

McCoy Memorial Baptist Church

Date: September 28, 2022

Fall Study: GALATIANS: "Letter of Liberation"

Personal: A _____ of Paul's Gospel and His Apostleship (1:11-2:21)

After his introduction, Paul took up in more detail the challenge to his gospel & his authority as an apostle. Was he a self-appointed imposter? Arguing autobiographically, Paul declared that (1) he was an apostle before he met the other apostles (which was 14 years after his conversion); and (2) when he did meet them, he was received as an equal; and (3) he even found it necessary to rebuke Peter, the reputed chief apostle.

1. Paul's gospel was received by way of _____ (1:11-12)

A. Paul certified that his gospel did not _____ with man.

His gospel was literally "not according to man". It was "no human invention" (JBP; NEB).

B. Paul declared that he did not _____ the gospel from any _____ source.

As if it were already an accepted tradition handed down from a previous generation.

C. Paul affirmed he did not receive the gospel by means of some course of _____.

I did not learn it from human teachers.

D. Instead, "it (his gospel) came through a revelation of Jesus Christ."

In vs. 1, Paul asserted the divine origin of his apostolic commission, so now he asserts the divine origin of his apostolic gospel. Neither his _____ nor his _____ was derived from man; both came to him direct from God, through Jesus Christ.

Transition: *Having made this startling claim to direct revelation from God without human means, Paul goes on to prove it from history, that is, from the facts of his own autobiography.*

2. Events _____ Paul's conversion (1:13-14)

"You have heard of my previous way of life," he says. He mentions two aspects of his unregenerate days; in both aspects, he was _____.

A. His _____ of the church, which he now knew to be "the church of God".

"Intensely" indicates the violence, even the savagery, with which he set about this grim work. Not satisfied with persecuting the church, he was bent on _____ it (Acts 8:3; 26:10).

B. His _____ for the traditions of his fathers.

"I was outstripping many of my Jewish contemporaries in my boundless devotion to the traditions of my ancestors" (vs. 14; NEB). He had been brought up according to "the strictest party" (26:5); namely, as a Pharisee, and this is how he lived.

Such was the state of Saul of Tarsus before his conversion. He was a bigot & a fanatic, and whole-hearted in his devotion to Judaism and in his persecution of Christ and the church.

3. Events _____ Paul's conversion (1:15-16a)

The contrast between verses 13 and 14 on the one hand and verses 15 and 16 on the other is dramatically abrupt. It is clearly seen in the subjects of the verbs. In verses 13 and 14, Paul is speaking about himself. But in verses 15 and 16 he begins to speak of God. God intervened in the life of Saul of Tarsus. NOTE: "But ... God." Nowhere is this intervention more graphically described than in Acts 9. Here, Paul listed three things God did for him. Notice how at each stage the initiative & the grace of God are emphasized.

A. God set him apart from birth; lit. "from my mother's womb".

Like Jacob (Ro. 9:10-13), & like Jeremiah (Je. 1:5), so Paul, before he was born, was set apart as an apostle.

B. God's pre-natal choice led to his _____.

Paul was fighting against God, against Christ, against men. He neither deserved mercy, nor asked for it. Yet mercy found him, and grace called Him. "Grace" — God's utterly undeserved and unmerited love.

C. God was pleased to reveal His Son in Paul: The _____ and _____ of Christ.

D. God's Purpose: "so that I might preach him among the Gentiles."

Paul's unique ministry as an apostle was to the Gentiles (Eph. 3:1-13). What Paul was charged to preach to Gentiles was not the law of Moses, as the Judaizers were teaching, but the "good news" of Christ.

The thrust (force) of these verses is compelling. Saul of Tarsus had been a fanatical opponent of the gospel. But it pleased God to make him a preacher of the very gospel he had been so bitterly opposing.

4. Events _____ Paul's conversion (1:16b-24)

In this longer paragraph the emphatic statement is the first, at the end of verse 16: "I did not consult any man." Paul's point in these verses is to let his readers know that he formed his theology not by consulting with others, but independently as he sought God's guidance. *He produces a series of three alibis to prove that he did not spend time in Jerusalem, having his gospel shaped by other apostles.*

Number 1: He went into _____ (vss. 16b-17).

