

## “A Freedom That Could Only Come from God” // Gal 1:11–2:2 // *Freedom in the In Between 2*

### Announcement

Our **vision is to plant 1000 churches** in our generation, and by God’s grace, we’re **a quarter of the way** there. But that goal doesn’t happen without people like you putting your yes on the altar.

**You see, pastors don’t plant churches. People plant churches.** So far, 900 people have been sent from our church to plant churches in the U.S. and around the world.

**This year, as we send these two guys** you were just introduced to, we’re praying some of you will do the same. **My question: “Are you willing to put your yes on the altar, and let God put it on the map?”**

- At whatever stage to say, “Whatever I do well, I want to do well to the glory of God, and somewhere strategic for the mission of God...”

And if **God is moving in** you about this, go to [thesummitnetwork.com](http://thesummitnetwork.com) to **let these guys know** you’d like to find out more.

### Introduction

**Alright! GALATIANS 1...** Since becoming a Christian in high school, I’ve probably gone through 20 different courses on how to share your faith. **Each was different**, suggesting different verses; different **metaphors** for explaining the gospel.

Works Consulted:

“Confidence to Change,” Chip Henderson

“Why They Glorified God,” Tim Keller

“God’s Amazing Grace”, Tim Keller

A Peculiar Glory, John Piper

The churches I went to in high school and college used these **tools called “tracts.”** Anyone remember those? Our **church lobby was filled** with a bunch of different ones of all different colors and varieties.

**I’ve maintained a small collection I keep in a file of my fav’s (with pics)**

- **Get out of hell free**
- Then this compelling gem: **Wanted: Americans in heaven.** That really makes me want to go there.
- One of the churches I went to was real big on the KJV being the only version: NIV/HIV
- **Satan’s Web: Rock Music:** Also, we were kind of hung up on rock music being Satan’s main instrument
- We were good at delivering these... (tract bombs)
- ~~Worst example: **Witnessing Accomplished**~~
- **Worst example: Here’s a tip: try Jesus:** I told you last week I don’t believe in purgatory, but I’m pretty sure you’ll go there if you do this.

**Almost all the training I got, however,** said that at some point you should share your personal story about Jesus, and that was always the most useful part of the training, I thought.

*Often, our most persuasive evidence for Jesus’s existence is the story of what he has done in our lives.*

Well, I share that because **in the last half of Galatians 1** Paul uses his story as evidence of the truth of his gospel.

<sup>11</sup>For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. <sup>12</sup>For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

**Remember, last week** we saw that **Paul's primary concern** in this letter to the Galatians was that **they had started to believe a perverted gospel**.

Paul wants to show the Galatians that there is only one, true gospel—the one he is preaching—and part of his case for that is that **only a resurrected Jesus with real power** could have changed Paul's life like he did.

Paul seems to be responding to a specific rumor, btw, going around Galatia that he had copied bits and pieces of the gospel from the Apostles, and then, without their consent, twisted it to fit his own selfish agenda.<sup>1</sup>

**Paul says, FIRST of all**, I was never even around the other Apostles to be able to plagiarize from them! <sup>15</sup>But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.<sup>17</sup>I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become Apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus. <sup>18</sup>Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas (Peter), and I stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you... Then after **14 years I went up again to Jerusalem and presented to them (for the first time) the gospel I preach among the Gentiles.**" (1:15–2:2)

- For the **first 17 years Paul labored** in basic obscurity, having Jesus teach and reveal the gospel to his soul.
- **(BTW: I always use that fact with seminary students** who are dissatisfied with the seminary portion of their lives, who feel like they don't have enough responsibility yet: I tell them, "Look, God took 17 years to train Paul before really establishing his ministry. I wouldn't complain about your 4 years." **When preach? 17 years.**
- **But, the point is: Paul said, I wasn't around** the other Apostles in a way I could have plagiarized from them.

No, he says, my gospel comes straight from Jesus Christ. And he offers **3 lines of evidence** to prove that.

### 3 Evidences

**Two are objective** types of evidence; one is subjective.

**Illustrate:** You get what I mean by the **difference in objective/subjective evidence**, right? **Objective evidence** is about verifiable facts; **subjective evidence** is about the effect the experience has on you.

**For example:** My wife makes the best chicken alfredo you've ever tasted.

- Seriously, I've eaten CA multiple other places; nothing comes close to hers.
- Every kid, at every birthday, asks for this for their birthday meal—(at breakfast, lunch and dinner.)

