**Live Free – Galatians 1:11-21 / Transformed!**

**Before and after shows - makeovers / face / body / home / cars – show me the before and after. Jesus is all about the makeover, transformation, life change. Can someone really change?**

**This letter is about freedom! Freedom from self, sin, shame, & religion**

**Galatians 5:1 - It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Paul contends that true freedom is found only is Jesus – regardless of life situation…FREE!)**

**Background Check**

* **Apostle Paul - to a group of new believers in the area of Galatia**
* **Galatians - warriors & hired mercenaries / Pagan = tribal gods**
* **Paul & Barnabas went there on a mission trip - 45/48AD (Acts 13,14) Judaizers claimed Paul was a phony apostle (1/3 of the letter is defending his apostleship) they said, be a Jewish Christian**

**Galatians were gentiles / didn’t know Judaism – didn’t speak Hebrew or have a Torah – Never read the OT their entire life.**

**Verses 1-11: Paul gets straight to the point - defining the Gospel.**

**Jesus lived, crucified, buried, rose again - to rescue us from sin! And was frustrated and “astonished” at their willingness to turn from it.**

**This letter is a personal, passionate response.**

**Galatians 1:11 - I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. (I did not make this up – this is not my idea)**

**\* If we were to make the bible up – what would it say?**

**Religion is man looking up to the sky speculating about God**

**Gospel is God came down to man clearly revealed in Jesus**

**Gal1:12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. (can’t be understood w/ human understanding)**

**Paul is not saying follow me because I’m cool, funny, a great communicator, have a moral life, educated background, make a good point - I am merely a conduit of truth, not the source**

**\*\* The false teachers had credentials – Paul had Jesus**

**Paul then gives his before Christ –How he met Christ –and After Christ**

**Ask yourself the same questions as we dive in.**

**Autobiography of an Apostle- greatest conversion story in the bible**

* **THE BC - Saul the Terrorist**

**Gal 1:13 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 of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (Zealous for traditions – he was happy and fulfilled – had no desire for Jesus - not a seeker - not interested)**

**“I was persecuting” - “I was destroying” - “I was advancing”**

**Attacking the church with reverse evangelism – going door to door – “Are Christians here?” – Then took them to prison**

**Mover & a shaker, great motives, sincere passion (FYI - you can be sincerely wrong) doing evil things in the name of God**

**He was a Pharisees: From the beginning, God of all creation has loved us and called us to be in relationship with Him, to walk with & trust Him**

**But man – decided God was not trustworthy and decided to make decisions apart from his will (=sin)**

**We are born with that same desire - We chose sin over God**

**God chose using patriarchs and prophets revealed himself to man - OT**

**Over time they began mixing other religions w/God - straying from His word. The Pharisees rose up as a conservative group committed to scripture – and hundreds of extra traditions.**

**By the time Jesus arrives the Pharisees were power players in the religion department – Matt 15:1-3 (Jesus and his disciples were being chastised by the Pharisees for not washing their hands before they eat as the elders have told them.) 3 Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?**

**We have Christians who do that too. Jesus challenged their way of life - they hated him and wanted him dead. Imagine If I said we don’t need capitalism, or English, or music, church…**

**Saul was a good Pharisees - After Jesus was crucified (pursued by the religious elite) Jesus followers were growing - Paul hated Jesus & his followers w/ a passion and was out to stop them at all costs.**

**It was with this he says - 14 I was advancing in Judaism… and I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God… (The “But God” moment… I was a sinner, but God - hated Jesus, but God - tried to tear people apart, but God)**

* **Sin & chaos happens with, “But I” Paul’s words before Christ**
* **New life happens with “But God” Paul’s words after Christ**

**The HC – Saul and the Throw Down**

**15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb (God had his eye on Paul from the beginning – Paul didn’t know it until he met Christ) and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles… (God did not ring the doorbell… Salvation starts with God – not us – Paul was able to look back and see the hand of God)**

**His story is so profound it’s told 3X - Let’s check out Acts. Maybe you’ve heard parts w/out supernatural parts in an effort to make is seem normal - but it was anything from normal!**

**Acts 9:1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest 2 and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, (name of early followers) whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. 3 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?” (not a seeker** - **sometimes we need to fall down to see up) 5 “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. (he says nothing) 6 “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” (Remember he does not like Jesus or Christians) 7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.**

**God knocked him down – Saul/Paul now, praying, soul searching, thinking what just happened?**

**Meanwhile in Damascus a disciple named Ananias was given a vision…11 The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. (Go and lay hands on him - Ananias did not want anything to do with him…Saul was hated, he was a horrible person – he was not trusted) 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.” (More on that in a bit) 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. (Eyes were opened - Salvation – what do you have blinding you from Jesus?) He got up and was baptized, (outward sign of the inward work) 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus.**

**The AC – Saul the Evangelist - Transformed – an extreme makeover**

**After this he went out on his own - Gal 1:17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus. (We don’t know what fully happened there - Jesus taught him through scriptures – No BS - Bible School)**

**Acts 9 this Pharisee who came to take prisoners began preaching Jesus! His influence got so great that the Jewish leaders (his old friends) plotted to kill him and the believers (his new friends) snuck him out of town in a basket down the wall at night.**

