

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

GALATIANS 1:11-24, *A PERSONAL DEFENSE OF PAUL'S GOSPEL*

- A. Paul did not receive the Gospel from man but directly from Jesus Christ (11-12)
1. The source of Paul's Gospel was not man (11-12a), ***For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it,***
 - a. *brothers*
 - 1) Paul speaks to the Galatians as brothers in Christ. He is not against them but against the false teaching.
 - 2) Note Paul's address to those in the church in Corinth which had issues as well, 1 Corinthians 15:1, *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand,*
 - b. *not man's gospel*
 - 1) In the Greek, it is written *not according to man*.
 - 2) The Gospel message proclaimed by Paul did not come to him from other men.
 - 3) His intent was to convince the Galatians that the message he presented to them was the true Gospel.
 - 4) Donald Campbell, *Man-made religions emphasize human merit and the necessity of human works for salvation. Paul's message did not.*
 - c. He did not receive the Gospel through ordinary means.
 - 1) *from any man* - traditional teachers.
 - 2) *taught it* - from a curriculum of formal education.
 2. It was received by revelation from Jesus Christ (12b), ***but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.***
 - a. Paul received the message of the Gospel directly from Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus.
 - 1) Acts 9:3-6, *Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."*
 - 2) He dared to call it *my gospel* not because he had made it up but because it had been directly revealed to him by Jesus Christ, note Romans 16:25, *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages*
 - b. Paul received the Gospel by revelation.
 - 1) It was a revelation of who Jesus Christ is and why He came.
 - 2) John Stott, *Paul's claim, then, is this. His gospel, which was being called in question by the Judaizers and deserted by the Galatians, was neither an invention (as if his own brain had fabricated it), nor a tradition (as if the church had handed it down to him), but a revelation (for God had made it known to him).*
 - 3) It is difficult for someone to say Paul's message was flawed if it came directly from the Lord.
 - 4) Max Anders, *No human mind apart from God's revelation would dream up a plan of salvation wholly dependent on God's grace and the death of his Son.*
 - 5) John Stott, *Having made this startling claim to a direct revelation from God without human means, Paul goes on to prove it from history, that is, from the facts of his own autobiography.*
- B. Paul had been a persecutor of the church of God but was transformed by a revelation of Jesus Christ (13-17)
1. His life was committed to destroying the Gospel message (13-14)
 - a. Paul was a fanatical persecutor of the church (13), ***For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it.***
 - 1) It is probable that Paul belonged to a radical wing of the Pharisaic movement.
 - a) Galatians 3:10, *...Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.*
 - b) Galatians 5:3, *I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.*
 - c) Total obedience to the law was Paul's pursuit in life.

- 2) Paul's focus was on being a good Jew not bringing Gentiles to faith in Christ.
 - a) He could not be accused of having a soft message since he was a fanatical persecutor of Jews who were following Jesus because he persecuted the church *violently, or to an extreme degree.*
 - b) Acts 26:9-11, *I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*
 - 3) Paul's intent was to destroy the church.
 - a) Grant Osborne, *As an extremely zealous and strict orthodox Jew he had considered Christianity an aberration and an abomination.*
 - b) He believed the existence of the church would bring God's wrath upon the nation of Israel.
 - c) His message of works was totally opposed to the Gospel's message of grace.
- b. Paul was a zealous Jew (14), ***And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.***
- 1) Paul's extreme animosity toward Christianity intensified his advancement in Judaism.
 - a) Philippians 3:4-6, *though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*
 - b) Warren Wiersbe, *His personal religious life, his scholarship, and his zeal in opposing alien religious faiths, all combined to make him the most respected young rabbi of his day.*
 - c) John Stott, *He was a bigot and a fanatic, whole-hearted in his devotion to Judaism and in his persecution of Christ and the church.*
 - 2) He was fully committed to *the traditions.*
 - a) The traditions included Mosaic regulations and the Torah, the set of extra laws developed by the scribes and Pharisees to enable adherents to apply general laws to specific situations.
 - c) Max Anders, *As a Pharisee, he had been one of the strictest Jews of his day, stricter than even these legalistic teachers who now opposed the gospel of grace.*
 - d) Donald Campbell, *...who could accuse Paul of not being acquainted with the teachings of Judaism when he knew them better than the Judaizers?*
2. His life was transformed by the call of God (15-17)
- a. God commissioned Paul to preach the Gospel to Gentiles (15-16a), ***But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,***
 - 1) God called Paul before he was born.
 - a) The Greek is *set me apart from my mother's womb.*
 - b) God always takes the initiative in grace.
 - 1] Isaiah 49:1, *Listen to me, O coastlands, and give attention, you peoples from afar. The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name.*
 - 2] Jeremiah 1:5, *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.*
 - 3] Romans 8:30, *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*
 - c) Grant Osborne, *God's grace is totally beyond our capacity to understand. God, knowing in advance all the terrible things that Paul would do, had still called him before he was even born. He was not only forgiven but given a ministry he could never have imagined. That is the case with each of us if we will but surrender to God's calling and will for our lives, as Paul did.*
 - 2) God revealed Jesus to Paul.
 - a) Paul met the requirement to be an apostle because God revealed Christ to Paul.
 - b) Paul noted this in 1 Corinthians 15:8, *Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.*
 - c) Donald Campbell, *Blinded as he had been to the deity of Jesus Christ and thinking that the Nazarene was a fraud, God gave Paul an outward vision of Christ on the Damascus Road and later an inner revelation concerning the full significance of the person and work of the Savior.*

