

Paul's Calling and Training (Part 1)

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[0 : 0 0] When we covered Galatians 1, verses 6-10 last week, we saw Paul remind his readers that! there is only one gospel, that is the gospel of God, which is the gospel of grace. Listen to Galatians 1, 9 and 10 again. Paul said there, As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. Verse 10 serves as a transition to the verses that we will look at tonight. So let's go ahead and read verses 11 through 24 now.

Paul continues, For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the tradition of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.

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. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

In what I am writing to you before God, I do not lie. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Sicilia, and I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.

[2 : 2 7] And they glorified God because of me. Tonight we'll see that Jesus revealed the gospel to Paul and transformed Paul's life for the glory of God. That's the main idea of this section. Jesus revealed the gospel to Paul and transformed Paul's life for the glory of God. One of the primary objectives of the Judaizers who were stirring up so much controversy and confusion in the Galatian church was to discredit Paul's apostolic authority. They were spreading the idea that Paul was self-appointed and that his motivation was to elevate himself and build up a personal following. They accused him of putting aside the mosaic ceremonies, standards, and practices to make the gospel more appealing to Gentiles by removing its Jewish associations. They were also saying that he made the gospel easier for the Jews to accept because he removed the demanding requirements of traditional Judaism to which all loyal Jews subscribed. At least that was their opinion of what the loyal Jews should do.

The accusations of the Judaizers had caused many members of the Galatian churches to begin doubting Paul's legitimacy as an apostle. And because Paul came later than the original apostles whom Jesus personally taught and commissioned, just where did he get his message and authority?

Did he get them from second hand, maybe from the other apostles, or did he simply make up his own brand of the gospel and inappropriately claim to have apostolic authority? What right, they were saying, did Paul have to speak for God as he persistently claimed to do? We're going to see Paul begin to answer those charges tonight. And that defense will continue in more than just tonight's verses.

Paul is going to defend his authority throughout most of chapter 2. So here's a brief summary of what we'll see not only tonight, but next week as well. From Galatians chapter 1 verse 11 all the way through chapter 2 verse 10, Paul emphasizes that he received his gospel when Christ was revealed to him on the Damascus road. Paul reviews his early training in Judaism, his persecution

of the church, and the radical change caused in him by the revelation of the Son of God. Then he talks about his immediate obedience to the commission that was laid upon him to preach Christ in the Gentile world. He insists that he'd begun this work even before he ever met the leaders of the Jerusalem church, and that on two occasions when he did meet them, which were separated by many years, they conferred no additional authority on him, but acknowledged the validity of his commission that he was already discharging. They agreed that his commission was to the Gentiles as theirs was to the Jews, and the only charge they gave him was a plea to remember the poor of the Jerusalem church. So that gives you a preview of where we'll be going the next two weeks, including tonight. And the section we'll look at tonight is about how God loves to save bad people. Many people have been transformed by the saving power of Jesus. Some of them may think my testimony is weak. Maybe I never sold drugs or committed what they call any big sins, but that's where they go wrong. According to scripture, all of God's people have been rescued. We've all been transferred from darkness into light and have passed from death to life. All of us are beggars in need of grace.

That's true no matter how dull we might judge our own stories. We're all desperate people in need of a savior. In this passage, we'll see the amazing, powerful, unusual grace of God on display. Paul gives us a picture of God's transforming grace by relating his own story, and that's a story of a terrorist turned evangelist. Sometimes we forget that Paul was considered a terrorist to the Jews, but Paul was transformed by his encounter with Jesus. And like Paul, we need more than a minor adjustment when we come to Christ. We need transformation too. And only the gospel transforms people from the inside out.

[7 : 01] One section of those last few words is important for us to remember as we go through the text tonight, so here's something to think about again. Like Paul, we need more than a minor adjustment when we come to Christ. We need transformation. Tonight we'll see that the detail in these verses apply to Paul's specific situation, but the bigger picture is true for each of us, and that bigger picture is that the headings apply to us just like they did for Paul. We'll break tonight's verses into three sections, and I already gave you a little bit of a spoiler alert on how the lesson is going to end. When we get to the end, we will look at how each of the three section headings applies to each true believer, so keep that in mind as we go through the sections tonight. The first section of tonight's passage comes in verses 11 and 12, and in those verses we see the gospel revelation. So the gospel revelation is the first section of blanks you have. Listen to verses 11 and 12 again. Paul said,

I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. In the introduction, we mentioned several questions that the false teaching Judaizers were asking. And just a reminder, those questions were, where did Paul get his message and authority? Did he get them secondhand from the other apostles? Did he make them up and come up with his own brand of the gospel? And was he inappropriately claiming apostolic authority to himself? And finally, what right did Paul have to speak for God? And we know that he persistently claimed to do that.

