When It Pleased God

THE GOSPEL REVEALED · PART 10

Galatians 1:15-17 | Arvin Assembly of God | Pastor Brian Overturf | November 1, 2026
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MY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Reformation Day. On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther posted his 95 theses. Before that he was a lot like Paul… a zealous monk who fasted, prayed for hours, and still could never be sure God was pleased with him. Then God opened his eyes to a verse Paul quotes in Galatians.

> **Galatians 3:11**
> **[11] But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for "the just shall live by faith."**

Luther called Galatians "my epistle"… he even compared it to his wife, Katie. Two men, fifteen hundred years apart, found out the very same thing.

You don't earn your way up to God. God comes down to you.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Last week… Why does the Bible get the last word?

- Because it was received.
- Because it was breathed.
- Because men were moved by the Holy Spirit.

This week… by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Paul's résumé. False teachers said Paul got his gospel secondhand. So Paul tells his story… and every line of it is Paul doing something for God.

> **Galatians 1:13-14**
> **[13] For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to* destroy it. [14] And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.**

He really believed God was pleased with him. Then verse 15 opens with a phrase that changes everything.

> **Galatians 1:15**
> **[15] But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace,**

It's not about what Paul was trying to do to please God… it's about what God was pleased to do with Paul.

YOUR OWN VERSION?

Many of us have our own version of how to please God… how to get to heaven.

- Be a good person.
- Go to church.
- Get baptized.
- Don't cuss.
- Pay your tithes.

And maybe then God will be happy with you?

What is God pleased to do with your life?

Not what you've done for Him. Not your résumé. What is God pleased to do with you? Here's our text this morning.

Galatians 1:15-17
15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

1. To Save Me (God takes pleasure in rescuing sinners.)

It pleased God. Taking pleasure in something and then deciding to do it. Nobody twisted God's arm. And Paul uses the same phrase in another letter to tell us exactly what pleases God.

1 Corinthians 1:21
21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

Saving people. God doesn't save anyone reluctantly… saving you makes Him glad.

Luke 15:7
7 I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son… every story ends with a party. And the reverse is just as true.

Ezekiel 33:11
11 Say to them: '*As* I live,' says the Lord GOD, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?'

Peter says it this way.

2 Peter 3:9
9 The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

God takes the initiative. He's done it since the garden.

Genesis 3:7
7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

The first thing sinners ever did was try to fix it themselves. But notice who goes looking for who.

Genesis 3:9-10
9 Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?" 10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Adam was hiding from God… and God came looking anyway. Then He covered their sin.

Genesis 3:21
[21] Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.

TWO COVERINGS
- **Their covering…** fig leaves they stitched together themselves. It cost them nothing.
- **God's covering…** animal skins. Something had to die… I believe it was a sacrificial lamb.
- **At the cross…** the Son of God gave His life to cover us.

That's exactly why Jesus came… and how He would cover us.

Luke 19:10
[10] for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Mark 10:45
[45] For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Paul's fig leaves. His traditions, his zeal, how far ahead of everybody he was. He told King Agrippa what was in his heart.

Acts 26:9
[9] "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

He thought he was pleasing God… and look how far he took it.

Acts 26:10-11
[10] This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against *them.* [11] And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted *them* even to foreign cities.

The scariest kind of lost… sincere, religious, and convinced he was right. God wasn't pleased with any of it. What pleased God was saving the man doing it.

1 Timothy 1:13
[13] although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.

"Insolent" means violently arrogant. That's Paul's résumé… but I obtained mercy. And it's all of our stories.

Ephesians 2:4-5
[4] But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Dead people don't ask for help. Dead people don't make the first move. God does.

God doesn't force anybody. His grace can be resisted. God calls, and we answer… and Paul answered.

Acts 26:19
[19] "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

Paul didn't find God. God found Paul. And you can't answer until somebody calls.

What does answering God look like?

Luke 18:18
[18] Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, <u>what shall I do to inherit eternal life?</u>"

PAUL'S ANSWER BEFORE DAMASCUS

If you had asked Paul how to get to heaven…

- Be circumcised.
- Go through the washings… your hands, your cups, your pots, yourself.
- Bring your sacrifice to the priest… again and again.
- Keep the feasts and the holy days. Don't eat pork.
- Say the prayers at the set times.
- Hold on to the traditions of the fathers right alongside the Scriptures.

Do it faithfully enough, for long enough… and maybe you'll make it.

That's the traditions of my fathers… exactly what Paul told the Philippians he was counting on. Then look at what he says.

Philippians 3:8-9
[8] Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, <u>and count them as rubbish</u>, that I may gain Christ [9] and be found in Him, <u>not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ</u>, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

Those were fig leaves. When his eyes were opened, he understood righteousness comes by faith alone… because you can't please God with your works.

Hebrews 11:6
[6] <u>But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*,</u> for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

Religion turns pleasing God into a performance… and you never measure up. There's always one more ritual… one more thing to do.

John 6:28-29
[28] Then they said to Him, "<u>What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?</u>" [29] Jesus answered and said to them, "<u>This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.</u>"

HOW IT ALL FITS TOGETHER

- **God made the first move…** it pleased God to save Paul.
- **Paul's only response was faith…** taking God at His word. Not his fig leaves.
- **Faith pleases God…** and in turn God is pleased to save us.

