



the Source

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...

Paul's Letter to the Galatians attempts to help people who were being victimized by a faction in the Christian community purporting a "different gospel." (Galatians 1.6) Their teaching was a distortion of the knowledge of Christ Paul's readers already knew and had experienced. To help them see through the confusion that these "false teachers" had set in motion, Paul both explains and reminds the Galatians of the foundation of faith – the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Conformity to old categories that separate and divide believers will not do. Nor will new rules or rituals add anything to what God has done in Jesus Christ. Paul writes that the new creation [in Christ] is everything. (Galatians 6:15:b)

Consider the Source Galatians 1:13-24

Paul writes convincingly of this new creation available to all, in part because he had to come to terms with this issue himself. When the risen Jesus came to him in a flash of light as he was going to Damascus; calling him by name and calling him to a new way of understanding his life and sharing it with others, Paul was in new territory; the territory of the new creation that God was working in him and in the world. (See Acts 9:1-20)

The encounter with Christ revolutionized Paul's self-understanding and the whole trajectory of his life. So much so, that the shock of the encounter struck him blind for three days. Not long after that, Paul would take three years, leaving Damascus to go to Arabia, to sort out his life. He took the time to come to terms with his old life and his old thinking. He opened his heart fully to his life in Christ. No doubt he wrestled in the desert with his experience and his thinking; with his past and his future.

May this summer include taking time away to come to terms with the changes Christ is working in you and with the future to which He is calling you. May you listen for the Grace that calls you out of the past into his marvelous light.

— Dr. Beverly Jones, Associate Pastor

A Family Affair

Matthew 5:8 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Watching carefully, we can spy God at work around us.

We had a lot of heart on our church campus the last two weeks as we shared in fellowship and worship at an exciting Vacation Bible School! The enthusiasm was contagious on campus as children's eyes were opened watching for God Sightings. We heard God's voice in our songs, glimpsed Him in volunteers' eyes, and touched Him when we hugged our new friends. Each morning, VBS participants would report the God Sightings they had observed in the world around them. It was amazing to hear all the places God can be found! After the excitement of Maker Fun Factory VBS, how do you continue to watch for God? Participants received yellow 'Watch for God' bracelets that we hope they can then wear all summer. As a family, list places you go that you can remember to watch for God. Swim practice? A trip to visit relatives? The movies? Set a time to discuss what you find in the world around you each day.

Pray together as a family, "Dear Lord, please help us always remember we can find you everywhere we go. You are with us and around us always. Amen."

— Children's Ministry Team

Monday: Galatians 1:13-14

Paul had been zealously religious, so sure of the rightness of his faith and tradition that he persecuted others of a different faith; violently persecuting the church of God – trying to destroy it.

- Where have you seen such zealotry of religion that turns to persecution today?
- In what ways do you empathize with those doing the persecuting? With those being persecuted?
- What might be some ways to constructively deal with such attitudes and actions?

Tuesday: Galatians 1:15; Jeremiah 1:4-5

Paul alludes in verse 15 to the words forming the call of the prophet Jeremiah. These words expressed for Paul how he felt about who he was, even before he fully understood it. Paul was a Jew well schooled in the scriptures of Judaism. This is an example of how he used the scripture of his upbringing to understand his own call from Christ that set him on a radically different religious path. What do you make of this?

- What are some of the scriptures that you were taught either as a young person or have encountered as an adult that help you now to express your identity and calling in life?

Wednesday: Galatians 1:15-17

The revelation of Christ to Paul was two fold. It radically changed Paul's relationship with God and also with himself. But, it also was the source of his calling to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles. This was something that made many of the early Christians uneasy about Paul.

- What kinds of things do you think Paul had to sort out when he went away to Arabia?

Thursday: Galatians 1:21-24

Paul shares with the Galatians that many in the churches in Judea had not met him, but glorified God for him as "the one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy."

- Do you think the Galatians would have found this convincing of Paul's trustworthiness? Why or why not?

Friday: Galatians 1:11-12

Paul is here laying a foundation to respond later in the letter to accusations against his calling and his proclamation by rival missionaries. These verses highlight the relationship and sometimes, the conflict between tradition and revelation.

- When you have some extended time, read through the entire Letter to the Galatians. Look for how tradition and revelation are used to both support and to critique different approaches to faith. Be sure to have a notepad and commentary handy!