They Glorified God in Me

THE GOSPEL REVEALED · PART 11

Galatians 1:18-24 | Arvin Assembly of God | Pastor Brian Overturf | November 8, 2026
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MY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Where we left off. Last week we asked, what is God pleased to do with your life? Paul answered it right out of his own story. It pleased God to save you… to set you apart… to reveal His Son in you… and to send you. We stopped at the end of verse 17.

> **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.**

A travel log? At first these verses don't look like much. Here are a couple of them.

> **Galatians 1:18, 21**
> **[18] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. [21] Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.**

Three years. Fifteen days. Syria and Cilicia. So why would God put Paul's itinerary in the Bible?

Laying out the record. The false teachers were saying Paul got his gospel secondhand… he picked it up from the real apostles in Jerusalem, then went off and changed it. So Paul lays out the record. Where he went, who he saw, and how long he stayed.

Paul couldn't take any credit for his own life. So when people heard his story, they gave the glory to somebody else.

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

The great truths the reformers fought for:

- Two weeks ago… Scripture alone.
- Last Sunday… grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone.
- This morning… there's one more.

Every one of us is telling a story with our life. And somebody is getting the glory for it.

How does God get glory from your life?

Not how you get noticed. Not how you get the credit. Not how you move up in the spiritual ranks. How does God get the glory?

> **Galatians 1:18-24**
> **[18] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. [19] But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. [20] (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) [21] Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. [22] And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. [23] But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." [24] And they glorified God in me.**

1. Through the People He Puts Around You (Grace seats us at the same table.)

After three years. The first answer is right there in verses 18 and 19.

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

Paul goes to Arabia… his time with Jesus. Then after three years, he returns to Damascus. Luke tells this same part of Paul's story in Acts, just a little differently.

> **Acts 9:23**
> **[23] Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.**

Check my dates. "After many days" is Luke's short way of saying it. But Paul is the one who lived it, and Paul fills in the number. Those many days in Acts are the three years in Galatians 1:18.

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

Paul is being as precise as he can possibly be. His opponents were telling the Galatians he was a second-string apostle… just a student of the real apostles in Jerusalem who got his gospel from them and then twisted it. So Paul is saying, go ahead and check my dates.

Out in a basket. Paul came back to Damascus and preached Jesus so boldly that the religious leaders wanted him dead. Here's how he got out of town.

> **Acts 9:25**
> **[25] Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.**

That's how the apostle Paul left Damascus. In a basket. So where does he go next?

> **Acts 9:26**
> **[26] And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.**

Everyone was afraid. The last time Paul was in Jerusalem, he was dragging their church family off to prison. Now he shows up saying, I'm one of you now. But notice verse 27.

> **Acts 9:26-27**
> **[26] And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. [27] But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.**

Barnabas brought him in. Barnabas wasn't even his real name. It was a nickname the apostles gave him, and it means son of encouragement. He put his own reputation on the line: I know what this man used to be, but I'm telling you, he's changed.

Even the apostle Paul needed a Barnabas.

Why he went. Back to Galatians. Look at verse 18 again, and notice why Paul went to Jerusalem.

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

To see Peter. That word see is only found right here in the whole New Testament. In the original language it means to visit somebody so you can get to know them. There's intention behind it. Paul didn't go to get his gospel approved. He went to get to know Peter… one brother sitting down with another.

And notice how long he stayed.

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

Fifteen days. Two weeks under the same roof. Think about what Peter could tell him. Peter walked with Jesus for three years. He was in the boat when the storm threatened to kill them, on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured, and at the table the night Jesus was betrayed. And he was in the courtyard that same night when he denied the Lord.

Luke 22:61-62
[61] And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." [62] So Peter went out and wept bitterly.

Peter knew what it was like to fail Jesus. And he knew what it was like to be restored by Him.

James, the Lord's brother. Now look who Paul names next.

Galatians 1:19
[19] But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

The same James who would one day lead the church in Jerusalem and write the letter of James. But James didn't always believe.

John 7:5
[5] For even His brothers did not believe in Him.

James grew up in the same house as Jesus, and he didn't believe in Him. Your big brother is the Son of God, and you think He's lost His mind. So what changed in James' life?

1 Corinthians 15:7
[7] After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles.

The risen Jesus went and found His little brother.

