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God Set Me Apart from Birth and Called Me Through His Grace 1: 11-17

God set me apart from birth and called me through His grace DIG: Why does it matter to us that the gospel is not of human origin? In light of 1:6-7, why does Paul stress where his message came from in verses 11 and 12? Skim Acts 9:1-31: What do Paul's comments here add to his conversion story? Why is it so important that he is not just passing on second-hand information to them? How does this validate his claim to be an apostle in 1:1? Paul says he received his gospel not from the apostles who had known Yeshua during His earthly ministry, but directly by revelation from Messiah Himself. What reasons does he give the Galatians to believe in something extraordinary?

REFLECT: Do you ever find yourself thinking you deserve God's grace? What prompts you to think this way? If you had to argue for the reality of the gospel by giving one example of how you have changed by faith, what would you share? What is your story? How is your personal experience of Messiah an important part of your witness to others? Paul's experience of conversion was by grace alone through faith in the Messiah. In your own process of coming to faith in Messiah, where was (and is) grace a work? How does the gospel of grace free you from pride and guilt?

Paul summarizes his autobiography, describes his persecution of the Church, his revelation from heaven, and his divine commission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

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The nature of **Paul's gospel** was not the kind of **gospel** men tend to preach. No other religion, including Judaism, has a concept of salvation of **faith** plus nothing. Every other religion has a concept of good works attached to it. You must do *something* to be accepted by **God**! Even believers have had a difficult time

accepting salvation by **faith** alone, wanting to do *something* to gain salvation. It is hard for mankind to fathom the fact that salvation is totally free by **the grace of God** and all the work that is necessary has already been accomplished by **YHVH** by sending **His Son** to die for our sins on the cross.

Now I want you to know (Greek: *gnorizo*, meaning *to know with certainty*)**, brothers and sisters, that the Good News proclaimed by me is not man's gospel (1:11). Mankind** does not come up with a **gospel** that is based purely on the basis of **faith**. **Mankind** has a tendency to add things to it. In fact, this statement was particularly directed at **the Judaizers**, who received their religious instruction primarily from **the Oral Law** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ei – The Oral Law**) by means of rote memorization. **Paul** goes on: **I did not receive it from any human,** or the first **Adam** in all **his** transgression and mortality**, nor was I taught it, but it came through** special **revelation of** the Second **Adam**, **Yeshua the Messiah (Galatians 1:12; First Corinthians 15:22).** The word **revelation** is from the Greek word *apokalupto*, meaning *an uncovering to an individual*. **Yeshua Messiah** is best understood as the object of that very **revelation**. This **revelation** was the act of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** *uncovering* truth incapable of being discovered by the natural mind of mankind.

Just as **Yeshua** was discipled by **His Father, "ADONAI Elohim has given me the tongue of the learned, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning. He opens My understanding to His will" (Isaiah 50:4), Yeshua** discipled **Paul**. **Morning by morning the Lord** woke **Paul** up and **opened his understanding** to **the** simple **gospel** of salvation equals faith plus nothing.

Paul began with **his** past conduct as an unbelieving Jewish rabbi. In this historical flashback, **he** contends that nothing in **his** past life predisposed **him** to **the gospel**. **For you have heard of my earlier behavior in** traditional **Judaism – how I persecuted God's Messianic Community** (Greek: *ekklesia*, meaning *the universal (total) body of believers whom God calls out from the world into His eternal Kingdom*) **beyond measure and tried to destroy it** (see the commentary on **Acts Cy – Paul's Witness before Agrippa**)**.** The words **persecuted** and **destroy** are in the imperfect tense which speaks of continuous action, right up to the time of **Paul's** conversion. The Gamaliel of **Acts 5** would not have approved of the stoning of Stephen. He would never have dreamed of riding off to Damascus to haul believers into prison and to death. Compared to **Paul's** teacher, who adopted

a “live-and-let-live” policy toward Messianic believers **(Acts 5:34-40), Paul’s** position of wanting to exterminate the early Messianic Community was very extreme.[26]

It is one thing to claim direct **revelation** from **ADONAI**, but quite another to prove it. Throughout the history of the Church many people have falsely claimed such revelation, as many do today. But **Paul** was not content to merely make the claim. Nor did **he** expect **his** readers to believe **him** simply on the basis of **his** claims. Therefore, **he** proceeds to substantiate **his** claim by presenting irrefutable evidence of that divine **revelation** and of **his apostolic** credentials.[27]

Steeped in Jewish tradition, young **Sha’ul of Tarsus** championed **his** faith. **His** reputation as a zealous persecutor of the *kedoshim* became known to everyone **(Acts 9:13-14)**. One occasionally finds the same kind of zeal among non-Messianic **Jews** today. The words **persecuted** and **destroy** are in the perfect tense which speaks on continuous action. The reason why **Paul** mentions **his** attempt to **destroy the Church** is that **he** might show that such bitter hostility proved that **he** was not among those whose association with believers had led **him** to receive **the gospel (1:13)**.

