

Galatians #5

August 25, 2024

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace

Today's Message: Paul, A New Calling: A defense of his conversion and message; Galatians 1:11-24

People demand authenticity. No one wants the proverbial wool pulled over their eyes. People want the real thing, especially when it comes to absolute Truth claims. In Galatians, obviously, Paul's detractors were slamming Paul's ministry. They questioned his motives (1:10); they attacked his personal testimony; they insulted his integrity; they argued against his apostolic authenticity and authority. But above all, and this was probably the most dangerous of the attacks of the Judaizers, they rejected his gospel, both its origin and its Truth. Over the next few weeks, we are going to join with Paul and watch and listen and learn how he fights for the Truth.

We should appreciate the transparency of Scripture. Concerning the spread of the gospel the Bible is an open book in relating the opposition that comes from every angle. The four gospels and the book of Acts, and the letters of Paul give us clear insight into the opposition that faced everyone who stepped out in faith and obedience to the Lord. In almost every letter or book we are left with little or no doubt that the world does simply receive the message of the free grace of God for the salvation of sinners, both Jew and Gentile.

We can learn a valuable lesson from these books, and in particular, Galatians. We can learn that our main goal in the gospel ministry cannot be to proclaim the message in such a way that no one objects or rejects the message. That would be foolish and unrealistic because letters like Acts or Galatians prove that even the world's best evangelists, the apostles, faced continual opposition. Why? Because, as Jesus said, "Men loved darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil. (John 3:19)" What we must learn is that the most important thing, regardless of its acceptance, is to speak the truth and defend the truth as it truly is, the Truth! And Truth is of God and found and revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God!

It was this attack on the Truth of God's gospel by the Judaizers that provoked Paul to wage a strong defense of his ministry to the Galatian churches (Galatians 1 – 2). And as we will see in the coming weeks, it was this attack on the Truth that will force Paul to wage a strong offensive attack on the false doctrine being preached by the Judaizers among the Galatian churches (Galatians 3 – 4). Last week we looked at Paul's defense of his authenticity as an apostle and his authority as an apostle to preach. This week we will look at Paul's Calling and his defense of his conversion and of the message he preached. This is important because, if the Judaizers can get away with undermining Paul's calling and message, then they have effectively stolen the hearts and souls of the Galatian believers.

Before we dive into the passage in Galatians, I want to set before you a critical principle to apply to your life: **We must know the Truth. We must stand on the Truth. And we must defend the Truth.**

We will look at this passage in two sections followed by a concluding application. 1) Paul Claims that his gospel came from Christ by direct revelation; 2) Paul Proves that his gospel came from Christ by direct revelation; and 3) Concluding application.

I) (1:11-12) Paul Claims that his gospel came from Christ by direct revelation.

- A) Paul defends the origin of the gospel he preached.
 - 1) If he successfully proves his case then that very gospel he preached and that which we preach is normative, that is, it is the very standard against which all other gospel proclamations are measured and judged!
 - (a) In other words, Paul is saying that if there is anything added to the message it is false.
 - 2) He says, "the gospel I preached (among the Galatians) is not something that man made up."

- (a) The implication is that it came from God, which he will declare directly.
 - 3) He implicates their source as defective:
 - (a) "I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it..."
 - (i) The false teachers accused Paul of learning his gospel from incompetent teachers.
 - (ii) They claimed that their gospel was taught to them by the apostles (Peter, James, John, etc.).
 - (a) So, theirs, they would concede was taught to them by men.
 - (b) Paul's claim was to the contrary!
 - 4) Paul's source:
 - (a) "I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ."
 - (i) A personal revelation. This is why Paul often referred to his message as "his gospel" as we can see, for example in Romans 16:25.
 - (b) Therefore, the Gospel he received is God's message; God's Gospel; God's words!
- B) Paul claimed this personal calling as well as personal revelation several times in his letters.
- 1) Galatians 1:1: "Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father."
 - 2) 1 Corinthians 11:23: "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you:"
 - 3) 1 Corinthians 15:3: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance..."
- II) (1:13-24) Paul Proves that his gospel came from Christ by direct revelation.** (His personal history.)
- A) Paul proves, from his personal history, that his gospel came from Christ by direct revelation.
- 1) (1:13-14) Who he was and what he was doing **before his conversion to Christ.**
 - (a) Who and what he was in Judaism
 - (i) A persecutor of the church: violent, savage, persecuting with great intensity with the intention of destroying the church, its doctrine and its people.
 - (a) Acts 8:3: "But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.
 - 1. Contrast that with his house to house ministry as an apostle! (**see Acts 20:20**)
 - (b) Acts 26:10b: "I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them."
 - 1. Contrast that with Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?"
 - (b) (1:14) He was fully steeped in his zeal for the "traditions" of the Jews.
 - (c) Summary: He was building the case for the impossibility of a change of heart and mind apart from God. God alone could reach him, and God alone did, in fact reach him!
 - 2) (1:15-16a) That it as God alone who reached him and caused his dramatic conversion!
 - (a) Remember who and what he was. But God intervened! God did it! Not man!
 - (b) "God set me apart before birth". This is a major theme of Paul's preaching: Divine Election.
 - (i) For examples: God chose Jacob before birth. **See Romans 9:10-13**
 - (ii) Jeremiah: Jer. 1:5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart..."
 - (c) "God called me by His grace": Paul acknowledged that he was not deserving!
 - (i) He was fighting against God, against Christ and against people. He was NOT looking for or asking for God's mercy. **Yet** mercy found him and grace called him!
 - (a) "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute Me?"
 - (b) **Application:** Paul's zeal for destruction was NO match for God. God's plan and His initiative was unhindered by Paul's sin, wickedness and depravity!
 - 1. So it is with any and all who come to faith in Jesus Christ!
 - (d) "[God] was pleased to **reveal** His Son **in** me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles."
 - (i) A visible encounter but an inward illumination worked by the Spirit of Christ in him.
 - (a) On the Damascus Road

