

GALATIANS

Chapter 1

Greeting

1 Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1:1 ἀπ’ ἀνθρώπων ... δι’ ἀνθρώπου (“from human beings ... through a human being”)—Some commentators distinguish in meaning between the two prepositions (ἀπό and διά) since there is very little semantic overlap between them. Paul also varies the number of the noun. Perhaps he is distinguishing the source of authority (“human beings”) from the agent (“a human being,” e.g., Peter in 1:18?). On the other hand, Paul only employs διά (“through”) to express the corresponding positive assertion (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ..., “through Jesus Christ ...”). “The use of a second preposition [διά, after ἀπό] may have been motivated by a desire to accent the denial rather than by a need to specify two aspects of authority.” The context does not suggest any real distinction in the meaning of the prepositions. (CC)

Paul.† Writers of this time customarily put their names at the beginning of letters for the convenience of the addressee(s), since letters were written on scrolls. For more information on Paul see notes on Ac 9:1; Php 3:4–14. (CSB)

Paul. Paul identifies himself by name in the sender formula. Luke’s book of Acts notes that Paul was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:37–38; 22:25–29). Many Roman citizens would have a Greek name as a *cognomen* or surname, as does “Paul.” Paul would also have had a family or clan name (his *nomen*) and a personal name (the *praenomen*), although he does not identify them. Had he also mentioned his *nomen* or *praenomen*, he would have betrayed himself as a Roman citizen. Paul may not want to draw attention to his status. Status in this “present evil age” (1:4) was of less importance to him than status in the new age that had begun in Christ. Such a value system is worthy of emulation today! (CC)

Luke further reports that Paul had a Jewish name befitting one born of the tribe of Benjamin, “Saul” (Acts 9:1; see also Phil 3:5). Saul was also the name of the first king of Israel who had hailed from Benjamin (1 Sam 9:1–2). Many people wonder if the apostle changed his name since Luke refers to him as Saul before Acts 13 and as Paul after that point. Although that is a possibility, Luke never narrates an actual change of name. Paul may well have had both names from childhood since diaspora Jews would sometimes bear both a Jewish/Hebrew name and a Greek name (e.g., Jesus Justus in Col 4:11). The Greek name would permit a Jewish person to function more effectively in the larger society. “Saul” (σαῦλος) in the Greek language conveyed the loose, wanton gait of courtesans or drunken Bacchantes, whereas the homophone “Paul” was a very common and accepted Greek name. Throughout his correspondence, Paul never refers to his Jewish name. In the book of Acts, the shift in names coincides with the very first instance of the Jews’ rejection of Paul’s preaching of Christ (Acts 13). That rejection forced Paul and his companions to turn to the gentiles, who received their message with great enthusiasm. Luke narrates the same pattern of Jewish rejection and gentile acceptance in Acts 18; 19, and 28. As Paul writes to gentile congregations (Gal 4:8–9: former idol worshipers), how appropriate, then, that he should identify himself by his Roman *cognomen*. He wanted to be known as “Paul,” the apostle to the gentiles, rather than as Saul the Hebrew (Phil 3:5). “To the Jews I became as a Jew so that I might gain Jews ... to those outside the Law [I became] as one outside the Law ... so that I might gain those outside the Law” (1 Cor 9:20–21). (CC)

We think that Paul was probably born three or four years after Jesus was born. And the point there is he is a contemporary of Jesus. If Jesus died and rose again at the age of 33, Paul was either in his very late 20s or his early 30s. So he is somebody who is of the same generation of Jesus. (Just-V-1)

Paul is not from Judea, he is not from Jerusalem. He didn't grow up in what we now today call Israel or Palestine. Paul is from Tarsus which is in Cilicia which is a part of Asia Minor, what we would call now today Turkey. He grew up in a town that was a significant town in the Roman Empire. It had a university. It was a town that was a center of commerce. It was a sophisticated city. It was a place in which the culture and art of Rome would have flourished. In Paul's early education, probably to the time in which he was what we would call today Bar Mitzvah, to the time in which he became a man, 13 or 14, Paul received a very rigorous Hellenistic education. That means that he was brought up in the Greek schooling of the time. (Just- V-1)

Now, what is most unique about Paul is that he is a Roman citizen. His father was clearly a Roman citizen. Maybe even his grandfather. And we don't know why or how that happened. But it put him in a unique position being a Jew and yet a Roman citizen. We have a pretty good idea that some time at an early age, 13 or 14, Paul was sent by his father to Jerusalem to study to become a Pharisee. Paul was a student in the Pharisaical school of Gamaliel, which was like the Yale or Harvard at the time. He was the top of his class. I would like to say that he was the one who broke the curve. He was a significant presence in that place. And from the say 13, 14, 15 until the time of our Lord's death and resurrection, Paul was studying the Scriptures in Jerusalem. Now we can't say this for sure. But certainly in reading the New Testament we can say that Paul was a fine biblical scholar. I don't think it's a stretch to say that he could have been perhaps the finest biblical scholar in the world at that time. Paul was a brilliant man. And he was a very fierce, passionate man about the law and what it meant to be a Jew. (Just – V-1)

Now, this is something, again, that we can't say for sure. But I think it's a deduction that we can make from the New Testament. During Jesus' Galilean ministry, Paul was in Jerusalem. And we know that the school there, the Pharisees in Jerusalem -- and I'm going to talk about the Pharisees in a minute -- but the Pharisees in Jerusalem sent a delegation up to Galilee to check out what Jesus was teaching. Now, we don't know if Paul was part of that delegation. But he certainly would have been privy to what found out. In other words, Paul knew about Jesus. Paul knew what he taught. Paul knew everything that anybody else knew about Jesus. And Jesus of course was the most significant, prominent, most important figure in Israel during his three-year ministry. When Jesus comes to Jerusalem for his death, it is most likely that Paul was in Jerusalem going to school there and was an eyewitness of the events. How intimately he was involved, we don't know. But even if he wasn't in Jerusalem, he certainly would have heard about it. Being one of the most significant students in the school of Gamaliel. (Just – V-1)

Paul is a Pharisee. That is a very important thing to understand. Because Jesus, our Lord, was most closely associated with the Pharisees during his ministry. The Pharisees were the conservative biblical scholars. They operated outside of Jerusalem. Which means that they were the ones who took care of the synagogues and the liturgy of the synagogues. They were teachers. Teachers of the law. Rabbis. They were the ones who opened up the Scriptures to people outside of Jerusalem. The other major party is the Sadducean party. And the chief priests came from this party. These Sadducees weren't as conservative as the Pharisees. They didn't believe in the resurrection. They didn't believe in angels. They didn't really accept most of the Old Testament canon except for the first five books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. And they were centered in Jerusalem because they were in charge of the liturgy of the temple. The Pharisees however were very conservative. So Jesus felt very much at home with them. The way they interpreted Scripture. Their beliefs. Their conservative understanding of the messianic prophesies and the hope of the resurrection. All of these things Jesus and the Pharisees had in common. (Just – V-1)

And yet as you read the New Testament you know how fierce Jesus is against the Pharisees. And the reason is they were so much alike and yet in one most significant fundamental way, they were so much different. Because the Pharisees taught that salvation was by works of the law. And Jesus taught that salvation was through him by grace. and the Messiah. This was a fundamental difference. And therefore, it made the Pharisees as much as they had in common with Jesus, it made the Pharisees one of his enemies. And if you read the New Testament, you can see that his harshest words are directed against the Pharisees.(Just – V-1)

I believe that if you read the New Testament, particularly the Gospel of Luke, you can see that the ones who were really behind Jesus' death among the religious establishment were the Pharisees. Ultimately the chief priests on the Council called the Sanhedrin of which both Pharisees, Sadducees and laypeople had a representative was the Council that put him to death. But the Pharisees were the instigators.(Just – V-1)

That's why Paul was such a fierce persecutor of the church. He persecutes the church because he sees it as a fundamentally theologically different vision of what he reads in the Old Testament. And even though we believe that Paul never physically put any Christians to death, there were many Christians who died in the early period because of Paul's instigations. Because of Paul's support of those who did commit these persecutions and these martyrdoms for the church. One of the things that is important to recognize about Paul is his passion. Wherever Paul is in his life, he is passionate about what he believes. Before the Damascus road experience, which we'll talk about later on where he is converted to the Christian faith, Paul is passionate for the law, passionate for the principles of Judaism, passionate for the Old Testament and its teachings. After his conversion, he is passionate for Jesus and the Gospel. We're going to see that passion in the book of Galatians. This is Paul the pastor, the genuine, loving, absolutely in love with this congregation pastor. We're going to see how passionate he really is in his own words. (Just – V-1)

One of the things that is very clear in our culture today with the DaVinci Code and the document now on Judas is there were other documents written in the first and second centuries about the church. Many of which are not accepted by the church. What is in our canon is what the church felt was what God wanted us to have as the inspired inerrant Word of God. But that doesn't mean that some of these documents don't reflect a certain level of truth and reality. One of the things that's important to recognize about the ancient world is that a person's appearance oftentimes was an indicator to them of a person's character. For example, if somebody had a large hooked nose, that was considered a mark of shrewdness. Or if somebody was bald, what I like to say follically challenged, that person was considered wise. Or if a person was of small stature, they were considered weak. (Just – V-2)

Now, there are various things in which you can read in the First Century about outward appearance that indicates a certain kind of character. Now, if you look at the ancient world, especially the Roman world, look at the statuary. Look at the athletic contests. There was a picture in the Roman world of what kind of the perfect human specimen was like. These were very well built men. Men who clearly were handsome in appearance. And these were considered almost gods. Paul was not a great human specimen. We believe that he was a short man. He was bald supposedly according to the documents that talk about Paul outside the New Testament. He had a hook nose. He had a very thin neck. And a very large head. A large head indicated great intelligence. And he had large bulging eyes. He was very small in stature. And this in many ways is the most significant thing. And we actually can sense this from Paul, especially if you read the letters to the Corinthians. Paul's voice was not a winsome voice. It was not a voice that attracted people. It was a very high pitched voice. Very shrill. So it didn't have that kind of mellifluous sort of sound you would expect from somebody on public radio, for example.(Just – V-2)

So when somebody saw Paul, they were not necessarily impressed. Although, they saw him as a wise, shrewd intelligent man. Which he was. So when Paul walked into a church or walked into a city, people

were not immediately struck by his appearance. This is important. When Paul talks about the superlative apostles -- and there were many people who were traveling around the ancient world trying to attract people to their position -- Paul did not immediately attract people by his outward appearance. And yet here is the key: There was something about Paul. There was something about his character. There was something about his passion for the Gospel. There was something about his confession, his conviction of the truth, that attracted people to him. And not only attracted people to him. But attracted them in such a way that they became fiercely loyal to him; so that they would follow him even into death just as Paul followed our Lord into death. (Just – V-2)

I think Paul's voice actually was an advantage. I don't know if you realize this but if you have a very deep voice it's hard for you in a crowd or with a lot of outside noise to be heard. But a very high pitched voice is a voice that can carry. And Paul's voice carried. And people actually were attracted to him even despite his voice. (Just – V-2)

The other thing about Paul -- and this is very important -- is that Paul would not have been considered in our culture to be a nice guy. Paul was a hard man. Paul took no prisoners when it came to the truth. And he was courageous enough to even get into the face of the apostle Peter as we're going to see in Galatians 2 if the truth was being compromised. Paul did not compromise on the truth. And he had such courage of conviction that he was able to withstand any kind of persecution or beating. He was able to stand up to anybody who challenged the truth of the Gospel. Now, that courage is rare. I think you do see it in Peter. And I'm going to point that out when we talk about the Book of Acts. And I think you see it in such people like Luther. But God raises up great men and women in the course of history in order to promote the preaching of the Gospel and its spread throughout the world. (Just – V-2)

Certainly in the First Century there is no more significant figure than the Apostle Paul. In his character, his personality, his courage, his passion, his desire that the Gospel be spread even beyond Israel to the Gentiles is one of the reasons why many of us are here today. There would be no Gentile church if it were not for the Apostle Paul. And almost all Christians today do not have Jewish roots. We are all Gentiles in a sense. And we owe our presence and the great Christian church because of the Apostle Paul. (Just – V-2)

Saul is clearly a Jewish name. And Paul, as a Jew from Tarsus, would have been given this name at his birth, at his circumcision, just like John was named at his circumcision. (Just V-4)

Paul is a Roman name and it's clearly the name that Paul is called after his conversion. And perhaps Saul/Paul is a way in which Paul was able to maintain both his Jewish heritage, his Roman citizenship, and his ability to have access to a Gentile community. (Just V-4)

When you see the persecution, the first persecution in which Stephen is martyred, the chief priests who are Sadducees are the ones leading the persecution. And they have hired Paul the Pharisee to carry out this persecution. Now, here you can see to a certain extent Paul compromising himself by aligning himself by people he doesn't believe the same things about. And yet his hatred of Christians was so great that he was willing to suspend his difficulties with the Sadducees in order to accomplish a greater goal. You know, the enemy of my enemy is a friend is that kind of thing. And it's a great example of that. (Just – V-3)

What happens after that first persecution when Stephen is martyred is that the church scatters. This is actually in some ways a good thing. Certainly there's a great tragedy that there are martyrdoms of Christians in the early church there. But from that point on, the church gets out of Jerusalem. And that's really the beginning of the mission of the church. There was kind of an ongoing -- not to the same intensity but there was an ongoing persecution of Christians by Jews for a number of years. But after the

conversion of Paul, which happens right after the martyrdom of Stephen, that persecution to a great extent lessens. (Just – V-3)

The next persecution is in the years 41 to 44. You can see that on the chronology. 41 to 44 is the persecution of Christians by Herod Agrippa I. One of the four Herods. Herod the great. Herod Agrippa, Herod Agrippa I and Herod Agrippa II. They are either sons or grandsons or great grandsons of Herod the Great. This is the first Gentile persecution. And this is a significant persecution. Because one of the big three among the 12, Peter, James and John, James and John are the sons of Zebedee. James the son of Zebedee is martyred. And you can read about it in Acts 12. I'll talk about it later because it's a significant event. This is a watershed event in the life of the church because after Chapter 12 in Acts everything changes. This is a time, too, when you see it's not just Jews that are persecuting the church, but Gentiles. And from this point on, it's the Romans who are now going to persecute the church. (Just – V-3)

There is, however, after this persecution from the years 45 to 49, a period of quiet. A period of peace. And it's during this time as we're going to see later on that the apostolic Council occurred in the year 49. Now we're getting some dates in mind. Remember 30 is usually the date of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension. Depending upon how you date things, between 30 and 36 were the persecutions of Paul. It could be five years. It could be two years. We're not sure. We do know the persecution of Herod Agrippa I was 41 to 45. Apostolic Council was usually dated in 49 and 50. And then there was a severe persecution following that beginning in Rome where the Jews were actually the target of the persecution. And many Christians were tossed out of places like Rome and Alexandria because of that. (Just – V-3)

Now, here is a very, very important point. And if you don't understand this, it's going to be hard to read the book of Galatians. Christians did not agitate in the Roman Empire. They did not put forward their position to an extent that the Romans would persecute them. The ones who were really the agitators were what were called the Jewish zealots. These Jewish zealots were fierce, like Paul to a certain extent. Even in some ways worse than Paul -- were fierce for maintaining the principles of Judaism. There was actually a name for some of them. It was called Sacarii, which is the name of a long knife with a curved blade. This knife was used by these Jewish zealots to actually go into a crowd when there was a great feast and they would just slip that knife into those people who they thought were not holding to the principles of Judaism. And it was a frightening thing. This is the kind of terrorism that we even see today in the Middle East. It seems to be part of the character of the Middle East. (Just – V-3)

But these Jews not only caused trouble in Israel and Palestine but all over the empire. And the Roman Empire in seeing how this agitation was disturbing and causing turmoil in their big cities not only persecuted the Jews but in the process persecuted Christians, as well. And there was this kind of confusion as to what a Christian was. Was he a Jew? Was he a Christian? Jewish Christian? We're going to see that that confusion was part of the persecution that was significant in the early Christian communities. (Just – V-3)

The emperor you perhaps know in the year 50 expelling the Jews from Rome was Claudius. And Jewish Christians not only were part of the persecution by Romans but -- and this is a key point -- the Jewish zealots, these Sacarii, were targeting Christians. Because they perceived them as being somewhat Jewish because they were holding to the Old Testament. And yet like Paul because they were no longer believing in circumcision and works of the law, they were considered to be betrayers of the Jewish faith. So here we see a combination of Romans and Jewish zealots persecuting Christians. From 50 until the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70, these Sacarii, these Jewish zealots were causing great difficulties in the church. The martyrdom of Peter and James in the 60s, 64, 65. And Paul. All of these persecutions were a result of primarily the Roman Empire. But also because of the way in which the Jewish zealots were stirring up the citizens of Rome. (Just V-3)

So if you take the big picture of the 40 years between the death and resurrection of Jesus and the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, the church can be defined by a series of persecutions and ongoing persecution. Now, that is why Christians have to hide out when they worship. The catacombs were certainly a place. But the prominent place of worship -- and you can see this in the gospels and you can certainly see it in the Book of Acts -- were in the private homes of Christians. They would take these ***teniman houses, these small houses, 40 feet by 16 feet. We know the size of these what were called ***tetilus, ***tetali if there were many of them. These were house churches that formed the foundation of the Christian church for the first 300 years of Christianity. (Just – V-3)

There is always a moment in a person's life that is kind of a turning point. And certainly Paul's encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus is one of those. (Just – V-5)

The people in Damascus probably knew he was coming. They were probably petrified of what was going to happen. And Paul was determined to change the church there and to turn it into a Jewish synagogue again. One of the things that's important to recognize about the Apostle Paul is that he was somebody who knew everything that everybody else knew about Jesus. In fact, in many ways, Paul probably understood Jesus better than anybody else. Because they both interpreted the Scriptures in the same way. He knew what Jesus taught. He knew what Jesus' claims were. What Paul didn't believe was that Jesus was the Christ. So when there is this encounter on the road to Damascus which you can read about and we don't have time to do it but you can read about it in the Book of Acts, Chapter 9, you'll see that in revealing himself to Paul, as the Messiah, he gives Paul that one piece that was missing for him. And that is that wonderful statement of grace that Jesus is the one who had come into the world to save sinners by suffering, dieing and rising. (Just – V-5)

When the Lord Jesus reveals that he is the Christ to Paul on the road to Damascus, the scales do in fact fall from his eyes both literally and physically. He becomes now an apostle to the Gentiles. And as the Lord says to Ananias: See how much he's going to suffer on behalf of my name. Paul will take the same passion that he had for Judaism into his apostleship to the Gentiles and his passion for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, that Damascus road experience was not a time where Paul learns anything new about Jesus. He knew it already. What he learns at that point is something that you can't learn in your head. It's a belief. The Holy Spirit came upon him when Jesus revealed that he was the Christ to him. And from that moment on, Paul went from being a persecutor of the church to being a believer and a confessor of Jesus Christ as Lord and Messiah. (Just V-5)

Now, this is something that is an act of God. And when we read the book of Galatians, we'll see how important this conversion was for him Paul describes it as -- and I'm going to use this language -- as an Apocalyptic event. Apocalyptic simply means a moment of revelation when God shows himself to us. The incarnation because Jesus is revealed to us as the Son of God is an Apocalyptic event. This is something outside of us. Where God comes to us in a way that is outside of our normal way of transacting reality. For Paul, the revelation of Jesus on the road to Damascus is an Apocalyptic event. It is a defining moment for him. (Just – V-5)

And again, as I mentioned earlier, it is a defining moment for us, for the church of Jesus Christ. Because from this moment on now, Paul becomes the apostle to the Gentiles. That is what his call is all about. And Paul not only understands that, he embraces it with the kind of passion and courage that only Paul seems to have. (Just – V-5)

There's a lot of discussion about where Paul fits. And the reason for that is because he is a significant figure in the Book of Acts. And you can see that his historical missionary journeys provide a timeline for us into the life of Paul. And into the life of the early church. Paul comes on the scene some time in the 30s. And from that moment on in a sense he is a person who defines the rest of history. However, it is

not until his first missionary journey that Paul is understood as being a significant player. Let's look at the Book of Acts for a moment. (Just – V-6)

The first five chapters are centered in Peter. Peter's preaching in Jerusalem alongside of James and John the sons of Zebedee is kind of the significant, you know, center of the church's life. And as you look at the sermons of Peter in Acts 2, 3, 4 and 5, you'll see how his preaching and his presence in Jerusalem is central. We talked about how in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, the preaching of Stephen and then his martyrdom begins to turn the church into different direction. And then of course the conversion of Paul in 9 makes a big significant change in the whole complexion of the early Christian church. But Paul doesn't step on the scene yet. (Just – V-6)

In Acts Chapter 10 we have a very, very significant event. A lot of people don't realize that the founder of the Jewish mission is Peter. Pentecost sermon indicates that very clearly. And this is of course the Lord's doing. It's the Lord who sends the Holy Spirit down upon the church. The spirit of Jesus. It's the one who inspires Peter to preach as he does. But Peter is not only the founder of the Jewish mission. He is also the founder of the Gentile mission. And it's by the Lord's revelation, again, in Acts 10 to Cornelius that the Gentile mission begins. Now, I didn't mention the mission to the Samaritans and in Samaria by Philip in Chapter 8 of Acts. And that's certainly a minor part but it's not insignificant. It's showing what Acts 1:8 says that the mission of the church is going to go from Judea to Samaria to the rest of the world. But it is the Peter who is the founder of both the Jewish and Gentile mission. Chapters 10 and 11 is really centered in this. (Just – V-6)

But then in Chapter 12 as I mentioned before there is this fundamental event, the persecution of Herod Agrippa I. And let me read for you a few verses from that chapter that will give you a sense of why this was a significant moment. I'm reading from Acts Chapter 12 verses 1 to 3. "About that time it says Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword. And when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter, also, this was the days of unleavened bread." Now, look what's happening here. You've got the church in Jerusalem, the big three, Peter, James and John there. This is the time of Passover. So it's a very filled city full of Jewish pilgrims. The church has really been around for a while now. We're talking about the years probably 41 to 44. (Just- V-6)

This is probably the year 41, beginning of this persecution. And John, the son of Zebedee, one of the big three who were on the mount of transfiguration with Jesus, one of the 12, the first of the 12 to be martyred is killed by a sword. Now, this sent a shock wave through the church. Peter is thrown into prison and you know the rest of the story. How he escapes from prison. He goes to where the apostles are gathered in the house of John, Mark's mother, knocks on the door. The maid sees him. Doesn't open the door. Runs and says Peter is here. They don't believe him. And finally they go back and Peter comes in and everybody is certainly afraid. This is a very, very tenuous time. (Just – V-6)

But here is something very interesting: In Chapter 12 when Peter is in that house and is talking about the persecution, it says very clearly here that this is the last time we hear from Peter, except, except, and this is an important exception for Acts 15 and the Apostolic Council. Now, look at what it says. I'm in Chapter 12 again. Verse 17 and following where Peter is now in the house talking to the apostles. It says but motions to them with his hand to be silent he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. Now, this is important, he says: "Tell these things to James and to the brothers. Then he departed and went to another place." Tell these things to James and the brothers. Now, this is James, the brother of our Lord, who from this moment on becomes the bishop of Jerusalem. Who the brothers are we think are the other brothers of Jesus. But Peter is in a sense here in Acts 12 handing over the leadership of the church which he was in charge of for these first 12 chapters he's handing over to James and Peter departs to we don't know where and goes to this other place. And we really never hear from

Peter again except for the Apostolic Council. Now, this is a defining moment. Peter now leaves the scene. And from this moment on Paul takes over. And this in Chapter 12 is the beginning of the missionary journeys of Paul. (Just – V-6)

Now, the missionary journeys of Paul take place -- there are three of them -- take place in these short bursts. Behind me is a map. And I think we will have a map for you to see where you can trace these journeys. But the first journey are the years 46 to 47. This is described from Acts 13:1 to 14:28. We believe that this journey is the one that preceded the Apostolic Council. It is where Paul first now opens up the Gospel to the Gentiles. Up until this time -- and what I mean by that is from his conversion up until these journeys Paul is essentially probably functioning as a missionary to the Jews. We don't quite know what he did. There are a couple of indications when we get to Galatians. We'll talk about them. He went to a number of different places. But it seems as if he's kind of preparing himself for this great act of being the apostle to the Gentiles. (Just – V-6)