Well, Paul answers all of those questions in these two verses that we start with tonight. In verses 11 and 12, Paul states his theme, and the theme is this, his message and ministry are of divine origin. He did not invent the gospel, nor did he receive it from men, but he received the gospel from Jesus Christ. Both his message and his apostolic ministry were divinely given. Therefore, anybody who added anything to Paul's gospel was in danger of divine judgment because that gospel was given by Jesus Christ himself. Paul's gospel, which was being called into question by the Judaizers and deserted by the Galatians, was neither an invention, as if his own brain had fabricated it, nor a tradition, as if the church had handed it down to him. But it was a revelation. Paul says that God made it known to him. Verses 11 and 12 are straightforward to understand, but they're very important.

In verse 11, Paul says that his gospel source came from a non-human origin. Verse 11 simply says, For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

[10 : 26] Paul says there's a reason why his gospel sounds different, and that's because Paul's gospel is different than what the Jews had been traditionally taught. No person taught Paul his gospel, and Paul reiterates that point in verse 12. Then he goes on to give the source of his gospel. In verse 12, we see Paul say, For I did not receive it, talking about the gospel from any man, nor

was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. We've heard this before, so we sometimes overlook the boldness of it. Consider what Paul is saying here. Paul's saying that we should listen to him because he heard directly from the Godhead. Some people debate whether Jesus was the one who was revealed or the one who did the revealing. Paul later says that God revealed Jesus to him, but it makes little difference. The important thing is that Jesus was revealed to Paul.

And this is talking, of course, about Paul's experience on the Damascus road when he looked up into heaven and saw Jesus in all his glory. What was unveiled for him in that moment was the essence of the gospel. For Paul, to see the glorious Christ was to know the reality of his cross and the reality of the empty tomb. Paul had heard some facts about Jesus of Nazareth before his conversion, but he rejected him because those facts sounded like blasphemy. But then he saw the same Jesus who had been crucified, now disclosed as the Son of God, and even more importantly, as the risen Lord.

His eyes were opened spiritually speaking. In that instance, he realized that he could never get right with God by keeping the law. He could only get right with God by coming to Christ. That's why Paul dared to call the gospel he preached, my gospel. It was his because it had been uniquely revealed to him. Think about how remarkable the magnitude of his claim is. He's affirming that his message is God's message, that his gospel is God's gospel, and that his words are God's words.

And if someone makes a claim like that, he had better be prepared to back it up. Starting with verse 13 and continuing all the way through verse 10 of chapter 2, Paul proves what he's saying. Verses 13 through 17 start that defense in the second section of tonight's lesson. And in verses 13 through 17, we see life transformation. So life transformation is your second set of blanks. Let's start by looking at verses 13 and 14.

Paul said there, For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.

[13:38] And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people. So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. In the introduction to Galatians two weeks ago, we looked at Paul's life before conversion. And we also looked at his conversion by looking at sections of Acts 8 and Acts 9.

Acts 8.3 told us this about Paul, who was then still known as Saul. Acts 8.3 said, But Saul was ravaging the church and entering house after house. He dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.

Listen to Paul later describe this experience to King Agrippa in Acts chapter 26. You may want to flip to Acts 26. We're going to spend a little bit of time there.

And the verses that we're going to look at first are Acts 26 verses 4 through 11. Talking to King Agrippa, Paul said, My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain as they earnestly worship night and day.

[15:12] And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O King. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priest, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blasphemous. And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

So you can see Paul himself admit that he was a terrorist. We'll look just a little bit at a few verses from Acts 9 before going back to Acts 26 to refresh our memories about Paul's conversion on the Damascus road.

So just listen to Acts 9, 3 through 6, and then we'll jump back to Acts 26. In Acts 9, 3 through 6, we see this. Now as he, talking about Saul, went on his way, he approached Damascus.