He seems to have stayed there for 3 years (vs. 18). In this period of withdrawal, as he meditated on the O.T. Scriptures, on the facts of the life and death of Jesus that he already knew, and on his experience of conversion, the gospel of the grace of God was revealed to him in its fullness. It's been suggested that those 3-yrs. in Arabia were a deliberate compensation for the 3-yrs. of instruction which Jesus gave the other apostles, but which Paul missed. Now he had Jesus to himself, as it were, for 3 years of solitude in the wilderness.

Number 2: He went up to Jerusalem 3 years later (after conversion) & _____ (vss. 18, 19).

The occasion is probably that referred to in Acts 9:26, after he was smuggled out of Damascus, being lowered down the city wall in a basket. *But this visit was not nearly as significant as the false teachers were obviously suggesting.* Several features are mentioned. For one thing . . .

- It took place 'after three years' (verse 18). This almost certainly means three years after his conversion, by which time his gospel would have been fully formulated.
- Next, when he reached Jerusalem, he saw only two of the church's leaders: Peter & James. He went "to get acquainted with" Peter. Paul also saw James (not an apostle; the Lord's brother; and the recognized head of the Jerusalem Church). But he did not see any of the other eleven apostles. They may have been absent, or too busy, or even frightened of him (cp. Acts 9:26).
- Thirdly, he was in Jerusalem for only "fifteen days." Of course, in fifteen days the apostles would have had some time to talk about Christ. But Paul's point is that he had no time in two weeks to absorb from Peter the whole counsel of God. Besides, that was **not** the purpose of his visit. He went to get acquainted, and much of those two weeks in Jerusalem, we learn from Acts 9:28-29, was spent in preaching.

Summary: Paul's first visit to Jerusalem was only after 3 years, it lasted only 2 weeks, & he saw only one apostle (Peter) & James. It was absurd to suggest that he obtained his gospel from the Jerusalem apostles.

Number 3: He was sent off to _____ and _____ (vss. 20-24).

This visit to the extreme north corresponds to Acts 9:30 where we're told that Paul, already in danger for his life, was brought by the brothers to Caesarea, where they 'sent him off to Tarsus', which is in Cilicia. As a result, he was "personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ" (vs. 22). Not until fourteen years later (2:1), presumably meaning fourteen years after his conversion, did Paul revisit Jerusalem & have a more prolonged consultation with the other apostles. By that time his gospel was fully developed. But during the 14-year period between his conversion and this consultation he had paid only one brief and insignificant visit to Jerusalem. The rest of the time he had spent in distant Arabia, Syria & Cilicia. ***His alibis proved the independence of his gospel.***

Introduction to Galatians 1:11-2:21

We have seen in Gal. 1:6–10 that there is only one gospel, and that this gospel is the criterion (the standard; benchmark) by which all human opinions are to be tested. It is the gospel which Paul presented.

The question now is, what is the origin of Paul's gospel that it should be normative, and that other messages and opinions should be assessed and judged by it? *Without doubt it is a very wonderful gospel.* We think of the Epistle to the Romans, the Corinthian Epistles and those mighty prison Epistles like Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians. We are impressed by their majestic sweep, their profundity, their consistency, as Paul outlines the purpose of God from eternity to eternity. But where did Paul get it all from? Was it the product of his own fertile brain? Did he make it up? Or was it stale second-hand stuff with no original authority? Did he steal it (plagarize) from the other apostles in Jerusalem, which the Judaizers evidently maintained, as they tried to subordinate his authority to theirs?

Paul's answer to these questions may be found in verses 11 and 12: *For I would have you know, brothers, 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.* The reason why Paul's gospel was the yardstick by which other gospels were to be measured is now clear.

CONCLUSION:

What Paul has been saying in vss. 13 to 24 may be summarized thus: The fanaticism of his pre-conversion career, the divine initiative in his conversion, & his almost total isolation from the Jerusalem church leaders afterwards together combined to demonstrate that his message was not from man but from God. Further, this historical, circumstantial evidence could not be gainsaid. The apostle is able to confirm and guarantee it by a solemn affirmation: 'I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie!' (verse 20).