The second missionary journey is much more far flung. Instead of being in the southern part of Asia Minor in the place really essentially where Paul was from, he goes to Europe. He goes to Macedonia. He goes to Athens and Corinth. That's from the years 50 to 54 describe in Acts 15 Verse 36 to Acts 18 Verse 22. That is where he establishes the Gospel clearly in Gentile communities across the empire as far as I said Greece. That is significant. Greece now being Europe. Asia Minor. There's a big difference between those. Especially in that day and age. (Just – V-6)

His third missionary journey is from the year 54 to 58 in which he essentially retraces the steps that he had during his second missionary journey, affirming the places that he had been, perhaps opening up some new missions. But essentially affirming what he did in the second missionary journey. And that is described from Acts 18:23 to Acts 21:15. It is during that time, that third missionary journey, that Paul goes to Jerusalem. And that would have been in the year 58. In Jerusalem he's arrested. He then goes to Caesarea Maritima which is on the coast of the Mediterranean in Israel, a place that was a central Roman outpost, a significant place for leadership there by Herod Agrippa II now. And there's he's in prison for two years. I'll talk about that a little later on. From there he goes to Rome and then perhaps onto Spain and then back to Rome to be martyred in the year 64, 65. (Just – V-6)

Now, just think about this from the year 46 to his martyrdom in 65, that's a little less than 20 years, Paul does three missionary journeys where for all intents and purposes he spreads the Gospel throughout the entire Roman Empire. The letters he wrote were written in the 50s. Galatians I think we're going to see is written in the 40s. But all the other letters are written between 50 and 60. These are letters to all of these churches. What we have in the New Testament was written during this time. The decade of the 50s for all intents and purposes was the most significant time in the church's missionary impulse to get out into the world led by the Apostle Paul and others. (Just – V-6)

So when you look at the history of the early Christian church, except for the first two decades, the last 20 years are essentially the years of the Apostle Paul. And as you read the Book of Acts, Acts 13 to 28, with the exception of the Apostolic Council, Paul is the major figure. Paul is the one that Luke who is the author of Acts features as the significant apostle. Now, we know Peter was certainly alive and well and doing things. But it's not recorded in the Book of Acts. And in a sense here you can see that Peter and the Gentile mission is retreating and Paul and the -- excuse me. Peter and the Jewish mission is retreating. Paul and the Gentile mission is increasing. And those three missionary journeys are the significant events that again are the reason why we are here today as Christians, a as part of the holy Christian church. (Just V-6)

apostle. One sent on a mission with full authority of representation; an ambassador. (CSB)

Lit, “the sent one.” See p 1901. Luther: “[Paul] does not come as a private person but as the emissary of a king” (AE 26:16). (TLSB)

An apostle. Paul immediately identifies himself appositionally as an “apostle” (ἀπόστολος), one who is sent (ἀποστέλλω). A technical use of the term “apostle” is without precedent in Greek and Hellenistic Jewish literature before and after the “apostolic” era. The dearth of non-Christian parallels has led some to conclude that a Hebrew or Aramaic concept must stand behind the NT’s use of the word “apostle.” The first Christians may have been drawing upon the Hebrew word שְׁלִיחַ, *shaliach* (or שְׁלִיחָא, *shaluach*), which could be translated as “apostle” (3 Kgdms 14:6 [LXX A; MT/ET 1 Ki 14:6]). The rabbinic Mishnah states about such an envoy that “a man’s agent is like to himself” (*m. Ber.* 5.5 [trans. H. Danby]). An agent could act on his sender’s behalf in business transactions (*b. B. Qam.* 102a–b), marriage agreements (*m. Qidd.* 2.1; *m. Git.* 3.6; 4.1), or even ceremonial rituals (*m. Ter.* 4.4). Perhaps the Jewish institution of *shaliach* served as the basis for the early Christian notion of an “apostle.” The first Christian churches were sending out “apostles” to act on their behalf (2 Cor 8:23; cf. Phil 2:25) even as the church of Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2–4; cf. Acts 14:4, 14). On the other hand, the Jewish *shaliach* was never used in a missionary context. The NT usage appears unique. The rabbinic texts that speak of the *shaliach* are also from an era long after Paul’s. Gal 1:1 remains clear with or without an allusion to the *shaliach*: Paul acts and writes as Christ’s own agent! (CC)

The uniqueness of early Christian usage may account for why Paul modifies “apostle” in his letters—with a genitive in 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1 and with a participle in Rom 1:1. In Gal 1:1 he explains the word “apostle” by means of three prepositional phrases that draw attention to the verbal meaning of “one who is sent.” Paul stresses that he has been sent not through the agency of human beings but rather “through Jesus Christ and God the Father.” Luke tends to reserve the term “apostle” for the Twelve (e.g., Acts 1:26), but he does depart from that pattern in the case of the missionaries Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14). Paul, in his letters, uses the term “apostle” more broadly than the Twelve (see 1 Cor 15:7, 9). He is an apostle because he has seen the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1–2) and has been directly commissioned to serve as the Lord’s messenger (Gal 1:15–17). To fail to heed the apostle’s message is to disrespect the one who commissioned and sent him. Paul is clear elsewhere that to receive his Gospel message properly one must recognize it for what it really is, the message not of a human being but of God (1 Thess 2:13)! (CC)

Paul also uses the term “apostle” for itinerant missionaries such as Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess 1:1 [Paul, Silvanus, Timothy]; 1 Thess 2:7 [ET 2:6b; “we” “apostles of Christ”]; cf. *Did.* 11.3–6). He recognizes “apostles” who are messengers or emissaries of particular churches (e.g., Phil 2:25: “your” apostle; 2 Cor 8:23). The uniqueness of the term to early Christianity and Paul’s own flexibility of usage may have required that he clarify what he meant by the term. Indeed, such clarification quickly follows in Gal 1:1. The third Greek word in the letter to the Galatians is a negative, “not” (οὐκ). This negative is succeeded by yet another in the following phrase, “nor” (οὐδέ). These negatives draw attention to themselves. What motivated this emphasis on what apostleship is *not*? Many throughout the history of interpretation have assumed that Paul must have been responding to attacks on his apostolic office or credentials as somehow dependent on those human beings who had commissioned him. While this interpretation is possible, the assumption in 1:1 of an attack by his Galatian rivals is unnecessary. Paul simply had to describe what he meant by the term “apostle” for his gentile listeners. He is not functioning as an emissary of the church in Syrian Antioch or of the church in Jerusalem. His is not a limited or a specific or even a temporary commission. Paul, rather, is acting on behalf of none other than God and Jesus Christ. (CC)

Paul uses the noun “apostle” or one of its cognate forms only four times throughout the entire letter (1:1, 17, 19; 2:8). By way of contrast, he will employ the word “Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον) or its cognate verb form *fourteen* times in Galatians (1:6, 7, 8 [twice], 9, 11 [twice], 16, 23; 2:2, 5, 7, 14; 4:13). He uses the verb

“gospelize” (εὐαγγελίζω)—to translate the verb similarly to the noun—six times in Galatians 1. In fact, seven of the nineteen Pauline instances of this verb are in Galatians. Such statistics suggest that Paul is not overly concerned about his apostleship.¹⁸ What is important to him is the Gospel message. A proper understanding of God’s revelation to him and his subsequent apostolic ministry is essential preparation for the Galatians to receive that Gospel message. Unnecessary and excessive mirror-reading has plagued Galatians scholarship through the years. One need not assume that Paul’s rivals at Galatia were impugning his apostolic credentials. Paul is not trying to demonstrate his independence of Jerusalem. If that were the case, he would be undercutting his own defense when he narrates his meeting in Jerusalem with the pillars, his laying before them his Gospel message, and his seeking their support lest he had run in vain (2:2). They recognized him (2:7–9), and he agreed to their request to remember the poor (2:10). All the talk of Paul’s “independence” betrays a modern, Western cultural value system that would likely have been alien to Paul. Further, had Paul’s rivals denigrated his dependence on Jerusalem, they would have simultaneously been denigrating their own ties to that center of authority. Paul is not shy about referring to attacks when he has experienced them (cf. 2 Cor 10:10–11; 11:5–6, 12–13). Excessive mirror-reading should not lead the reader’s attention away from what is central in this letter: the Gospel message! (CC)

From PBC Acts commentary 1:21... Peter was describing what an apostle in the strictest sense was and what an apostle did. An apostle was a man with whom Jesus associated (went in and out). He was a man who saw Jesus after the Lord rose from the dead and who then testified of him in the world.

Not from men nor through man – At the very outset Paul deals with those false teachers. They claimed to be the pupils of the apostles, sent by them; and they despised Paul as one who was neither the pupil of the apostles nor sent by them to preach the Gospel but had entered in some other way and had intruded himself upon the ministry on his own initiative. Against them Paul defends his calling and says: “Your preachers look down on my calling. But whoever it is that has come to you, he is sent either from men or through man; that is, he has either entered on his own, without a call, or has been called by someone else. But my calling is not from men or through man; it is superior to any calling that can come after the apostles. For it is ‘through Jesus Christ and God the Father.’” (Luther)

Paul’s apostleship was not of human origin (“men”), nor did it come through human agency (“man”; cf Am 7:14–15). (TLSB)

Mention of the first two persons of the Trinity (governed by one preposition in Gk) emphasizes Paul’s divine appointment: God the Father called Paul through His very own Son, whom He raised from the dead (cf Rm 1:1–4, for all three persons of the Godhead). (TLSB)

Not from human beings, nor through a human being, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul is adamant that he was not sent by human beings but rather “through Jesus Christ and God the Father.” He expands the sender formula in order to issue a double negation followed by an affirmation. The anarthrous genitive nouns “human beings” (lit. “men”; ἀνθρώπων) and “human being” (lit. “man”; ἀνθρώπου) in the negations are qualitative; one might translate “of human origin” (as opposed to divine origin). This contrast of agencies is the first instance of a pattern discernable throughout the letter. Paul regularly juxtaposes and contrasts God’s action with the actions of human beings. The contrast of agency here in 1:1 foreshadows one of the chief problems for Paul in this letter, the matter of human activity or works taking precedence over God’s saving action. Paul’s twofold negation in 1:1 is reminiscent of Amos 7:14–15: “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son. But I am a herdsman ... and the Lord took me ...” According to Philo, Moses declares of his call: “Nor did I receive the office through appointment by some other of mankind, but when God by plain oracles ... made clear to me His will ...” (*Virt.* 10 § 63 [Colson, LCL]). Paul’s call appears to be analogous. Certainly his call is just as direct. The impression of a prophetic call is reinforced in Gal 1:15. (CC)

Jesus Christ's agency in Paul's call stands parallel to God's agency and in contrast to human agency, *any* human agency. Jesus' authority and agency therefore surpasses even Moses' as a human being (3:19–20: via angels?). Note that Paul does *not* describe the call as “through [διὰ] Christ from [ἀπὸ] the Father.” As the earliest NT author, Paul already attests a very high Christology with Christ on par with God the Father. His apostolic call is “through” (διὰ) both “Jesus Christ and God the Father.” That one preposition (διὰ) governs both Jesus and the Father. Paul does not distinguish Jesus Christ's call from God the Father's. By identifying Jesus Christ *before* God the Father in 1:1, Paul reverses the order he typically uses in his letters (cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Phil 1:2). Perhaps he is anticipating the narration later in the chapter of his encounter with the risen Jesus. The attribution of his apostolic call to Jesus Christ as well is unique to Gal 1:1 in the Pauline corpus (cf. God alone in 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1). “Christ” functions at this point like a proper name and is not likely a titular reference to his messianic role. Paul's call *by Christ* is surely the ultimate qualification to preach the Gospel *of Christ*. The Galatians should heed Paul rather than the rivals! Whereas the rivals derive their authority from the human leaders in Jerusalem, Paul derives his authority directly from Jesus Christ and God the Father—strong claims indeed placed at the very beginning of the letter. (CC)

Another emphasis of the letter is signaled in 1:1 by “God the Father.” Paul will refer to God the Father a second time in 1:3 (“God *our* Father”) and yet a third time in 1:4. The metaphorical kinship of the Galatians as children of God is a central organizing concept. The letter is filled with references to familial relations. The Galatian rivals had claimed that God's children are to be identified with the children of Abraham and that the males must therefore be marked by circumcision. Paul disputes that claim. The Galatian gentiles are *already* the “sons” of Abraham and of God by virtue of believing as Abraham believed (3:6–7: υἱοί). “If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed” (3:29: σπέρμα). The Galatians are no longer minors and heirs under guardians and trustees (4:1–3) but have come of age. They have inherited the full rights and privileges of sonship. The Galatian gentiles are the beneficiaries of “adoption” (4:5: υἱοθεσία) as “sons” (4:6: υἱοί) who may call God “Abba, Father” (4:6: ἀββα ὁ πατήρ; cf. Jesus' true family in Mt 12:46–50 || Mk 3:31–35 || Lk 8:19–21). With the Galatians' step backwards, Paul laments in 4:19 that he is again in the pains of labor over “my little children” (τέκνα μου). He proceeds to speak metaphorically of children birthed by the free woman and children birthed by the slave woman. These women and their children stand for his gentile mission as opposed to his rivals' mission. The free woman is the Jerusalem above and she is “our mother” (4:21–26). The child of the slave will not share the inheritance (4:30; cf. the “false brothers” of 2:4). As “children of promise” (4:28), the Galatians should care for each other in love (5:16–6:10). They are members, after all, of “the household of faith” (τοὺς οἰκεῖους τῆς πίστεως, 6:10). Paul closes his letter to the Galatians with one last familial address to his “brothers (and sisters)” (6:18; cf. 1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1). (CC)

How many Christians today find their true family and home among fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? Believers in Christ should view other Christians as their kin, their own family members. Surely such an understanding of “family” would lead to expressions of concrete, loving action toward fellow members of the family of faith (cf. 5:16–6:10). Christians share the same Father! (CC)

God calls in two ways, either by means or without means. Today He calls all of us into the ministry of the Word by a mediated call, that is, one that comes through means, namely, through man. But the apostles were called immediately by Christ Himself, as the prophets in the Old Testament had been called by God Himself. Afterwards the apostles called their disciples, as Paul called Timothy, Titus, etc. These men called bishops, as in Titus 1:5 ff.; and the bishops called their successors down to our own time, and so on to the end of the world. This is a mediated calling, since it is done by man. Nevertheless, it is divine. (Luther)

The opponents had probably said that his only call had been that extended by the congregation at Antioch, Acts 13, 2, 3, and that he had originally received Baptism and the gift of the Spirit through the agency of a mere man, Ananias of Damascus, Acts 9, 17. Therefore Paul insists that his authority was not from men, just as the Scripture-account has it that he was sent forth by the Holy Ghost, Acts 13, 4, that Christ Himself had sent him to the Gentiles, Acts 22, 21. Neither was his call a mediate or secondary call only, even though he did not receive the Spirit at the time of the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. (Kretzmann)

raised him from the dead. The resurrection is the central affirmation of the Christian faith (see Ac 17:18; Ro 1:4; 1Co 15:20; 1Pe 1:3), and because Paul had seen the risen Christ he was qualified to be an apostle (see Ac 1:22 and note; 2:32; 1Co 15:8). (CSB)

Who raised him from the dead. Jewish males prayed in the (pre-Christian) second benediction of the *Amidah* (or *Shemoneh Esre*, “Eighteen Benedictions”): “Thou art mighty ... that liveth for ever, that raiseth the dead, ... that quickeneth the dead.... Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who quickenest the dead!” Paul shared this belief in the resurrection to come. In fact, that age to come had already dawned with the resurrection of Jesus Christ by God the Father (1:1; cf. the “new creation” of 6:15; cf. 1 Sam 2:6; Is 26:19; Ezek 37:1–14; Dan 12:1–3). For Paul, God’s raising of Jesus from the dead demonstrated life-giving power, the very same power *already* at work in the Galatians’ midst, quite in contrast to the life-sapping, deadening message of his rivals (e.g., 2:20!). Although Paul does not explicitly mention the resurrection elsewhere in his letter to the Galatians, his apocalyptic theology presupposes it. God’s raising Christ from the dead was the initiating event for the “new creation” (6:15). The very same power that raised Christ from the dead worked in Paul’s life to raise him from the darkness and death of unbelief.³⁵ Christ’s resurrection presages God’s powerful work on behalf of believers both in this life and at the Last Day. This epistle is full of acclaim for the saving power of God!

Paul can barely introduce God without immediately adding that he raised Jesus Christ from the dead. God is first of all the Father of Christ (cf. 2 Sam 7:12–17; Ps 2:7–9; Gal 4:6). God first raised Christ from the dead. God’s action in Jesus Christ is “the primal mark of [God’s] identity” and self-revelation. Christ is therefore the means by which God is to be understood and approached. Paul does not do “theology” in the abstract. The Pauline Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only valid approach to God. (CC)

1:2 brothers. Fellow Christians (see 3:15; 4:12; 5:11; 6:18). (CSB)

And all the brothers with me. Paul identifies his co-senders as “all the brothers with me”; he uses similar language in Phil 4:21–22. These are most likely Paul’s missionary companions. Although Barnabas had helped found the Galatian congregations in Acts 13–14, the Antioch dispute that Paul narrates in Gal 2:11–14 may have left its mark. At Antioch Barnabas had sided with the men from James. Here Paul, as he writes, does not single out Barnabas among “the brothers” who are his co-senders. On the other hand, to name any of the other “brothers” who served as co-senders may have been beside the point. This is not Paul’s own Gospel message or any other human being’s. What is important is not the messenger but rather the Gospel itself. Certainly Paul will speak in 1:6–9 in the first person singular of the message he personally preached to the Galatians, but one should not draw the wrong conclusion from that. What he preached was not his own but the Gospel that even he himself must not contradict. This is a Gospel confessed by “all the brothers with me.” (CC)

Of course, if *all* the brothers stand behind this Gospel message, what about those who dispute the Gospel message? Would Paul call *them* “brothers”? In the very next breath (1:6–9), Paul pronounces a curse on any who would speak against the Gospel message. This emphasis on the Gospel message is at odds with any ministry that has devolved into a personality cult based on an individual. Genuine ministry is grounded primarily in the Gospel, and not in the charisma or charm of a minister. It is about the message, not the messenger! Egocentrism has no place in ministry. (CC)

This helps to stop the mouths of these false apostles, for it is the purpose of all his arguments to enhance and exalt his ministry and to discredit theirs. It is as though he were saying: “It is indeed sufficient that by a divine call I have been sent as an apostle through Jesus Christ and God the Father. Yet in order not to stand alone, I add all the brethren—even though I do not have to—who are not apostles but comrades in arms. They are writing this epistle as well as I, and they are bearing witness with me that my doctrine is true and divine. Therefore we are sure that Christ is present in our midst, and that here and in our church He is teaching and speaking. So far as the false apostles are concerned, if they are anything at all, they have only been sent from men or through man; but I have been sent from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, who is our life and resurrection (John 11:25). My other brethren have been sent from God, although by man, that is, by me. Therefore to avoid the impression that I set myself proudly against so many all by myself, I have my brethren with me—all of one mind, as faithful witnesses who think, write, and teach exactly what I do.” (Luther)

Deuteronomy 19:15, “One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Matthew 18:16, “But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’”

churches. This was a circular letter to several congregations. (CSB)

Congregations in the towns that Paul and Barnabas visited on the first missionary journey (Ac 13:4–14:28). (TLSB)

Galatia. The term occurs three times in the NT. In 2Ti 4:10 the reference is uncertain. In 1Pe 1:1 it refers to the northern area of Asia Minor occupied by the Gauls. Here Paul probably uses the term to refer to the Roman province of Galatia and an additional area to the south, through which he traveled on his first missionary journey (Ac 13:14–14:23). (CSB)

To the churches of Galatia. Paul addresses the audience as simply “the churches of Galatia.” “Galatia” most likely refers to the churches founded in Acts 13–14 within the Roman province of that name. The plural “churches” (ἐκκλησίαι) is what one would expect to be used for the Christ-believing assemblies throughout that region. Paul’s circular letter would have been taken and read in the various gatherings for worship (note the autograph in 6:11). The translation “churches” may, however, be somewhat anachronistic. The modern person uses the word “church” on the basis of two thousand years of intervening history. Paul does not have buildings or organs or later forms of liturgy in mind. He is writing to “churches” in the sense of assemblies gathered in individual homes to worship Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Nevertheless, Paul identifies the Galatian believers precisely by their association with these gatherings “even when they are not actually in assembly.” Whatever else may describe their identity is penultimate to their association with fellow believers in Christ. Paul’s greetings and doxology in 1:3–5 will therefore be fitting for a people whose lives are oriented around worship. (CC)

As people assembled to worship the true God, Paul frequently identifies his recipients as the assemblies “of God” (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1), the “beloved” (Rom 1:7), or the “sanctified/saints” (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1). Paul says none of that here. He writes, unadorned, to “the churches of Galatia.” The early church father Chrysostom noted this omission and concluded: “They were in danger of falling from grace.”⁴² A stern tone permeates this letter from the very beginning. Unlike Paul’s other letters, he will not offer thanksgiving for his addressees after the opening prescript (cf. Rom 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3; 1 Thess 1:2). This lack of thanksgiving does not mean that all the members of the “churches” of Galatia have acted against the Gospel. Paul still addresses the Galatians as “brothers (and sisters)” in 1:11; 3:15;

4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18, and he still seeks common ground with them by the use of first person pronouns (e.g., 1:3–4). Paul still hopes for the best, for a return to the Gospel message at Galatia. (CC)

Now, what a lot of people don't know about Galatia is that this is where the Celtic people come from. You know the Irish? The Celts? They come from Galatia. And if you were living in the Roman Empire at the time of Paul, you would know that the Galatians were the mercenaries of the empire. If you needed soldiers to fight tough battles for you, you went to Galatia. These were the tough guys. The guys who were sent out by the Romans to fight the tough battles. And they are essentially men of the world. We're going to see how important that is as we get into the epistle. And we're going to see how Paul uses a lot of military metaphors and illustrations, which indicate that he is addressing a people who are deeply immersed in the life of a soldier. (Just – V-14)

1:3 πατὴρ ἡμῶν καὶ κυρίου (“our Father and the Lord”)—This reading is supported by ⲛ A P Ψ 33 81 (see also Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Philemon 3), but several notable witnesses have πατὴρ καὶ κυρίου ἡμῶν (“Father and our Lord,” ℣⁴⁶ ℣^{51vid} B D F G H K L Byzantine vg syr cop^{sa}). Out of reverence, scribes may have shifted the pronoun to modify the “Lord,” Christ. (CC)

Grace to you and peace. Paul greets the Galatians in 1:3 with “grace to you and peace.” “Grace” (χάρις) is an adaptation of the Greek word for “greetings” (χαίρειν, 1 Macc 12:6; Acts 23:26). “Peace” (εἰρήνη) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *shalom* (Hebrew: שָׁלוֹם, 1 Sam 25:5–6; Aramaic: ܫܠܘܡ, Ezra 4:17). Paul’s reference to both “grace” and “peace” may reflect the Aaronic benediction of Num 6:24–26, a benediction that continues to be used in Christian liturgical contexts:

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make his face shine on you and be *gracious* to you;
The LORD lift up his countenance on you and give to you *peace*. (CC)

The Aaronic benediction was used in the worship life of ancient Israel and in the Dead Sea’s Qumran community, which was still standing in Paul’s day (Psalm 4; Psalm 67; Mal 1:6–2:9; 1QS II.2–10; 4QBer^f 2–5). The Septuagint translates the benediction this way:

εὐλογῆσαι σε Κύριος καὶ φυλάξαι σε,
ἐπιφάναι Κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σέ καὶ ἐλεῆσαι σε,
ἐπάραι Κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐροῦ ἐπὶ σέ καὶ δώῃ σοι εἰρήνην. (CC)

The Lord bless you and guard you;
the Lord make his face shine upon you and have mercy on you;
the Lord lift up his face upon you and give to you peace. (CC)

The key words in the Septuagint are “have mercy” (ἐλεέω, translating ἡλῆ) and “peace” (εἰρήνη, translating εἰρήνη). Paul uses “peace” (εἰρήνη) but not “have mercy” (ἐλεέω). Clearly Paul is not quoting LXX Num 6:24–26. Any hypothesis of dependence on the Aaronic benediction must remain tentative. If Paul is drawing on the Aaronic benediction, then he has adapted the blessing of the God of Israel for the non-Jews. (CC)

The twofold greeting of “grace” and “peace” is particularly appropriate for the Galatian gentile assemblies. Grace and peace are both key concepts throughout the letter. Paul opens and closes this letter with references to God’s grace followed by a solemn “amen” (1:3–5; 6:18). “By bracketing his letters with these grace-wishes, the Apostle indicates that everything begins and ends with the unmerited favor and peace that God has bestowed on believers through Jesus Christ.” God has graciously acted in Christ to adopt the gentiles into the family of Abraham and of the Son. God’s gracious action, to which Paul frequently refers (1:6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18), is at the heart of the conflict with the rivals whose position

elevates human works. The Galatians are in danger of falling away from grace (5:4)! Luther wrote: “Paul is so prolix and ardent in his praise of grace that he sharpens and aims every word against the false apostles” (AE 26:42). In their advocacy of human works as necessary for God’s salvation, the rivals are wittingly or unwittingly sowing seeds of discord at Galatia. They are troubling the Galatians (1:6–9). The Galatians are experiencing conflict and strife in their assemblies (5:15, 20). Paul would have there be peace, the peace of God’s “new creation” (6:15; cf. 5:22, the fruit of the Spirit; the “covenant of peace” promised in Is 54:10; Ezek 34:25; 37:26; cf. Ps 72:7). (CC)

Grace. The Christian adaptation of a common Greek form of greeting. (CSB)

peace. The common Hebrew form of greeting. (CSB)

Notes from Ephesians 1:2 – Grace is the undeserved mercy and kindness we receive from God our Father through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peace is the restored relationship with God our Father through Jesus. (LL)

Grace was the Gentile greeting word. Peace was the Jewish greeting word coming from the OT Shalom [It is a happiness where one’s welfare is secure. It wished prosperity in body and soul to the person being greeted.] In our worship service we use phrases like “The Lord be with you – And also with you” and “The peace of the Lord be with you always – And also with you” in the liturgy. Preachers use it at the beginning of the sermon. It is both an affirmation of the oneness of Christ’s body, the church, and the affirmation of the favor which God bestows of his own choosing which is far beyond what we deserve.

