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Description automatically generated**True Freedom in Grace:**

**A Study in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians**

**Session 2: The Grace That Molded Paul**

May 9, 2022 • Monday Night Bible Study

1. **Teaser and Prayer**

When you were 16, what were your career plans? Does that factor into your life now?

1. **Recap: Knowing the Galatians & Greeting**
   1. Galatians — Galatia is a mountainous region in Turkey. The Galatians are mostly Gentiles, wanting to be hard-core for God. Paul was the founder of some churches in Galatia. This letter would have been read aloud in worship at one house-church, then passed to another. Probably written in 50–56 AD.
   2. Themes to watch for — Some Jewish-Christian missionaries are telling the Christians in Galatia that they have to keep all the Jewish Law (including circumcision for the guys) to be saved. Paul wants to be clear that grace is what matters. Watch how Paul defines grace and how it affects/changes Jesus’ followers and their futures.
2. **Words to watch for**
   1. seeking the approval (*peitho*) — try to earn the trust of; persuade, convince
   2. servant (*doulos*) — slave, the lowest of the classes of servants.
   3. Brothers (*adelphoi*) — not gender exclusive in their thought, *the family of God*
   4. gospel (*euangleia*) — Good News
   5. preached (*euangelizo*) — preached, evangelized
   6. man (*anthropos*) *—* generic for humankind or humanity
   7. Christ (*Christos*) — not Jesus’ last name ☺ the Greek word for Messiah, the anointed or chosen one of God. Has echoes of the line and house of King David.
   8. revelation (*apoculupsis*) — unveiling, lifting of the curtain of mystery
   9. violently (*huperbole*) — extreme, lit. *to throw beyond*, intensifies verb
   10. destroy (*portheo*) — lay waste to, ravage
   11. advancing (*prokopto*) — running term, getting ahead and cutting off your pursuit
   12. zealous (*zelotes*) — passionate
   13. grace (*charis*) — related to the words for gift and joy ☺
   14. Gentiles (*ethnos*) — also can be translated as *nations* or *peoples*. For Jews, there were two kinds of people: Jews (insiders, people of the promise) and Gentiles (everybody else, outsiders, no promise for you).
   15. Church (*ecclesia*) — lit. *the called out*
   16. Gospel/Good News (*euangelia*) — note angel is part of it
3. **Reading Galatians 1:10–24**

**Gal. 1:10** For am I now seeking the approval/trust of people, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

**Gal. 1:11** For I would have you know, brothers and sisters, that the Good News that was preached by me is not Good News according to people. **12** For I did not receive it from any person, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a lifting of the veil by Jesus Christ. **13** For you have heard of my old life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to lay waste to it. **14** And in Judaism, I was running far ahead of many of my own generation among my people, so extremely passionate was I for the traditions of my fathers. **15** But when He who had set me apart in my mother’s womb, and who called me by His grace, **16** was pleased to lift the veil to show his Son to me, in order that I might preach the Good News of Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; **17** 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.

**Gal. 1:18** Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Peter and remained with him fifteen days. **19** But I saw none of the other apostles, except James the Lord’s brother. **20** (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) **21** Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. **23** They only were hearing it said, “He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” **24** And they glorified God because of me.

*Translation by Rev. Doug Gray*

1. **Questions for Reflection**
   1. What did God call Paul to do? List some ways God prepared Paul his calling.
   2. Why did Paul tell us about what he did after the Road to Damascus experience?
2. **Why does this matter?**
   1. How has God prepared you for what you are doing right now?
   2. How can God shine more grace through you where you are?
   3. What is one way your life is different and better as a result of Jesus Christ?
   4. Have you ever told anyone the story of what made you decide to follow Jesus? If so, what was that experience like? If not, what has held you back so far?

**What Do We Know about the Life of Paul?**

* Birthname was Saul. After becoming Christian, changed his name to Paul.
* Born in Tarsus, a city on the southern coast of what is now Turkey, near northern Syria. Tarsus was a Roman colony, which meant Paul was a Roman citizen. Being a Roman citizen was a privilege that brought certain benefits and protections that saved Paul’s life.
* Studied under Gamaliel, one of the greatest Jewish Rabbis of the first century, really ever.
* Paul was a Pharisee, the hardest core, most passionate, elite, keepers of the Law. Paul was considered to be the “elite of the elite.”
* Virulently, violently opposed the early Christians, those of “The Way.”
* Held people’s cloaks so they could more easily throw rocks at Stephen, the first Christian killed for his faith. (See Acts 7. Paul’s cameo is in 8:1.)
* Got warrants from Jewish authorities to persecute the church: “But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, Saul dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3)
* When the early Christians scattered ahead of these persecutions, Paul got warrants to follow the Christians to Damascus, capture them and return to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1–2)
* Jesus appears to Paul on the road to Damascus, speaks to and blinds Paul. In Damascus, Paul is healed by a brave Christian, named Ananias, and begins life as a Christian.
* On his return, Paul is part of one of the first, inclusive churches—Jews and Gentiles.
* He has four missionary journeys up into Syria, Turkey, Greece, and last of all, Rome.
* Paul writes letters of thanks, encouragement and admonition to many churches.
* Paul participates in the Council of Jerusalem in 44 AD, where the church leaders determine God is leading them to include Gentiles as well as Jews, without keeping the Law.