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Sermon Notes

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The Supernatural Origin of Paul's Gospel

Galatians 1:11-24

I. The Link between the Man and the Message

A. This Chapter Serves an Eternal Purpose

1. The attack on Paul is a timeless attack on the truth of the gospel!!
2. We 21st century Christians need to be sure that Paul was an Apostle sent not from men nor by man but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead
3. When we sit down and read one of Paul's epistles, we need to be absolutely sure it is TRUTH

B. Paul Under Attack: Paul is Not on an Ego Trip; Neither is He Insecure and Needing Affirmation

1. Paul actually spends a lot of time defending himself and his ministry from Satanic attacks
2. The Book of Acts is full of the many attacks on Paul, especially by the Jews who pursued him from town to town to keep him from preaching to the Gentiles; the last eight chapters are basically the story of Paul as a prisoner, and the many defenses he had to make in one court trial after another
3. He defends his apostleship throughout 2 Corinthians from so-called "superapostles", who thought their credentials were greater than his
4. And here, in Galatians 1-2, Paul spends a lot of time defending his apostleship
5. WHY does he defend himself so much? Why so much ink spilled in the NT on defending Paul?
 - a. As perhaps the key theologian of the NT and the key figure in redemptive history to move the people of God from being Jewish only, to Jew +

Gentile, Paul was of incredible importance... therefore, Satan would come after him

- b. We should not think Paul does this because he's insecure and wants everyone to like him!!
- c. He's not on some ego trip, wanting praise and affirmation

Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:6 We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else.

1 Corinthians 4:3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.

C. Fundamental Issue: The Link between the Man and the Message

1. Key link right in the text of Galatians 1: vs. 1 is very similar to vs. 12

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an apostle-- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead

Galatians 1:11-12 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

2. Basically... "I got my apostleship from God... and I got my message from God."
3. To some degree, this makes perfect sense... a messenger from the king of one country to the king of another must come with a message... the role and the message go together
4. Imagine a royal ambassador appearing in the town square, assembling the populace, breaking open a document that has been sealed with the royal signet ring of the king, unrolling it, saying "Hear ye, hear ye..." and then saying nothing at all... and the scroll he has unrolled is totally blank!
5. So also Paul's apostleship and his message go hand in hand
6. He got his role as an apostle from Almighty God, and he got his gospel message from the same source: Almighty God

D. Another Way to Look at It: Authority and Truth

1. Paul's authority to teach and preach and plant churches came from his apostleship
2. Paul's message had to be established as truth... the absolute truth of the gospel was what was at stake here
3. If Paul was genuinely an apostle from God, then the gospel he preached was genuinely truth from heaven itself
4. Paul's AUTHORITY and the TRUTH of the gospel he preached go hand in hand

E. God's Consistent Pattern: Speaking to His People Through Accredited Messengers

1. In a larger sense, this is just another step in a long line of God-sent messengers from heaven to whom the people of God must listen
2. God sends the messenger, and cloaks his authority to speak by the truth of the message
3. This began formally with Moses...

Exodus 20:18-19 *When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die."*

Deuteronomy 5:24-29 *And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. ²⁵ But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. ²⁶ For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? ²⁷ Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey." ²⁸ ¶ The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. ²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!"*

4. The office of "prophet" in the Old Testament followed in turn

Deuteronomy 18:15-18 *The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die." ¹⁷ The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. ¹⁸ I*

will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

- a. Prophets were able to say the powerful words, “Thus says the Lord...”
 - b. The people of God had to learn to listen to the voice of God through the voice of a human messenger
 - c. Once God had spoken through a man, his authority was established, and he began to be identified as a prophet from God
 - d. People would seek his insight and ask if there was a word from the Lord
5. Christ’s apostles play the same role in the New Testament church