The Greek word translated “grace” is the ordinary term one Greek person would use in greeting another. It’s the word Matthew uses to record Gabriel’s salutation to Mary when he announced to her that she would become the mother of our Lord. (PBC)

Paul’s characteristic greeting was especially pertinent to the Galatia situation, where the message of grace was compromised and peace undermined. (TLSB)

from God our Father...Lord Jesus Christ – But why does the apostle add “and from our Lord Jesus Christ”? Did it not suffice to say “from God the Father”? Why does he link Jesus Christ with the Father? You have often heard from us that it is a rule and principle in the Scriptures, and one that must be scrupulously observed, to refrain from speculation about the majesty of God, which is too much for the human body, and especially for the human mind, to bear. “Man shall not see Me and live,” says Scripture (Ex. 33:20). (Luther)

From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul greets the Galatians with grace and peace in 1:3, he places the Lord Jesus Christ alongside God the Father. In 1:3 “God” is placed *before* “the Lord Jesus Christ” in a reversal of order from 1:1. Whereas 1:1 likely anticipates Paul’s call by the risen Christ to be narrated later in the chapter, in 1:3 the apostle prioritizes God (the Father). Placing Christ second in 1:3 does not diminish the importance of his being listed with God the Father. “Lord” (κύριος) was the usual manner of translating the Hebrew name for God, but in Paul the name refers to Christ (confessionally in Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:11). The Jews in the Second Temple era often spoke of an exalted figure with God, a figure who shared God’s own attributes and glory. The Jews spoke of an exalted Wisdom or the divine-man Moses or even a powerful angelic figure. The new development in early Christianity was that the first Christians went beyond placing Christ alongside the Father. They took the unprecedented step of worshipping Jesus as God. In Paul’s letters, within decades of Jesus’ death and resurrection, Christ receives the worship that the Hebrew Bible reserved for God alone (e.g., Phil 2:5–11). Even as Jesus enjoys with the Father divine status, Jesus remains subordinate to the Father’s will. Jesus acts according to God the Father’s will to save humanity (Gal 1:4; cf. 1 Cor 15:27–28). (CC)

Paul's language would have been striking for a gentile audience under Roman rule. Whereas the contemporaries of the first Christians thought that peace came through the *pax Romana*, true peace, Paul avers, can only come through Jesus Christ—thus the apostle's greeting in 1:3. The letter draws not only on the imagery of the OT but also on the imagery of the Galatians' own cultural milieu. Caesar demanded worship, not just taxes.⁴⁹ Separation of church and state is a modern notion. The powerful Christology of Galatians is a reminder that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar! To the extent of the idolatrous claims associated with his office, Caesar remains part and parcel of “the present evil age” (1:4). (CC)

1:4 ὑπέρ (“for”)—External evidence supports both ὑπέρ \mathfrak{P}^{51} κ^c B H 33) and περί (“for,” \mathfrak{P}^{46} κ^* A D G K P Ψ \mathfrak{M}). ὑπέρ should be preferred on internal grounds since Paul will explicate Jesus' saving work in 3:13 with that preposition. Although Paul employs both prepositions with the same meaning (“concerning, on behalf of”; BDF § 229 [1]), he uses ὑπέρ more frequently, and particularly with reference to Christ's action on behalf of humanity. (CC)

ἐξέληται (“rescue”)—The rescue or deliverance could refer grammatically to the future but also to the present. The emphasis in the letter is on potent, present realities (e.g., 4:1–6) but not at the expense of what is still to come (e.g., 5:5). The first person pronouns (“our Father,” 1:3; “our sins,” “us,” 1:4) include the Galatians in this deliverance from the “present” (ἐνεστώτος) evil age. (CC)

for our sins. [The Lord Jesus Christ,] *who gave himself for our sins in order to rescue us from the present evil age.* Paul does not praise his Galatian recipients. He does not focus on himself or the Galatians. Instead, he praises Christ's saving work. In 1 Cor 15:3 Paul cites a prior tradition he received that expresses Christ's work similarly. Is Paul citing traditional material also in Gal 1:4? Paul's preferred term is “sin” in the singular, and yet 1:4 employs “sins” in the plural (ἁμαρτίαι) in a manner that agrees with the tradition in 1 Cor 15:3. On the other hand, the language for Jesus' self-sacrifice varies from passage to passage (cf. also Eph 5:2; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14). This variation defies the conventional wisdom that the apostle is quoting an early Christian confession in Gal 1:4. In 1 Cor 15:3 Christ did not give himself but rather died. He acted in accordance with the Scriptures in 1 Cor 15:3 rather than according to the will of God the Father, as in Gal 1:4; Phil 2:8 adds an element of humility and does not mention Jesus' acting in accordance with the will of God or the Scriptures. Firm evidence is lacking that Paul is citing pre-Pauline material in Gal 1:4. Even if he were, Paul would not cite such material unless it expressed his own sentiments, sentiments he could just as well have composed himself. (CC)

Had Paul employed the preposition ἀντί, he would have rendered Christ's death “in our stead” clearer. Instead Paul employs the preposition ὑπέρ, “for our sins,” which may be translated with other senses. Nevertheless, “*throughout the Koine period ὑπέρ [‘for’] began to encroach more and more on the meanings of ἀντί [‘in our stead’], though never fully phasing it out.*” Paul is clear that Jesus' death is the means by which God saves human beings from their sins. The epistolary prescript does not say *how* Christ's death served to rescue from the effect of sins. The prescript does, however, signal the significance of Christ's saving death as a crucial topic for the letter (cf. Gal 3:10, 13). This is no mere pious martyrdom (e.g., 4 Macc 17:22). Jesus is dying “for our sins”! (CC)

If Paul is paraphrasing an earlier Christian tradition, he has clearly placed his own, apocalyptic stamp on that material. He expresses Jesus' saving death in terms of “rescuing” (ἐξέληται, from ἐξαίρω). Paul uses this verb only here in 1:4 (Luke employs it in Acts 7:10, 34; 12:11; 23:27; 26:17), but he adds that Jesus has “rescued” believers (ἡμᾶς) from “the present evil age” (ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ; cf. 1 Cor 3:19; 15:24; 2 Cor 4:4). Paul's language parallels that of Second Temple texts emphasizing deliverance from the present evil age (e.g., 4 Ezra 6:9; 7:12–13; 2 Bar. 15:8; 44.11–15; CD VI.10, 14; XII.23; XV.7; 1QpHab V.7–8 [“the era of wickedness”; trans. F. García Martínez]). The Jews often divided the world into the present age of corruption and the age to come when God's justice would finally

be established (e.g., Is 60:1–22; 65:17–25; 4 Ezra 7:12–13, 50, 113; 8:1; 1 En. 91.15–17; 2 Bar. 14.13; 15.8; 44.8–15). Paul speaks similarly here of a “new creation” (6:15) invading “the present evil age” (1:4) and overturning the cosmos’ “elements” (4:3). Christ’s victorious, redeeming work sets people free from the enslaving powers of sin and the Law and ushers in a glorious new future (3:10, 13, 22; 4:2, 3, 5, 9; 5:1). The Christian therefore lives in an overlap of ages, but the decisive rescue from the power of evil has already taken place.⁶¹ Paul balances the “already” of the rescue with the “not yet” caused by the lingering “present evil age.” The emphasis is decidedly on the “already” with its powerfully effective rescue. The cross of Christ’s self-sacrifice therefore dominates the perspective of this letter. A failure to recognize the reality of the new age could lead to a mistaken valuation of this present age’s power or works, i.e., human works. Again, the “Lord Jesus Christ” (1:3) effected this rescue, not Caesar; not Cybele, the mother goddess of the Galatians; nor any other supposed power. Jesus Christ is Lord of this new age. (CC)

In a sense Paul treats the argument of this epistle in every word. He has nothing in his mouth but Christ. Therefore in every word there is a fervor of spirit and life. Note how precisely he speaks. He does not say: “Who has received our works from us” or “Who has received the sacrifices required by the Law of Moses” Instead, he says: “Who has given.” Has given what? Neither gold nor silver nor cattle nor Passover lambs nor an angel, but “Himself.” For what? Neither for a crown nor for a kingdom nor for our holiness or righteousness, but “for our sins.” These words are a veritable thunderbolt from heaven against every kind of righteousness, as is the statement (John 1:29): “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Therefore we must pay careful attention to every word and not look at it casually or pass over it lightly; for these words are filled with comfort, and they give great encouragement to timid consciences. (Luther)

Learn this definition carefully. Especially practice this pronoun “our” in such a way that this syllable, once believed, may swallow up and absorb all your sins, that is, that you may be certain that Christ has taken away not only the sins of some men but your sins and those of the whole world. The offering was for the sins of the whole world, even though the whole world does not believe. So do not permit your sins to be merely sins; let them be your very own sins. That is, believe that Christ was given not only for the sins of others but also for yours. Hold to this firmly, and do not let anything deprive you of this sweet definition of Christ, which brings joy even to the angels in heaven: that Christ is, in the strictest of terms, not a Moses, a tormentor, or an executioner but the Mediator for sins and the Donor of grace, who gave Himself, not for our merits, holiness, glory, and holy life but for our sins. Christ also interprets the Law, to be sure; but this is not His proper and chief work. (Luther)

Present evil age The present period of the world’s history. In contrast to the age to come (climax of the Messianic age), this present age is characterized by wickedness (Eph 2:2; 6:12). (CSB)

Evil powers in this world rule in opposition to God, but Jesus’ atoning death has delivered Christians away from the evil one (Col 1:13). Because believers already participate in the age to come (Gal 2:19–20; 5:5), they are in the world but not of it; they are not conformed to it (Jn 17:14–15; Rm 12:2). “[God] has set up this and the other commandments between the good people and the evil” (LC I 183). (TLSB)

In these words, too, Paul summarizes the argument of this epistle. By “the present world” he means the whole world that has been, is, and will be, in order to differentiate it from the eternal age to come. And he calls it “evil” because whatever is in this age is subject to the evil of the devil, who rules the entire world. Therefore the world is called the kingdom of the devil; for there is nothing in it but ignorance, contempt, blasphemy, hatred of God, and disobedience of all the words and works of God. We exist in this kingdom of the world and under it. (Luther)

according to the will of our God – Paul chooses and arranges his every word here in such a way that each of them does battle against the perverters of the doctrine of justification. Christ, he says, has delivered us from this wicked kingdom of the devil and the world, and has done so according to the will, good pleasure, and command of the Father. Therefore we have not been delivered by our own will or exertion (Rom. 9:16) or by our own wisdom or decision; we have been delivered because God has had mercy on us and has loved us. As it is written in another passage (John 1:13): “Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” It is by grace, then, and not by our merit that we have been delivered from this present evil world. Paul is so prolix and ardent in his praise of grace that he sharpens and aims every word against the false apostles. (Luther)

Our deliverance came not by happenstance; it revealed God’s saving intention from eternity. (TLSB)

According to the will of our God and Father. Modern Western Christians with their typical stress on individualism speak far too much of personal, individual decisions of the human will. Paul does not. He stresses, instead, “the will of God.” The powers of death and sin hold sway over humanity. The sins that people commit cast long, paralyzing shadows over their lives. Luther noted the awful, oppressive effects that sins can have on the individual (AE 26:35; cf. Eccl 8:8). Only God’s rescue in Christ can salve the conscience, certainly not the action of a feeble and fickle human will. What a comfort that Christ delivered us from “our” sins (AE 26:38)! (CC)

In yet a third mention of God the Father in the epistolary prescript of the letter, Paul alludes to the begetting action of a Father. God has initiated in Christ a rescue of those who are incapable of rescuing themselves. “According to the will of our God and Father” (κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν) most likely modifies the entire complex idea of Jesus’ giving himself for sins (everything from “gave” to “the present evil age” [δόντος ... τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ]). Even if the “according to” (κατὰ) phrase modified only the rescue (ἐξέληται) clause which immediately precedes, Paul would still be attributing that deliverance to the divine initiative. God has a plan. (CC)

our God and Father – This word “our” is to be applied to both, so that the meaning is “of our God and of our Father.” Then Christ’s Father and our Father are one and the same. Thus Christ says to Mary Magdalene in John 20:17: “Go to My brethren, and say to them: ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’ ” Therefore God is our Father and our God, but through Christ. This is an apostolic mode of speaking, and Paul’s own phrase. He does not speak with such carefully chosen words, but his Words are nevertheless very appropriate and ardent in their zeal. (Luther)

1:5 to whom be glory – In their writings the Hebrews make it a custom to mingle praise and thanksgiving, a custom observed both by the Hebrews and by the apostles, as is evident very often in Luther.

Praise for what Christ has done in delivering us from sin is affirmed by a hearty “amen!” This Letter’s opening differs from Paul’s other letters in two noticeable ways: he includes a doxology in the salutation (greeting), and he does not include an opening thanksgiving prayer. This format conveys a sense of urgency and an impending rebuke. (TLSB)

[God the Father] *to whom be glory unto the ages of the ages. Amen.* Whereas Pauline prescripts typically conclude with the greeting of the recipients, the letter to the Galatians’ prescript concludes rather uniquely with a doxology of praise (1:5). Whereas other Pauline letter openings include a thanksgiving section for what God has done in the lives of the addressees, the doxology of 1:5 limits the focus exclusively to God. God deserves the praise, not human beings. The rivals’ insistence on a human role in salvation compromises the sufficiency of God’s own action and detracts from the proper praise of God. Christ’s deliverance from the present evil age invites eternal praise *to God alone*. The present evil age (1:4) has been overwhelmed by the One to whom be praise “unto the ages of the ages” (1:5). With the Psalter, “let all the people”—and certainly all the Galatians—“say, ‘Amen’ ” (Ps 106:48 [LXX Ps 105:48:

γένοιτο, “may it be so”]; see the double “amen” in Pss 41:13 [MT 41:14]; 72:19; 89:52 [MT 89:53]). (CC)

1:1–5 Paul’s greeting anticipates the Letter’s central argument. According to His Father’s will, Christ has graciously given Himself for our sins and delivered us from this present evil age; therefore, works of the Law are not necessary for salvation. Teachings that compromise this core truth rob God of His due glory and rob us of true peace, for God brings true peace to our hearts through the forgiveness of sins. • Heavenly Father, by the power of Your Son’s resurrection, set our hearts free and forever at rest. Amen. (TLSB)

No Other Gospel

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 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. 10 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.

Paul’s Amazement at the Galatians’ Desertion of the Gospel (1:6–7) (CC)

1:6 *I am astonished that you are so deserting him who called...a different Gospel.* Paul’s expression of amazement in 1:6 must be placed into its first-century context. Letters of rebuke, disapproval, or disappointment from the third century BC until well after the time of Paul would begin with an “I am amazed/astonished” (θαυμάζω) section followed by a request to remedy the situation. Letter writers expressed amazement in order to shame the recipients into adopting a new course of action. Cicero (*Inv.* 1.17.25) explains that expressions of amazement or perplexity are a useful means of appealing to audiences being persuaded by an opposition. Paul does not employ this sort of rhetorical device elsewhere, which suggests that he is genuinely rebuking the Galatians and expressing his disappointment. Paul probably *is* surprised by what has transpired at Galatia. (CC)

What has elicited Paul’s surprise has been the speed with which the Galatians have begun to depart from the Gospel. The Greek expression for the speed of their desertion is οὕτως ταχέως (1:6). This phrase may be translated in two different ways. Paul may be amazed that the Galatians have capitulated “so quickly” to the rivals’ teaching. They should have recognized its error and resisted longer than they did. He does not mention the rivals, however, until 1:7. The second option is that Paul is amazed that they have departed “so soon,” since either their conversion or Paul’s departure. The phrases “from the one who called you” (ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς) and “to a different Gospel” (εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον) favor “so soon” after their conversion, their initial calling to the Gospel. (CC)

A choice between the alternatives may be unnecessary. The letter was probably written not long after Paul had been in Galatia. At the same time, Paul’s language is reminiscent of Israel’s apostasy in the wilderness in Ex 32:8 (LXX: ταχύ); Deut 9:12, 16 (cf. Judg 2:17): No sooner had Moses received the Law at Mount Sinai when the Israelites began breaking the covenant with the golden calf incident. The Galatian betrayal was apparently no less rapid and no less severe. If Paul intends an echo of the golden calf incident, then he judges the Galatian departure to be an imminent apostasy of potentially the same caliber.¹⁴ Whether the Galatian readers would have recognized the echo is questionable, but the Jewish-Christian rivals, were they reading over the shoulders of the Galatians, may have recognized it—and been incensed. (CC)

The Galatians are “turning away” (μετατίθεσθε) from the true Gospel. This verb (μετατίθημι) is employed throughout Greek literature for a change of mind, political desertion, or religious apostasy (Herodotus 7.18.3; Plato, *Resp.* 1.345B; Polybius 24.9.6; Sirach 6:9; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.2.4 § 38), especially in the construction “μετατίθημι [middle voice] from *x* to *y*” (ἀπό τινος εἰς τι)—the same construction used here in 1:6. Diogenes Laertius (*Vit. Phil.* 7.166; third century AD) employs the construction for a defection from one movement to another. 2 Macc 7:24 in the second century BC employs the verb for abandoning allegiance to God and the Law under pressure from Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Paul’s use of the present tense indicates that the process of abandonment is still taking place even as he writes. The entire letter is an attempt to dissuade the Galatians from this possible course. The apostle springs into action to dictate his response as any pastor should when witnessing such a serious threat to the Lord’s congregations. Paul prayerfully hopes to stem the tide of desertion. (CC)

How ironic that the rival teachers thought they were leading the Galatians to a more faithful observance of God’s will! One can imagine their shock when Paul describes *them* as apostate deserters. The Jews were hypersensitive to desertion after their faith had been nearly eradicated by the persecutions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Law had prescribed death for apostates (Lev 24:16; Deut 17:1–7; see 11QT^a). By the time of Paul’s writing, many Jews would have been willing to suffer death rather than forsake their ancestral traditions. In their desire to preserve their ancestral traditions, the rival teachers have done exactly what they themselves feared: They have deserted the true faith! (CC)

The referent of “the one who called you” (ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς) is unclear. The referent could be Paul himself. It could be God, or even Christ. Complicating matters further, some of the ancient manuscripts omit “of Christ” (Χριστοῦ) immediately after “in [the] grace” (see the textual note on 1:6). The omission would strengthen the likelihood that Christ is “the one who called you.” Specialists who reconstruct ancient texts cite as a general rule that the shorter reading is to be preferred, which is good advice in this particular instance since the longer readings of this verse do not agree with each other. Nevertheless, an omission in the scribal tradition is more likely than an insertion since “it is difficult to imagine the circumstances that would have caused anyone to add this word [of Christ].”¹⁹ Very strong textual witnesses include “of Christ” (Χριστοῦ). Along with the strong external evidence of ancient manuscripts, from an internal standpoint, God is the one who “calls” (καλέω) in the immediate context of Gal 1:15 (he revealed the Son to/in Paul). God is regularly the agent of “calling” (καλέω) in Paul’s letters. The sheer number of these examples, as well as God’s call in Gal 1:15, muffles any appeal to the single instance of the call “of Jesus Christ” in Rom 1:6. Paul never uses the verb “call” (καλέω) with himself or any other human being as the subject. Paul may have preached the Gospel to the Galatians, but their rejection is not just of Paul. He consistently uses this verb to express *God’s* gracious summons. (CC)

Most commentators assume that the prepositional phrase should be translated as “called you *by means of* [ἐν] *grace/the grace of Christ.*” On the other hand, elsewhere when Paul writes of grace as the means of being called, he uses the dative noun “grace” (χάριτι) without the preposition (Rom 11:6; 1 Cor 15:10; Eph 2:8). Furthermore, whenever Paul uses the verb “to call” (καλέω) with the preposition ἐν (“in; by”) the meaning is almost never causal or instrumental (1 Cor 7:22 is the sole possible exception). Instead, it is either (1) the sphere one is “in” when called (1 Cor 7:18, 20, 24)—but the heathen Galatians were not “in” the sphere of grace when they were first called—or (2) the sphere one is called to be “in” (1 Cor 7:15; Eph 4:4; Col 3:15; 1 Thess 4:7; with εἰς: 1 Cor 1:9; Col 3:15; 2 Thess 2:14). God called the Galatians into the sphere of the gracious activity of Christ. They are now “in Christ.” In this realm everything is according to God’s grace. Since grace is enjoyed only through God’s effective call, to adopt the translation “called *in* Christ” would not compromise the sense of the unmerited character of salvation that is conveyed in the instrumental translation. God must bespeak this state or sphere of grace into existence. (CC)

Tragically, the Galatians are leaving behind the *one* who called them (note the masculine gender of τοῦ καλέσαντος, “he/the one who called”) for a different *thing* (the neuter ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, “a different Gospel”). They are abandoning their personal relationship with God. The rivals would not have viewed themselves as guilty of serving a different God or Lord, but Paul explains that that is the unintended consequence of their message. For that matter, God is not the only one being deserted by this alternate message. The Galatians are also deserting Paul as the instrument of God’s calling. (CC)

God expressed his gracious choice of a people by calling them (e.g., Is 41:8–9; 42:6; 43:1; 45:3–4; 48:12; 49:1; 51:2). Paul will draw upon Isaiah’s language in narrating his own call later in Galatians 1. God’s call of the Galatians was likewise by grace and apart from any human activity such as circumcision. The Galatians, by abandoning the Gospel, are denying for themselves what God did in their lives apart from any merit on their part. The sheer graciousness of God’s call is precisely why they were included in God’s salvation *as gentiles*. (CC)

I am astonished – You see here the art and skill with which Paul treats his Galatians, who had fallen away and had been led astray by the false apostles. He does not attack them with harsh and stern words; he speaks paternally, not only bearing their fall with patience but even excusing it somewhat. He also shows maternal affection toward them; he speaks gently to them, and yet in such a way that he scolds them, though with words that are very appropriate to the purpose. (Luther)