[16:26] And suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

And he said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.

Going back to Acts 26 now, listen to how Paul describes that conversion experience to King Agrippa. These verses are Acts 26, verses 12 through 23.

So Acts 26, 12 through 23, continue Paul's dialogue. And he says there, In this connection, I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priest.

At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

[17 : 35] It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And I said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

But rise and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me, and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass, that the Christ must suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles. Hearing what Paul said in Acts 26 is important, because those words expand on what Paul says in Galatians. Paul shows in Acts 26 that his gospel is God's gospel, by showing that his teaching matches up to what Moses and the prophets said was going to happen.

[19 : 24] For one proof of that, just think back to when we looked at Isaiah 53 a few months ago, because Isaiah 53 gave the Jews a summary of the gospel, and that is the same gospel that Paul is preaching now.

So here's a bit of a side trip that's important. Paul showed that he spoke for God by showing how his teaching matched up with what God had already revealed.

We have many people today who claim to speak for God, and we need to judge their claims the same way. We need to check whether their claims agree with what God has already revealed.

And if any teacher's words differ from what God already has revealed, we know that those teachers are false teachers. If a teacher truly speaks for God, that teacher's words will match what the Bible said.

Let's go back to tonight's text now and look at what Paul wrote in Galatians 1, 15 through 17. Paul said, starting in verse 15, But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone, 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.

[20 : 55] Until these verses, Paul has been explaining how he received his gospel from God. And in verses 15 through 17, Paul emphasizes the other side.

He emphasizes that he never received the gospel from men. Notice at how each stage, the initiative and grace of God are emphasized.

First, Paul says that God set him apart before Paul was born. Next, we see that God called Paul through God's grace.

And finally, God was pleased to reveal his son to Paul. We'll look at each of those three things in a little more detail, but always remember the big picture.

Paul did nothing to earn this treatment from God. In fact, until God converted him, Paul was doing everything he could to fight against God. Think about Paul's statement that God set Paul apart before Paul was born.

[21 : 59] We see that in other cases in the Bible as well. Like Jacob, who was chosen before he was born in preference to his twin Esau, and like Jeremiah, who before he was born was appointed to be a prophet, so Paul, before he was born, was set apart to be an apostle.

If he was consecrated as an apostle before his birth, then obviously Paul had nothing to do with it himself. Consider even more the amazing fact that God called Paul before he was born, yet Paul spent years rebelling against God and persecuting the church.

It's no wonder, then, that Paul would later say of his conversion that Jesus showed his perfect patience to him. You can find that in 1 Timothy 1, verse 16.

Through Paul's pre-conversion time, God remained patient with Paul the terrorist. And we should be grateful that God remained patient with us before we came to know Christ.

Now let's consider how God called Paul through God's grace. Paul was fighting against God and against Christ. He neither deserved mercy nor asked for mercy, but mercy found him and grace called him.

[23 : 23] Paul then becomes the poster child for how grace is unmerited favor. And now let's think about how God was pleased to reveal his son to Paul.

Whether Paul still is referring to his experience on the Damascus Road or to the days immediately following that experience, what was revealed to him was Jesus Christ, God's son.

Paul had been persecuting Christ because he believed that Jesus Christ was an imposter. Now his eyes were opened to see Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews, the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

We already talked about how Paul knew some of the facts about Jesus, but now he understood their significance. It was a revelation of Christ for the Gentiles.

It was a private revelation to Paul, but it was a public commissioning to take that news to the Gentiles. What Paul was charged to preach to the Gentiles was not the law of Moses, as the Judaizers were trying to teach them, but the good news of Christ.

[24 : 36] This Christ had been revealed, Paul says, literally, in me. We know that it was an external unveiling. Paul claimed that he saw the risen Christ, and he did see the risen Christ, but it essentially was an inner illumination of Paul's soul as well.

God shined in his heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. And this revelation was so inward and became so much a part of him that he was able to make it known to others.

That takes us halfway through verse 16. Look at the end of Galatians 1.16 and all of verse 17 again. Paul said, starting with the end of verse 16, So here Paul reemphasizes that he never learned his gospel from others.

Before he went to meet any of the other apostles, he went to Arabia and then went back to Damascus. Because the Lord Jesus Christ had appeared to him and called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul needed no other confirmation.