**Galatians 1:18 Then after three years, (3 years after his throw down with Jesus)**

**Notice Paul stresses what he didn’t do: He didn’t go to JCC (Jerusalem Christian College) didn’t start a TV / radio ministry, didn’t go on tour, or write a book. What did he do? He dropped out of sight for 3 yrs to grow with Jesus and tell his story.**

**Gal 1:18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas (Peter) (1st time to meet him.) and stayed with him fifteen days.**

**19 I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother.**

**Acts 9 tell us why it was only 15 days - nobody wanted him there - Acts 9:26 When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. (Barnabas took him under his wing)**

**Paul started preached the gospel and his old friends attempted to kill him and again his new friends snuck him out**

**Paul reminds Galatia his BC/ HC/ AC. I am called by God and set free**

**Galatians 1:20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. (My life was not changed by religion, culture, rules or tradition! My Life was changed by Jesus Christ.) 21 Then I went to Syria (Antioch) and Cilicia. (Tarsus)**

**After his 15-day Jerusalem trip they sent him on errands, then sent him home and then to Antioch to help Barnabas.**

**Paul’s run around: Damascus > Arabia >Damascus (3 years) > Jerusalem (15 days) > Caesarea > Tarsus (9yrs) > Syria > Antioch (1 year) – total roughly 12-13 yrs**

**Galatians 1:22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” 24 And they praised God because of me. (Saul was completely transformed: A new attitude toward the Gospel and Jesus, toward believers - toward scripture - towards life)**

**Acts 13 - While serving in a church in Antioch with Barnabas, God called them to tell the gentile world about Jesus – roughly 12-13 yrs after his salvation - Paul became an apostle. It was on this trip that Paul and Barnabas when to Galatia and preached the gospel.**

**Galatians 2:1 Then after fourteen years, (13 and 1 year on the mission trip) I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.**

**Next week the strangest and most bizarre command in the entire bible**

**Four Thoughts: 1. The greater the calling, the greater the cost**

**Making a difference in the world means absorbing substantial pain**

**Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.**

**And he did… assignation attempts, beaten, tortured, imprisoned, ship wreaked, abandoned, hungry - this was part of his daily life**

**\* Paul’s accomplishments and his suffering went together.**

**It’s not because God had some kind of a secret vendetta against Paul - make him drink a little of his own medicine… It is because for Paul to be used greatly, he had to be wounded deeply.**

**Sometimes - God has to bruise you before He can use you**

**So, you will be sensitive to his touch and reliant on Him**

**If you really want to be used greatly by God, accept this now: You’re going to be tired / You’re going to be betrayed / You’re going to suffer**

**\*\*\* I think of mom’s – the sacrifice and pain many go thru**

**2 Corinthians 4:17 - Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.**

**2. Transformation is a miracle that depends on God alone**

**God set him apart, called him, got his attention, healed him –transformed him, commissioned him - God takes full responsibility**

**Paul did not deserve it – it was a work of Grace / we can do nothing to deserve it or assist it.**

**Gal 6:14 - 14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (It was nothing I did – I’m going to brag about Jesus alone)**

**3. Jesus is still changing lives – He’s still doing surprise makeovers**

**The “that was then this is now” moment**

**\*\*\* This fundamental truth is at the core of who we are - Your life can be radically changed by Jesus - you’re never the same again**

**Maybe you can relate – if you knew my life, where I came from, what Jesus did - that is the work of Jesus**

**4. No one is beyond the reach of God**

**God can touch and change anybody. That includes you mom – and your children. The worst sinners often make the best saints.**

**Paul to - 1 Timothy 1:15 - This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.**

**Two responses to this from some**

**1. I don’t really want everybody touched – “But God…”**

**2. But they are really far from God - “But God…”**

**Paul’s is a story of amazing grace, the terrorist who became an evangelist - 2 Cor 5:17 – if anyone be in Christ – they are a new creature…**

**What’s your story?**

**Are you a Saul? I once was a liar, cheat, angry, pride filled, perverted, I once was blind but now I see – the scales are off…**

**Paul gives his Before Christ – How he met Christ – and the After Christ**

**My BC/ HC/ AC – you have heard my testimony – but I want to share my mom’s.**

**Had an abusive childhood with an alcoholic father, married young, had kids young, divorced young, single mom, married to an abusive convict, divorced, single and struggled w/ drugs & alcohol, married again (her mother never stopped praying) One Easter after years of running from God, she went to church… (God answered my grandma’s years) she encountered Jesus. She was radically changed!**

**Life continued to take it’s turn as she became a single mother again (whole diff story). God continued to work in her –she never gave up on Jesus. She was my biggest fan, she sat on the front row at Livingway until she passed away at age 64. It was her and my grandma’s prayers that helped to get me here.**

**Where Christ is - there is a before and after.**

**There is an extreme makeover – transformation.**

**1 Corinthians 6:9 Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

**Moms here is a challenge for you today – tell your gospel story to your family. How you met Jesus - and celebrate your greatest gift.**

**Acts 9:4-5 When Paul was confronted by Jesu on that road to Damascus, Jesus said… “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”**

**Jesus felt the pain of every believer – he knows your pain too.**

**Salvation**

**VIDEO**

**If you mom is there, get up and hug your mom – let’s pray**

**Prayer from mothers**