F. The Apostles Are Foundational to the Future of the Church

Ephesians 2:19-20 God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

1. The apostles are the link that twenty centuries of Christians around the world would have to the resurrected Christ
2. Their eyewitness testimony was the foundation of the New Testament
3. Thus the authority of the apostles and the truth of their message was essential to the future of the church
4. As the Lord would have it, much of the doctrine of the gospel would be revealed to the Apostle Paul... his epistles would make up a significant portion of the doctrinal precision of the New Testament
5. Think of all the Lord intended to give the church through the Apostle Paul!!
 - a. The Book of Romans: the clearest unfolding of the doctrine of the Christian faith there is
 - b. The two epistles to the Corinthians: settling some of the most critical issues of church life, including divisions within the church, marriage, holiness, the role of women, the Lord’s Supper, the use of spiritual gifts, the importance of love, the importance of the doctrine of the resurrection
 - c. Need I go on? The authority of the Apostle Paul and the truthfulness of his doctrine are VITAL to the future of the church

G. Satan’s Temporary Attack on Paul is an Eternal Attack on the Gospel

1. SO, the attack on Paul during his lifetime had ETERNAL consequences for the life of the church

2. If Satan could discredit Paul, his doctrine would also be discredited; then we would be without Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, etc.

II. Paul's Main Point: The Supernatural Origin of the Gospel He Preached

Galatians 1:11-12 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. ¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

A. Paul Makes His Point Plain: The Supernatural Origin of the Gospel He Preached

1. He refers to the message he preached to them, which they heard, on which they took their stand
2. After he left, other people came in and questioned that gospel message; sought to add to it and take away from it
3. He is referring to the origins of THEIR salvation... the message that is their hope
4. He wants them to have absolute certainty in that message... its truthfulness, its ongoing power to save them "to the uttermost"
5. Frankly, the gospel he preached isn't done with them until they leave this world... they need to keep believing in it... the care of their souls is an ONGOING WORK... they need to KEEP BELIEVING IN THE SAME GOSPEL while it finishes its work in them

Romans 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

6. Satan has thrown the Galatians into confusion by tempting them to doubt Paul and therefore to doubt the gospel he preached
7. Paul is working on their confidence in the DIVINE ORIGIN of the gospel he preached to them
8. One of TWO OPTIONS: either Paul's gospel was from heaven or from man

B. Man-Made Gospel is No Gospel At All

1. If Paul's gospel was defective, then it must have been MAN-MADE; if Paul's gospel was revealed from heaven, then it was PERFECT as it was... that's what's at stake here
2. BUT a man-made gospel cannot raise us up to heaven

3. The problem between God and humanity is sin... the rebellion we committed against God's holy laws
4. It is impossible for that problem to be solved by humanity
5. God willed that only by His grace, His initiative, His power, His gospel would sinful people be saved

C. The World is Full of Man-Made Gospels

1. Islam is a man-made gospel: if Islam is not a true religion, then its origin must have been in the mind of Muhammad
2. Mormonism: Joseph Smith was a clever con artist who took a historical novel and turned it into the Book of Mormon and started a new religion
3. Hinduism and Buddhism and other answers to man's ills are all man-made gospels
4. No doubt Satan had influence on the hearts and minds of people as these religions were concocted; but the precepts of them were brewed in the minds of the religious leaders under Satanic influence; they are man-made religions

D. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is Heaven-Sent... Revealed to Man, Not Man-Made

1. The gospel: crafted in the mind of God—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—before the world began

1 Corinthians 2:7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

2. The gospel: revealed little by little in redemptive history... events and words

Romans 1:1-3 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God-- ² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son

Romans 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, ²⁶ but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him

3. "In the fullness of time": Christ revealed; descended from heaven... lived a supernatural life, died an atoning death, raised from the dead by the power of God, ascended to heaven again

Galatians 4:4-5 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law

John 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

This gospel is HEAVEN DESCENDED!!!

