

Galatians 1:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Analysis

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Paul appeals to widely known facts. "Ye have heard" (ēkousate, ἤκουσατε) references his reputation—his pre-conversion life was public knowledge. "My conversation" (anastrophēn, ἀναστροφήν) means "conduct, manner of life"—behavioral pattern, not mere speech. "In time past" (pote) contrasts former life with present.

"In the Jews' religion" (en tō Ioudaismō, ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ) refers to Judaism as religious system and culture. Paul uses Ioudaismos (only here and verse 14 in NT) to describe his zealous Pharisaic past. "Beyond measure" (kath' hyperbolēn, καθ' ὑπερβολήν) means "to excess, extraordinarily"—Paul was extreme in persecution. "I persecuted" (ediōkon, ἐδίωκον) uses imperfect tense indicating continuous, habitual action.

"The church of God" (tēn ekklēsian tou theou)—Paul attacked not mere human movement but God's own assembly. "Wasted it" (eporthoun autēn, ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν) means "destroyed, ravaged," using military language for violent devastation (same word Acts 9:21). Paul's savagery proves his gospel didn't evolve from natural progression but required supernatural intervention—the persecutor became the preacher through divine revelation alone.

Historical Context

Paul's persecution is documented in Acts 7-9. He held coats at Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:58), ravaged the church dragging believers to prison (Acts 8:3), breathed murderous threats seeking letters to arrest Damascus believers (Acts 9:1-2), and was known to Judean churches by reputation though not by sight (verse 22). His Pharisaic zeal (Philippians 3:4-6) made him Judaism's rising star and Christianity's chief enemy. This dramatic reversal authenticated both his conversion's reality and his gospel's divine origin—no human process explains such transformation. The Judaizers couldn't claim comparable divine intervention.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. In what ways does your pre-Christian past (whether morally good or bad) reveal the gospel's transforming power?
2. Why is it significant that Paul attacked not just Christians but "the church of God" specifically?
3. What should the miracle of conversion produce in both your confidence about gospel truth and compassion toward current enemies?

Interlinear Text

Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν
the church of God and wasted it
G1577 G2316 G2532 G4199 G846

Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὅτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν
the Jews' religion how that beyond measure I persecuted
G2454 G3754 G2596 G5236 G1377 G3588

Ὑκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ
ye have heard For G3588 of my conversation in time past in G3588
G191 G1063 G1699 G391 G4218 G1722

Additional Cross-References

Acts 8:3 (Parallel theme): As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Acts 9:26 (Parallel theme): And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

Acts 9:21 (Parallel theme): But all that heard him were amazed, and said; Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?

1 Corinthians 15:9 (References God): For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Timothy 1:13 (Parallel theme): Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Acts 8:1 (Parallel theme): And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Philippians 3:6 (Parallel theme): Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

