day were built on these teachings and it was these teachings that Paul zealously followed and emphasized. Jesus, on the other hand, had rejected these traditions that contradicted God’s law, which was what often put Him in conflict with the Pharisees (Mark 7:1-13).

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15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

**“But when it pleased [to choose to do] God”** – Paul has been describing the direction that his life was going based on the choices he had made. However, God had other plans and chose to direct Paul’s life in a different direction, which he describes in v. 16.

**“who separated [to set apart for some purpose] me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace”** – This line is a parenthetical description of God. Even though Paul had made some decisions that headed his life down the path of attempting to destroy the church of Jesus Christ, his life actually followed the purpose that God intended, which was to prepare him to be an apostle. God, in an act of grace, had set Paul aside since the day he was born to prepare him for the day that He would call Paul to salvation and use him to spread the gospel to the Gentiles (see what Jesus said of Paul when He sent Ananias to lay hands on Saul of Tarsus - **Acts 9:15-16** “*But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake*”).

**“To reveal [to unveil; to make known] his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen”** – This is what it pleased God to do: to use Paul to make His Son known by sending him to preach the gospel among the Gentiles.

**“immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood”** – Paul did not begin his ministry by consulting with or receiving training from more experienced Christians. God apparently used Paul’s knowledge of the scriptures to reveal to him that Jesus Christ fulfilled the OT prophecies concerning the Messiah. As a result, Paul was able to immediately begin preaching that Jesus Christ was the Son of God (**Acts 9:20** “*And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God*”).

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

**“Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me”** – Paul is continuing to build the case to prove that he did not get the gospel that he preached from men. It was God that changed the course of his life (vs. 15-16) and Paul did not meet with the original apostles in Jerusalem in order to formulate the gospel that he preached.

**“but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus”** – Arabia was a wilderness region east of Damascus and apparently Paul spent the better part of three years there (v. 18). He may have sought the seclusion of the wilderness in order to study the OT scriptures and learn more about how Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies and the typology of the OT sacrifices. Once he had completed this, Paul returned to civilization in Damascus prepared to preach the gospel.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. 19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

**“Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see [become acquainted with] Peter, and abode with him fifteen days”** –

This visit, some three years after Paul's conversion, seems to be documented in Act 9:26-30, where Paul wanted to join with the other believers in Jerusalem but they were afraid of him because they did not think that he was sincere. It took the influence of Barnabas to convince the other believers that Paul had truly become a genuine believer. During his effort to seek fellowship with the Jerusalem believers, Paul met Peter and was able to be a guest in his house for just over two weeks. This visit would have given Paul time to fellowship with Peter and tell the story of his conversion.

**“But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother”** – The purpose of Paul's visit was not to receive gospel instruction from the apostles and he wants the Galatians to understand that the only other Christian leader that he met was James, the half-brother of Jesus. James had become the leader of the Jerusalem church.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

Paul assures the Galatians before God that what he is writing to them is not a lie. God is a witness to the truth that the gospel preached by Paul was not the result of a collaboration with the apostles or other leaders of the church in Jerusalem.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

Syria and Cilicia were two parts of a single Roman district. Cilicia was the region where Tarsus was located and was Paul's home turf. Syria was the region where Antioch was located and Paul became involved in the church there (Acts 11:25-26; Acts 13:1).

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: 23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. 24 And they glorified God in me.

**“And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ”** – The expression “unknown by face” means that Paul had never met in person any of the believers in the churches of Judea and so they would not have recognized him. He is emphasizing that the gospel that he preached was not influenced by Judean believers. What he preached came straight from God.

**“But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed”** – Paul further emphasizes the separation between himself and the believers in Judea by declaring that the only contact between himself and these believers was that they had heard the reports of his conversion. Paul had devoted his life to destroying the church of Christ (v. 13) but now they are hearing that Paul had become a preacher of the very faith that he had previously been attempting to destroy.

**“And they glorified God in me”** – The Judean believers praised God for the change that He made in Paul's life. They understood that only God could have caused such a reversal in Paul's life. Paul was now following Christ with as much zeal as he had when he was persecuting the church. Paul's reason for reminding the Galatians of this is to make the point that such a turnaround could only have come from God. It was not a simple change of mind that caused Paul to switch from persecuting believers in Christ one day to becoming a believer the next. It was God's grace that intervened and this was the basis of the gospel that Paul preached.