- 3) God called Paul for a purpose.
 - a) He was chosen to preach the Gospel to Gentiles.
 - 1] Romans 1:1, *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,*
 - 2] Acts 9:15, *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."*
 - b) Warren Wiersbe, *God chose Paul to preach among the Gentiles the same grace that he had experienced. This, in itself, was evidence that Paul's conversion was of God; for certainly a prejudiced Jewish rabbi would never decide of himself to minister to the despised Gentiles!*
 - c) Paul declared that his conversion and commission to ministry did not come from man but directly from God. Of course, Paul was not speaking from pride but to prove that the message that saved the Galatians was from God, as well.

b. Paul's message was not formed by others but in continued revelation from God (16b-17), ***I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.***

- 1) Paul did not immediately consult *with anyone*.
 - a) The Greek is *with flesh and blood*.
 - b) His calling was from God, his commission was from God and his instruction was from God.
- 2) He spent time in Arabia and then returned to Damascus.
 - a) It is believed Paul studied the Scriptures in relation to Messiah, Acts 9:22, *But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.*
 - b) It is probable he started preaching to the Gentiles in that area.
 - c) John Stott, *It has even been suggested that those three years in Arabia were a deliberate compensation for the three years of instruction which Jesus gave the other apostles, but which Paul missed.*
 - d) Donald Campbell, *The product of these days in Arabia was the Christian theology that Paul explained in his epistle to the Romans.*

C. Paul's first meeting with Christian leaders (18-20)

1. He met with Peter and James (18-19), ***Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.***

- a. His meeting with Peter (*Cephas*) was not to confirm his message.
 - 1) Thomas Constable, *He went there "to get personally acquainted with" them, not to get information from them or to make inquiry of them.*
 - 2) Robert Wilkin, *There is no evidence here that Paul was seeking guidance from the Jerusalem church. He is clearly an independent witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*
- b. He stayed only 15 days because of a plot against his life, Acts 9:23, *When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him,*
- c. The only other apostle Paul met was James.
 - 1) James was the half-brother of Jesus whose mother was Mary.
 - 2) He was a leader of the church in Jerusalem, note Jerusalem Council where James declared, Acts 15:19, *Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,*
- d. John Stott, *To sum up, Paul's first visit to Jerusalem was only after three years, it lasted only two weeks, and he saw only two apostles. It was, therefore, ludicrous to suggest that he obtained his gospel from the Jerusalem apostles.*

2. Paul affirmed what he declared with an oath (20), ***(In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)***

- a. He is emphasizing the truth and importance of his letter by making an oath, calling God to be his witness.
 - 1) He was not taught the Gospel by any man.
 - 2) He had no contact with the Jerusalem church for three years.
 - 3) The Lord Jesus gave him the message directly.
- b. Thomas Constable, *The truth of the gospel as he preached it was at stake in the truthfulness of what he said, as was the error of what the false teachers were proclaiming.*
- c. Jesus did not condemn oaths in regard to important issues, even God made an oath, Hebrews 7:28, *For the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.*

D. Paul's first ministry (21-24)

1. He spent time in Syria and Cilicia (21), *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*
 - a. Paul left the region of Judea where the Gospel was being proclaimed for an area where the Gospel was relatively unknown.
 - b. Syria was north of Judea by way of Caesarea.
 - c. Cilicia was the province where Paul's home town, Tarsus, was located.
2. The churches of Judea were still unfamiliar with Paul (22), *And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.*
 - a. He had so little contact with the churches in Judea that he was still unknown by sight but he was known by his former reputation as a persecutor of the church.
 - b. He was not looking for validation of his ministry by staying close to Jerusalem.
 - c. Donald Campbell, *He was not commissioned for this ministry by the apostles, and because of the distance between him and Jerusalem he could not have been under their authority or subject to their oversight.*
3. The churches heard good reports of Paul's ministry and glorified God (23-24), *They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me.*
 - a. The churches of Judea heard reports that Paul was preaching a message of faith in Christ alone.
 - b. They glorified God that Paul's message was the same as that of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
 - c. The Jewish Christians in Judea rejoiced in the same Gospel that Judaizers in Galatia sought to distort.

CONCLUSION

- A. Paul received the Gospel of grace directly from God.
- B. It was the message that changed him from a persecutor to proclaimer of faith in Christ alone.
- C. Paul's isolation after conversion from church leaders for 14 years confirms his message was not from man but from God.