- (b) And, also when he spent three years in Arabia, learning Christ from Christ Himself!
- (ii) And here we also see that the calling led to his call to preach to the Gentiles.
 - (a) Now Paul becomes an apostle of light and life instead of destruction and death!
 - 1. To preach Christ as Deliverer, not Moses and the law as deliverer.
- 3) (1:16b-24) Paul proves from his post conversion history that his revelation came from Christ. (He is proving that after his conversion he never took opportunity to consult anyone else.)
 - (a) (1:16) He consulted no man.
 - (i) Even Ananias, did not teach him. He only laid hands on him to receive sight (Acts 9:12).
 - (b) (1:17-18a) He did not go immediately to Jerusalem to consult apostles.
 - (i) Acts 9:20 tells us that he preached Christ in Damascus to the amazement of the people.
 - (a) He had to run for his life. King Aretas of Damascus wanted to kill him (2 Cor. 11:32)
 - (ii) (1:18a) He fled to Arabia for 3 years. Taught by Christ. Learned from Christ from OT.
 - (a) I imagine Christ explained Himself from the OT like He did Emmaus Road disciples!
 - (c) (1:18b-20) Up to Jerusalem but for only 15 days!
 - (i) He met with Peter and James (James that wrote "James," not the brother of John.).
 - (ii) Acts 9:28-29 tells us that Paul spent most his time preaching.
 - (a) Not any significant time with Peter and James.
 - (b) This also proves his point that his gospel was NOT taught to him by men!
 - (d) (1:21-24) Paul flees from Jerusalem and goes to Syria and Cilicia. (Damascus and Tarsus.)
 - (i) Acts 9:29-30 tells us why Paul only stayed 15 days in Jerusalem: He was debating with Grecian Jews and they tried to kill him. The church in Jerusalem sent him to Caesarea.
 - (ii) The point: Paul was arguing that he spent most his time far from the apostles of Christ!
 - (a) (1:22) Case in point: His influence was so small: "he remained unknown in Judea."
 - (b) (1:23) "They only heard the report: 'The man who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.'"
 - (c) And (1:24) affirms that the only explanation of Paul's change in activity, from persecutor of the church to preacher of Christ, was God!
 - 1. "And they praised God because of me."
 - 4) Summary:
 - (a) Paul has been making the case that his conversion, calling and message was from God revealing Christ in him, and not from meeting with and conferring with apostles or others.
 - (b) That he never spent more than 15 days in Jerusalem and even fewer with the apostles undergirds his assertion that he did not have time nor opportunity to learn the fullness of Christ from them.
 - (c) Galatians 2:1 adds to our evidence by saying it was 14 years after his conversion that he finally went to confer with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. And, even then, he clarifies that this action was in "response to a revelation. (2:2)"
 - (d) All these points of evidence proves that his gospel was revealed by Christ, independent of the apostles or others.

III) Concluding Application.

- A) How could these verses of Paul's testimony help you defend the gospel message the next time you hear someone make the charge that Paul simply made up the gospel? "The Pauline Gospel."
- B) Paul gives a testimony of his conversion, calling and of his message. He makes a great case. But he seals his case by relating an easily confirmed story, that the people in Judea, who having not seen him, were saying that he who formerly persecuted the church was now preaching the faith (1:23)! Then he says, "And they praised God because of me. (1:24)." I wonder if your life and mine is so full of Christ in us that we spill over with His presence in our lives when we are with our families, our friends, our church and in public. This should be true of you and me. If it is not, what will you do this week to begin reconnecting in a close and personal way with the Lord Jesus who loves you?