Paul’s use of the phrase **God’s Messianic Community** is significant. In **his** very first book that **he** wrote (see **Ae – Dates of Books in the B’rit Chadashah**), it shows that **Paul** had not only formed the concept as churches as local congregations, but had already gathered those local congregations in his mind into one entity, **the** universal **Church**. It also shows that he saw at that time, that **the nation of Isra’el** had been temporarily set aside and **the** universal **Church** made up of both **Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14)**, had been brought in. In other words, the Dispensation of Torah had ended and the Dispensation of Grace had begun to establish a channel through which **ADONAI** was to work for the time being.[28]

Not only was **Sha’ul** against **grace** before being saved, **he** was for **the Oral Law**. **I was even advancing** (Greek: *prokopto*, meaning *a trail blazer*) **within Judaism beyond many my own age among my people, being a more extreme observer of my fathers’ traditions (1:14). Sha’ul** had far surpassed **his** contemporaries in **his** zeal and activity in **Judaism**. Everyone knew that this brilliant student of Rabbi Gamaliel **(Acts 22:3)** was well on **his** way to becoming an influential leader in Judaism. **He** pioneered in **his** studies, cutting new paths ahead of **his** fellow-students. In those days, various rabbis gathered together in certain

rabbinical courts. The purpose of those gatherings was to add many new traditions to build a fence around the Torah to keep it from being broken (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei – The Oral Law**). **He** was well on his way to being the most respected young rabbi of his day.[29] Therefore, nothing in **his** past life predisposed **him** to **the gospel**. Only a supernatural **revelation** could have changed **him** so thoroughly. Therefore, proof is established that neither **Paul's** office as **an apostle**, nor **his gospel** of **grace** came by way of anyone other than directly from **ADONAI Himself**.

So how did **Paul** receive **the gospel** of **grace**? **Paul** presents **himself** as having been predestined for servanthood, on the model of the long line of biblical prophets. Reflecting on **his** previous behavior as one who persecuted **the Messianic Community**, **Paul** indicates **God, who set me apart from birth, and called me through His grace (1:15a). He** described **his** calling in this way to likely associate **himself** with **those** who had been specifically **called** out by **the Lord** before **him** – specifically **the** Servant **Messiah** and **the** prophet **Jeremiah**:

Listen to Me, islands! Pay attention, peoples far away. ADONAI called Me from the womb, from My mother's belly He named Me (Isaiah 49:1).

Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I set you apart – I appointed you a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:5).

As **Paul** will later describe **his** calling to the church in Rome: **Paul, a bond-slave of Messiah Yeshua, called to be an apostle and set apart for the Good News of God (Romans 1:1).** This means, before **he** was ever born, **God** had **His** eye on **Paul** and set **him** apart for **his** apostolic ministry. In that way, **Paul's** mission was similar to that of the prophets.

Here again, **Paul** declares that **ADONAI was pleased** (Greek: *eudokesen*) **to reveal His Son to me (Acts 9:5) so I would proclaim Him among the Gentiles** many years later **(Galatians 1:15b-16a; Acts 9:15, 22:21, 26:18-23; Romans 1:5, 11:13, 15:16).** In the context of **Yeshua's** immersion, **Paul** adopts the same verb *eudokesen*, **pleased**, that **God the Father** applied to **God the Son: You are My Son, whom I love, with You I am well pleased (Mark 1:11; Isaiah 42:1).**[30]

Beginning with the **Damascus** Road encounter, **Paul** sat at the feet of **Messiah** as a *talmid* (*the student of a Jewish scholar*). It was essential for **ADONAI** to establish

Paul's independence as **an apostle**. **He** was not taught by **the** other **apostles**, but was fully equal to them. Therefore, to defend **his apostleship**, **Paul** declared: **I did not immediately go up to Jerusalem** or talk with **those who were apostles before me, either.** When **Paul** first arrived in **Jerusalem**, **the Messianic community and the apostles** refused to welcome **their persecutor; they** did not trust **him. They** assumed **he** wanted to get inside information. Finally, **Barnabas** brought **him** before **the apostles** and vouched for **his** sincerity **(Acts 9:26-27)**. Immediately after **Paul's** experience on the **Damascus** road (see **Am – Damascus during the Time of Paul**), **he went away to Arabia** where for **three years he** was taught **the gospel** of **grace** by **Messiah** (see **An – Arabia during the Time of Paul**). Only after **his** apprenticeship under **the Master** did **he return again to Damascus (1:16b-17).** Consequently, **Paul** asserts that **his** commission and **gospel message** came to **him** directly from **ADONAI**, independent of any **human** teaching.