THE TABLE IN JERUSALEM

- **Peter…** who denied Jesus three times. The denier.
- **James…** who didn't believe in Him. The doubter.
- **Paul…** who tried to destroy His church. The destroyer.

Every one of those men met the risen Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:5, 7-8
[5] and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. [7] After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. [8] Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Same risen Lord. Same grace. And not one of them earned his seat.

Grace doesn't rank people. That's exactly what the Judaizers couldn't stand. Their whole world was built on categories… who's in and who's out, who's on top and who's on the bottom, who gets the best seat at the banquet, who's close to Jerusalem and who isn't. In their world, Paul was on the bottom. But grace doesn't rank people that way. Peter doesn't get a lower seat because he denied Jesus. James doesn't get a lower seat because of what he said about his brother. And Paul doesn't get a lower seat because he tried to destroy the church.

1 Corinthians 15:10
[10] But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was* with me.

There's only one way to explain that table. It's called grace.

Not from man… but not alone. Paul's whole point in Galatians is that the gospel he received wasn't from man. It came directly from Christ. But he never once said he didn't need the church. Some folks hear, I don't need anybody's approval, and turn it into, I don't need anybody.

WHO YOU NEED

God didn't save you so you could be by yourself.

- A brother who knows your past and loves you anyway.
- A sister who'll pray for you when you can't pray for yourself.
- A friend who'll tell you the truth.
- A Barnabas who'll vouch for you when nobody else will.

When grace puts a denier, a doubter, and a destroyer at the same table, people don't talk about those men. They talk about God.

Every single one of us are sinners that have been saved by grace. That's the beauty of the body of Christ.

God gets glory through the people He puts around you.

2. Through the Truth You Tell (Before God, I do not lie.)

Under oath. The Galatians had been hearing a different version of Paul's story. So right in the middle of it, he does something very unusual. He puts himself under oath.

Galatians 1:20
[20] (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

THREE PHRASES

- **The things which I write to you…** everything he just told them. The three years, the fifteen days, Peter and James.
- **Before God…** Paul isn't just saying, trust me. He's calling God Himself as his witness.
- **I do not lie…** courtroom language. It's as if Paul is raising his right hand in front of the judge.

Why go that far? The false teachers were picking his story apart. And if Paul's story falls apart, the gospel he preached falls apart right along with it. This isn't the only time Paul does this.

2 Corinthians 11:31
[31] The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

He's saying, I'm so sure of what I'm telling you that I'll say it in front of God.

Your integrity backs up your testimony. Paul's testimony carried weight because his life backed it up. Your testimony only carries as much weight as your integrity does. Everyone around you could know you're a Christian. But if you're padding the timesheet, or calling in sick so you can go do something fun, they're not going to glorify God in you.

> **Ephesians 4:25**
> **[25] Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.**

Putting away lying is like taking off a dirty set of work clothes and leaving them at the door. And when you lie to a brother or a sister in this church, you're lying to your own body.

GETTING SPECIFIC

- The little white lie to get out of something.
- The half-truth that makes you look better than you are.
- The exaggeration that makes your testimony sound a little more impressive.
- The lie you tell yourself… that nobody's watching.

Somebody's always watching. And more than that, God is.

Paul is giving his sworn testimony because the gospel message is on the line. Before God, I do not lie. What would happen if we lived every single day like God was standing right there in the room… because He is?

God gets glory through the truth you tell.

3. Through the Seasons Nobody Sees (Faithful in the hidden years.)

Paul disappears. After fifteen days in Jerusalem, you'd expect him to head out on his first big missionary journey. Instead, Paul just disappears.

> **Galatians 1:21**
> **[21] Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.**

Afterward. Paul's still keeping count. Three years after he got saved… fifteen days with Peter… a short visit with James… and then, afterward, he's gone. And his visit actually got cut short.

Back home to Tarsus. Syria and Cilicia are up north, and Cilicia is where Paul grew up. His hometown was Tarsus. Luke tells us there was a plot to kill him in Jerusalem, so the brothers got him out of town.

> **Acts 9:28-30**
> **[28] So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. [29] And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. [30] When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.**

The hidden years. They sent him home. After this, we hardly hear a word about Paul for years… most scholars estimate about eight to ten. The man who would write almost half of the New Testament, and for close to a decade we hardly know what he was doing.