OK, say I brought you some, and I wanted to prove to you that Veronica had really made it for you, and that I didn't just buy it at the grocery store and heat it up in the microwave. I could show you a **note** she wrote to go along with it, or a **picture** of her making it earlier that afternoon. That would be **objective evidence**. But if I

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<sup>1</sup>Tim Keller, "Chapter 2: God's Amazing Grace," *Galatians for You*

were to say, “Just taste it—chicken alfredo that good could only be made by Veronica Greear.” That’s subjective.

Paul offers **two pieces** of objective evidence and 1 line of subjective evidence as proof his gospel is from God. Both are important to master in talking about the gospel.

So, let me walk you through them, and then I’ve got a really cool **story**—of a modern-day Paul right here in our church—that I want to share with you.)

**Objective evidence #1:** Only an actual vision of a resurrected Jesus could explain the conversion of Christianity’s #1 Enemy into its #1 Emissary

- Paul says, “<sup>13</sup> For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism... (and I now) persecute the faith I once tried to destroy.” (1:13, 23)
- “How else can you **explain a conversion as dramatic as mine** except that I really encountered a resurrected Jesus?”
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- **Skeptics have a hard time explaining** how Christianity really got started. What made 11 ordinary men—fishermen and blue collar workers—and Paul—a sworn enemy who hated Christianity with every fiber of his being—such dedicated and unrelenting advocates for the gospel?
- **Every single one died a martyr’s death**, and, as I’ve often explained to you: people aren’t willing to suffer and die for something they **know** to be a lie.
  - Sure, lots of people die for a lie—**900 people** drank the Kool-Aid at Jonestown—but not for something they know to be a lie.
- **Best illustration** I’ve heard of this:
  - **Chuck Colson was known as Richard Nixon’s “hatchet man.”** He was a former Marine Corps Colonel whom President Nixon trusted to do what no one else would—mostly the **illegal** and **dirty** stuff.

- Colson was the kingpin behind the Watergate wiretapping scandal. He teamed up with five other guys—all of them hardened veterans from the Marines, the FBI, and the CIA. But the wiretapping operation went south, and they got caught.
- **As soon as the press broke the story**, these 5 guys got together, came up with a false story, and promised each other that that was the story they would stick with it to the end.
- **Colson said**, “Do you know how long it took for each of us to break? Under threat of prison, we started pointing fingers at each other in less than a week.” *In less than a week, every single one of them cracked!*
- **He said**, “That’s with Marines, CIA and FBI agents. And you are going to try to convince me that a bunch of untrained fishermen and blue collar workers maintained their story, unbroken, to the end, as each was tortured and executed? No way!”
- **Just consider what happened to Paul** because of his testimony!
  - On 5 separate occasions, he was given 39 lashes with a whip for preaching. Each time he got up and kept preaching.
  - 3x he was **beaten with rods** (that’s a step up from a whip).
  - More than once he was publicly stoned—not that he got high in public, but had **baseball sized rocks** hurled at him until they thought he was dead.
  - He was shipwrecked, not once, but 3x. (How many times do you have to get shipwrecked before feel like God is not calling you to go on any more mission trips? Where you assume ‘sea travel’ is not for you?)
- What makes someone **willing to endure** that time and time again?
- Again: People sometimes suffer for what is false but they don’t willingly suffer for what they **know** to be false... **UNLESS there is something to be gained from it, like money or power.**
  - **\*But what would Paul gain from his lie?** Year after year he embraced a life of suffering to spread this gospel he formerly had hated.

- *This simply rules out the idea that he was using his apostleship as a cover for a con game.*
- **So, Paul uses his unrelenting testimony** to Jesus Christ as **evidence #1 that** his gospel is the true one, that it **really was revealed by a resurrected Jesus** like he said.

Objective evidence 2...

Objective Evidence #2: My message perfectly aligns with that of the other Apostles and Prophets

- **This is very important**—and maybe the primary proof the Apostles pointed to—what we are saying perfectly lines up with what all the previous prophets predicted.
- That's **why all through your Bible** you'll find them saying,
  - "As it was written..." or
  - "These things were done in order to fulfill... (some Scripture)"
- **Even Jesus pointed** back to what the previous Scriptures said as validation that he was who he said he was.
  - The Pharisees were once arguing with Jesus, telling him that he didn't know what he was talking about (**What would you do if you were Jesus and in an argument** with someone who told you that you didn't know what you were talking about? **Levitate**. Or make their mouths disappear like that scene in **Matrix**—"Tell me, Mr. Anderson, What good is a phone call if you are unable to speak?" That's what I would have done) **"Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: yet these are they which testify of me." (John 5:39)**
  - Or, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." (**Luke 24:27**)
- **Proof that what he was saying was true** was how well it lined up with previous revelations.
- Last week I talked briefly about **Islam and Mormonism**, two religions that claim to have received additional revelation from God.