Here Paul lives up to his own rule, which he gives later on in the sixth chapter (Gal. 6:1): “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual, etc.” We, too, should follow this example. We should show that toward those poor disciples who have been led astray we feel as parents feel toward their children, so that they may see our paternal zeal and maternal feelings toward them and may see that we seek their salvation. But when it comes to the devil and his servants, the originators of perversion and sectarianism, we should follow the example of the apostles. We should be impatient, proud, sharp, and bitter, despising and condemning their sham as sharply and harshly as we can. When a child has been bitten by a dog, the parents chase the dog but console and soothe the weeping child with the sweetest of words. (Luther)

so quickly. So soon after your conversion. (CSB)

You see that Paul is complaining about how easy it is to fall from faith. In the same vein he warns Christians in another passage: “Let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12). (Luther)

Thus Paul can teach us from his own experience that churches gained by great labor can be overthrown quickly and easily. Therefore we should constantly be on our guard against the devil as he roams everywhere (1 Peter 5:8), so that he does not come while we are asleep and plant tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:25). Even though pastors are ever so watchful and diligent, the Christian flock is threatened by Satan. For, as I said, Paul had established churches in Galatia with painstaking care. Yet no sooner had he set his foot out of the door, as the saying goes, than the false apostles overthrew some of them; and this fall brought on great ruin in the churches of Galatia. This loss, so sudden and so great, was undoubtedly bitterer for the apostle than death itself. Therefore we should constantly be on our guard not to enter into temptation (Matt. 26:41)—first, each for himself, and secondly, the clergy not only for themselves but also for the whole church. (Luther)

deserting – Here again Paul uses a word that is not sharp but is very mild. He does not say: “I am astonished that you are defecting so quickly, that you are so disobedient, fickle, inconstant, or ungrateful” but “that you are removed so soon.” It is as though he were saying: “You are completely passive; for you

have not done any harm, but you have suffered harm.” Therefore in order to recall those backsliders he accuses those who have removed them rather than those who were removed. At the same time, however, he shyly puts some blame on them when he complains that they have been removed. It is as though he were saying: “Yes, I embrace you with fatherly feeling. We know that you have fallen, not by your own fault but by the fault of the false apostles. Still I do wish that you had been a little more mature in the strength of sound doctrine. You did not take hold firmly enough of the Word; you did not sink your roots deeply enough in it. That is why such a light breeze can carry you away so quickly.” (Luther)

Jerome thinks that Paul intended to interpret the name Galatians” by referring to the Hebrew word גָּלָה, which is tantamount to “fallen or carried away.” It is as though he were saying: “You are really Galatians both in name and in fact; that is, you have been removed.” (Luther)

The Galatians were turning away from the Gospel through which God had called them (cf 2Th 2:14). To desert the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul preached is to abandon God Himself. (TLSB)

who called you. God. (CSB)

The saving initiative always belongs to God alone. (TLSB)

grace of Christ. The test of a pure, unadulterated gospel. (CSB)

Χριστοῦ (“of Christ”)—This reading is attested in \mathfrak{B}^{51} \times A B K P Ψ Byzantine vg syr^{pes} cop^{bo}; some other witnesses have Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“of Jesus Christ”), and still others have Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (“of Christ Jesus”). The external evidence for θεοῦ (“of God”) is weak (327 Origen^{lat}) and probably dependent on 1:15. The addition of “Jesus” to “Christ” in some manuscripts is an understandable variant. Χριστοῦ (“Christ”) is omitted entirely, however, by \mathfrak{B}^{46vid} G H^{vid} it^{ar, g} Marcion Tertullian Cyprian Ambrosiaster Ephraem Pelagius. In favor of the shorter reading omitting “of Christ,” later scribes would likely have clarified what was implicit by adding “of Christ.” For Paul, on the other hand, God is ordinarily the one who calls. χάρις (“grace”) is not decisive for either reading; Paul refers to the grace Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (“of Jesus Christ”) in 6:18 but the grace τοῦ θεοῦ (“of God”) in 2:21. (CC)

Paul emphasizes these words, “from Christ, who has called you,” and mystically suggests a contrast. It is as though he were saying: “My proclamation was not about the hard laws of Moses; nor did I teach that you should be slaves under the yoke. But I preached sheer grace and freedom to you; that is, that Christ has mercifully called you in grace to make you free men under Christ rather than slaves under Moses. But through your false apostles you have now become disciples of Moses; for they have called you by the Law of Moses, not to grace but to wrath, hatred of God, sin, and death. But when Christ calls, this brings grace and salvation. For He transfers them from the Law to the Gospel, from wrath to grace, from sin to righteousness, and from death to life. Will you permit yourselves to be carried—and so quickly and easily at that!—in another direction, away from such a living fountain bubbling over with grace and life?” (Luther)

a different gospel – Here let us learn to recognize the tricks and craft of the devil. A heretic does not come with the label “error” or “devil”; nor does the devil himself come in the form of a devil, especially not that “white devil.” In fact, even the devil, who impels men to overt acts of evil, provides them with a covering for the acts they perpetrate or intend to perpetrate. In his fury the murderer does not see that murder is as great and horrible a sin as it is in fact, because he has a covering for it. Lechers, thieves, covetous men, drunkards, and the like, have the means to flatter themselves and cover up their sins. Thus the devil always emerges in the disguise and covering of all his works and tricks. But in the spiritual area, where Satan emerges not black but white, in the guise of an angel or even of God Himself, there he puts himself forward with very sly pretense and amazing tricks. He peddles his deadly poison as the doctrine

of grace, the Word of God, and the Gospel of Christ. This is why Paul calls the doctrine of the false apostles and ministers of Satan a “gospel,” saying, “to a different gospel.” But he is speaking ironically, as though he were saying: “Now you Galatians have different evangelists and a different gospel. You despise my Gospel now, and it has lost your respect.” (Luther)

A so-called “gospel,” i.e., a “revised version” of the Gospel of Christ (cf 1Th 2:2), promoted by some in Galatia. Paul’s opponents might have referred to their message as the “full” or “complete” gospel, suggesting that Paul’s proclamation was deficient. (TLSB)

ὅ—The referent is εὐαγγέλιον (that is, the different “Gospel”), which immediately precedes, and not the entire clause from μετατίθεσθε εὐαγγέλιον (1:6). Were the entire clause the referent of ὅ, the parallel between ἕτερον (1:6) and ἄλλο (1:7) would be weakened (see the next textual note). Had Paul wanted to refer to the entire preceding clause, he would likely have used ἃ or τοῦτο γάρ ἐστιν (“for this is”). An entire clause as referent would also require translating οὐκ ... ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ as “not other than” (without qualitative distinction), a translation otherwise unattested. (CC)

ἄλλο (“another”)—There is no distinction between the pleonastic use of ἄλλο here and ἕτερος (“different”) in 1:6; BDF § 306 (4). Using the same adjective twice would impair the style in the Greek even as it would in English. (CC)

εἰ μὴ (“but”)—On the adversative usage, see BDF § 448 (8). This instance is not exceptive. Paul is not offering an exception to the non-existence of any other Gospel. (CC)

Paul has, however, not written off the Galatians. They have not as yet totally and completely rejected the gospel. Paul nonetheless is letting them know they are flirting with something very, very dangerous by listening to a message that plays down grace. (PBC)

1:7 *Not that there is another [Gospel]...distorting the gospel of Christ.* Paul refers in 1:6 to a “different” (ἕτερος) Gospel and then in 1:7 to “another” (ἄλλος) Gospel. Despite the translation of the one Greek word as “different” and the other as “another,” the two words are probably synonymous. The possibility cannot be ruled out that Paul does, in fact, intend a distinction: Perhaps ἄλλος (“another,” 1:7) is enumerative (another of the *same* kind—numerical non-identity) and ἕτερος (“different,” 1:6) is differentiative (another of a *different* kind). Paul nevertheless appears to use the two words interchangeably elsewhere in his correspondence (1 Cor 12:10; 15:39–41; 2 Cor 11:4), as do other authors of the day. If he intends a difference in meaning between the two words, the cumulative effect would be emphatic. In either case, the rivals are offering neither a complement to his Gospel preaching nor a different form of that Gospel message. According to Paul, what they are offering bears no resemblance at all to the genuine Gospel. (CC)

Paul’s approach in 1:6–7 is rather peculiar. No sooner does he label his rivals’ message a “Gospel” message than he instantly and emphatically has to correct himself by stating that it is not really a Gospel message after all. Note the stress on “not” (οὐκ), which is moved forward in the Greek of 1:7. “Gospel” was the term Paul preferred to call his own Christ-centered preaching (sixty of the seventy-six NT instances of εὐαγγέλιον are in his epistles). Why would Paul dignify the rival message as a “Gospel” if it really was not? If the Galatians’ instructors are proponents of what they *themselves* call a “Gospel” message, then Paul’s initial concession makes perfect sense. He grants that there is a “Gospel” message being proclaimed at Galatia, but it is a “different” Gospel message which, in the end, is not “another” Gospel message after all. Chrysostom commented: “As therefore they gave the name of Gospel to this their imposture, he contends against the very name, and boldly says, ‘unto a different Gospel,’ ... ‘which is not another Gospel.’ ” (CC)

The first Christians consistently referred to their message as the “Gospel” or “good news” (the singular noun εὐαγγέλιον or its related verb εὐαγγελίζω, “preach the Gospel,” in Acts 5:42; 8:4; 10:36; 11:20;

15:7; 20:24; 1 Cor 1:17; 15:1–2; Heb 4:2; 1 Pet 1:12). The Greco-Roman world was filled with “good news.” Caesar Augustus’ birth was heralded to the world as the “good news” (the plural noun εὐαγγέλια) of the birthday of a god in the famous Priene Inscription from western Asia Minor (9 BC). The Romans spoke of “good news” on the occasions of military victory.³⁰ The Greek translation of the book of Isaiah employs the related verb (εὐαγγελίζω) for proclaiming the good news that God would deliver Israel from its exile (Is 40:9; 52:7 [cited in Rom 10:15]; 61:1; cf. Is 41:27; 60:6; Joel 2:32 [LXX 3:5]; Lk 4:18). The noun “good news” (plural: εὐαγγέλια) occurs within the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures only in LXX 2 Kgdms 4:10 (MT/ET 2 Sam 4:10). Both the Jews and their Greco-Roman counterparts employed the noun for “good news” in its plural form. The singular form of the noun is exceedingly rare and attested in only three authors throughout Greek literature, all *subsequent* to Christianity’s origins: Josephus (late first century AD; *J.W.* 2.17.4 § 420), Plutarch (late first century AD; *Demetr.* 17.5; *Ages.* 33.4; *Glor. Ath.* 3 [twice]), and a third century AD Egyptian papyrus. The first Christians for their part, as a rule, employed the singular form of the noun. This consistent departure from the standard, plural usage of the day appears deliberate on the part of the first Christians. The point would have been clear: In contrast to all the glad tidings (plural) in the Greco-Roman world, there is really only *one* glad tidings (singular). The singular noun (εὐαγγέλιον) denoting the rivals’ “Gospel” therefore implies that they were claiming to be preaching a Christ-centered message. Paul vehemently disputes that claim. (CC)

Paul grants the ones “confusing” or “troubling” (οἱ ταρασσόντες) the Galatians the indignity of remaining unnamed. “Some” (τινές) nameless people are “confusing” the Galatians and are perverting the Gospel about Christ (see ταρασσω also in 5:10 as well as Acts 15:24). They are “agitating” the Galatians even as people might agitate a crowd for political purposes or intimidation (e.g., ταρασσω in Acts 17:8, 13). The rivals “are” (εἰσὶν) confusing them; Paul is writing while the rivals are still at work in Galatia. They “are wanting” (θέλοντες) to pervert the Gospel of Christ; apparently their desire has not yet been fully realized. The damage may not yet be irreversible. Through his letter Paul wants to win the Galatians back to the genuine Gospel. (CC)

“[The Gospel] *about Christ*” (τοῦ Χριστοῦ) is an objective genitive since God is the one who reveals this Gospel. Paul employs the Greek article (τοῦ) with “Christ,” which in this instance may perhaps emphasize his title as the Messiah. The language “to pervert” (μεταστρέψαι, “change or distort” [BDAG, μεταστρέφω]) the Gospel is used throughout Greek literature for changing one thing into something radically different or even into its opposite, such as water into blood or salt, feasting into mourning, daylight into darkness, or good into evil. In other words, this Gospel is no Gospel.³⁷ The Gospel is, by definition, *about Christ*, not about circumcision, Moses’ Law, or anything else. What the rivals are promoting does not deserve the title “Gospel,” even though they would see the matter differently. (CC)

In a pluralist, Western society, people do not, on the whole, subscribe to absolute truth claims. Even Western Christians shy away from expressing such claims. Paul contends that absolute truth can indeed be known because God has intervened in human affairs, yes, even in Paul’s letter itself, in order to reveal truth. To compromise that revelation is to compromise one’s commitment to the Revealer. In an age of rampant sensitivity training, Paul’s harsh tone will likely seem offensive. Modern Westerners are not as accustomed to inflammatory rhetoric as were the ancients. Nevertheless, the danger Paul warns against threatens the modern no less than the ancient: The absolute truth of the Gospel message must not be compromised in any part. As the early church writer Theodore of Mopsuestia put it: “Just as with royal currency—anyone who cuts off a little from the impress has debased the whole currency—so one who makes even the smallest change in sound faith adulterates the whole.” Likewise Chrysostom:

A slight adulteration vitiates the whole. For as he who but partially pares away the image on a royal coin renders the whole spurious, so he who swerves ever so little from the pure faith, soon proceeds from this to graver errors, and becomes entirely corrupted. Where then are those who charge us with being contentious in separating from heretics, and say that there is no real

difference between us except what arises from our ambition? Let them hear Paul's assertion, that those who had but slightly innovated, subverted the Gospel. (CC)

According to 1:6–7, the Galatians are in the process of turning away from the One who called them. They had experienced God's grace and are now abandoning it. Christians may indeed be led astray from their confession and faith. In some ecclesiastical circles, the slogan is "once saved, always saved." Paul does not agree. The danger for the Galatians is a very real one. They had been rescued from the present evil age by the intervention of Jesus Christ (1:4) and are now being drawn back into that dark age. (CC)

not that...is another – Once more Paul makes excuses for the Galatians and bitterly attacks the false apostles. It is as though he were saying: "You Galatians have been persuaded that the Gospel which you received from me is not the true and genuine Gospel. Therefore you suppose that you are doing the right thing when you accept that new gospel which the false apostles are teaching and which seems better than mine. I am not accusing you so much as I am accusing those troublemakers who are disturbing your consciences and snatching you out of my hand." (Luther)

The opponents' "gospel" did not modify but perverted the Word of truth (Eph 1:13) that the apostles proclaimed and taught. Christ's Gospel stands by itself, without parallel and exclusive of all other messages – however cogent and attractive they may seem. The Good News of salvation comes from and points to Christ. Just as there is one Savior, so there is only one Gospel (Gal 2:5, 14). (TLSB)

some. The Judaizers. (CSB)

Unnamed persons who threw the congregation into confusion with their destructive teaching. (TLSB)

A striking thing about the letter to the Galatians is how little Paul says about the troublemakers. He never names them. He never tells us how many there are, nor even how great their following is. This indicates that Paul's chief concern is for the members of the congregation whose faith is in jeopardy. His heart goes out to them. As a result, Paul doesn't engage in a running battle with the false teachers. In fact, he doesn't address them directly. (PBC)

This passage shows that the false apostles undoubtedly called Paul an imperfect apostle and a weak and erring preacher. Paul takes such a strong stand against them and calls them troublemakers of the churches is that they taught that in addition to faith in Christ, circumcision and the observance of the Law were necessary for salvation. Paul testifies to this later on in the fifth chapter; and in Acts 15:1 Luke says the same thing: "Some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" Therefore the false apostles argued seriously and stubbornly that the Law was to be obeyed. The obstinate Jews, who argued for the observance of the Law, immediately allied themselves with them and then easily convinced those who were not well grounded in faith that Paul was not an orthodox teacher, since he neglected the Law. For it seemed incongruous to them that the Law of God should be utterly abolished, and that the Jews should be rejected, those who until that time had always been regarded as the people of God and to whom the promises had been given (Rom. 9:4). And it seemed even more incongruous to them that the Gentiles, those evil idolaters, were to achieve the glory of being the people of God without circumcision and without the works of the Law, solely by grace and faith in Christ. (Luther)

want to distort the gospel of Christ – That is, they are intent not only on troubling you but also on utterly destroying and extinguishing the Gospel of Christ. Satan is engaged in both of these activities. He is not content to trouble and deceive many people through his false apostles; but through them he is also at work to overthrow and abolish the Gospel completely, and he will not rest until he has accomplished this. Yet such perverters of the Gospel find it intolerable to hear that they are the devil's apostles. In fact,

they are prouder than anyone else of the name of Christ, and they claim to be the most sincere preachers of the Gospel. But because they confuse the Law with the Gospel, it is inevitable that they subvert the Gospel. Either Christ must abide, and the Law perish; or the Law must abide, and Christ perish. It is impossible for Christ and the Law to agree and to share the reign over a conscience. Where the righteousness of the Law reigns, there the righteousness of grace cannot reign; and, on the other hand, where the righteousness of grace reigns, there the righteousness of the Law cannot reign. One of these two will have to yield to the other. And if you cannot bring yourself to believe that God wants to forgive your sins for the sake of Christ, how will you be able to believe that He wants to forgive you for the sake of the works of the Law or for the sake of your own works? Therefore the doctrine of grace simply cannot stand with the doctrine of the Law. One of them must be rejected and abolished, and the other must be confirmed or substantiated. (Luther)

The Greek term means to change something often into its opposite. The Galatian intruders consciously intended to change the Gospel. (TLSB)

1 Corinthians 5:1-11, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father’s wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn’t you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? ³ Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. ⁶ Your boasting is not good. **Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?** ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. ⁹ I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (Psalm 1:1 – walk, stand , sit)

The Curse of God upon Any Who Would Depart from the Gospel Message (1:8–9) (CC)

1:8 ἡμεῖς (“we”)—Along with προειρήκαμεν (“we have said before”) in 1:9, this may be an instance of the epistolary plural or editorial “we” since the first person singular is used in 1:6 with θαυμάζω (“I am astonished”) and in 1:10–24. In 1:2, note Paul’s associates, who may be the rationale for the use of the plural here.

εὐαγγελίζεται [ὑμῖν] (“preaches a Gospel to you”)—The external witness is mixed: εὐαγγελίζεται ὑμῖν (D^c); ὑμῖν εὐαγγελίζεται (ℱ^{51vid} B); εὐαγγελίζεται ὑμῖν (K P Byzantine); εὐαγγελίσθητι ὑμῖν (ℵ^c A). The indicative εὐαγγελίζεται is poorly attested; most of the variants have a subjunctive verb. Transcriptional probability favors -ζεται as the original reading since the other readings could result from a single letter’s change. A scribe would also render Paul’s words harsher by a change to -σηται. On the use of the singular verb form with ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος (“we or an angel”) as subject, see BDF § 135 (4). The omission of ὑμῖν (“to you”) in some witnesses (ℵ* G it Tertullian Cyprian Eusebius Ambrosiaster Marius Victorinus Cyril) may be explained as an attempt to rectify the potential misunderstanding that Paul’s words were addressed only to the Galatians and not to believers more generally.

παρ’ (“contrary to” or “other than”)—On this usage of the preposition (also in 1:9), see BDF § 236 (3); 1 Cor 3:11. Paul could be referring to a Gospel “other than” or “besides” what he brought (e.g., Rom

1:25; 1 Cor 3:11). Perhaps the rivals viewed their message as supplementing Paul's. The tone here, however, suggests the stronger "contrary to" or "against" (e.g., Rom 16:17). (CC)

Yet even if we or an angel from heaven preaches a Gospel to you contrary to the Gospel we preached to you, let him be accursed! Gal 1:8 opens with "yet" (ἀλλά) as Paul turns to the fate of anyone who adopts the approach advocated by the rivals in 1:6–7. The Greek καί is ascensive: "Even if we [Paul and presumably his missionary companions] or an angel from heaven preaches a Gospel to you contrary to the Gospel we preached to you, let him be accursed!" That Paul or an angel from heaven would speak against God's revelation is unlikely—thus the form of the conditional sentence and the ascensive "even." The Galatians would surely have recalled this verse when they heard in 3:19 about the Law of Moses having come through "angels." Perhaps 1:8's conditional is not so impossible after all! On a more positive note, Paul will refer in 4:14 to his reception at Galatia as an "angel" of God. Angelic messengers were standard fare in the Jewish apocalyptic literature extant in Paul's day (Ezek 8:2–3; Dan 10:5–6; 1 En. 1.2; 2 En. 1.4–9; Apoc. Zeph. 2.1; 4 Ezra 2:44–45; 4:1–4). An angel would surely not contradict the divinely revealed Gospel message. Perhaps the supposed angel is really a demon. The point here, however, is the *message*, not the messenger(s). Paul is not defending himself. Rather he is asserting that the Gospel is clear and authoritative in itself. If even an angel from heaven were to depart from this message, that messenger would be accursed. If an angel would suffer such punishment, how much more dire is the situation for Paul's Galatian rivals, mere human beings!