Galatians 1:22
[22] And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.

Unknown by face. They heard of him, but the churches back in Judea wouldn't have recognized Paul if he walked in the door. And these were the very churches he used to raid.

Not doing nothing. Later in Acts, when Paul and Silas travel back through Syria and Cilicia, there are churches all over that region.

Acts 15:41
[41] And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Paul planted them during these years.

Paul was faithful. He just wasn't famous.

The churches of Judea didn't know Paul's face. But God did. When nobody's clapping and nobody's posting about it, your faithfulness still gives God glory.

God gets glory through the seasons nobody sees.

4. By Letting God Do What He Could Do (They glorified God in me.)

Hearing only. Those churches in Judea never saw his face, but they sure heard his story. No pictures, no video. Just a report getting passed from one church to the next.

Galatians 1:23
[23] But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy."

The faith he tried to destroy is the faith he's now preaching. Only God could write a story like that.

Galatians 1:24
[24] And they glorified God in me.

Not Paul. Notice they didn't glorify Paul. Nobody stood up and said, what an amazing man. Nobody threw him a parade. When they looked at Paul, they saw something only God could do. It's not about your abilities or titles or accomplishments. It's about God getting all the glory.

Paul prayed the very same thing over the church in Thessalonica.

2 Thessalonians 1:12
[12] that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Glorified in you. That's what's supposed to happen in you. Jesus said it like this.

Matthew 5:16
[16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

When people look at your life, what do they see in you?

Your story is worth telling. Maybe you never persecuted anybody. Maybe you've been saved as long as you can remember. Every salvation story is a story only God could write… because nobody raises themselves from the dead. If you've been saved, then you've got a testimony to share.

DON'T HIDE YOUR STORY

- Tell it to your coworkers.
- Tell it to your kids and your grandkids.
- Tell it to the neighbor across the fence.
- On the days you forget how He saved you, tell it to yourself.

Why? Because only God could do that.

God gets glory only through what He can do.

CONCLUSION

Soli Deo Gloria. Five hundred years ago the reformers boiled the gospel down to a handful of short phrases, and we've been walking through them the last few Sundays.

THE FIVE SOLAS

- **Sola Scriptura…** Scripture alone.
- **Sola Gratia…** grace alone.
- **Sola Fide…** faith alone.
- **Solus Christus…** Christ alone.
- **Soli Deo Gloria…** to God alone be the glory.

That last one is the reason for all the others. If we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, there's nothing left for us to brag about. All the glory goes to God and God alone.

Psalm 115:1
[1] Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory,
Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth.

J.J. and S.D.G. Johann Sebastian Bach was a church musician. For years he worked for the churches in Leipzig, Germany, and in his first years there he wrote a brand-new piece of music for the church almost every single Sunday. Before he wrote a single note, he wrote two letters at the top of the page… J.J., Jesu juva, "Jesus, help." Every page started with a prayer. When he finished, he wrote three more letters at the bottom… S.D.G., Soli Deo Gloria, "To God alone be the glory."

Fine… S.D.G. On the very last page of a piece Bach wrote for church in 1726, in his own handwriting, the corner says Fine… "the end." And right next to it… S.D.G. The title on the sheet music? "I will gladly carry the cross."

Faithful… not famous. When Bach died in 1750, his music fell out of style. One of his greatest works, the St. Matthew Passion, wasn't performed again for almost eighty years. Bach never knew he'd be famous. He was a lot like Paul up in Tarsus. Unknown by face. But every page started with, Jesus, help. And every page ended with, To God alone be the glory.

HOW DOES GOD GET GLORY FROM YOUR LIFE?

- **Through the people He puts around you…** grace seats us at the same table.
- **Through the truth you tell…** before God, I do not lie.
- **Through the seasons nobody sees…** faithful in the hidden years.
- **By letting God do what He could do…** they glorified God in me.

Some of you are in the middle of a page… in the middle of a season that doesn't make any sense right now. Some of you feel like your life is hidden, like nobody's ever going to hear it. Start every day with, Jesus, help. And end every day with S.D.G. Because when your life is over, the goal isn't for people to say, what an amazing person. It's for them to say, look what God did.

They glorified God in me. To God alone be the glory.