- **I used to live and work among Muslims**, and they would often tell me that Mohammad received the Quran from the angel Gabriel in a cave, and that the Quran corrected all the revelation that had gone before it.
  - **Muslims believe in 4 holy books... What the Quran** corrects and supersedes everything that went before it.
- I always **pointed out to Muslims that none of the biblical prophets** ever talked that way about previous prophets.
- Instead, they all grounded their claims to authority on how they stood in continuity and agreement with what the previous prophets said.

**At the end of the day,** I don't reject the messages of Mohammad and Joseph Smith because of **deficiencies in their characters**, or because **Mohammad was a violent warrior**—but because what they teach stands in opposition to all that came before it. **That can't be!**

- **(This is one of the reasons you need to learn your Bible, btw—If you don't know your Bible, you can't know** when some slick-talking preacher is saying something that **contradicts what God has already said.)**
- **When you don't know the Bible**, you are a sucka for Satan. You need to be *checking and verifying* what you hear—that includes with me also, btw! **Bring your Bible** and read along and **make sure what I am saying** is accurate!
- Paul says, "**It is amazing**—miraculous even —but when I finally got to confer with the other Apostles, after 17 years, what they were saying and what I was saying was exactly the same!"
  - **"I went up (to Jerusalem)... (this is an amazing statement!) and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles... I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain." (2:2)**
  - He was saying, "**Even after my experience with Jesus on the road**, I realize that if what I was saying contradicted the teaching of the other Apostles, I would be in error, because Jesus established his Apostles as the rule of faith and promised that they would get it right!"

- Jesus had given his Apostles the “keys to the kingdom” (Matt 16:19) which meant that the authority to get the message right about the way to heaven—the secret to unlocking the doors, so to speak, **and he promised he would give them the Holy Spirit who would guide them into all truth** (John 14:26).<sup>2</sup>
- There’s **this idea promoted by guys like Dan Brown in the Da Vinci Code** and Bart Ehrman that there were all these differing gospel accounts believed by Jesus’ 1<sup>st</sup> followers and in the 4<sup>th</sup> century the **Roman Emperor Constantine** selected his favorite and destroyed all the other differing accounts.
  - But there is no way that is historically accurate. These Gospels—**Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**—which were the only ones that came out of the Apostolic community, were **spread literally all over the world** in a bunch of different languages by the time of Constantine. There is **no way he could have collected** up all the differing ones and destroyed them.
  - **What we see from the 1<sup>st</sup> century Apostolic church** is one, unified witness.
- **You say, “Well, I watched a special about Jesus on CNN the other night and it talked about “lost Gospels”**—like, the Gospel of Peter, or Thomas, or Judas, or Casper, the Friendly Ghost... and they have messages that contradict what we see in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.”
  - Yes, I saw that special, too. But these “Gospels” all show **clear evidence of being written a couple hundred years** after the time of the Apostles, whereas Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written in the 1<sup>st</sup> century by the Apostolic community.
- **What comes out of the Apostolic community is one, unified message**—believed and affirmed by all of the Apostles, and Paul, and they all recognized each other’s legitimacy
- Listen to what **Peter says about Paul** in 2 Peter:

- “Our dear brother Paul also speaks about these things in all his letters, in which there are some matters that are hard to understand. The untaught and unstable twist them to their own destruction, as they also do with the rest of the Scriptures.” **2 Peter 3:16**
- **Two things there:**
  - First, for those of you who find Paul sometimes tough to understand—**be encouraged**, so did Peter! He was like, **Romans 9, predesti-what?**
  - Second, Peter recognized Paul’s writing to be Scripture!

So...

- Objective evidence #1 Paul gives: *Only a resurrected Jesus could explain the conversion of Christianity’s #1 Enemy into its #1 Emissary.*
- Objective evidence #2: *My message perfectly aligns with that of the other Apostles*

Subjective evidence: Jesus changed my life

Paul is going to explain **3 ways he experienced Jesus in his personal life**. **While** you probably haven’t seen a **visible manifestation** of the resurrected Jesus like Paul did, if you’ve really met Jesus, these things will be true of you, too.

The FIRST thing he says is, vs. 15, *“I see how God pursued me.”*

- **When Paul talks about his conversion**, he talks as if God was the one acting, and he, Paul, is the one being acted upon: <sup>15</sup>*But when God, who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son in me...*

<sup>2</sup> “The Father will send you the Holy Spirit in my name, who will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (John 14:26)

Someone who has had a genuine experience with Jesus usually feels less like it was a decision that they made, and more like something that happened to them. **Less something that they took up**, and more something that took them up.