He got that confirmation straight from the source. The independence from the other apostles also helped establish Paul as an equal to those apostles.

[26 : 15] Gentiles also would have been more likely to believe a message coming from someone other than a group of Jews. The text says that Paul journeyed to Arabia.

In Galatians 4.25, we'll see the word Arabia referred to the location of Mount Sinai. However, in the days of Paul, the word Arabia referred to the Nabataean kingdom, a vast expanse of territory stretching southward from Damascus toward the Arabian peninsula.

This section of territory was fairly close to Damascus and it was likely where Paul spent most of the next three years. After his stay in Arabia, Paul returned once more to Damascus and continued preaching there for a while.

When he did, he almost immediately encountered persecution from the Jewish leaders. And ironically, that was probably the same group that included men with whom he had once conspired to attack the Christians.

In 2 Corinthians 11.32, Paul wrote about this time. He said, At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me.

[27 : 33] And this verse suggests that the apostle also preached in Arabia and aroused the displeasure of its king. The Gentile civil authorities of Damascus supported the efforts of the Jewish leaders to arrest and execute Paul.

This brings us to the last section of tonight's passage. So far, we've seen the gospel revelation and the life transformation.

In verses 18 through 24, we see bold proclamation. So bold proclamation is your last set of blanks. Look again at what Paul wrote in verses 18 through 24 of Galatians 1.

Paul said, Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

In what I am writing to you before God, I do not lie. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

[28 : 47] They only were hearing it said, He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me.

The periods preaching in Damascus and the sojourn in Arabia alone with the Lord Jesus where he learned, meditated, and studied even more on the Old Testament totaled about three years.

And after that, Paul went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas. And we know that is the apostle Peter. Paul makes it a point of noting that he solely went for the purpose of becoming acquainted with Peter, who was the personal companion of the Lord Jesus and the most powerful spokesman of the Jerusalem church at that time.

Acts chapter 9, verses 23 through 25 indicate that Paul's leaving Damascus was because of a dramatic set of events.

The Jews strongly resisted Paul's preaching and they had developed a plan to kill him. They were patrolling the city gates 24 hours a day waiting to capture Paul.

[30 : 00] But when Paul's disciples heard of the plot, they helped Paul escape by lowering him over the city wall in a basket. Acts chapter 9, verses 26 and 27 show us that Paul initially failed to fare much better when he arrived in Jerusalem.

So here are Acts chapter 9, verses 26 and 27. And when he had come to Jerusalem, he attempted to join the disciples and they were all afraid of him for they did not believe that he was a disciple. You can't really blame them for being afraid of Paul, can you? But in verse 27 of Acts 9, it says, Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord who spoke to him and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

So Barnabas had to vouch for Paul and make the introduction before Peter and James would see Paul. The mention of Paul's being brought to the apostles in 927 must refer only to Peter and James, the Lord's brother, who was certainly attached to the apostles at that time.

And because of James seeing the risen Christ and his having been intimately associated with the other apostles, this James would easily have been considered by Paul to be an apostle in the wider sense.

[31 : 29] Look at verse 20 now of Galatians 1. That verse says, In what I am writing to you before God, I do not lie. In our culture, if someone insists he isn't lying, we often assume that person really is lying.

The culture of Paul's day viewed Paul's choice of words differently. In Paul's day, the phrase that Paul used was a common Jewish vow. That statement, along with many others, contradicts the claims of liberal interpreters that Paul was a sincere and highly capable leader, but that many of his teachings reflect only his personal ideas and preferences.

If that were true, he would either have been terribly self-deluded or else he would have been a shameless liar. He was either authoritative and completely reliable as a spokesman for God or he was a sham.

And we see Paul continue to prove that he was a reliable spokesman. We need to look again at Acts chapter 9 to see how Paul was spending most of his time during the visit to Jerusalem.

Here are Acts chapter 9, verses 28 and 29. Acts 9, 28 is where the heading for this section comes from tonight.

[33 : 08] Acts 9, 28 shows us that despite intense opposition, Paul boldly proclaimed God's word. Paul then goes to Syria and Cilicia.

Cilicia was another name for Tarsus and we know that as Paul's home territory. The reference to Syria implies that he might have revisited the churches in Damascus.

