

The Independent Gospel: Divine Call over Human Approval

A SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY ON GALATIANS 1:11-24

Let's Talk Scripture Series • Teacher: Pastor Eric T. Lee

The purity of the Christian message is perpetually threatened by human legalism and the desire for institutional consensus. In this small group study, the foundational argument of Galatians 1:11-24 is examined, mapping out how the truth of justification by faith in Christ alone was defended through an unyielding commitment to direct divine revelation.

I. THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE REVELATION

"For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

GALATIANS 1:11-12

True biblical authority does not originate from human consensus, committee reviews, or rabbinic lines of succession. The message proclaimed by the Apostle Paul is explicitly labeled as not being configured "according to man." He states a critical dual negative: he neither received it from a human source, nor was he formally taught it in an institutional environment.

Instead, the message came through a vertical, unmediated *apokalypsis*—an unveiling of reality communicated directly by the ascended Lord Jesus Christ. This supernatural origin positions the gospel entirely above human manipulation, ensuring that its core truth remains uniform and free from the contamination of legalistic compromise.

II. THE EVIDENCE OF SOVEREIGN GRACE

"For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it... But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me..."

GALATIANS 1:13, 15-16A

As a profound proof of this divine origin, attention is directed to a radical historical transformation. Prior to conversion, identity was anchored in an elite advancement within Judaism and a fanatical, violent passion to completely destroy (*biazomai*) the Church of God. Humanly speaking, there was zero inclination toward the Christian faith; only an objective intervention of divine power could break such intense ideological hostility.

This conversion is explained strictly through a monergistic framework: God sovereignly set the instrument apart from the maternal womb and applied an effectual call through sheer grace. This pre-natal election completely dismantles the pride of legalistic teachers, establishing that standing before God is grounded entirely in His eternal, unmerited purpose long before any human work can be performed.

III. HISTORICAL AUTONOMY FROM HUMAN COUNCILS

"I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas..."

GALATIANS 1:16B-18

Following this internal illumination, there was an intentional refusal to seek immediate validation from mortal humanity, termed "flesh and blood." Rather than traveling to Jerusalem to secure administrative licensing from the original twelve apostles, geographic withdrawal occurred into the wilderness of Arabia. This solitary environment served as a private seminary under the direct instruction of Christ, where the Old Testament scriptures were systematically re-evaluated in light of the New Covenant.

When contact finally occurred with Jerusalem three years later, it was a minimalist interface. A brief fifteen-day visit took place exclusively to become acquainted (*historesai*—to conduct a fraternal interview) with Peter and James, confirming that the ongoing Gentile mission operated on a parallel track of divine appointment rather than subordinate institutional authorization. This timeline provides a critical chronological anchor, proving that Galatians was written prior to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, as the complete absence of that council's decree confirms the early, uncompromised status of this letter.

IV. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION & REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Review the text and principles exposed above to answer the following questions systematically during group study:

1. What is the precise significance of the term *apokalypsis* (verse 12) regarding how the church must view the absolute authority and unalterable nature of the written Word of God today?
2. How does Paul's former life as an elite, aggressive persecutor serve as an irrefutable historical proof that his gospel message was not a product of human persuasion or psychological manipulation?
3. In what ways does the doctrine of monergistic election from the maternal womb (verse 15) completely eliminate religious pride and expose the error of adding human rituals or traditional performance to the gospel of grace?
4. Why was the geographic withdrawal into Arabia historically and theologically necessary before interacting with the Jerusalem leadership, and what does this teach about the role of direct communion with Christ in pastoral preparation?

5. How does the total omission of the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council decree throughout the entire book of Galatians serve as an ironclad chronological proof that this is the earliest written epistle of the New Testament?