Every person I know who has a serious walk with Jesus for any length of time looks back and recognizes that **God was the one at work in their salvation**. You see how God was putting people into your life, questions in your heart, random conversations, sometimes even painful experiences to draw you to himself

**C.S. Lewis allegorizes his conversion** in the story of one of his characters in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (one of the *Chronicles of Narnia*). The character's name is Eustace, a young boy who develops an **evil heart**, symbolized by him taking on the hard, scaly skin of **a dragon all over his body**. He comes to his senses and wants Aslan, the Lion who represents Jesus, to change him back into a boy. So, Aslan leads him to this fountain of pure water to bathe in.

He tells him first, however, before bathing, he needs to scrape off his dragon skin. So, Eustace claws through the scales down to the skin. It is uncomfortable, but he gets it done, and there's a pile of rough dragon skin on the ground and he steps over to the pool of pure water. **But as he gets ready to step in**, he notices his skin has already started to turn back into dragon's skin. So, he repeats the process. **Three times**. But every time his skin changes back.

Eventually he says, "I can't do it, Aslan." And Aslan says, "**I can...**" and he reaches out his paw to peel away Eustace's scales.

**"The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart. And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt."**

But when it was done, **it was done**, and the skin stayed off.

**Lewis is describing his own conversion**—whom he called "**the most reluctant convert** in all of England, whom God had to drag **kicking and screaming** into his kingdom." God put things into his life to tear him down, to show him his need for God; he put him flat on his back so he'd be looking the right direction.

**Illus. There's a guy that is part of one of our prison campuses**—an incredible story. He's a white-collar criminal who has been in prison for 14 years; all signs point to him being innocent, set up by others in power to take the fall for some shady-dealings. **When he was convicted**, he lost everything—his livelihood, his life savings, his reputation, his wife. The **story is heartbreaking**. He says, "But still, I thank God for this. Because before this happened, I thought I was God. So, God let this happen to show me I was not God, and in here, in prison, I found him. And I wouldn't trade what I've found in God for all the freedom and all the riches in the world."

**Can you look back into your life and see how God wrote your story?** How he was drawing you, getting your attention—moving you to look to him?

Part of that, btw, is recognizing how God has shaped you for a part of his mission. See this, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles,

- **Paul saw how God had shaped him for ministry**: giving him experiences, abilities, and opportunities for the spread of the gospel.
- He revealed Christ to Paul so that he could reveal Christ through Paul.
- **He has done that to you, too, and** a genuine experience with the gospel always gives you lenses to see how throughout your life God has been preparing you—through your gifts and experiences,

even through your sins and failures—to be his vessel of grace to others!<sup>3</sup>

**So that's the first thing...** *If you've really met Jesus, you can see the evidence of his drawing work in your life...*

The **second thing** Paul says is, **"God became even more real to me when I am alone."**

- **After Paul met Jesus**, he didn't spend time with anyone, he went off into the desert alone. But during that time, Jesus worked in his life.
- (I would never counsel you intentionally to separate yourself from other believers, but **one of the things that is true**—if you genuinely have met Jesus—is that **when you are alone, your relationship with Jesus is as real**—if not more so—as when you are with others.)
- **Sometimes being surrounded by excited Christians** all the time can keep you from realizing that you have never really had your own experience with him; you are only sharing in the excitement of others.
- But you **can't piggyback off of someone else's** experience with God.
- A STORY I **tell our staff sometimes...** (**the only dog who saw the rabbit**). At a church like this, you have some who are excited only because they are around others who are excited, but you've never actually seen Jesus.

Some of you have been exposed to the gospel but not really penetrated by it. And **one of the evidences** of that is you don't meet with him in private. You don't have an **active prayer life** where you talk with him, **read his word** and glean his promises for your life, gain insight into his will for you, and lay your problems down at his feet and trust him with them.

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<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *Galatians for You*, 29.

*Beware of Christianity **overshadowing you** but not **penetrating you!***

The **third thing** Paul says, **"God took away my hate and fear."**

- Paul said in vs. 23, **"I now preach the faith I once destroyed."** (**Galatians 1:23**)
- **Throughout the book, Paul is going to explain how the pride, fear, and hate** that used to drive him are gone.

**That always happens to a believer:** When you don't know God, **you are filled with all kinds of insecurities and fears.**

Before Christ, for example, Paul had always been in **constant competition** to others, driven by the pride to show that he was superior—You can see that when he says, *"I advanced in Judaism beyond all my contemporaries; I was the Jew of the Jews"*—and that desire to prove himself made him constantly jealous of others, and hate, and ultimately murderous violence.