That's your story too. Some of us were hiding behind fig leaves. Some of us were running the other way. And He came anyway… because it pleased Him.

It pleased God to save me.

2. To Set Me Apart (Before I was ever born.)

Galatians 1:15
15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace,

Separated means set apart… marked off for a purpose, from my mother's womb. Before Paul learned one tradition or hurt one believer, God had already set him apart. He borrowed that language from the prophets.

Jeremiah 1:5
5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."

And Isaiah uses the very same picture.

Isaiah 49:1
1 "Listen, O coastlands, to Me, And take heed, you peoples from afar! The LORD has called Me from the womb; From the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name.

The separated one. Pharisee means a separated one. Jesus didn't separate Himself that way… He ate with sinners, talked with Samaritans, and touched lepers. Paul spent his life separating himself from all that… while God had already separated him for the very people his traditions told him to avoid.

Through His grace. Paul's traditions he had to earn. God's grace he couldn't earn. That's how God calls every one of us.

2 Timothy 1:9
9 who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

It's the same grace that called the Galatians.

Galatians 1:6
6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Same God, same grace. So why go back to earning it?

He didn't wait for you to clean up first.

Romans 5:8
8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

God loved you at your worst. And even our best isn't good enough.

Isaiah 64:6
6 But we are all like an unclean *thing,* And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Our best stuff… next to a holy God, it's filthy rags. Fig leaves again… everything we stitch together dries up and blows away. You can't earn salvation. You can only receive it.

It pleased God to set me apart.

3. To Reveal His Son in Me (Jesus on the inside.)

Galatians 1:15-16
[15] But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, [16] to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

Not a new set of rules. Not a better tradition. His Son. Paul had all kinds of religion and tradition… what he didn't have was Jesus.

Not to me… in me. The light that blinded Paul on the road that day didn't just shine on him. It shined in him.

2 Corinthians 4:6
[6] For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

When you're born again, the light shines in you… a new creation. Paul went from hating Jesus to worshiping Jesus. Only Jesus gets on the inside… and He changes who's living your life.

Galatians 2:20
[20] I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And that's not just for apostles. It's for you too.

Colossians 1:27
[27] To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

IS JESUS IN YOU… OR JUST AROUND YOU?

- You can grow up in this church.
- You can know every song.
- You can have a grandma who prayed for you every day of her life.
- And still have Jesus on the outside.

It pleases God to reveal His Son in you.

It pleased God to reveal His Son in me.

4. To Send Me (Discipled first, then sent.)

Galatians 1:16
[16] to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

Saved and sent. God revealed His Son in Paul so He could be seen through Paul. The same day Paul got saved, he got sent… to the very people his traditions taught him to avoid.

Galatians 1:16
[16] to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

"Confer" means to consult. **"Flesh and blood"** means people… frail, get-it-wrong people. Paul didn't run to people to find out if God had really spoken.

Galatians 1:17
[17] nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

This isn't "I don't need a church or a pastor." Paul did go to Jerusalem later.

Galatians 2:2
[2] And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.

He cared about unity. He just didn't need people to tell him whether God had spoken.

Counsel helps you walk out what God said. It doesn't get a vote on whether He said it.

Galatians 1:17
[17] nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Arabia. We don't know exactly what Paul did there or where he went. Preaching? Learning? Both? But look how long it was.

Galatians 1:18
[18] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.

Before Jesus ever sent the twelve out, He called them to be with Him.

Mark 3:14
[14] Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach,

DISCIPLESHIP
- **With Him first… then sent.** Before Jesus sends anybody, He disciples them.
- **The twelve** got three years walking with Jesus.
- **Paul's three years…** Arabia was his discipleship, his school in the desert.
- **You…** being with Jesus, learning and growing, so when He sends you, you've got something to say.

Back to Damascus.

Galatians 1:17
[17] nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

The city Paul came to raid. God sent him back to preach the faith he once tried to destroy. He came with letters from the high priest… and left in a basket.

2 Corinthians 11:32-33
[32] In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; [33] but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

YOUR DAMASCUS

God may be sending you back to…

- The family that knew the old you.
- The friends who saw that you were a mess.
- The job site where everybody remembers who you used to be.

Go back. Let them see Jesus in you.

"Pastor, that's Paul." Not everybody is called to vocational ministry… but every one of us is sent.

Matthew 28:19-20
[19] Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen.

We get discipled… so we can go make disciples. And Jesus told them how.

Acts 1:8
[8] But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

You don't need a title to be a witness. It starts in Jerusalem, right where they were. For Paul, Damascus. For you, Arvin.

You may never stand behind a pulpit. But if Jesus is in you… you're sent.

CONCLUSION

WHAT IS GOD PLEASED TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE?

- **To save me…** He came looking for me while I was hiding behind my own fig leaves.
- **To set me apart…** before I was born, by His grace, not my works.
- **To reveal His Son in me…** it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.
- **To send me…** discipled first, then sent, starting right here in Arvin.

You can't please God into saving you. But it pleases God to save you.

Ephesians 2:8-9
[8] For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, [9] not of works, lest anyone should boast.

The Lord's Table. Nothing on it you made or earned. Just the bread and the cup… His body and His blood. Their covering cost them nothing. God's covering cost Him everything. We come with empty hands… by grace, through faith.

It still pleases God to save.