4. Pentecost: The power of the Holy Spirit descended from heaven

E. Testimony: No One Could Have Made this Up!!

1. How could anyone have crafted such a story?
2. Apologists are strong on this point: the gospel is such a perfect and surprising story that only God could have made it up
3. Anyone with the brilliance to author such a story would have to be God Himself
4. We commonly hear it said: "You can't make this stuff up!!" That is literally true in the case of the gospel of Jesus Christ
5. This gospel was not something man made up, but it was heaven-sent for our salvation

F. Revealed Directly to Each Individual Believer by Supernatural Power

Galatians 1:12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

1. Peter's confession: Matthew 16

Matthew 16:16-17 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." ¹⁷ Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

2. So also Paul: the Damascus Road revealed Christ directly to him

Galatians 1:15-16 when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me

3. So also every single Christian: all of us have had the gospel revealed to us by the Spirit

1 Corinthians 2:7-10 we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"-- ¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

Summation: The gospel he preached to the Galatians was not man-made, but it heaven sent; and it has been progressively revealed by God through the prophets, exquisitely revealed in the appearance of Jesus Christ, and individually revealed to each Christian by the Holy Spirit...

This is a HEAVEN-SENT message... the POWER OF GOD for our salvation!!

III. Paul's Evidence: His Supernatural Conversion

A. What Paul Was: "His Former Life in Judaism"

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Philippians 3:4-6 If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

Acts 22:3-4 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. ⁴ I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison,

1. The point is this: how in the world do you account for this radical transformation in a fanatical man like Paul?
2. Either Paul was insane, or he was supernaturally worked on by the power of God
3. But his words were not those of an insane man; nor was his life; he lived a holy, upright, courageous life; and he reasoned very carefully from scriptures proving that Jesus was the Christ
4. SO... Paul's astonishing conversion was a powerful testimony to the heavenly origin of the gospel... there is no other good explanation for the course of Paul's life...

5. It is similar to the transformation in the Apostles after the resurrection
 - a. While Christ was being crucified, they all (except John) deserted him and fled for their lives
 - b. Forty days later, they were all in downtown Jerusalem preaching boldly that Jesus had risen from the dead, and they were all eyewitnesses of the fact
 - c. No matter what the authorities did to try and shut them up, they just preached even more boldly that Christ was risen
 - d. What possible explanation could there be for the radical transformation in these men? Only that Christ was really risen from the dead, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, they had lost all fear of death!!

B. God's Eternal Purpose for Paul

Galatians 1:15-16 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles

1. Stunning statement
 - a. God had SET PAUL APART FROM BIRTH
 - b. Actually, Paul's own writings teach that God had chosen him before the foundation of the world

Ephesians 1:4-5 he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-

- c. But Paul's statement implies the careful planning and preparation of Paul to be the Apostle to the Gentiles from his birth
2. Similar to Jeremiah the prophet

Jeremiah 1:4-5 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

3. Everything Paul went through was for a purpose... he was being crafted step by step for his apostolic ministry
4. His birth as a Jew AND as a Roman citizen
5. His upbringing as a Pharisee
6. His detailed training under Gamaliel

7. His extreme zeal for the traditions of the fathers
8. His initial hatred of Jesus Christ and of the gospel
9. His fiery persecution of the church
10. All of this was PART OF GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN for him; it was part of the message of his ministry... his testimony

C. The Supernatural Change: God's Grace AND His Revelation of Christ

1. Paul's life of open rebellion against Christ and his persecution of the church were part of God's plan for him
2. That's why God WAITED for just the right moment to convert Paul
3. Though he was accountable for what he did, yet he was also an example of grace to the nations

1 Timothy 1:12-16 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. ¹³ Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴ The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶ But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

4. The logic is this: if God can save someone like me, he can save anyone!!
5. Thus the timing is key... God waited to reveal Jesus
6. Notice the language of revelation: to reveal his Son IN ME!!
7. Notice the theme of the PLEASURE of God in Paul's conversion!!

^{KJV} Luke 12:32 ¶ Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

D. The Immediate Purpose: "So that I might preach..."

1. From the very beginning of his Christian life, Jesus made it plain that He had a clear purpose for him

Acts 9:3-6 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Acts 26:16-21 *'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'* ¹⁹ ¶ *"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰ First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. ²¹ That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me.*

2. Thus we see the IMMEDIATE LINK between Paul's salvation and his ministry
3. God set Paul to work right away in the preaching of the gospel
4. As soon as he was converted, he began preaching the gospel in the very synagogue in Damascus where he was travelling to arrest Christians
5. Imagine the SHOCK of those Jews in Damascus who knew what Paul was about and who heard he was there with authority from the Chief Priests to arrest Christians; and instead, he began preaching the very faith he had been trying to destroy!!