Paul carried the Galatians into God's presence with the "amen" of 1:5. Now he invokes God's presence in their midst again in 1:8–9 as he hands over the rival instructors to God. The apostle warns of a curse (ἀνάθεμα, *anathema*, "accursed") upon any who would depart from the Gospel message. The Galatians were familiar with curses both from their Greco-Roman world as well as from the Jewish Scriptures. The deadly, frightening, supernatural power of curses was very real for the ancients. "Curses were regarded as an *evil, poisonous substance which occupies humans*, destroys them from inside, and makes them a threat to their environments." Paul will speak of the "curse" upon those who do not observe the Law in its entirety in 3:10, although there he employs a different word (κατάρα). The word for "curse" in 1:8–9 (ἀνάθεμα, *anathema*) is the Greek word used exclusively to translate the Hebrew *herem* (חֵרֵם) and related words (the related verb is also translated by ἐξολεθρεύω). ἀνάθεμα (*anathema*, "accursed") is used for a curse only in Jewish literature. For example, Deut 7:26 warns: "Do not bring an abomination into your house, or you will be *devoted for destruction* [חֵרֵם, *herem*; LXX: ἀνάθεμα] like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is *devoted for destruction* [חֵרֵם, *herem*; LXX: ἀνάθεμα, *anathema*]." The abomination in Deut 7:26 is presumably an item dedicated to an idol, but even entire cities with their inhabitants and contents, should they be devoted for destruction (*herem*, *anathema*), must be annihilated (Josh 6:17–18; see also Zech 14:11). The annihilation of whoever and whatever is devoted for destruction (*herem*; *anathema*) serves as a proper sacrifice to the true God (Lev 27:28–29). Once the devoted thing (*herem*; *anathema*) has been sacrificed, "the LORD may turn from his furious anger and show compassion to you" (Deut 13:17 [MT/LXX 13:18]—in a context that also warns against false teachers). God will visit the people with wrath when what is cursed remains in their midst (Josh 7:1, 11–13; 22:20; 1 Chr 2:7). Paul pronounces God's curse on anyone who departs from the Gospel message. The Hebrew Bible (the Christian OT) had originally demanded execution of the offenders (Deut 13:1–11 [MT 13:2–12]). Second Temple Jews replaced execution with the practice of exclusion from the community upon pronouncement of the curses. Non-biblical Greek, with one exception (a first- or second-century inscription), used the word ἀνάθεμα, *anathema*, for a votive offering. Paul does not explain for his gentile readers the Septuagintal background of his usage. "The curse in v. 9 is clearly meant for [the troublemakers], rather than for the Galatians." He leaves it to the rival teachers to elaborate the loaded term. (CC)

Paul's opponents were teaching the Galatians on the basis of Deut 27:26 the necessity of Law observance lest they incur God's curse. In response, Paul in Gal 1:8–9 ironically invokes the Law's curse upon such rival teachers. Any who associate with the rival teachers and teachings would be endangering themselves

and their households. The only proper response, should the Galatians heed Paul's warning, would be to exclude the rival teachers from the Galatian assemblies, which is exactly what Paul demands in 4:30. With his conditional sentences, the apostle avoids cursing the rivals directly. He leaves that to God, but he also invites the Galatians to verify whether these people are contradicting the Gospel message and to consider the dire consequences. (CC)

Luther raises an important point. Teachers of error can be as winsome as an angel from heaven: "For if the false apostles had not possessed outstanding gifts, great authority, and the appearance of holiness; and if they had not claimed to be the ministers of Christ, pupils of the apostles, and sincere preachers of the Gospel, they could not so easily have undermined the authority of Paul and made an impression on the Galatians" (AE 26:52). On the other hand, even the most conscientious Christians can make genuine mistakes in their public teaching and example, as Peter's error in 2:11–14 makes clear. No matter how polished, credentialed, or well-intentioned the teacher, the slightest departure from the Gospel's truth must be actively and decisively addressed. Laity must be courageous enough to confront pastors when error creeps into the church's teaching, and pastors must be courageous both to invite correction and to discipline their fellow called shepherds as well as the laity. May all give and receive such correction with the respect and humility of Christ. If godly correction is rejected, then the curse of 1:8 requires separation from the false teacher and his or her teaching. In matters of doctrinal aberration, the modern love for tolerance and compromise is completely mistaken. (CC)

let him be accursed. The Greek word (*anathema*) originally referred to a pagan temple offering in payment for a vow. Later it came to represent a curse (see v. 9; 1Co 12:3; 16:22; Ro 9:3). (CSB)

Gk term means to change something, often into its opposite. The Galatian intruders consciously intended to change the Gospel. (TLSB)

Let him be anathema. Let him be doomed to hell. (PBC)

This reflects the Hebrew which most often refers to an object of God's wrath that must be completely destroyed according to His command. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 5, Part 3)

Here Paul is breathing fire. His zeal is so fervent that he almost begins to curse the angels themselves. He says: "Even if we ourselves, my brethren, Timothy and Titus, and I, and all who are with me, to say nothing of the others—indeed, even if an angel from heaven should preach to you, etc., I would wish that my brethren and I, yes, even an angel from heaven, be accursed rather than that my Gospel be overthrown." This is a passionate zeal, that he has the courage to curse so boldly not only himself and his brethren but even an angel from heaven. The Greek word *ἀνάθεμα*, *anathema* in Hebrew, means something cursed, execrable, contemptible, something that has no relation, participation, or communication with God. Thus Joshua says (6:17): "Let the city of Jericho be *ἀνάθεμα* forever, so that it is never reconstructed." And in the last chapter of Leviticus it is written: "If a man or a beast has been devoted or *ἀνάθεμα*, let him be put to death and not permitted to live" (Lev. 27:28). Thus the divine sentence was that Amalek and some other cities destined for the *ἀνάθεμα* were to be completely demolished (Ex. 17:14). So this is what Paul means: "I would wish that I, others, yes, even an angel from heaven be accursed rather than that we or others preach any other gospel than the one we or others have preached." Thus Paul curses himself first; for clever debaters usually begin by criticizing themselves, in order that then they may be able to reprove others more freely and more severely. (Luther)

1:9 *As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches a Gospel to you contrary to the Gospel you received, let him be accursed!* The content of 1:9 largely parallels 1:8. Nevertheless, the "before" in "as we said have before" (*ὡς προειρήκαμεν*) in 1:9 does not likely refer to the similar warning in 1:8. The "now" in 1:9 suggests a lapse of time. Not only is Paul repeating the content of the warning of

1:8, but he also is reminding the Galatians that he had already warned them similarly *before*. Since Paul was writing shortly after founding and departing from the Galatian churches, he appears to be referring to a warning he offered while he was still with them and not to the contents of an intervening letter.⁵⁹ The Galatians have, with the arrival of the letter, received this warning on two separate occasions, and on this second occasion in 1:8–9, Paul expresses the warning doubly. The emphasis could not be clearer. Either the Galatians accept Paul’s preaching as divinely authoritative (and act on the danger), or they reject his preaching. The stakes are high. If the Galatians reject Paul’s message, they will share the curse that stands over the rival teachers. (CC)

When Paul prefaces with “as we have said before,” he may be reminding the Galatians that his missionary companions had seconded his warning while he was at Galatia even as his coworkers stand behind the current letter (1:2). Although Paul begins with what “we have said before,” he quickly modulates to “now I say again”—using the first person singular. Paul solemnly repeats what “we” previously had said. The ancients commented on this rhetorical device. The shift in pronouns would signal a sense of genuine emotion behind his concerns. (CC)

In 1:9 the Galatians were handed or “received” (παραλαμβάνω) what had been preached (εὐαγγελίζω). The word rendered as “receive” is regularly used for the reception of the Christian message or tradition. The point Paul is making is that they had already *received* this life-changing message! Tragically, the saving message that was in their hands is now in danger of being lost. With this strong language Paul urgently seeks to win the Galatians back. The curses he threatens are rhetorically effective but at the same time no mere, empty rhetoric. (CC)

Paul’s pronouncement of a curse upon any who would depart from his Gospel message is difficult to fathom for modern, Western Christians in an age of tolerance and compromise. Paul will broach no compromise or alteration of the divine, saving message, even by Christian teachers. What God has revealed must not be altered. Paul permits only a “take it or leave it” approach to the Christian message. The Gospel is an unbroken circle; to break the circle compromises *the entirety* of the Gospel. (CC)

At the same time, many Christian denominations distinguish between fundamental truths of the Gospel that are essential to saving faith and non-fundamental doctrines that may be compromised without necessarily jeopardizing an individual’s salvation. This distinction reflects the approach of the apostle. Paul may have been patient with the errors at Corinth as long as the congregation remained open to correction, but the errors introduced at Galatia were utterly incompatible with the very essence of the Christian faith. The rivals were teaching the necessity of Law observance for salvation, and that teaching is at odds with Jesus’ completed work on the cross for salvation. Some errors in the unbroken circle allow for patience, but not others. (CC)

as we have said before – Paul says the same thing over again, but he shifts the persons. Earlier he had cursed himself, his brethren, and an angel from heaven. Here he says: “If there is anyone besides us who preached to you any gospel other than the one you have received from us, let him also be accursed.” Thus he clearly excommunicates and curses all teachers in general—himself, his brethren, angels, and, in addition, anyone else at all, that is, his opponents, the false teachers. This shows great fervor of spirit in the apostle, that he has the courage to curse all teachers throughout the earth and heaven. For all men must either yield to that Gospel which Paul had been preaching or be accursed and damned. (Luther)

Paul repeats a warning that he and his co-workers had issued on an earlier visit (cf 5:21). “Ungodly teachers are to be deserted because they no longer act in Christ’s place, but are antichrists” (Ap VII and VIII 48). (TLSB)

προειρήκαμεν (“we have said before”)—A few witnesses have instead προείρηκα (“as I have said before,” 𐤒* 𐤅𐤂^{mss} 𐤅𐤓^{resh} 𐤁𐤓^{pl}), but see the other senders mentioned in 1:2. The curse is not uttered by Paul on his own. The perfect tense indicates the continuing validity of the warning. (CC)

1:10 Legitimate Persuasion versus Flattery (1:10)

For am I now trying to persuade people or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ. Many commentators identify 1:10 as the beginning of a new section of the letter, but 1:10 is most likely a continuation of 1:6–9: Paul links 1:10 to 1:9 by the conjunction “for” (γάρ) as a clarification, if not a natural inference from the strong statements of 1:8–9 (BDF § 452). Gal 1:11’s disclosure formula, as in other instances of the formula, serves a transitional function signaling a new section. Another link between 1:9 and 1:10 is the word “now” (ἄρτι): In 1:9 Paul emphasizes “now I say again” (ἄρτι πάλιν λέγω) even as he begins 1:10 (in Greek) with the word “now” (ἄρτι). This is a significant connection, especially in an oral culture as the Galatians listened to the letter’s being read. The “now” of 1:10 appears to include the curses of 1:8–9. (CC)

In a world obsessed with magical and divine agencies, an ancient audience would have considered Paul’s angry pronouncement in 1:8–9 “let him be accursed” powerfully effective. Paul is soliciting God’s wrath against the evildoers. The Dead Sea Scroll covenants similarly called down God’s curse on those who practiced evil (1QS II.5–17; 4Q280–82, 286–87; note the “amen, amen” in 4Q286).⁶⁶ *1 En.* 95.4 decries the illegitimate attempt by wicked persecutors to pronounce anathemas to afflict the righteous. “The reference seems to be to the practice of ‘anathematising’ or ‘cursing,’ probably to the accompaniment of magical formulae, incantations and spells.” Anathemas and their remedies brought to the minds of ancients a supernatural world of powerful forces. The odd reference at the beginning of Gal 1:10 to “persuading” God (“now”) makes sense, then, when read alongside Paul’s solicitation of divine punitive action in 1:9 (“now”). (CC)

The first interrogative of 1:10 has as its verb πείθω. The BDAG lexicon lists as the meaning for this Greek verb to “persuade,” to “win over,” to “convince.” Paul uses πείθω in a similarly positive sense in 2 Cor 5:11, the only other instance of the transitive form of the verb in Paul. Persuading people of the truth of the Gospel was Paul’s business. The vast majority of instances of this verb in Greek literature refer to the act of persuasion. The translation of the verb and its object here as “seeking human approval” (e.g., NRSV), i.e., as a synonym of the verb in the next clause (ἀρέσκω), is lexically dubious and unnecessary in this context. The initial question in 1:10 may therefore be answered in four different ways depending on whether the Greek particle (ἤ) between “people” and “God” is translated with a conjunctive sense (“and,” options 1 and 2) or with a disjunctive sense (“but rather,” options 3 and 4):

1. “Obviously, Paul, you *are* trying to persuade both people and God.”
2. “Of course you are not trying to persuade either people *or* God.”
3. “You are trying to persuade *people*, but not God.”
4. “You are trying to persuade not people but rather *God*.” (CC)

The second and fourth options are unlikely since Paul *is* trying to persuade the Galatians to take a course of action in writing his letter. He is trying to drive a wedge between the Galatians and the rivals with their alternate Gospel message. The pronouncement of a supernatural curse (1:8–9) is a highly effective means of dissuading the Galatians from following these Jewish-Christian teachers. The pronouncement of a curse also invokes God to fulfill the pronouncement. Josephus, in his recasting/revision of Numbers 22–24, narrates a request by Balaam to curse Israel: “Let us erect yet other altars and offer sacrifices like unto the first, if perchance I may persuade God [εἰ πείσω τὸν θεόν] to suffer me to bind these people under a curse” (*Ant.* 4.6.5 § 123 [Thackeray, LCL]; cf. the same language in *Ant.* 8.10.3 §§ 255–56). Balaam is seeking to persuade God to endorse a curse since God’s endorsement is essential to the curse’s

effectiveness. Israel's enemies ultimately failed to obtain God's permission or consent (οὐκ ἐπένευσε) to curse the Israelites (*Ant.* 4.6.5 § 124). By his pronouncement of the anathemas, Paul is persuading God to enact the curse upon those who depart from the Gospel.⁷⁴ The curse formula in 1:8–9 therefore rules out option 3 since Paul is calling God's wrath upon the teachers of evil. Option 1 appears to be the most likely understanding of Paul's question and its presumed answer. (CC)

Immediately after Paul broaches the concept of persuasion, he must clarify himself against a possible misinterpretation. Persuasion had both positive and negative connotations to the ancients, who often criticized the devolution of rhetorical practice from a genuine attempt at persuasion to mere entertainment, or even worse, deception. The "people-pleaser" or "flatterer" was a figure regularly lambasted in antiquity.⁷⁶ Paul's audience could potentially view his attempt to "persuade" (πειθῶ) as an exercise in people-pleasing, in which case the answer to his initial question would have to be "no!" Paul therefore does not answer his initial question and immediately asks another question that will clarify the matter: "Or am I seeking to please people?" Note that Paul does not ask: "Or am I seeking to please people or God?" Of course, he wants to be a God-pleaser, but people-pleasing is too easily conceived of as flattery and rhetorical entertainment (cf. the negative implications of ἀρέσκω in 1 Thess 2:4). Paul responds to his second question: "If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ." The answer to that second question is an emphatic "no!" (CC)

No evidence is forthcoming that Paul as a Christ-believer was ever inconsistent in his Gospel preaching. He left people-pleasing behind at the point that he began to follow Christ—hence the "still" (ἔτι) is most likely in reference to his pre-conversion past, when he sought to advance in the Law beyond his peers to gain acclaim (see 1:14). Paul is anticipating the narrative to follow (note also the use of the first person singular in 1:11–12). No, he is now a slave of Christ instead. Paul may be claiming that he was formerly a people-pleaser as a means of implying that the Galatian rivals *remain so* as they encourage the Galatians to take on the Law's precepts. By trying to please their fellow Jews, the rivals hope thereby to escape persecution (6:12–13). The Galatians *themselves* are acting as "people-pleasers" in yielding to the rivals' message and pressure tactics (4:17, 29). No, Paul is not attempting to "people-please." Were that the case, it would call into question the consistency of Paul's Gospel preaching. The connection of 1:10 to 1:8–9 is clear: Since Paul recognizes that even he himself must suffer a curse should he preach a different Gospel (1:8–9), no one should claim that he is a mere people-pleaser (1:10). His attempts to persuade must flow from positive motives. (CC)

The avoidance of people-pleasing that Paul models presents a tremendous challenge since people naturally seek human approval. We yearn for the applause of others. Gal 1:10 presents a countermodel: an individual who does not worry about human acceptance or displeasure. The believer in Christ places pleasing God before anything or anyone else in this life. If the believer in Christ has prioritized God and his saving Word properly, then he or she will be able to stand up even to a Peter should he depart from the Gospel message (2:11–14). Unfortunately, Paul's own companion Barnabas was unprepared for that difficult challenge (2:13). The God who called and empowered Paul is the same God who empowers the Christian believer. Christians must stand for the truth of God's Word, or else they will fall prey to error. (CC)

When Paul speaks of himself as a "slave of Christ," the title suggests in the Galatian Christ-believing context tremendous authority. The word order is emphatic: *Christ's slave* (Χριστοῦ δοῦλος). In the Greco-Roman world, a slave acted with the full authority of his or her master. The slave's status in society depended on the status of the master. Socially, a slave would rank above any free or freed person who was significantly lower in status than that slave's master. For the Galatians, who viewed Christ's authority as supreme, the slave of Christ should rank very high in authority. Paul has been faithful in his actions in the service of his Master. He bears the branding marks of his service on his body (6:17). As a

faithful servant, Christ's authority imbues all that Paul does or says. The Galatians would do well to hearken to that Gospel message! (CC)

seeking the approval of man or of God – These words are spoken with the same ardor as the earlier ones; it is as though he were saying: “Am I, Paul, so unknown among you after preaching publicly in your churches? Are you still unaware of my bitter controversies and disputes with the Jews? I should think it is evident from my preaching and from the many great afflictions I have endured whether I am serving men or God. Everyone sees that by my preaching I have not only brought persecution upon myself everywhere but have also earned the bitter hatred both of my countrymen and of all others. Thus I make it obvious that by my preaching I am not seeking the favor or praise of men, but that I am seeking the grace and glory of God.” (Luther)

Implies that Paul's critics were charging him with merely seeking human favor. But Paul consistently maintained that, in obedience to God, he subordinated his interests to the interests of others (1Co 4:2–5). (TLSB)

πείθω ... ἤρεσκον—On the conative use of the present and imperfect tenses (“trying to persuade,” “were trying to please”), see BDF § 319. (CC)

am I trying to please man – That is, “Do I serve men or God?” Paul is always looking obliquely at the false apostles. These, he says, always have to try to please and flatter men; for thus they seek to be able to glory in the flesh again. In addition—because they cannot bear the hatred and persecution of men—they teach circumcision, simply to escape the persecution of the cross of Christ, as follows in the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter. (Luther)

Paul repeatedly emphasized that being faithful to God must take precedence over being popular. (TLSB)

Paul had a laudable trait that his opponents misunderstood and threw up to him as a fault. In seeking to win converts for the gospel, Paul went out of his way not to offend people or put them off. (1Cor 9:22) Paul's opponents twisted this around and leveled this charge against him: Paul is just flattering people. He's a clever politician trying to win favor for himself by telling people what they want to hear. (PBC)

I would not be a servant of Christ – All this should be referred to the entire office and ministry of Paul, so that there is an antithesis between his attitude when he was still in Judaism and his present attitude. It is as though he were saying: “Do you think I am still pleasing men?” Thus he says later on in the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter: “If I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?” It is as though he were saying: “Do you not see and hear of my daily battles, great persecutions, and afflictions? After I was converted and called to the apostolate, I never sought the favor of men. I did not try to please men; I tried to please God alone. That is, by my ministry and doctrine I seek the glory and favor of God, not of men.” (Luther)

1:6–10 This Letter begins not with an expression of thanksgiving but with a stern warning against defection from the one true Gospel. Whoever falsifies the Gospel of Christ comes under God's curse. The Gospel, through which God calls us to be His own, proclaims God's grace in Christ. • May Your precious Word, O Lord, be taught in all truth and purity so that we may receive Your divine blessing. Amen. (TLSB)

Paul Called by God

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a

revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 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. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 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; 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. 18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas 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

Thesis: The Divine Origin of the Gospel Message (1:11–12) (CC)

1:11–12 *For I make known to you, brothers (and sisters), that the Gospel preached by me is not a human affair, for neither did I receive it from a human being nor was I taught it; rather [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.* The solemn "I make known" (γνωρίζω) draws attention to this statement as of fundamental importance (see 1 Cor 12:3; 15:1; 2 Cor 8:1). Even as the Galatians must now know this divine message, so also this message was made known to Paul. "To make known" was used for the revelation of heavenly mysteries (Dan 2:23, 28–30, 45; 5:7–8, 15, 17; 1QpHab VII.4–5; 1QH XII [= IV].27–28; XV [= VII].27). The Gospel therefore "is not a human affair" (οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον). It was not according to a human source or a matter of merely human ideas or customs. (CC)

Whereas 1:6–9 with its harsh, imprecatory rhetoric had placed the audience on edge, now Paul seeks to draw the Galatian "brothers (and sisters)" (ἀδελφοί) closer. He is admonishing them from the context of his relationship with them, a relationship based on a shared faith in Jesus Christ. The Galatians will not hear Paul's message properly if they remain on edge. The warning served its purpose. Now they need to hear that message from the perspective of what they enjoy in Christ. The Gospel has brought them together into a new family, even as that same Gospel worked a profound change in Paul's life. (CC)

Gal 1:11 draws attention to the Gospel message. As numerous commentators have noted, the negative statements in 1:11 parallel 1:1:

1:1	apostle	1:11a	Gospel
1:1	not from human beings	1:11b–12a	not a human affair
	nor through a human being		nor ... from a human being
1:1	but through Jesus Christ	1:12b	but through a revelation of Jesus Christ

Or in the original:

1:1	ἀπόστολος	1:11a	εὐαγγέλιον
1:1	οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου	1:11b–12a	οὐκ ... κατὰ ἄνθρωπον οὐδὲ ... παρὰ ἀνθρώπου
1:1	ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ	1:12b	ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως

Paul’s apostolic authority, of divine origin (1:1), is not for its own sake but remains subordinate to and in the service of the Gospel (1:11), which is likewise of divine origin. Paul speaks redundantly of the “Gospel” (the noun εὐαγγέλιον) he “gospelled” or “preached (as) the Gospel” (the verb εὐαγγελισθέν, 1:11). As is fitting for its divine origin, this message comes power-charged. The “Gospel” possesses a verbal character.¹⁹ The Gospel message is an event. The message of Christ’s cross brings with itself the power to speak into existence a “new creation” (6:14–15). The Gospel is God’s invasion of a lost cosmos to break the grasp of the enslaving powers of sin and the Law (1:4; 3:23). (CC)

When Paul adds that this Gospel was preached “by me” (1:11), he is reminding the Galatians that he is God’s instrument to convey that message (cf. Rom 2:16; 16:25). He will narrate a few verses later his apostolic call. “By me” also contrasts this message with the message that others are preaching. Implicit in the contrast is the notion that the other message, unlike Paul’s, is of human origin. So Paul elaborates in 1:12 that his Gospel message did not come from a human being or from human teaching; it came through the “revelation” or “apocalypse” (ἀποκαλύψεως) of Jesus Christ. “Revelation” (ἀποκάλυψις) is employed in the NT predominantly by Paul (thirteen of the eighteen instances). The noun or its related verb (ἀποκαλύπτω) refers to the revelation of hidden, heavenly secrets about God’s plan for human beings (Rom 2:5; 8:18–19; 1 Cor 1:7; 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7). God has spoken and revealed his plan in Jesus Christ.²² The emphatic “I” (ἐγώ) in 1:12’s “I received” and the “by me” in 1:11 both serve to contrast Paul’s reception of direct, divine revelation from the rivals’ reception of teaching from other human beings. (CC)

Paul the Jew was of the Pharisaic party (Phil 3:5). The Pharisees boasted of their oral traditions that teachers would pass down to students. The later rabbis, the offspring of the Pharisees, prized these extrabiblical traditions received from their elders (e.g., *m. ’Aboth* 1.1: “Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it [including the oral traditions of its interpretation] to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue” [trans. H. Danby]). In Christ, Paul is no longer dependent upon human traditions as he receives his revelation directly and unalloyed from God. Apparently some of the Jewish-Christian rivals at Galatia boasted of yet a new variety of tradition from the elders, in this case from the Jerusalem church (e.g., 2:12). (CC)

When Paul speaks of the “revelation of Jesus Christ” (ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, 1:12), does that revelation have Jesus Christ as its content (objective genitive, i.e., Christ as the object of the revealing action) or is Jesus Christ the one who reveals (subjective genitive)? Gal 1:1, which describes revelation coming from or through Christ, favors the subjective genitive interpretation of 1:12, and 1:1 and 1:12 are structurally similar. On the other hand, the parallels between 1:1 and 1:12 are not exact. Paul is introducing himself as an apostle in 1:1, whereas his Gospel is the subject of 1:12; Gal 1:15–16, in describing a revelation *about* Christ with God as the agent of revelation, suggests a different understanding of the corresponding phrase in 1:12: an objective genitive. The subject of active forms of the verb “reveal” (ἀποκαλύπτω) in Paul is always God (1 Cor 2:10; Gal 1:16; Phil 3:15). The similar noun phrase “the revelation of the Lord Jesus” (τῇ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ) in 2 Thess 1:7 (see also 1 Cor 1:7) refers not to a message from Jesus but rather the revelation *of* Jesus at the second coming. Paul had apparently received a specific insight directly from God about Christ or his ministry that was not available to him from other believers (Gal 1:12). Witherington thought that “Paul is referring to his Law-free Gospel for the Gentiles which focuses on and is based on faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross which provides one with right standing before God.” Perhaps. At a minimum, the “revelation of Jesus Christ” would confront Paul with the *living* Crucified One (Acts 9:1–19; 22:6–11; 26:12–18). First-

century Jews, steeped in apocalyptic expectation, would have interpreted the resurrection of someone from the dead as the beginning of a new age for the world. (CC)

To make his point, Paul employs an ellipsis in 1:12: “For neither did I receive it from a human being nor was I taught it; rather [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Elsewhere Paul speaks of the message of the Gospel as something that “came to” the Thessalonians (1 Thess 1:5). The Gospel of Christ must be “received” (1 Cor 11:23; 15:1–3 [note the shared words with Gal 1:11–12]; Phil 4:9; 1 Thess 2:13; 4:1). In Gal 1:12 Paul points to his passive reception of the Gospel. In 1 Thess 1:5 Paul writes of the Gospel message’s actively coming “not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit.” God’s powerful Word has invaded and been received in the life of Paul the apostle. What a contrast to the human teaching received by Paul the former Pharisee (1:13–17)! (CC)

