

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Notes by Doug Hamilton

Galatians: Part 2

In the introduction from our last lesson, we discovered that the Galatians were influenced by some Judaizers into thinking they needed to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. The Galatians had gone from a group of Christians saved by grace through the blood of Christ to a mutated Jewish-type faith that was Christian in name only. The Judaizers were able to do this because they first called into question Paul's apostleship and then his gospel message. With that foundation, Paul would have attempted re-establishment of both.

Paul Defense

Galatians 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

- He started out making a propositional statement. To establish his connection to Christ, Paul would have to re-establish his apostolic authority. Since his gospel was also called into question, he starts out by making four points concerning the gospel that he preached.
 1. It was not according to man.
 2. It was not received from a man.
 3. It was not taught to him.
 4. It was received directly from Jesus Christ Himself.
- The last point is in contrast to the first three. He is making the claim that the gospel that he received came directly from Jesus Christ.
- We must remember that one of the qualifications of being an apostle is that you must have been personally "*sent out with a message*" by Jesus Christ. That is what the term *apostle* means, one sent out with a message. In order for Paul to have been sent out by Jesus, he would have had to meet Jesus. Clearly he was not in the same category as the other apostles who were with Jesus in the three and a half year ministry (Acts 1:21-22), was he? We know that he was "*an apostle born out of due time*" (1 Corinthians 15:8) because we have the New Testament, but they did not.
- If he could prove through logical deduction of the facts that Jesus was the One that gave him the gospel, then he could not only re-establish his apostolic authority, but also address the other. To do this Paul takes a trip through the historical facts of the case.

A) His former manner of life before the GOSPEL.

Galatians 1:13-14 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

- Paul, alias Saul, was a zealous Jew that was bent on destroying Christianity. This is confirmed in three bits ways:

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1. He was a persecutor of the church.
 - Acts 8:1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.
 - Acts 8:3 But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.
 - Acts 22:4 “I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons...”
 - Acts 9:21 “...Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and *who* had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?”
2. He was prominent among his contemporaries.
 - Acts 9:1-2 “...Saul...went to the high priest,² and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”
 - Philippians 3:4-5 “...If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;
 - Acts 22:3 “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers,
3. He was extremely zealous for Jewish tradition.
 - Acts 22:3 He was “being zealous for God just as you all are today.”
 - Phil 3:6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”
 - Acts 26:4-5 “So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my youth up, which from the beginning was spent among my *own* nation and at Jerusalem;⁵ since they have known about me for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion.
- All of this spelled out one primary message: Saul of Tarsus was absolutely unreachable by anyone on the planet. He was employed in the hunting down and eliminating Christians; He was deeply entrenched in the Jewish system of things; He was steeped in the traditions of the Jews. That leads to the all important question: WHO WOULD HAVE OR COULD HAVE LED SAUL OF TARSUS TO THE GOSPEL?
 - Was it the Christians? No, for they were terrified of him and fled in his presence.
 - Was it the apostles? No, they were hiding out fear of this man as well.
 - Was it the Jews? No, for they are the ones that wanted the Christians killed.
 - Was it Jesus? A review of history would seem to indicate that it was Christ that influenced Saul to convert.
- Paul was confronted by Jesus on the Road to Damascus.
 - Acts 9:4-6 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”⁵ And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” And He *said*, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,⁶ but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do.”

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- Acts 9:15-16 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; ¹⁶ for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."
- Acts 22:15-16 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

B) No apostolic influence concerning the GOSPEL.

Galatians 1:15-20 But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus. ¹⁸ Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)

- Only two of the apostles met him during those fifteen days in Jerusalem. Acts 9:26-27 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.
- He had to immediately flee for safety when attempts were made on his life by the Hellenistic Jews. Acts 9:28-30 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. ³⁰ But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

C) No Judean church altering of the GOSPEL.

Galatians 1:21-24 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; ²³ but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they were glorifying God because of me.

- Acts 9:30 But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.
- Paul would remain away from the region of Judea and its capitol of Jerusalem for many years. There is indication that he was doing mission work around the area of Tarsus. He would have no influence from the Judean brethren concerning his ministry of the gospel.

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D) The Jerusalem conference reinforced Paul's GOSPEL.

Galatians 2:1-10 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ² It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. ³ But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. ⁵ But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. ⁶ But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. ⁷ But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised ⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), ⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ *They only asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

- This is the account of the Jerusalem conference from Acts 15. Some brethren from the churches of Judea had come to Antioch, putting a circumcision commandment on the gentile converts that Paul had worked so hard to bring into the covenant with Jesus.
- As mentioned in the last lesson, Paul and Barnabas made the trip to Jerusalem in order to meet with the apostles and make sure that their gospels lined up with each other. Instead of making it a public issue, they initially met behind closed doors to avoid any potentially embarrassing moments.
- In the meeting the apostles confirmed that Paul's gospel was true and consistent with the apostles.
 - a. The apostles did not compel Titus, the gentile convert that traveled with him, to be circumcised.
 - b. The apostles were united against the false misrepresentation of the "brethren" that came to Antioch.
 - c. The apostles added nothing to Paul's gospel presentation.
 - d. The apostles assigned Paul the mission to reach out to the gentiles and Peter the Jewish mission.
- When that conference was complete, Paul had a ringing endorsement that his gospel and ministry was fully in agreement with what the apostles were also saying.

E) His Rebuke of Peter's misapplication of the GOSPEL.

Galatians 2:11-14 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ² For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to

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withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. ¹³ The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

- Apparently not long after the Jerusalem conference, Peter came to Antioch for some mission work. Initially while there he was quite accepting of the gentiles, for he would sit at the same table for meals. That all changed when James sent some other Jewish missionaries to Antioch. When they arrived, Peter abandoned the gentiles to hang out with the Jews, leaving a bad impression.
- Paul would not tolerate this second-class citizen perspective and confronted Peter openly about this. His actions spoke contrary to his words concerning the gospel that he preached. Paul rebuked Peter before all about a perversion of the gospel.

Summary

- There were many proofs that Paul offered to show that he received his gospel from Jesus Christ.
 - His prior life before his response to the gospel says so, leaving the question, "How did he change?"
 - The fact that there was no apostolic nor Judean congregational influence leaves open the question "Where did he acquire his gospel presentation?"
 - The facts of the Jerusalem conference leaves us with the question, "Were not the apostles all in agreement with Paul's gospel?"
 - The account of Paul's rebuke to Peter leaves us with the question, "Is Paul's gospel consistency obvious?"
- They should have no reason whatsoever to doubt neither the apostleship nor the gospel of Paul. He systematically removed this from the equation. That leaves us with the question... Why would we ever doubt Paul's apostleship or his gospel message?

Application:

You can have great joy in knowing that the writings of Paul are firm and the gospel that he preached was complete. The arguments that he made were sound and the results he gained were real. They questioned his apostleship and his gospel to no avail in the end. Paul defended both with good logic and we must build our confidence with that fact. In every decade and in the lives of every Christian there are troublemakers of the faith. Just stick to the facts and you will always be okay.