

**An Invitation and Calling:
Learning to Live in the Grace of Christ
September 16 – November 11 2012**

**“A Personal Testimony (from Paul) of Grace”
Study Helps: Week Two of Nine
Galatians 1:1-11-24, Sept 23 2012**

Focus for Week Two

Jesus calls people by his grace. When he does, he must reveal himself to the individual, the family, the community. As we study Paul’s words to the churches of Galatia about “living in the grace of Christ,” it is important that we consider Paul’s own testimony about how Jesus called him by grace, revealing himself to Paul. In this 2nd week, we did this by looking at Galatians 1:11-24 and a section of Acts 26. In Galatians 1:15-16, Paul summarizes his testimony saying, “But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles...”

Summary of “Time of Reflection” and Message

1. **Time of Reflection:** Grace Revealed by Jesus
 - Listening to another’s story can be an expression of God’s grace to that person. When you say to a person, “Tell me your story,” and then give that person uninterrupted time to share, what a kindness such active listening can be to the person speaking.
 - How we tell our story, however, demonstrates clearly whether we see our lives disconnected from God, lived without thought of his involvement, or whether we see it lived, from beginning to the present, IN the grace of Christ.
 - This morning, as we unfold the series called, “Learning to Live in the Grace of Christ,” shaped from a letter one follower of Jesus, Paul, wrote to churches he had influenced, we want to explore how Paul shares his story of God’s grace in his life. By doing so, it will help us look at our own stories and lives through the lens of God’s grace.
 - Paul’s story includes five dimensions of God’s grace that shaped how Paul shared his story. These are summarized in Galatians 1:15-16:
 “*But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles . . .*”

2. **Summary of Message**
 - In Galatians 1:11-24, Paul further defends his authoritative calling to proclaim this grace of Christ; in doing so, he highlights five dimensions of grace.
 - Dimension One: **The grace-filled “but when God”**

- a. Note Paul's previous life: full of zeal for God, God's law and religious traditions; convinced he was right in his thinking, he persecuted Christians zealously.
 - b. Paul's experience of "but when God" is a work of God's grace that God does in all our lives.
 - c. When we look at how we tell our life story, do we see these grace-filled "but when God" moments?
- Dimension Two: **"Who set us apart from my mother's womb"**
 - a. From his Jewish background, Paul saw God at work in his life from before he was born; his life was not without purpose but ALWAYS "set apart" for God's purposes.
 - b. As people created by God, God reveals by his grace that our lives too are important to him; we too are "set apart for his purposes."
 - c. When we look at how we tell our life story, does it include the deep awareness that every moment of our lives is important to God, even those times when we are uncertain of his promised, powerful presence?
 - Dimension Three: **"Called me by his grace"**
 - a. Jesus called Paul clearly into his grace (see Acts 26:12-18).
 - b. Jesus is calling us by his grace to come out of hiding into his light; his light is full of grace and truth for our lives.
 - c. When we look at how we tell our life story, does it include the many ways Jesus is calling us into his grace?
 - Dimension Four: **"Was pleased to reveal his Son IN me"**
 - a. Jesus revealed so much IN Paul, not simply TO Paul!!!
 - b. As God brings us to Jesus, Jesus reveals more and more in us about himself as the Holy Spirit works in us such that we learn to come to him, hear his voice and follow him.
 - c. When we look at how we tell our life story, does it include sharing more and more of what Jesus has revealed to us from his Word and our relationship with him?
 - Dimension Five: **"So that . . ."**
 - a. Paul saw clearly the purpose for his life; he wanted the Christians to whom he wrote to see clearly their purpose in life as well: "live in the grace of Christ."
 - b. Paul expands on what "living in the grace of Christ" includes in Acts 26:18. Living in the grace of Christ includes God
 - ✓ Opening our eyes to the truth about Jesus, ourselves in Christ, and others (Acts 26:18)
 - ✓ Turning us from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18)
 - ✓ Showing us how we "receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18) through Jesus
 - ✓ Expanding our understanding on our "place among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus" (Acts 26:18)
 - c. When we look at how we tell our life story, does it include a growing awareness of our primary purpose to learn to "live in the grace of Christ?"

For Further Study

1. Read Galatians 1:11-24 with the map of Paul's travels and the timetable of Paul's life and ministry before you to ensure you grasp the details of Paul's story.
2. While Paul highlights his story in Galatians, read Acts 9:1-31 and Acts 26 for a fuller expansion.
3. As you consider these five dimensions of God's grace, ask the Holy Spirit to identify in your life times when you have experienced aspects of this grace.
4. Look again at Galatians 1:11-24. What else do you see of God's grace through Paul's story?
5. **Take Away Question:** As I consider Paul's unique testimony of the grace of Christ, what are ways I see the grace of Christ in my own life?