1:11 γάρ (“for”)—NA²⁸ prefers γάρ at the beginning of 1:11 (κ^c B D* F G 33 it cop^{sa}), but δέ has the support of strong external witnesses as well (ℱ⁴⁶ 2 *κ A D¹ K L P Ψ Byzantine syr cop^{bo}). γάρ would connect this verse to the Gospel preaching in 1:9, and δέ would signal a break from the intervening 1:10. If the correct reading is δέ, it could be resumptive (“and”) or mildly adversative (“but”). Externally, ℱ⁴⁶ and κ* weigh in favor of δέ. Paul also employs δέ in the disclosure formula γνωρίζω δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί elsewhere (1 Cor 15:1; see also 2 Cor 8:1) when he introduces a new section. On the other hand, γάρ (“for”) may be the more difficult reading. A scribe may have wanted to bring the disclosure formula in 1:11 into conformity with 1 Cor 15:1 and 2 Cor 8:1 and with the frequent use of a disclosure formula to signal a shift in topic. Also, Paul uses γάρ in 1:10, 12, and 13. Scribes tended to switch γάρ to δέ (1:11; 4:25c; 5:17b; 6:5), and not the reverse (a switch from δέ to γάρ occurs only in 3:20 and 4:18 in manuscript 33). The γάρ in 1:10 (two instances in some manuscripts) may have motivated a scribe to make a switch in 1:11 to δέ. (CC)

κατὰ ἄνθρωπον (“a human affair”)—This means in any way human. The preposition κατὰ denotes quality and not source. (CC)

I want you to know, brothers. A phrase found also in 1Co 15:1, where Paul sets forth the gospel he received. (CSB)

Paul changes to a warm and winsome tone directed to the congregation members whom he is trying to hearten and encourage in the truth. (PBC)

Though going astray, the Galatians are still brothers and sisters in Christ, members of God’s family. (3:15; 4:5, 12, 28; 5:11, 13; 6:1, 18). (TLSB)

the gospel was preached by me. † Called “my gospel” in Ro 2:16; 16:25. Salvation is for all and is received by grace through faith in Christ. (CSB)

Note the passive verb. Paul served as the instrument of the Gospel’s proclamation, not as its source. (TLSB)

1:12 οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην (“nor was I taught”)—The reading οὔτε is supported by ℱ⁴⁶ B Byzantine, but οὐδέ is supported by very strong witnesses (κ A D F G P Ψ 33). The meaning is the same (“nor”). (CC)

received it through a revelation. See Eph 3:2–6. (CSB)

When Paul denies that he received his Gospel from man, he clearly indicates by this that Christ is not a mere man but is true God and man at the same time. Paul received his Gospel when he was on the way to Damascus, where Christ appeared to him and spoke with him. Later He spoke with him again in the

temple at Jerusalem (Acts 22:17–21). But Paul received his Gospel on the road, as Luke tells the story in Acts 9. (Luther)

Paul was forced to recite this to refute the slander of the false apostles, who endeavored to bring the disfavor of the Galatians upon him. They said that Paul was far inferior to the remaining pupils of the apostles, who had received from the apostles what they taught and kept; that they had observed the behavior of the apostles for a long time; and that Paul himself had received the same instruction from them but was now denying it. Why were they listening to an inferior and despising the authority of the apostles, who were the ancestors and teachers not only of the Galatians but of all the churches throughout the world? (Luther)

The Gospel Paul preached came directly from the risen Christ, and He is its content. (TLSB)

First Proof of the Divine Origin of Paul’s Message: Paul’s Reception of the Gospel through the Revelation of Christ (1:13–17) (CC)

The explanatory “for” (γάρ) in 1:13 begins an autobiographical narrative that will extend at least through 2:14. The Galatians are already aware of Paul’s former conduct (1:13). A divine revelation must have taken place to effect such a change in his life (1:12). Paul wants to impress upon the Galatians how his life story is proof of the Gospel’s divine power in action. His behavior now exemplifies the Gospel he preaches. Such consistency between profession and behavior was a common *topos* in antiquity. Rhetoricians regularly presented examples for imitation (παράδειγματα; *exempla*), especially in deliberative forms of rhetoric when urging hearers to a particular course of action (*Rhet. Her.* 3.5.9; Aristotle, *Rhet.* 1.9.40; Cicero, *De or.* 2.82.335; Quintilian, *Inst.* 3.8.36, 66; Isocrates, *Or.* 8 [*De pace*].36–37). The individual might even present *himself* as a model for imitation: “It is more fitting that a virtuous man should show himself good than that his speech should be painfully exact” (Aristotle, *Rhet.* 3.17.12; Freese, LCL). “For exhortation ... presents the speaker’s own example” (Plutarch, *De laude* 14–16, here 15 [*Mor.* 544C–545D, here 544E]; De Lacy and Einsarson, LCL). “The way is ... short and helpful, if one follows patterns” as the best of philosophers “lived according to his own rules” (Seneca, *Ep.* 6.5–6; Gummere, LCL). The philosophers modeled their teachings (Seneca, *Ep.* 11.8–10). Socrates taught by example (Seneca, *Ep.* 71.7). Musonius Rufus likewise described the philosopher as “demonstrating by his own labor the lessons which his philosophy inculcates.” (CC)

Paul is doing exactly that as he presents himself as an embodiment of the Gospel message he preaches. He is encouraging the Galatians to become like he is (4:12). One should not be surprised, then, that Paul emphasizes his activities as a Christian and does not in 1:13–17 dwell on his pre-Christian past. He will speak of his past insofar as that past offers a contrast with the present. Such a contrast between past/formerly and present/now brings glory to the God who changed Paul’s life. (CC)

Paul’s Former Life (1:13–14) (CC)

1:13 *For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, that I was intensely persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it.* Paul describes in 1:13–14 his former life in Judaism. He uses the term “Judaism” (Ἰουδαϊσμός) twice, which doubly emphasizes his former affiliation. Although he recognizes his kinsfolk according to the flesh (cf. 1:14; 2:15), he nevertheless speaks of “Judaism” in relation to his *former* life. A decisive social and religious break has taken place. God’s people are no longer defined, for Paul, by birth or ethnic identity or obedience to the Torah. Jew and gentile are now brought together in the assembly of God (unlike the assembly of old; e.g., Deut 23:2–3 [MT 23:3–4]). The church is in continuity with the religious heritage of Judaism but not with contemporary non-Christ-believing

synagogues. As the etymology of the Greek *ecclesia* suggests and as is apropos in this instance, the followers of Christ in “the church of God” (ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ, 1:13) have been “called out.” (CC)

Paul describes his former “conduct” (ἀναστροφή). The Greek cognate verb (ἀναστρέφω) was sometimes used to translate the Hebrew *halakh* (הלך, “walk”). *Halakhah* became the technical term of rabbinic Judaism for the obligations of the Torah. One must “walk” in the way of God’s commandments (1 Ki 6:12; Prov 20:7; *T. Ash.* 6.3; 2 Macc 6:23). One must live as a Jew (Gal 2:14). Even as Paul’s former life involved an approach to conduct, so also does his new life in the Spirit. (CC)

When Paul says that he “was persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it,” his verbs are in the imperfect tense. The first verb (διώκω, “persecute”) likely refers to repeated action, a way of life. The second verb (πορθέω, “destroy”) was used in Greek literature for the sacking and devastating of cities and peoples. The conative force of the imperfect tense of the second verb (“was trying to ...”) conveys Paul’s failed attempt, a failure particularly evident by the change in his life narrated in the ensuing verses. He further describes his persecution of the Christians as “to the extreme” or “intensely” (καθ’ ὑπερβολήν, as also in Rom 7:13; 1 Cor 12:31; 2 Cor 1:8; 4:17). Some contend that Paul may have exaggerated the violence of his past, but the combination of terms he employs strongly suggests the use of force (cf. Acts 7:58–8:3; 9:1–2; 22:4; 26:9–12; 1 Cor 15:9). He describes the physical punishments he himself endured from the Jewish authorities in 2 Cor 11:23–26. Paul’s description of his past as a violent man agrees with Luke’s portrayal of him as facilitating the death of Stephen (Acts 7:58–8:1; note the laying of the garments at his feet as a sign of his authority). The death of Stephen was an instance of mob violence, which Paul had no interest in stopping and probably facilitated.⁴⁵ Paul further describes his persecuting activity in the context of his advancement in Judaism, the hub of which was Jerusalem. One would surmise from Paul’s autobiography that he had been actively persecuting Christians in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The book of Acts corroborates this conclusion with Stephen’s activity and martyrdom in the Jerusalem area (Acts 7:58–8:3). (CC)

1:14 *I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my people since I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.* Paul’s “advancing” (προκόπτω) may refer either to his educational progress (as in Josephus, *Life* 2 § 8; see also Lk 2:52; Acts 22:3) or to his moral and spiritual development. The two possibilities are not mutually exclusive. If he is referring to his moral and spiritual development, then a note of irony is difficult to avoid for this violent, former persecutor of Christians.⁴⁸ The imperfect form of the verb “advancing” suggests a continual, ongoing process. (CC)

Paul’s description of himself as “zealous” (ζηλωτής) draws on an often-violent heritage of righteous anger within biblical literature and Second Temple Judaism. Simeon and Levi acted zealously to destroy the Shechemites (Genesis 34; Judith 9:2–4; *Jub.* 30.5–20). God rewarded Phinehas for his zealous killing of an Israelite who had married a Midianite woman (Num 25:6–13):

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, turned back my wrath from upon the Israelites by being *zealous* with *my zeal* among them, so that I did not finish off the Israelites in *my zeal*. Therefore say, ‘Behold, I am granting him my covenant of peace, and it shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of lasting priesthood, because he was *zealous* for his God, and he made atonement for the Israelites.’ ” (Num 25:10–13) (CC)

The authors of Second Temple texts, in reflecting on this story, highlighted the word “zealous” (Sirach 45:23–24; 1 Macc 2:54; 4 Macc 18:12). (CC)

In another biblical account, Elijah slaughtered the prophets of Baal (1 Ki 18:40; cf. Sirach 48:2; 1 Macc 2:58) and later declared, “I have been very *zealous* for the LORD” (1 ,ךָאֵלֹהִים אֵלֶיךָ Ki 19:10). During the

Jews' struggle for survival and independence against their Greek overlords in the second century BC, Mattathias burned with the same zeal when he slaughtered a fellow Jew who was on the verge of offering a pagan sacrifice. Mattathias immediately issued a call for those "zealous" for the Law of Moses to join him in the fight against the Greeks (1 Macc 2:15–28, explicitly citing Phinehas' example; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.6.2 §§ 270–72; on zeal for the Law of Moses, see 1 Macc 2:23–28, 42–48, 50, 58; 2 Macc 4:2). 2 Macc 6:13 comments: "It is a sign of great kindness not to let the impious alone for long, but to punish them immediately" (NRSV). In 1QS IX.21–22 from the Dead Sea Scrolls: The righteous bears "everlasting hatred for the men of the pit" (trans. F. García Martínez). In 1QH VI (= XIV).14, another Dead Sea text: "My fervour against all those who act wickedly and (against) men of guile increases" (trans. F. García Martínez). Philo, a few decades before Paul, writes of "thousands who have their eyes upon [God] full of zeal for the laws, strictest guardians of the ancestral institutions, merciless to those who do anything to subvert them" (*Spec.* 2.46 § 253 [Colson, LCL]). Such zeal safeguarded Israel's purity and distinctiveness since intermarriage or syncretism jeopardized both Israel's relationship with the LORD and the future of the people. The pre-Christian Paul viewed the Jesus movement within Judaism as a serious threat to the purity and survival of the people's religious heritage. (CC)

Luke relays that Paul had been educated by the famous Pharisaic teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3; cf. Acts 5:33–42), but the use of the word "zealous" (ζηλωτής, Gal 1:14) has spurred speculation on the possibility that Paul was also influenced by more extreme elements among the Pharisees. N. T. Wright has theorized that Paul had been a Shammaite Pharisee influenced by such famous examples of zeal as Phineas, Elijah, and/or the Maccabees. Even as the zealous Elijah at one point set out for Mount Sinai in Arabia (1 Kings 19, esp. 1 Ki 19:10, 14), so also did Paul as he too sought God's revelation for the next step in his activities (Gal 1:17). While Wright's proposal is, typically, creative and attractive, he has left certain key details unexplained. Paul never articulates his divine call in terms of such figures of zeal as Elijah or Phineas but rather in terms of Jeremiah and/or the Isaianic Servant figure (Gal 1:15; Jer 1:5; Is 49:1–6). A simpler rationale for Paul's proceeding to Arabia, the Nabatean kingdom, would have been to begin preaching to gentiles. In 2 Cor 11:32–33 Paul narrates the Nabatean ruler Aretas' attempt to capture Paul after he returned to Damascus. Since the Nabatean kingdom/Arabia was in the immediate vicinity of his encounter with Christ at Damascus, what better location from which to begin his apostolic labors! Paul went right to work. (CC)

"Zeal" was associated with Torah observance (Acts 22:3; 1 Macc 2:27: "zealous for the Law"; 2 Macc 4:2; 4 Macc 18:12; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.6.2 § 271; 13.10.6 § 297; Philo, *Spec.* 1.5 § 30; 2.46 § 253: "zeal for the laws"; Philo, *Abr.* 13 § 60; Philo, *Virt.* 33 § 175). "The traditions of my fathers/ancestors" (τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων, Gal 1:14), on the other hand, also included the oral interpretive traditions of the Pharisees (Mt 15:2; Mk 7:3–13; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.1 § 297; 13.16.2 § 408; 17.2.4 § 41). Paul is therefore boasting of a discipline that included even the sectarian traditions that went beyond the strictures of the Torah. The former insider is now advocating for the gentiles, ironically, a non-Law-observant form of Christianity. "He had once been the absolute epitome of opposition to everything for which he now stood." (CC)

The first Christians whom Paul the Jew persecuted were themselves *Jewish*. What, then, drew Paul's ire? Had they adopted a lax approach to the observance of the Torah? In that case, Paul might have, before or after his conversion, encouraged a more rigorously Law-observant form of Christianity (cf. Acts 21:20–21). No, the pre-Christian Paul had come to view faith in Christ as somehow fundamentally opposed to God's Torah. What rendered these first Jewish-Christians distinct from other Jews were most likely their claims regarding Christ and their worship of him. The first Christians bestowed saving significance upon the person of Jesus Christ and his cross, but this belief would, if consistently applied, jeopardize the saving efficacy of the Law of Moses for the Jewish people. (CC)

If Paul viewed the Law and Christ as mutually exclusive means of salvation prior to his conversion, as appears to be the case, then his position has remained consistent in the wake of his conversion. The Law and Christ remain mutually exclusive instruments of salvation. A zealot for the Law would not easily have abandoned his zeal. He simply found himself face-to-face with the very One he had denied. Paul's Law-free gentile mission did not emerge over time. He probably recognized right away that if the Law was not God's instrument of salvation, then the works that it required, apart from Christ, were mere empty human activities that could not merit God's favor. Such works should not be foisted upon the gentiles since the Law's works were not God's means of salvation. Therefore Paul immediately departed for gentile territory with only the cross of Christ. (CC)

Paul's life is filled with tremendous ironies. As a non-Christ-believing Jew, he had furiously fought for what he thought were the people of God, and yet he ended up unwittingly persecuting the *true* people of God. The Jewish-Christian rivals at Galatia ironically share Paul's former zeal with respect to the Law and yet have not recognized the contradictions that their insistence on Law observance entails with respect to God's salvation in Christ. If the Law were also necessary for the gentiles, then Christ's death would not be sufficient to save (2:21). Even as Paul the zealot persecuted Christians as defectors from Judaism, now he must urge the Galatians not to defect from the Christian faith. Misplaced, passionate, violent zeal shatters the lives of others. (CC)

Violence and hostility, unfortunately, remain all-too-common in expressions of religious fervor. The cross of Christ offers a different model, the way of peace (1:3; 5:22). Paul's case is a sobering reminder that religious fervor is only as valid as its object. If the object is false, then such fervor can only result in profound tragedy. He would come to realize that he had been persecuting "the church of God" (1:13)! (CC)

Paul does not convey any doubts from the period prior to his conversion. He does not express any angst or qualms about his former activities. On the contrary, he had advanced in Judaism beyond his peers! Elsewhere he describes himself as formerly "blameless with respect to the righteousness of the Law" (Phil 3:6). He never describes himself as having been troubled by guilt. "There was nothing in his religious background and preconversion life that could have in any way prepared him for a positive response to the gospel."⁶⁰ Paul's conversion must therefore have been an utter miracle of God! God simply reversed the course of Paul's life and called him to a new mission. No believer's faith in Christ is any less miraculous. God is invading lives, bringing about his new creation! (CC)

The Decisive Apostolic Call (1:15–17) (CC)

1:15–16a *But when the one who had separated me from my mother's womb and who had called me through his grace was pleased to reveal his Son in me.* The beginning of 1:15 signals the decisive change in Paul's life: "but when." His way of life can be divided into "before" and "after." Whereas Paul's "I" was the subject of the preceding verses, now with 1:15 *God* becomes the subject. This verse is triply emphatic: God expressed good pleasure (εὐδόκησεν) in Paul, set him apart (ἀφορίσας), and called him (καλέσας). The apostolic call was therefore a miraculous action of God "through his grace" (διὰ τῆς χάριτος). God turned the former persecutor's life around. The Galatians, like Paul, experienced God's call (1:6), but they are in the process of abandoning that call even as the apostle, for his part, is seeking to remain faithful. (CC)

Paul sees the decisive change in his life as part of God's plan for him from the very beginning. The apostle was destined from his mother's womb (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου, 1:15) to become like a prophet of the Most High. His call (καλέσας) was not only to faith but also to a prophetic task, as is clear from the allusions in Gal 1:15 to Is 49:1 and Jer 1:5. In Jer 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I consecrated you" (LXX: πρὸ τοῦ με πλάσαι σε ἐν **κοιλίᾳ** ἐπίσταμαί

σε καὶ πρὸ τοῦ σε ἐξελεῖν ἐκ **μήτρας ἡγίακά** σε). Paul likely also has in mind the language of Is 49:1: “The LORD called me from the womb; from the belly of my mother he called my name” (LXX: ἐκ **κοιλίας μητρός μου ἐκάλεσεν** τὸ ὄνομά μου). Strengthening the likelihood of an allusion here to Is 49:1 are the allusions to Isaiah 49 elsewhere in Galatians. In Gal 1:24 Paul draws on the language of Is 49:3, and in Gal 2:2 (cf. 4:11) he may be drawing on the language of Is 49:4. He will also cite Is 49:8 in 2 Cor 6:2. Like the prophets, God has called Paul and separated him from his mother’s womb. Paul was actually returning to God’s *original* plan for his life to serve as a minister of the Gospel. This verse is a reminder that God has a plan for *every* person’s life, which begins at conception, even if an individual has not been called to be a prophet or an apostle like Paul. (CC)

According to 1:16a, God’s plan was for Paul to preach the message of Jesus Christ to the gentiles. Paul may have been drawn to the language of Isaiah and Jeremiah for interpreting what God had done in his life precisely because they too had mentioned the gentiles as among the intended recipients of God’s revelation. In Is 49:6: “I will make you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Isaiah anticipated the saving message of God reaching the non-Jews.⁷³ Jeremiah too was appointed to go to the nations (Jer 1:5), but his message was to be largely of their impending judgment. Perhaps Paul viewed his ministry to the gentiles in continuity with that of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah.

Paul	Prophets
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[God] separated me from my mother’s womb	Jer 1:5: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I consecrated you
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Is 49:1: From the belly of my mother he called my name

and called me through his grace to reveal his Son in me	Is 49:1: The Lord called me from the womb [Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1]
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so that I might preach him among the gentiles	Jer 1:5: I appointed you a prophet to the nations
	Is 49:6: I will give you as a light to the nations; cf. Is 42:6 (CC)

Although Paul narrates his own call in language reminiscent of the prophets, he also differs from Isaiah and Jeremiah in that as “a servant of Christ” (1:10) his message focuses on what Christ *has done* (1:15–16). The prophets of old could only look forward to that ministry (Rom 1:2–3; 3:21–22). Also, as Susan Eastman has pointed out: “Paul’s suffering appears to be somewhat different from that of the prophets: they experience anguish because they must both preach and experience God’s judgment and punishment on apostate Israel, whereas Paul suffers in solidarity with the crucified Christ, even as he preaches good news of deliverance from bondage to the powers of this age.” Paul stands on the other side of God’s invasion of the cosmos in Christ and his Spirit. Nevertheless, even as the prophets’ lives were *shaped* by their message, Paul now embodies the message of Christ crucified! (CC)

The prepositional phrase near the beginning of 1:16a is difficult: God revealed his Son “to/through/within me” (ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί). The Greek ἐν ἐμοί could be a simple dative: “to me.” In support of the simple dative translation “to me,” some commentators have noted what they perceive as a parallel construction later in 1:16. Paul’s “to me” (ἐν ἐμοί) matches “to/among the gentiles” (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν) in both the preposition (ἐν) and the dative case of the noun: “God revealed the Son *to Paul* in order that Paul might proclaim the Son *to the Gentiles*.” These commentators, however, ignored the verb

Paul uses: “to reveal” (ἀποκαλύπτω); Paul regularly employs with this verb a substantive or pronoun in the dative case—but no preposition—to indicate the indirect object (1 Cor 2:10; 14:30; Phil 3:15). In other words, Gal 1:16 with its prepositional phrase (ἐν ἐμοί) employs a construction Paul does *not* use elsewhere to express an indirect object of the verb “reveal.” This leads to a second possible translation, “through/by me”: God is revealing his Son *through* Paul as an apostle. The translation of the prepositional phrase (ἐν ἐμοί) as “through me” is unlikely as well since Paul’s missionary purpose and activity is clearly specified by the *next* clause: “so that I might preach him among the gentiles” (ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). God’s revelation “in” Paul took place in the *past* (God “was pleased,” 1:15), with the apostle’s evangelizing activity as a consequence. (CC)

The best translation of 1:16’s disputed prepositional phrase (ἐν ἐμοί) is “in me.” As Paul says in 2:20: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” In 4:6: “God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts.” Elsewhere, in 2 Cor 4:6: “For God, who said, ‘Out of darkness light will shine,’ is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” God revealed His Son “in” Paul. This translation should not be taken to imply that Paul is emphasizing some purely internal and subjective experience. God’s revelation remains an invasion of Paul’s life from without. As Richard Hays rightly pointed out: “The phrase ‘in me’ does not refer to ‘the inward reality of Christian experience,’ as though Paul were locating the event of revelation within his own heart. This sort of introspective individualism is foreign to Paul’s thought world; he is describing the dynamic outreach of the gospel to the Gentiles through him.”⁸¹ One could therefore translate “in me” in the sense of “in and through me,” referring to the transformation that God worked in Paul’s life *for the purpose of his mission*. “God revealed Christ in Paul in order to reveal him through Paul.”⁸³ God has miraculously worked a change in the life of the apostle Paul, and, in that sense, God is manifested “in” Paul. A revelation had to take place to bring about this change from his “former way of life” (1:13)! Faith in Christ is no less a miracle in *any* believer. One way of life is over as another begins that participates in the new reality ushered in by Christ’s cosmic, saving work (cf. 6:14–15). (CC)

God has revealed “his Son” (τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, 1:16) in Paul. “Son of God” was used as a messianic title in some quarters of Second Temple Judaism (4QFlor I.10–13 on 2 Sam 7:14 [also Ps 2:7]; 1QSa II.11–12; 4Q246; 4 Ezra 7:28–29; 13:32; 14:9). Paul does not manifest any explicit concern with those texts at this point. Rather he associates Jesus’ Sonship with the salvation that comes through the cross (Rom 5:10; 8:3; Gal 2:20; 4:4–5). Gal 1:16 is best understood in light of the familial language that dominates this letter. Christ remains uniquely God’s Son (“his Son,” τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, Gal 1:16). Paul will build on this unique relationship between the Son and the Father later in the letter. According to 3:28–29 the baptized are “one” in Christ and heirs of Abraham through the sole, rightful Heir (3:16). Jesus remains *the* Seed of Abraham (3:16) and *the* Son of God (4:4). Believers therefore call God Father by means of a process of adoption through the Spirit of the Son (4:5–6). Even as God revealed his Son “in” Paul (1:16), so also Paul is now “in Christ” and therefore shares in Christ’s rights as the Son (as do all Christians). (CC)

1:16b–17 ... so that I might preach him among the gentiles, I did not immediately thereafter 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 again to Damascus. The narration of God’s revelation and call in 1:15–16a is subordinate to the initiation of Paul’s apostolic ministry in 1:16b–17. The Galatians already know about his former life (1:13), whether from Paul himself or from others. His former life deserves no further mention. Paul’s emphasis, rather, is that he immediately went to work as an apostle, thereby fulfilling his apostolic call. The Galatians are within the sphere of the ministry to which he has been called. The narration of the divine call is not for its own sake but serves as a supporting argument for why the Galatians should respect and heed his message. (CC)