Acts 9:19-22 *Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, "Isn't he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn't he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?" ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ.*

6. The persecution against him broke out immediately, and he had to make his escape from Damascus by being lowered over the city
7. The actual history from the Book of Acts makes it plain how truthful Paul's assertion was here in Galatians: his calling as an apostle was intrinsically wrapped up in his conversion

IV. Paul's Assertion: No One Taught Me This Gospel

Galatians 1:15-18 *when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later*

returned to Damascus. ¹⁸ ¶ Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days.

A. Paul's Initial Reaction: Withdraw from Man to God

Vs. 16 "I did not consult any man..."

1. Paul's enemies were claiming he was a "second-hander"... someone who came along later, got some training from the apostles in Jerusalem, then went out and botched the message by altering it
2. On the contrary, Paul says that after his conversion he didn't then consult with any man
3. As we've seen, he began preaching immediately... no consultation with any man... just immediate preaching
4. That didn't mean, however, he had nothing to learn doctrinally...
5. Actually, after his escape from Damascus, he immediately went into a kind of a retreat
6. This is the difference between normal Christians and an apostle: the Twelve Apostles and Paul all stood directly in the presence of Christ and got their doctrine from his mouth; the rest of us get our instruction second-hand (or by now, not third hand or fourth hand but what's been passed on from generation to generation)
7. Like Timothy, for example:

2 Timothy 2:2 the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

8. But Paul's training in the gospel was different... it was unique... Jesus appeared to him personally; and Jesus had far more yet to teach him

B. He Didn't Go to Jerusalem... Instead, He Went to Arabia

1. So, instead of going to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the apostles, he withdrew into the desert
2. The desert was a well-known place for God to speak to his prophets in the Old Testament... think of Elijah sitting by the Brook Kerith in the desert, being fed by ravens and communing with God; think also of John the Baptist living in the desert and being trained by God before the time came for him to begin his public ministry; think of Jesus also being tempted in the desert by Satan

3. Paul withdrew from all human contact and was trained directly by Jesus in the doctrine of the gospel
4. He was no second-hander, but a legitimate apostle, hearing doctrine directly from the Lord Himself

C. Later Paul Went to Jerusalem

1. It was only after THREE YEARS of his personal training by Jesus and his ministry in Damascus that he went to Jerusalem
2. And at that point, he met the Apostle Peter and introduced himself to him
3. The disciples in Jerusalem were reluctant to trust him because of all the incredible damage he'd done to the church there... but Barnabas escorted him into the church and stood by him, testifying to the courageous way he'd preached Christ in Damascus... so they welcomed him in
4. The Apostles in Jerusalem recognized the grace of God in him:

Galatians 2:9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.

5. In all, he only spent a brief fifteen days in Jerusalem!! Hardly enough time to be trained by the Apostles and get his doctrine and his message from them

D. Paul Personally Unknown to the Churches in Judea

1. Furthermore, Paul said the churches in Judea didn't know him personally either
2. If the Apostles in Jerusalem had trained Paul, it would have been in those churches that he would have ministered... he would have done his apprenticeship there... they would have personally seen his development under the tutelage of the Apostles
3. But that's not what happened at all
4. They had only heard his story related to them!
5. There is NO WAY to make the case that Paul was a rogue disciple of the Jerusalem Apostles who had "gone off the reservation" by teaching contrary to their doctrine
6. Instead... the churches PRAISE GOD for the clear evidence of supernatural grace they saw in his life!!!

E. The Point: Paul Got His Ministry and His Message Directly from God

V. Application

A. The Same Gospel that Saved Paul Can Save You Too!!

1. Paul's Story Points to the Amazing Power of God to Save ANYBODY!

1 Timothy 1:15 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst.

2. So call on the Lord Jesus Christ to save YOU!

B. "All Flesh is Grass... But the Word Stands Forever!"

C. Be Willing to Defend the Gospel Against All Attacks

D.