

## **Galatians 1:11-21**

*“For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when He who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me, in order that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia; and again I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!”*

About 13 or 14 years ago when I was a Children's pastor we had graduation Sunday. The following week as Sunday School was about to begin we had all the children who were moving meet in the Fellowship Hall. The teachers escorted all their new students to their new class rooms, except for those students who were moving up into the youth class. I gathered these four students together and talked to them for a moment and then I escorted them to the Youth Class. When we arrived at the class I knocked on the door, then I opened it and stepped inside. I announced the names of the new students, the youth in the class snickered, something had happened. When I turned around I found that none of the new students were behind me. They were all standing outside the door. I urged them in, but still none of them would move. I thought maybe they were nervous about starting a new class, about being with new students. But they knew all the youth, and they had been with them all their lives. What could it be? I stepped outside the room with them, and asked "What's the problem?" Then one of them said, "Mr. Kevin, once we step through that door there's no going back.

They were right about that, once they crossed that threshold there would be no going back. By entering that room they were closing a chapter in their lives and beginning a new one. All of us, everyone under the sound

of my voice has faced the same situations in our own lives. Those who continue to live are still facing the same situations today. Only those who have died or stopped living no longer face the unknown or uncertainty of a new chapter in their lives. What does the future hold for these young people? What does the future hold for us? Tomorrow is not guaranteed, **James 4:13-14** *“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.” Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”* For that matter, none of us know what the next hour has in store. The only positive, the only constant we have, the only thing we know for sure is that God loves each of us, and loved us so much He sent His only Son to die for us to have everlasting life. That's the only definite!

What unknown is awaiting you, is awaiting us? What exciting things does God have in store for you? No one knows, but one thing for sure it will be exciting. Just think graduates, of all the encounters you have already experienced with success in your life thus far. You graduated from the womb and successfully adjusted to life on the outside.

You graduated from infancy and successfully began that first day of kindergarten. You graduated from preadolescence and successfully navigated almost all of your teen years. Now you are graduating from high school or college and now you must travel the road of adulthood. How can your continued success be assured? We've all been there. Your heart begins to beat rapidly. There's shortness of breath. You have difficulty swallowing. Your knees are weak. Your hands are cold, and you've never been so hot in your life. What I've just described are some of the physiological reactions that some people have when getting ready to give that first public speech.

So now graduates, come on up and each of you give us a speech! Just kidding! One of the greatest hazards to success is fear. While not all fear is bad, everyone knows what its like to be afraid. When fear immobilizes us and keeps us from doing that to which we have been called, we are dominated by a "spirit of fear." This kind of fear paralyzes us and keeps us from doing things we could or should be doing.

Paul, in this morning's passage, had to have been facing some of these same kinds of fears. Paul had had a mission in his life, and that was to rid the world of any and all Christians. **Acts 8:3** "*Saul was ravaging the church by entering house after house; dragging off both men and women, he committed*

*them to prison.”* He had just been an integral part of the stoning of Stephen, and not long after he came face to face with Jesus and with Paul's first meeting with Jesus he was knocked down and blinded. **Acts 9:3-4** *“Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.”* He fell to the ground He was told to go into Damascus and wait. Three days later he met Ananias. After meeting Ananias, Paul's sight was restored. He spent the next several days in Damascus doing something for the first time ..... preaching, but word came that the people wanted to kill him, so he left. They wanted to kill him because they were focused on who Paul use to be, not who he was now.

Our passage this morning says in **verses 16-17** *“I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia.”* Paul left Damascus and went to Arabia for three years, word is, that's why Seminary is three years long. But the reason Paul went to Arabia was so God could prepare him for what he was to do. What would have happened if Paul had not went into Arabia? What would have happened if Ananias had not went to Paul laid hands on Paul and prayed for him?