God revealed his Son in Paul “so that I might preach him among the gentiles” (ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). The purpose of Paul’s call is to preach Christ among the gentiles. Paul will insist on this

with the Jerusalem pillars in 2:7. The Hebrew *goyim* (גוֹיִם) frequently referred to nations other than Israel in the OT. The Greek *ethnē* (ἔθνη) likewise may be used for the peoples other than “the Jews” (as in Acts 14:5; 21:11, 21; Rom 3:29; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 2:15). One may therefore translate the Greek word here as “gentiles,” or non-Jews. Paul’s mission is to go to the “gentiles,” the non-Jews. Gentiles may likewise become the children of Abraham and of God (3:28–29; 4:5–6)! At the same time, Paul is preaching *among* the gentiles; he is not limited to preaching to the gentiles alone (that would require an omission of the preposition ἐν, “among”). As Paul will write in Rom 1:16; 2:9–10: “to the Jew *first* and also to the Greek” (see also 1 Cor 9:20–21). This missionary work among the gentiles will require Paul to go to gentile lands. (CC)

Paul does not describe to the Galatians (or in his other letters) exactly how the predominantly gentile target audience was revealed to him, although the target audience would be understandable if Christ is God’s means of salvation rather than the Law. The Law would no longer serve as a barrier for gentiles to become members of the people of God. Paul *is* clear, on the other hand, that his gentile mission did not come from a human being, whether in the initial call or immediately afterward. Paul did not “consult with flesh and blood” (οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι, 1:16). (CC)

The verb “consult” is sometimes used in Greek literature with an authoritative interpretive figure as the object; thus “consult in order to be given a skilled or authoritative interpretation.” The point here is that Paul did not need to consult others about the validity of the revelation he received. The emphatic “immediately” (εὐθέως) may modify just the non-consultation of human beings in the clause that directly follows in Gal 1:16c, or the word may modify the entire complex of ideas from the non-consultation of human beings to the lack of visit to the Jerusalem apostles and the departure for Arabia (1:16c–17). “Immediately” (εὐθέως) suggests an action to follow rather than non-action, in which case the word would modify only the departure for Arabia. On the other hand, Paul’s non-consultation with human authorities likewise undergirds his apostolic authority. Instead, he went right to work. One might therefore translate the word “immediately thereafter” to modify the negative statements as well as the positive statement of the departure for Arabia. (CC)

Paul’s Gospel is not of human origin. He did not receive it from those who were apostles before him. Instead, he immediately set out for Arabia. What does Paul mean in 1:17 by “to those [in Jerusalem] who were apostles before me” (πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους)? “Before me” is strictly temporal and does not indicate anything about the apostles’ status. As for “apostle,” Paul uses the term rather flexibly.⁹³ He sometimes employs the word for those who had seen the Lord, including “the Twelve,” himself, Jesus’ brothers, and Barnabas (1 Cor 9:1–7). In 1 Cor 15:5, 7, 9 Paul *distinguishes* the apostles as a group that includes himself from “the Twelve.” Paul at times belabors his apostleship (e.g., 2 Cor 12:11–12); he defines it as having encountered the risen Christ (1 Cor 9:1–2; Gal 1:1, 15–17) and having received a commission to proclaim the Gospel (Rom 1:1–5; 1 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:15–17). When Paul speaks of “those who were apostles before me” (Gal 1:17), he is placing his apostolic office on the same level as of those in Jerusalem. Paul gives no evidence that he thinks of himself as “the thirteenth apostle” with the other twelve, but, as one who has encountered the risen Christ, he would certainly rank ahead of an itinerant missionary “apostle” (e.g., Silvanus or Timothy in 1 Thess 1:1; 3:6). The use of the word “apostle” for itinerant evangelists and missionaries was common in the first and early second centuries (e.g., *Did.* 11.3–6). These itinerants did not exercise the same sort of authority as those who had seen the Lord. Epaphroditus, who serves on behalf of the Philippian church, is labeled an “apostle” in yet a third sense as a messenger or emissary of the church (Phil 2:25: “your” apostle). Paul labels others in the same way as “messengers of the churches” (2 Cor 8:23). In Gal 1:1 Paul clarifies that his own apostolic calling is not equivalent to those called by human individuals or assemblies. He is therefore referring here in 1:15–17 to those apostles in Jerusalem “before me” who have similarly witnessed the risen Christ. If God’s revelation of Christ was “in” Paul (1:16), it was not “in” him in the sense of a mere inner experience. He genuinely witnessed the risen Christ as had the apostles before him. Paul’s apostolic office is based on his

direct call (cf. Isaiah 49; Jeremiah 1) rather than on a mediated revelation through Moses' Law (cf. the rhetorical devaluation of mediation in Gal 3:19). (CC)

Paul's immediate destination in 1:17 is Arabia. By "Arabia" Paul means the Nabatean kingdom. Greek writers from the time of Herodotus (2.11; 3.107–13; 4.39) onward employed "Arabia" (Ἀραβία) either for the entire region or for portions of the territory that stretched from the Red Sea (Arabian Gulf), located in the southwest, to the lands east of the Jordan River Valley, to the east of the easternmost Decapolis cities of Damascus, Raphana, and Philadelphia, all the way to the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates River, located in the distant northeast. Petra, the capital of the Nabateans, served as the royal seat of Arabia. The city was therefore called "Arabia Petra," and the territory was called "Arabia belonging to Petra" or "Arabia of the Nabateans."⁹⁹ Arabia/Nabatea not only included desert regions but also large cities and population centers. Although the boundaries of the kingdom did not remain constant in the Middle Nabatean period from 30 BC to AD 70, the kingdom nevertheless included the Sinai, the Negev (south of Judea), east of the Jordan River Valley, much of modern Jordan, and some of Saudi Arabia. (CC)

Paul's primary point here must remain clear: He did not go to Jerusalem or confer with human beings. He would not be in the vicinity of Jerusalem until three years later. Up to that point, he had been at work in gentile territory. As his very first act, he had boldly taken a Law-free Gospel¹⁰³ straight to the heart of Arabia, the very region of the Mosaic Law's origin (Sinai "is a mountain in Arabia," 4:25). What a statement! (CC)

The Extent of Paul's Arabian Ministry

In the history of interpretation, some have wondered if Paul went to Arabia to reflect on his divine call or to seek God's further guidance. After all, Mount Sinai, the site of God's revelation to Moses, was in Arabia (Gal 4:25). Paul does not specify where in this rather large territory he went, and he does not mention Mount Sinai here (but does in 4:24–25). Paul narrates his departure for Arabia (1:17) immediately after saying that God had called him to spread the Gospel message of Christ among the gentiles (1:16). Paul's departure appears to be a faithful response to his apostolic call and not an attempt to gain clarity or guidance. Luther was rather blunt (AE 26:74–75):

Therefore it is idle for Jerome to ask what Paul did in Arabia. What else was he to do but preach Christ? For, as he says, the Son of God was revealed to him for this purpose, that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. Therefore he travels from Damascus, a Gentile city, directly to Arabia, where there were Gentiles also; and there he carries out his ministry with vigor. (CC)

Ambrosiaster thought that Paul departed for Arabia since it remained unevangelized territory. In 2 Cor 11:32–33 the apostle writes of the conflict that he experienced in his missionary labors with the ethnarch of Aretas IV, the Nabatean ruler (8 BC–AD 40), while in Damascus. Paul had probably left for the Nabatean region/Arabia for evangelism work, experienced conflict, and then returned to Damascus. (CC)

Scholars have been divided on whether Damascus was part of Arabia at the time of Paul's call/conversion. Many have claimed on the basis (solely) of 2 Cor 11:32 that Damascus had been part of Aretas IV's Nabatean kingdom at various points during his reign from 9 BC to AD 40, including the time of Paul's conversion. Damascus and Arabia were clearly distinguishable entities at the time of Paul's letter to the Galatians (written no earlier than the late 40s AD), since he departed for "Arabia" and returned from there to "Damascus" (1:17). Nevertheless, some scholars have speculated on the basis of 2 Cor 11:32 that Caligula had transferred control of Damascus for a time to Aretas IV. The coins of Caligula and Claudius have not been found in Damascus, but this does not prove that Damascus was under Nabatean rather than Roman control. Early Roman coins are rarely found in the city and are absent

also for the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, Nerva, and Trajan.⁷ In the meanwhile, Caligula had given Agrippa I the territory of Philip, which extended eastward to Hauran. Agrippa I's territory would have cut Damascus off from the Nabatean kingdom. To give Damascus to the Nabateans would have posed a threat to Agrippa from within his borders since Nabatea already encircled his kingdom from the north, south, and east. At a time when Caligula was bestowing favors on Agrippa I, it is not likely that Damascus, with its rich resources and tradition, would have been given to the Nabateans. Aretas IV did not mint his own coins there (cf. the Damascus coinage of Aretas III). Had Aretas IV been ruler over Damascus, his ethnarch would have been effectively the royal governor of Damascus and would have gone by some other title than "ethnarch" (ἔθναρχης) in 2 Cor 11:32 (e.g., στρατηγός, *stratēgos*, or ἐπίτροπος, *epitropos*). "Ethnarch" referred to the leader of a particular people and not to a governor on behalf of the king. As "ethnarch," this individual headed the Nabatean trade colony in Damascus as a sort of consul. Josephus and Strabo both refer to the leader of the Jewish population in Alexandria, Egypt, by the term "ethnarch."¹⁰ The Nabateans had established trade colonies in Gerasa, Sidon, Puteoli, and the Decapolis. Even as Alexandria and Damascus had their Jewish quarters, Damascus had a Nabatean quarter to the northeast.¹² Despite the popularity of the translation "governor" in many English translations of 2 Cor 11:32, other titles would have been used in antiquity for the governor of a city. Damascus was therefore separate from Arabia at the time of the events Paul narrates. (CC)

Aretas IV enjoyed control over Arabia only because Herod the Great, after skirmishes between the two regional rulers, had refused Augustus' offer of control over the area. The Jewish lands and their inhabitants under the Herodians had served as rivals to the Nabateans for several decades by the time Paul arrived in the 30s AD. The preaching of a Jewish sectarian, such as Paul, would have aroused suspicion and even hostility from the Nabateans. Paul does not say how long he was in Arabia, but the *real* stay would have been the subsequent "three years" upon his return to Damascus. Paul may have gone as far as Mount Sinai, or he may not have gone very far beyond Damascus. He may have made it to Petra in the south or Bostra in the north.¹⁶ He may only have made it to the northern Nabatean towns of Philippopolis, Kanatha, and Suweida before being forced to return to Damascus. (CC)

Paul's stay in Arabia was likely very brief. If he planted churches in that region, they did not leave any trace in the archaeological record. Paul went right to work, but he probably immediately faced conflict, conflict to such an extent that three years later Aretas IV was still hunting for him in Damascus (2 Cor 11:32). Witnessing to the truth of Jesus Christ is not often a very popular or winsome activity. Frequently, the Christian witness evokes hostility and even persecution. Such difficulties did not deter Paul. They should not deter the modern Christian either. (CC)

1:13 τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ("my former way of life in Judaism")—The article need not be repeated when there are several attributive modifiers. It would be clumsy to insert the string of attributive modifiers between the article and the noun (τὴν ἐμὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ἀναστροφὴν). On Ἰουδαϊσμός as the religion of the Jews, see 2 Macc 2:21; 8:1; 14:38; 4 Macc 4:26. (CC)

ὅτι ("that")—The following clause is exegetical and introduces the element of Paul's former conduct that is relevant for his point.

ἐπόρθουν ("I was trying to destroy")—The imperfect is conative. (CC)

heard – Either from Paul himself or from reports being circulated about him (cf vv 22–23). (TLSB)

Judaism. The Jewish faith and way of life that developed during the period between the OT and the NT. The term is derived from Judah, the southern kingdom that came to an end in the sixth century B.C. with the exile into Babylonia. (CSB)

Designates the Jewish faith and way of life that distinguished Jews from Gentiles (including especially circumcision, dietary laws, Sabbath observance, and the system of feasts and sacrifices). (TLSB)

I persecuted – The Greek tense shows repeated action. (TLSB)

church of God. The NT counterpart of the OT assembly (see Nu 16:21) or community of the Lord (Nu 20:4). (CSB)

In contrast to his former life in Judaism, Paul now belongs to those who believe in Christ, the new “Israel of God” (see note, 6:16). Paul regards the persecution of the Church as an act hostile to God Himself. (TLSB)

violently...tried to destroy it – Literally “to an extraordinary degree,” intensively and extensively. (TLSB)

His argument is, “If you know the circumstances of my case, it is really very unlikely that I would be influenced by men. I was the kind of fellow to whom nobody could tell anything. Just look at my track record. (PBC)

1:14 περισσοτέρως (“far more”)—This adverb has a stronger force than the proper comparative adjective περισσώτερον; see BDF § 60 (3).

ὕπαρχων (“since I was”)—If the participle is causal (“because I was”), it is weakly so. The participle may also express manner. (CC)

I was advancing in Judaism – Nothing is needed here but word study. Paul is citing his own example: “I once defended Pharisaism and Judaism more vigorously and steadfastly than you and your false teachers did. Therefore if the righteousness of the Law were worth anything, I would have remained a Pharisee. For I, too, was a Pharisee, and I pursued the traditions of the fathers with greater zeal than the false apostles do today. And yet I regarded them and all Judaism as of little worth.” (Luther)

Paul had progressed beyond many others in the teachings and practices of the Jewish religion, shown esp by his ardent zeal for persecuting God’s Church. (TLSB)

zealous. See Php 3:6. (CSB)

traditions of my fathers. Traditions orally transmitted from previous generations and contrasted with the written law of Moses. Cf. the “tradition of the elders.” (CSB)

Teachings, commandments, stories, etc., of the rabbis accepted by the Pharisees and passed on particularly in the oral law (Hbr *halakah*, Mk 7:5). (TLSB)

Here Paul does not call the traditions of the fathers “pharisaical” or “human” traditions, as Jerome supposes. For in this passage he is not discussing the traditions of the Pharisees; he is discussing a much sublimer issue. Therefore he calls even the holy Law of Moses “the traditions of my fathers,” in the sense that they were handed down and received as a legacy from the fathers. “For these,” he says, “I was very zealous when I was a part of Judaism.” He speaks the same way to the Philippians (3:5–6): “As to the Law I was a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the Law blameless.” It is as though he were saying: “Here I may brag openly and put myself against the entire Jewish people, even the best and holiest of all those who belong to the circumcision. Let them show me, if they can, a more zealous and earnest defender of the Law of Moses than I was! I was an outstanding zealot for the

traditions of the fathers, a devotee of the righteousness of the Law. This in itself, you Galatians, should have persuaded you not to believe these deceivers, who lay great stress on the righteousness of the Law as an issue of great importance. For if there were any grounds for boasting in the righteousness of the Law, I would have more grounds for boasting than anyone else.” (Luther)

1:15 εὐδόκησεν or ἠὐδόκησεν (“was pleased”)—ὁ θεός (“God”) is not explicitly identified as the subject (but is implied) in diverse witnesses such as \mathfrak{B}^{46} B G (cf. 1:6; 2:8; 3:5; 5:8; Rom 8:11; 1 Thess 5:24). ὁ θεός (“God”) is included in good witnesses: κ A D Byzantine syr^h cop^{sa, bo}. The inclusion of “God” is likely secondary as scribes made explicit what was implied in the original reading; a scribal deletion of “God,” were it original, would be inexplicable. (CC)

διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ (“through his grace”)—This phrase likely modifies “called” (καλέσας) rather than “to reveal” (ἀποκαλύψαι, 1:16). The two participial phrases are, in that case, better balanced: “the one who had separated me from my mother’s womb” and “who had called me through his grace.” The element of grace in the revelation is signaled already by εὐδόκησεν (“was pleased”) upon which ἀποκαλύψαι (“to reveal,” 1:16) depends. (CC)

set me apart when I born. See Isa 49:1; Jer 1:5; Ro 1:1. (CSB)

Paul did not decide to “change religions.” As God set apart and called the prophets of old, so also He chose Paul to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles in keeping with His divine purpose. Paul, the former persecutor of the Church, knew from experience that God called him by grace (1Co 15:9). (TLSB)

Thus Paul abolishes all “deserving”; he gives the glory only to God, but to himself only confusion. It is as though Paul wanted to say: “Every gift—whether great or small, whether physical or spiritual—that God intended to give to me, and all the good things that I was ever to do at any time in all my life—all this God had predestined even before I was born, when I could not think, wish, or do anything good but was a shapeless embryo. Therefore this gift came to me by the mere predestination and merciful grace of God even before I was born. And then, after I was born, He still supported me, even though I was covered with innumerable and horrible iniquities and evils. To declare the unspeakable and inestimable greatness of His mercy to me even more obviously, He forgave my infinite and horrible sins by His sheer grace. So generously did He shower me with His grace that I not only knew what is given to us in Christ but also preached this to others.” This is what all men deserve and merit, and especially those old fools who are busy only in the filth of man’s own righteousness. (Luther)

by his grace was pleased – This is as though Paul were saying: “It is only the unspeakable kindness of God that He has not only spared me—a good-for-nothing, a criminal, a blasphemer, and a sacrilegious man—but that He has also given me the knowledge of salvation, His Spirit, Christ His Son, the apostolic office, and life eternal.” Seeing us in similar sins, God has not only pardoned our wickedness and blasphemies out of His sheer mercy for the sake of Christ; but He has also showered us with His great blessings and spiritual gifts. But many among us not only, as 2 Peter 1:9 says, “have forgotten that they were cleansed from their old sins”; but, opening a window to the devil again, they begin to loathe His Word, and many also pervert it and thus become the founders of new sects. The last state of such men is worse than the first (Matt. 12:45). (Luther)

1:16 *to reveal his Son* – In this passage you hear what sort of doctrine was given and committed to Paul, namely, the doctrine of the Gospel, which is the revelation of the Son of God; as Ps. 2:11 says, “Kiss the Son.” This is a doctrine different from all others. Moses does not reveal the Son of God; he discloses the Law, sin, the conscience, death, the wrath and judgment of God, and hell. These things are not the Son of God! Therefore only the Gospel reveals the Son of God. Oh, if only one could distinguish carefully here

and not look for the Law in the Gospel but keep it as separate from the Law as heaven is distant from the earth! In itself the difference is easy and clear, but to us it is difficult and well-nigh incomprehensible. For it is easy to say that the Gospel is nothing but the revelation of the Son of God or the knowledge of Jesus Christ and not the revelation or knowledge of the Law. But in the conflict of conscience and in practice it is difficult even for those who have had a lot of experience to hold to this for certain. (Luther)

Gentiles. Lit. “nations” or “peoples.” The **term** commonly designated foreigners—hence pagans, or the non-Jewish world. (CSB)

anyone . Lit. “flesh and blood”—in the NT always with the implication of human weakness or ignorance (see Mt 16:17; 1Co 15:50; Eph 6:12). Paul received his message from God. (CSB)

Lit, “take up a matter with.” *anyone*. Lit, “with flesh and blood.” Paul received no instruction from anyone in Jerusalem immediately after his conversion. This proves that his Gospel did not depend on any human source. (TLSB)

Paul did not consult with anyone. He didn’t need to because he was sure of his message. (PBC)

1:17 ἀνῆλθον (“I went up”)—This reading is favored by the majority of manuscripts (⋈ A K L P Ψ 33), but ἀπῆλθον (“I went away”) is in ℱ⁵¹ B D G and ἤλθον (“I went”) in ℱ⁴⁶.

πάλιν (“again”)—Paul returned “again” to Damascus (1:17), that is, the site of his conversion (in agreement with Acts 9:3; 22:6; 26:12, 20). (CC)

Jerusalem. The religious center of Judaism and the birthplace of Christianity. (CSB)

Arabia. The Nabatean kingdom in Transjordan stretching from Damascus southwest to the Suez. (CSB)

Probably the Nabataean Kingdom located in the area around Damascus in Syria, founded in the second century BC. See map, p 1886. Aretas IV (9 BC–c AD 40) was king when Paul was converted (2Co 11:32). Some commentators believe that Paul went to Arabia to begin mission work among the Gentiles. (TLSB)

For a while there, Paul kind of retreated. And if you look where Arabia is, it's kind of east and south of Jerusalem. It's really the center of Arabia at this time was Petra, which is where the Nabateans were. You can look it up on a map. It's very interesting. Petra is of course the place that is featured in the movie "Indiana Jones, The Last Crusade." A magnificent kind of rock walled city. And Paul went and retreated there. Now, there were a lot of Jews there. There were synagogues. There wasn't a lot of pressure for Paul. I think Paul spent time learning how to be an evangelist to the Jews in Arabia. He was not a popular person in Judea. He's going to talk about that later on. He needed to retreat. He needed to learn. It was in a sense his way of coming to grips with what it meant to share the Gospel with his own people. (Just – V-16)

And this of course prepared him to share the Gospel to the Gentiles. But the point is that he doesn't go running and learn the Gospel from others. Because he had already known it from his studies as a Pharisee in knowing the Old Testament. And then in seeing that the key of knowledge as Jesus says, the key of knowledge that unlocks the Old Testament is knowing that Jesus is the Messiah himself. (Just – V-16)

From his lodging place in Damascus Paul headed for Arabia. With our modern sense of geography we may be inclined to associate the term “Arabia” with the triangular peninsula far to the southwest of Damascus – the area today occupied mainly by Saudi Arabia. (PBC)

Damascus. Ancient capital of Syria (Aram in the OT). Paul had been converted en route from Jerusalem to Damascus (Ac 9:1–9). (CSB)

One of the cities of the Decapolis under the supervision of Syria’s imperial legate, it came under Roman control in 66 BC. At Paul’s time, it was a Nabataean city and had a large Jewish population. (TLSB)

Paul also sees the Damascus road experience as an Apocalyptic invasion. And I think when he sees that, he sees it in the same way as the incarnation, that God is invasively revealing himself in an Apocalyptic way to Paul just as Jesus revealed himself in an Apocalyptic way when he came into the world to be our Savior. (Just – V-16)

Second Proof of the Divine Origin of Paul’s Message: The Jerusalem Church Did Not Commission Paul (1:18–20) (CC)

1:18 *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to meet Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days.* “After three years” (μετὰ ἔτη τρία) would have been understood by the ancients inclusively: “in the third year” and not after a full three years. A portion of one year, a full year, and a portion of a third year would suffice with respect to Paul’s expression. He did not go to Jerusalem for about two years. Regardless of the exact length of his absence, Paul is clear that a significant period of time had intervened. (CC)

Commentators are divided on the starting point of this time period. Paul could have been speaking of the time since his conversion or of the time since his return to Damascus. Paul is very concerned with placing events into a chronological order. His regular use of “then” (ἔπειτα) in 1:21 and 2:1 indicates a temporal sequence: The events “after fourteen years” (2:1) follow those “after three years” (1:18). Several indications favor that the starting point of the “three year” interval is Paul’s conversion. He emphasizes in 1:16 an immediate departure for Arabia after his conversion. The revelation that changed Paul’s life remains the pivotal turning point for this autobiography as time is measured from that decisive moment.¹⁰⁶ After three years Paul finally *did* do what he did not do initially: He went up to Jerusalem (Jerusalem is in the hill country—one must go *up*). His journey three years later must be reckoned from his initial non-journey at the point of his conversion. (CC)

In Jerusalem Paul visited with Peter. The verb translated here as “meet” (ἰστορέω), when employed with a personal object, means to make someone’s acquaintance (Josephus, *Ant.* 8.2.5 § 46; Josephus, *J.W.* 6.1.8 § 81; Plutarch, *Curios.* 2 [*Mor.* 516C]).¹⁰⁷ James D. G. Dunn has emphasized that Paul’s acquaintance visit would have included inquiry and investigation since Paul recognized Peter as the key figure in the Gospel mission to the Jews (Gal 2:7–8). From a lexical standpoint, whenever this verb (ἰστορέω) is used in the sense of “get information,” that particular information is stated in the context. In the absence of such contextual cues and with a personal object, as is the case here in Galatians 1, “make acquaintance” is more likely than “get information.” Paul has already explained that his Gospel preaching is based on God’s direct revelation (1:1, 11–12; cf. 2:6). Paul apparently does not consider whatever information he would have gleaned from Peter as sufficient to jeopardize his claim of independent revelation. He did not “consult” (1:16). Paul’s ministry was already well established during the three years (!) before he eventually spent a mere fifteen days with Peter. At the same time, Paul is not trying to argue absolute independence from the Jerusalem church and its leadership, as if he were the “lone apostle.” Paul can point to the fifteen days with Peter as confirmation to the Galatians that his Gospel preaching is perfectly consistent with the message preached by the original apostles as represented by Peter. (CC)