And those travels are documented in verse 21 of Galatians 1. Look again now at verses 22 through 24 of Galatians 1.

Here we learn about some of the results of Paul's bold proclamation. And he wrote in verses 22 through 24, And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

They only were hearing it said, He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. and they glorified God because of me.

[34 : 09] The churches in Judea did not know Paul personally. They had only heard that the former persecutor was now a preacher. They had heard that he was now preaching the faith that he had tried to destroy.

And because of this, Paul says, They glorified God because of me. It's important to look at those words because notice they did not glorify Paul.

They glorified what God was doing in Paul, recognizing that Paul was a trophy of God's grace. Remember the main idea.

Jesus revealed the gospel to Paul and transformed Paul's life for the glory of God. Paul's a classic example of a person who was sincere in his misdirected beliefs before becoming a Christian. sincerity alone cannot bring you to salvation if you believe a lie. Everybody can be sincerely wrong. You can be consumed with religion and miss Jesus.

[35 : 15] Paul, without knowing it before Jesus was revealed to him, was in a desperate situation. If we had been there, we might have even looked at him and thought, he was in a hopeless situation.

He's beyond the hope of the gospel. There's no way that God could save somebody like him. In the introduction, I said that the detail in the verses applies to Paul's specific situation, but the bigger picture applies to Paul and to each of us who are believers.

David Platt and Tony Merida wrote, The gospel is a rescue mission. God intervened in the life of Paul and he has done the same for all believers.

If you are a Christian, you have sensed at some point God's powerful calling. You have sensed that something or someone is dealing with you. Maybe it was after a sermon in your room or in a worship service.

Paul was called on the Damascus road. How did you respond to God's call? Perhaps you've already seen how the three headings of the lesson apply to every believer.

[36 : 32] All of us, like Paul, were spiritually dead in sin before God revealed the gospel to us. Romans 3, 23-25 say, For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

Romans 6, 23, and 24 say, For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

moving to one of Paul's other letters, Ephesians 2, verses 1-7, talk about the gospel revelation done for every believer.

Then the Ephesians verses go into more detail about how God accomplished the second heading for each believer. God transformed every believer's life.

[37 : 33] Listen to Ephesians 2, verses 1-7. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

God transformed us and every believer from being spiritually dead to being spiritually alive. The first two headings of tonight's lesson, Gospel, Revelation, and Life Transformation, clearly apply to each believer.

And now here comes the challenging part and the question for each of us to ponder. Does the third heading of tonight's lesson apply to each of us as a believer?

Are we boldly proclaiming the gospel like what we've been commanded to do? Verses like Matthew 28, 18 through 20 clearly mandate the command to boldly proclaim the gospel.

[39 : 17] Here are Matthew 28, 18 through 20. And Jesus came and said to them, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. And then in Acts 1, 8, we see these words from Jesus. In Acts 1, 8, Jesus said that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.

Believers are to promote the gospel in their city, their state, their region, and the world. That is why we need to ask ourselves whether the third section heading of bold proclamation applies to us. If you're like me, we all need to boldly proclaim Christ more often than we do. Perhaps meditating more on what God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have done for us will motivate us to do so.

[40 : 35] The wonderful reality of Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and reigning was made known to Paul and that same wonderful reality was made known to each of us as believers.

Think about that amazing truth. God opens the eyes of believers that they may see God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ. The last line paraphrases Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 4.6.

2 Corinthians 4.6 says, For God, who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Here's one more quote from David Platt and Tony Merida. Here's how they summarize Paul's story. They say, For us, Paul's is a story that shows us that God loves to save bad people.

No one is beyond the reach of his amazing grace. This message only comes from God. The gospel is good news from God.

[41 : 44] Rejoice in this gospel. In Christ you find what your heart has always longed to find. No other love is this great. No other hope is this secure.

No other forgiveness is this complete. No other joy is this deep. No other freedom is this liberating. No other peace is this sweet.

All of it is found in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Do you know this Savior, the fountain of saving grace? Come and drink. As Jesus said in John 3.16, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this section of scripture that shows how you transformed Paul. We thank you even more for this section of scripture because it illustrates how you've transformed each and every true believer. Help us be mindful of that and be ever more grateful of that as we think about it more and more.

[42 : 57] Help us be more willing to boldly proclaim this truth to others that we meet. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.