It seems we hold back from doing things out of fear. We fear doing something new, something different. Often time's people quit rather than try and/or except any type of change. We fear doing anything which takes us out of our comfort zones. Seems many people want things to never ever change. We all want to wake up, do the same thing we did yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that, etc. That is not the life God has for us. That is not the life God has in store for you. God has a wild exciting, not always pleasurable journey for each one of us, the question is, are you willing to answer the call. Another thing to remember is, we will never reach our destination until we die. In other words we are never ever to stop serving.

Graduates, young people, and adults do not look to the people for guidance on what to do if all you see them doing is going through the motions. If you see people not going forward, if you see people staying the same or worse retreating or even worse stepping back and quitting do not follow or emulate them. Instead we, you need to pray for them but do not emulate or follow them. But if you see those who are all about placing their lives in God's hands and consistently stepping out on faith, those are the models you to seek.

God has a purpose for each one of us and sitting around, retreating, or quitting is not it. Place your lives in God's hands, allow Him to guide and direct your paths.

Go where you have never gone before, but go with God. Allow God to open doors for you. If He shuts a door don't get discouraged, look for an open window. I do not consider myself a prophet, but I don't believe God has called you to do nothing but to continue looking back at what you had done in the past. Far too many people have given up on the future and live in the past never speaking of and/or looking towards the future.

I read a story of a woman who lives by a three-word philosophy: "Seize the moment." Just possibly, she may be the wisest woman on this planet. Too many people put off doing something just because they haven't ever done it, or they don't have it on their schedule, or didn't know it was coming, or have quit doing for whatever reason, or are just too plain rigid to change.

This started me thinking one day about all those people on the Titanic who passed up dessert at dinner that fateful night in an effort to cut back. Since then, I've tried to be a lot more flexible.

How many women out there eat at home because their husband didn't suggest going out to dinner until after something had been thawed? Does the word "refrigeration" mean anything to you?

Life has a way of accelerating as we get older. The days get shorter, and the list of promises gets longer. One morning, we wake up, and all we have to show for our lives is a long list of "I'm going to's," or "I plan on it," or "Someday, when things are settled down a bit."

Everyone please hear my question, "If you were going to die soon and had only one phone call you could make, who would you call and what would you say?" Why and what are you waiting? Have you ever watched children playing on a merry go round or listened to the rain splashing on the ground? Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight or gazed at the sun into the fading night? Do you run through each day on the fly? When you ask someone, "How are you?" Do you hear the reply? Do you really want too? When the day is done, do you lie in your bed with the next hundred chores running through your head? Ever told someone, we'll do it tomorrow? Ever lost touch, ever let a good friendship die because you were too busy being ridged to call and say "Hi?"

When you run so fast to get somewhere you miss half the fun of getting there. When you worry and hurry through your day, it is like an unopened gift, thrown away. Go forward in the Lord and allow Him to guide your steps.

Listen to what Jesus told Peter in **John 14:1-4**, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.”*

Yes, you are going to fail. No, you aren’t perfect ... not yet! But don’t get discouraged. Though Satan may attack you from every angle, Jesus won’t let you fall if you just keep on going forward in His name. Don’t allow those times of failure to rule your life. Get up, dust yourself off, and walk on in the Lord. Jesus said that we shouldn’t allow failures to trouble us, but that we should put our trust in Him and believe in Him.

It’s not our righteousness, not our obedience, not our good works that will bring us to our destination; it is the righteousness of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit that will bring us there.

Jesus wants you to be in Heaven with Him and He will not allow you to fall unless you turn away in fear or just plain give up.

No matter what you do, or where God leads you, or what you may become in this life, you will never arrive at your destination though you live to be 100 years old or more. Nothing in this world is your final destination. Your final destination is that heavenly mansion which has been prepared for you in Heaven. No I'm not talking about some house on 2.6 acres, the mansion is a metaphor for more than we can possibly fathom. Enjoy the journey, and when you begin to think you've arrived, remember that it's just another stop and the journey is about to continue on. Keep walking in the will of God. Don't let the setbacks in life trouble your heart. If you fail God, don't let your heart be troubled. Just confess it, release it and walk on with Jesus. Now, let's go to Arabia!