Paul prefers the Aramaic “Cephas” for Peter. Only in Gal 2:7–8 does he call him “Peter.” Several ancient witnesses identify Peter and Cephas as two separate individuals. Despite the occasional tendency of translators to prejudge the matter by using “Peter” instead of the original “Cephas” (e.g., AAT, CEV), some modern scholars agree with the ancient witnesses that distinguish Cephas from Peter.¹¹³ The historic consensus that Peter and Cephas are the same, however, need not be doubted. Jn 1:42 clarifies that “Cephas” means “Peter.” The similarities between “Cephas” and “Peter” in the NT witnesses are too great to be coincidental:

<i>Peter</i>	<i>Cephas</i>
His name means “rock”	His name means “rock”
The Lord appeared to him first (Lk 22:32; 24:34)	The Lord appeared to him first (1 Cor 15:5)
He was a Jew and a prominent leader of the primitive Jerusalem community (Acts 1–15)	He was a Jew and a prominent leader of the primitive Jerusalem community (Galatians 1–2)
He was associated with both James (Acts 15:1–21) and John (Acts 3:1–26; 4:1–31; 8:14)	He was associated with both James and John (Gal 2:9)
He participated in the gentile mission (Acts 15)	He participated in the gentile mission (Galatians 2; this is probably also implicit in 1 Corinthians 15)
He was married (Mk 1:30 and parallels)	He was married (1 Cor 9:5)
He was of fickle character (Mark 14 and parallels)	He was of fickle character (Galatians 2)
He knew Paul personally (Acts 15)	He knew Paul personally (Galatians 1–2)
He was an itinerant missionary (Acts 1–15)	He was an itinerant missionary (1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; and Gal 2:11, taken together, strongly imply this)
He came into conflict with Jerusalem Christians over eating with the uncircumcised (Acts 11)	He came into conflict with Jerusalem Christians over eating with the uncircumcised (Galatians 2) (CC)

Ancient authors who distinguished “Cephas” and “Peter” may well have done so because of a well-attested discomfort in the first centuries of Christianity with the conflict between these two central apostolic figures (Peter and Paul) in Galatians 2. That conflict would be mitigated if Cephas and Peter were different persons. Paul, for his part, may have preferred to call Peter “Cephas,” the Aramaic name by which the Jews knew him, as a way of emphasizing Peter’s mission to the Jews, just as “Paul,” who was commissioned to go to the non-Jews (2:7–8), preferred to use his Greek name (1:1; 5:2). (CC)

1:19 *And I did not see any of the other apostles except James, the brother of the Lord.* In 1:19 Paul refers to James. This James who was the Lord’s “brother” had not been one of his disciples during his earthly ministry (Jn 7:5; cf. Mk 3:21), as were James the son of Zebedee, who was killed by Herod Agrippa in Acts 12:1–2, and James the son of Alphaeus (Mk 3:17–18; Acts 1:13). Nevertheless, this James had also witnessed the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:7), an event which no doubt changed his life, and he eventually

assumed authority over the early Jerusalem church (Acts 12:16–17; 15:13–21; 21:18). The Sadducees eventually plotted to have him killed in AD 62 (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 §§ 197–203). (CC)

The relationship of “James” to Jesus as his “brother” is multiply attested in the ancient witnesses (Mt 13:54–57; Mk 6:2–4; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 § 200; on Jesus’ “brothers” as a group, see Mt 12:46–50; Lk 8:19–21; Jn 2:12; 7:3–5; Acts 1:14; 1 Cor 9:5; also Tertullian [ca. 200], *Adv. Marc.* 4.19; *Carn. Chr.* 7). The view that James was the “half-brother” of Jesus through Mary eventually came to be associated with Helvidius of Rome in AD 380. After the first century of the Christian movement, asceticism began to take root. This subsequent ascetic movement influenced the author of the *Protoevangelium of James* 9.2, which identified James as a son of Joseph through a previous marriage and therefore a step-brother of Jesus. Epiphanius (AD 315–402/403; *Haer.* 78) supported this approach, which eventually bore his name. Yet a third approach, championed by the famous Latin theologian Jerome in AD 383, took James and the other “brothers” of Jesus as Jesus’ first cousins, the children of Alphaeus and Mary of Clopas (inferred from Jn 19:25 to be Mary’s sister). This approach, eventually called the Hieronymian view, safeguarded Mary’s perpetual virginity. The Hieronymian view is unlikely since there is little evidence that the Greek word for “brother” (ἀδελφός) ever meant “cousin” (ἀνεψιός) in the NT or in secular Greek literature. (CC)

The Galatians, as Greek speakers, would have assumed Paul meant that James was the ordinary half-brother of Jesus. Matthew’s Gospel states that Mary and Joseph delayed sexual relations until after Jesus’ birth (Mt 1:25) and then records Jesus’ “brothers,” including James (Mt 13:55). Lk 2:7 describes Jesus as Mary’s “firstborn” (πρωτότοκος), which suggests that Mary had other children later. After Jesus’ ascension, James may have entered into a leadership role right away, which would be expected as an inheritance passed from a deceased (or in this case, absent) brother to a living brother. (CC)

In Gal 1:19 Paul states clearly that he “did not see any of the other apostles except James, the brother of the Lord.” Whereas Paul spent fifteen days with Peter (1:18), he only briefly met James. Although Paul respectfully affirms James as the Lord’s “brother” (in contrast to the “false brothers” in 2:4), Paul may be distancing himself from James in view of the party “from James” that caused trouble for him in Antioch (2:11–14). (CC)

Paul’s language here in 1:19 is ambiguous on the point of James’ apostolic identity. “Except” (εἰ μή) may modify only the verb “I did not see”: Paul did not see any of the apostles, but he did see James, who is *not* an apostle. “Except” (εἰ μή) may instead modify the entire clause: Paul did not see any of the apostles except for James, who is an apostle. Was this ambiguity deliberate because of Paul’s conflict with the people from James? Paul may not want to reinforce James’ apostolic credentials because of the conflict situation at Galatia, but any certainty on the matter is elusive. On the other hand, Paul in 1 Cor 15:5–7 appears to identify James as an apostle: The parallelism of the passage links Cephas with the Twelve (1 Cor 15:5) and James with the apostles (1 Cor 15:7). Had Paul wanted to distinguish James from the apostles in Gal 1:19, he could have written “other than the apostles” (ἕτερον δὲ ἢ τοὺς ἀποστόλους or used ἕτερον with παρά or a dative case noun). Gal 1:19’s “other” (ἕτερον) is therefore best taken as enumerative and not comparative or differentiative, and the “except” (εἰ μή) modifies the entire preceding clause. Paul only saw James the apostle and brother of the Lord. Why Paul did not see the “other apostles” is open to speculation, whether they were engaged in missionary labors, keeping their distance from the former persecutor, or of little interest to Paul. (CC)

1:20 *What I am writing to you, [I testify] before God that I am not lying.* Paul swears before God that what he writes is no lie. The interjected oath may refer to what Paul writes in 1:18–19, in 1:15–19, or in 1:13–19. Paul may have even inserted the verse in the middle of 1:10–2:21 in order to verify the entirety of the autobiography. Certainty is not possible. (CC)

The OT permitted oaths in the LORD's name to assert the truth of a statement or to seal a promise of future conduct (Deut 6:13; 10:20; Judg 21:1–5; Neh 10:28–29 [MT 10:29–30]). In the Greco-Roman world, oaths were used outside of courtroom situations as a way of warning the other party that one would be willing to stand trial for the truth of one's claims. Oaths could therefore function rhetorically (Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.6.1–2; 9.2.28). Perhaps Paul was responding to charges that had been laid against him. On the other hand, in 1 Thess 2:5 Paul affirms before God the truthfulness of an account in a context where no charges or criticism was involved. Paul is attempting to forestall any possible question as his letter was publicly read during worship and in the sight of God. The Galatians may therefore trust Paul's account of his itinerary and the extent of his involvement with Jerusalem.¹³⁰ No one should claim from his visit to Jerusalem that his authority somehow derives from or is subordinate to the Jerusalem leadership. The God before whom Paul swears is, ironically, the very source of his Gospel message. (CC)

1:18 Κηφᾶν (“Cephas”)—“Cephas” is the more difficult reading and is well attested (P⁴⁶ P^{51*} κ* A B syr^{pesh, hmng} cop^{sa, bo}). Πέτρον (“Peter”) is the reading in κ^c D F G K L P Ψ lat syr^h. See Κηφᾶς (“Cephas”) also in 2:9, 11, 14; cf. Πέτρος (“Peter”) in 2:7–8. (CC)

after three years. From the time of his departure into Arabia. The text does not say he spent the three years in Arabia. (CSB)

I went up to Jerusalem. Probably the visit referred to in Ac 9:26–30, though some equate it with the one in Ac 11:30. (CSB)

Paul does not deny that he was with the apostles. Indeed, he concedes that he was with them, but not with all of them. He declares that he went to them in Jerusalem, not under orders but of his own accord, not to learn anything from the apostles but to see Peter. Luke writes the same thing in the ninth chapter of Acts (9:26 ff): Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles and told them that Paul had seen the Lord on the road, that He had spoken to him, and that Paul had preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus; Barnabas testifies to this about him. All of Paul's words are put in such a way as to prove that his Gospel was not from men. He concedes that he had seen Peter and James, the brother of our Lord, but none of the others except for these two; and from them he did not learn anything. (Luther)

Romans 9:3, “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.”

Exodus 32:32, “But now, please forgive their sin—but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written.”

Cephas. From the Aramaic word for “stone” (see Mt 16:18 and note). The name designates a like quality in the bearer (see note on Jn 1:42) (CSB)

Aram *kēpha*, the name Jesus gave to Simon Peter (Gk *petros*, “stone”; Jn 1:42; cf Mt 16:18). With one exception (Gal 2:7), Paul customarily used this name for Peter. (TLSB)

remained with fifteen days – I think it's important to recognize that the language here, to remain, to visit, means that he stayed with Peter. That means he had table fellowship with Peter. And that means that he went to Peter's church at least three times. In 15 days you can celebrate the Lord's support with Peter three times. I think Paul is saying here that he had fellowship with Peter as he will in Chapter 2 at the Lord's table. That he and Peter were in agreement. (Just V-17)

Probably to get acquainted with Peter, not to get instruction (though certainly they would have shared information about Jesus). (TLSB)

Even if he had intended to receive information from Peter, the time Paul spent with him was really too short to launch into anything like a course of study. (PBC)

1:19 *James*. See Introduction to James: Author. In Ac 21:18 this James appears to be the leader of the elders in the Jerusalem church. (CSB)

the Lord's brother. The first of Jesus' four brothers (Mk 6:3). Though not one of the Twelve, he became a prominent apostle in the Jerusalem Church (Ac 12:17; 15:13; 21:18–19). Two other men bore this name in the NT (James the son of Alphaeus and James the son of Zebedee). (TLSB)

At first these brothers did not have a proper understanding of Jesus' mission and ministry, and they did not put their trust in Him as a spiritual Savior (John 7:1-5) Soon after Christ's resurrection, however, we find His brothers a recognizable group solidly associated with the faithful followers of Christ. Acts 1:14 for example, enumerates he names of the twelve (minus Judas) and says of them, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." Obviously, Jesus' brothers had become believers. (PBC)

1:20 ὅτι ("that") as well as the adverbial phrase ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ("before God") both depend on an understood verb, μαρτύρομαι ("I testify") or the like. (CC)

I do not lie – Why does Paul add an oath? Because he is narrating a history. He is obliged to swear, in order that the churches may believe him. Otherwise the false apostles might say: "Who knows whether what Paul is saying is true?" Here you see that such a great apostle of Christ was held in such great contempt among his own Galatians, to whom he had preached Christ, that it was necessary for him to swear that he was telling the truth. If this happened to the apostles then—that they had despisers, in fact, big men who dared accuse them of lying—it is no wonder that a similar thing happens to us, who are not worthy of comparison with the apostles in any way. He is swearing to what seems to be a trivial matter, namely, that he is telling the truth when he says that he stayed with Peter to see him, not to learn from him. But if you consider the matter more carefully, it is very weighty and grave, as is clear from what has been said earlier. We follow the example of Paul and swear: "God knows that we are not lying!" (Luther)

By oath, Paul absolutely affirms his integrity, since the truth of the Gospel he proclaims is at issue. (TLSB)

Numbers 30:2, "When a man makes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said."

Second Commandment – You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God.

What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satantic arts, lie, or deceive by His name,, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

Third Proof of the Divine Origin of Paul's Message: Those in Judea Glorified God because of Paul (1:21–24) (CC)

1:21 *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia*. Paul "then" (ἔπειτα) went "into the regions [κλίματα] of Syria and Cilicia." This was the next series of stops on Paul's itinerary, although he does not indicate how long he labored there. Tarsus, Paul's birthplace (Acts 22:3), was the capital of Cilicia. Eastern Cilicia (Cilicia Pedias) and Syria, with its capital at Antioch, were part of the same Roman double province from 25 BC until AD 72. The repetition of the Greek article (τῆς) before "Cilicia" suggests that Paul is referring to the separate geographical districts (κλίματα) *within* the province and is not at this

point using an official provincial designation. Paul does elsewhere employ provincial designations when he distinguishes Judea from Syria in 1:21–22. The Roman province of Judea included the districts of Galilee and Samaria. Nevertheless, 1 Thess 2:14 employs a regional title to refer to the Christian communities in Judea, and “Arabia” in Gal 1:17 was the unofficial name for the Nabatean realm. (CC)

John Knox suggested, on the basis of Phil 4:15’s reference to the “beginning” of Paul’s Gospel proclamation, that his early ministry in Gal 1:21 reached beyond Syria and Cilicia to Macedonia and Greece. Were that the case, the veracity of his account would be in question, and Paul does have his critics. So Paul is conscientious in Galatians 1 to indicate not only the order of events but also the locations of events. If Knox were correct, Paul would have left out significant destinations in his travelogue. The omissions would be inexplicable. Such distant destinations would have well served Paul’s claim that his Gospel was based on God’s commission rather than the commission of the Jerusalem apostles. He had therefore labored in regions far away from the Jewish homeland. If, as is most likely, Paul writes Phil 4:15 from the perspective of his Philippian audience, then he is not making any claim that he had reached Macedonia and Achaia early in his ministry. Rather, he writes of “the beginning of the Gospel *when I left Macedonia.*” Paul’s focus in Phil 4:15 is on the preaching of the Gospel *from* Macedonia and not before his ministry there. The Philippians became partners with him in his ministry at that point by sharing with him (Phil 4:16; also Phil 1:3–5). Paul is not omitting crucial details about his itinerary here in Gal 1:21. (CC)

1:22 *I remained unknown by sight to the assemblies of Judea in Christ.* John Knox noted an apparent contradiction between Gal 1:22 and Saul’s persecuting activity in Acts 8:3. How could Paul be unknown by sight to the very churches that he had persecuted? Neither Gal 1:22 nor Acts 8:3, however, indicates any persecuting activity in the Judean regions outside Jerusalem. Acts suggests that the earliest days of the Christian movement remained limited to Jerusalem. By the time Paul writes to the Galatians, the movement had significantly grown and spread well beyond Jerusalem to Judea and afar. Many Jerusalem Christians at this later point in time would not know Paul by sight. Paul also refers to the Jerusalem “church” in the singular as the object of his persecuting activity (Gal 1:13), as opposed to the Judean “churches” or “assemblies” in the plural (1:22). He apparently focused his activity on the members of this one body of believers in Jerusalem, this one “church.” Note Luke’s report of Paul’s activity in the Jerusalem area in Acts 7:58, his association with the Jerusalem high priest in Acts 9:1–2, and his plan to bring the Christian believers from Damascus back to Jerusalem, his base of operation (Acts 9:2; Acts 22:5). In Gal 1:23 the adverb “only” offers a limitation or exception to the ignorance of Paul mentioned in 1:22: The Judeans had received a report about him. Since the Judean churches are receiving a report about the one who had persecuted “us” in 1:23, from whom did that report originate if not the Jerusalem church, the very group that had formerly suffered his persecution? The Jerusalem church likely informed the Judean churches about Paul’s identity and activity. Paul focused his persecuting activity on major urban centers (Jerusalem, with plans for Damascus) even as he planted churches in major urban centers after his call/conversion.¹⁴⁰ Paul was apparently of the opinion that what takes place in the urban hubs will eventually impact the surrounding regions. (His missionary strategy still deserves consideration.) (CC)

As those who had formerly been persecuted by Paul were also attesting, his life is a demonstration of the power of the Gospel. The former persecutor has become the evangelist. The zealous Jew has become the zealous follower of Jesus Christ. Gal 1:22–24 draws upon the very language Paul employed earlier in the chapter for his past:

Formerly	Now	
1:13	violently persecuting the <i>church</i> of God	1:22 still unknown by sight to the <i>churches</i> of Judea
1:13	you have <i>heard</i> of my	1:23 they only <i>heard</i> it said

	earlier life		
1:13	in Judaism	1:22	in Christ
1:13	I was violently <i>persecuting</i>	1:23	the one who was formerly <i>persecuting</i> us
1:13	I was trying to <i>destroy</i> it	1:23	now proclaiming the faith he once tried to <i>destroy</i> (CC)

A profound reversal has taken place. Paul has labored for the Gospel from Damascus and Arabia all the way to Syria and Cilicia. He has been in Jerusalem, and his ministry has been reported throughout Judea. The Galatians should heed this laborer in the Word, and they have not only the testimony of Paul himself but also of the other churches where he preached and of his co-laborers (1:2). Paul is a paradigm of the powerful work of the Gospel.¹⁴⁴ The change in Paul's life serves as a striking contrast to what is taking place at Galatia. The Galatians are not living consistently with how they began their lives of faith (3:3). They are returning to slavery (5:1). They are sadly, ironically, turning to the very Law-observant state¹⁴⁶ that Paul had abandoned when Christ revealed himself. (CC)

1:23 *Only they kept hearing that “the one who formerly used to persecute us is now preaching the faith which he formerly tried to destroy.”* The Jerusalem church reported that Paul is “now preaching the faith” (1:23), or at least there was a rumor to this effect. Indeed, he proclaimed that faith immediately after his call and is continuing to do so in his letter to the Galatians. Paul uses the word “faith” twenty-two times in his letter to the Galatians, but this instance differs from the others. Those who deny that Paul wrote some of the letters traditionally ascribed to him have contended that he uses the word “faith” strictly for believing trust and that some of the letters in the Pauline corpus cannot be from his hand since they use “faith” in other ways. They overlook this verse's use of “faith” for the content of the Gospel message.¹⁴⁸ Paul's persecution of “the faith” may even be referring to Christ himself (cf. 3:23: “before the coming of this faith”). “Preaching the faith” in 1:23 parallels “preach [God's Son]” in 1:16. (CC)

1:24 *And they were glorifying God in me.* Paul writes that the Judean churches “were glorifying God” “because of” or “in” Paul. The preposition (ἐν) may be translated in different ways. Paul may have abbreviated a longer thought: “They glorified not me, but God in me” (ἐδόξαζον οὐκ ἐμὲ ἀλλ' ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸν θεόν). Bligh opined: “If he had not had this antithesis in mind, he would probably not have hit upon this form of expression.” Another possibility is that Paul was echoing in his wording the language of Is 49:3: “You are my servant Israel, and in you I will be glorified” (LXX: δοῦλός μου εἶ σύ, Ἰσραηλ, καὶ ἐν σοὶ δοξασθήσομαι). Paul had just alluded to Isaiah 49 earlier in Gal 1:15–16 (cf. “in me” in 1:16). The glorification of God by these churches brings to mind the doxology of praise to God in 1:5. Here in 1:24, Paul's transformation motivates that praise. Paul in his life-circumstances embodies the very Gospel message that evokes the glorification of God. As will become clearer later in the letter (2:19–20; 3:28; 4:12, 19), Paul expects *all* believers to embody the Gospel message to the glory of God. (CC)

The mention of the positive and enthusiastic response of the Judean churches forms a poignant contrast with the Galatians' own current attitude toward Paul and the true Gospel message. The Galatians could learn from the Judean Christians how to evaluate God's servants properly so that “they would no longer be mesmerized by the troublemakers” who bring different “Gospel” messages. All Christians should hear in this contrast a call to careful judgment of the “messages” of the age. Without the vigilant exercise of proper discernment, believers are vulnerable to being swept away from the truth of the Gospel. (CC)

1:21 τῆς Κιλικίας—The definite article (τῆς) before “Cilicia” is externally well attested but omitted in * 8 1611 33. The omission is understandable since Syria and Cilicia were parts of the same Roman province in Paul’s day. (CC)

Syria and Cilicia. Provinces in Asia Minor. Specifically Paul went to Tarsus (see Ac 9:30), his hometown. (CSB)

Regions combined into one Roman province with its capital at Antioch. See map, p 1886. Paul mentions his post-conversion work here to show again his distance from Jerusalem. (TLSB)

Syria and Cilicia are provinces situated close together. Throughout Paul is trying to convince them that before and after he had seen the apostles, he was always a preacher of the Gospel, which he had received by the revelation of Christ, and that he had never been a pupil of any of the apostles. (Luther)

Piecing together the details and dates of Paul’s life poses some problems, but by looking at what information and datable incidents we do have, it is possible to calculate that Paul’s stay in Tarsus may have been somewhat longer than his low-key reference here would suggest. He could have been there as long as seven or eight years. Whatever the specific length of time Paul spent in Tarsus, the point of mentioning his stay there is still the same. Paul was far away from where the other apostles conducted their activity. He didn’t need to be in touch with them. He was an apostle in his own right, called directly by God. (PBC)

1:22 ἤμην ... ἀγνοούμενος (“I remained unknown”)—This is a periphrastic construction indicating duration, i.e., a stronger form of the imperfect. (CC)

churches of Judea – Groups of believers (house churches) were forced to leave Jerusalem in the persecution following Stephen’s death. (TLSB)

Judea was the Roman province included all of Galilee, Samaria, and Judea proper. (TLSB)

in Christ – The Galatians no longer lived in Judaism but in the Body of Christ (1Co 1:9). (TLSB)

1:23 ἀκούοντες ἦσαν (“they kept hearing”)—On the masculine form of the periphrastic participle ἀκούοντες, which refers to the feminine ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις (“the assemblies,” 1:22), see BDF § 134 (2).

ἐπόρθει (“he tried to destroy”)—This reading is strongly attested externally; cf. ἐπολέμει (“he was waging war”) in F and G. (CC)

were hearing it said – The churches were continually hearing reports about Paul the persecutor. (TLSB)

the faith – The content (doctrine) of the Gospel. (TLSB)

1:24 *they glorified God because of me* – Paul adds this to fill in and complete the story, that after seeing Peter he went into Syria and Cilicia and preached there, indeed preached in such a way that he won the testimony of all the churches in Judea. It is as though he were saying: “I appeal to the testimony of all the churches, also of those that are in Judea. For the churches testify—not only those in Damascus, Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia but those in Judea as well—that I preached the same faith I once persecuted and opposed. And they glorified God because of me, not because I taught that circumcision and the Law of

Moses were to be observed, but because I preached faith and built up the churches by my ministry of the Gospel. Therefore you have the testimony not only of the people of Damascus and Arabia but also of the whole catholic church in Judea” (Luther)

1:11–24. Selecting key facts from his personal history, Paul proves that his apostleship comes from God, independent of human sources. Today, enemies of God’s Church continue to question the divine origin of the Christian message, causing doubts and confusion among many believers in Christ. As God called Paul “by His grace,” so He now seeks to change hearts through the Good News of His Son. • Keep us faithful to Your Word, O Lord, when doubts threaten. Amen. (TLSB)