**C.S. Lewis said,**<sup>4</sup>

- **"Pride is like spiritual cancer:** it eats up the very possibility of love..."
- It is **inherently competitive:** It doesn't matter that I'm smart, only smarter than you. Better looking... Wanting to see myself as superior to others. Intelligence. Religion.
  - That's why proud people can never get along. People of other vices can get along (drunks, immoral people, etc), but proud people always hate each other.
- The quickest way to tell that you have pride is that **some other person's pride REALLY ticks you off**. How much it bothers you

<sup>4</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 122–125

when they snub you, or refuse to take any notice of you, or patronize you, or show off?<sup>5</sup>

- **You are mad that they think they're something** because deep down you want to be thought of as something, and their "somethingness" is getting in the way of your "somethingness."
- **Pride, you see, comes out of insecurity:** you have to demonstrate that you are something so that you are considered worthy of love and acceptance.

By contrast, the **gospel gives you security**. It teaches you that you are not saved by how good you are, but because of what Jesus did in your place. (Nothing you could do to make God love you more...)

And in Christ, **you have the absolutely approval** of the only one whose opinion matters any more.

**That gives you security.** You are as sure of heaven as Jesus Christ is, because his record has become yours.

- Rather than make you PROUD, **it makes me humble**—you didn't do anything that sets you apart!
- Then it makes you **generous toward others**—you were saved when you were desperately lost by a sheer act of kindness on God's part. *How could that not affect how you see others? At TSC, we often say, "People who really believe the gospel instinctively become generous." How could they not be?*

Paul says, "**This is evidence I have met the true God!**" My hate and fear are gone, and when people encounter my story, **...they glorified God because of me.**

- (BTW, for Paul, that his story glorifies God is another distinctive mark of the true gospel. **All other religions, you see, glorify man;** the gospel glorifies God.

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<sup>5</sup> "If you want to find out how proud you are the easiest way is to ask yourself, 'How much do I dislike it when other people snub me, or refuse to take any notice of me, or shove their oar in, or patronize me, or show off?'" C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, "Pride."

- You say, "**How do other religions glorify man?**" Well, every other religion teaches that you save yourself by how good you are: **If you are good enough**—you observe the 5 pillars of Islam, the 8-fold path of Buddha, confess enough and do the sacraments enough, be good enough to create good karma—then you'll be saved.
- They **all have in common** that if you are saved it is because of what you did. You are the Savior! You get glory.
- **The gospel glorifies God! Because** it says that God saved you when you were unworthy solely because of his grace and he alone deserves all the glory.
- Rather than raising himself up and **crushing those who sinned against him**—and rewarding the victorious righteous—God **lowered himself** and died for them.
- And that's a special kind of **glory, unique** to Christianity and **demonstrates that the gospel is different than all the other religions** of the world that glorify man.
- **Christianity is the only religion that celebrates** a God who humbled himself.
- So, when you **hear the often-repeated claim**, made by people like that great prophetess of our time, **Queen Latifah**: "The gods of the religions have different names, but if you peel back the layers, all teach the same thing—love others,"<sup>6</sup> know that she cannot talking about Christianity.
- **Christianity teaches a unique message**—you are saved not by your goodness, but **God's grace**. And God alone gets the glory.
- **Which is why C. S. Lewis said, "Of course, Christianity must be from God, for who else could have thought it up?"**

#### CONCLUSION:

So, there it is: Paul gives **objective and subjective** evidences for the truth of the gospel:

<sup>6</sup> 56<sup>th</sup> Grammy's



- **Objective:** A. Our gospel rests upon the concrete fact of Jesus' resurrection, B. It **conforms** to the unified prophetic witness
- But it is also **subjective**—it changed me from being a man of pride and hate to a man of humility and generosity who glorified God.

**That's our gospel.** So, 2 questions—

- The gospel is **objectively true**, have you believed it?
  - *Do you believe the gospel the Apostles preached?*  
(**EXPLAIN:** the **GOSPEL is:** Jesus did it all, you can only repent and receive)
- The gospel should be **subjectively verified!** Can you **point to the change** its made in your life? Can you see the evidence of Jesus in your life? Has he **changed** you?
  - *If you can't see how Jesus is real and at work in your life than you haven't really been saved.*

Well, like I said, I **want to end today by sharing with you the story of a modern-day Paul**—whom God transformed dramatically. He was a religious hypocrite, even while being an **elder in his church** in New Jersey—when he **met Jesus and that changed everything**.

**His name just happens also to be Paul**, and he is at the **Downtown Durham** campus: **Paul M.** His story is part of the proof that our gospel is **from God**.

ROLL VIDEO

