

8. Paul's defence of his apostleship & authority Gal 1:10 - 2:10

A. He did not preach by His own authority - he represented God whom he was serving: 1 vs 10-12

◇ *Galatians 1:10* "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ."

He had just said in vs 8 & 9 that if he, and angel or anyone preaches a different gospel they will be accursed. Now in vs 10 he in effect asks "what about me?" Am I one of these "people pleasers" who changes the message to suit his audience? He answers by saying he is now a bond-servant (doulos) of Christ... he is in complete submission to Jesus Christ as Lord & master ... he was under the Lord's authority.

The word "now" is used to express a contrast between his present life and his former life. Before his conversion it was his object to obtain the favor of the Jewish leaders. His authority & permission came from them. But now he had a higher aim. It was to please God who had saved, called & commissioned him as an apostle. His allegiance is to God & not man. His calling is to declare & teach the true Gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ.

Paul was not his own ... he had been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ ...he now belonged to Christ! His desire was to be faithful to Him.

Application: We must be sure to wait upon the Lord for HIS leading in when, where & how to be involved in ministry & serving the Lord. We must submit to HIS will, for HIS glory ... we must not force "our agenda" ... we should not be trying to build our own little kingdom ... our aim should not be popularity or power ... we should not be seeking position or prestige. Our goal should be total service to the Lord as His bond-servant.

◇ *Gal 1:11-12* "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something man-made. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ."

Paul did not make up his own message... and he did not get it from another human being. The Gospel is it is God's truth! Paul assured them that the source of his message was Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul was not a "self-appointed" apostle he did not get his message or his authority from the other apostles ... they "added nothing to him."(Gal 2:6) Paul was personally commissioned as an apostle by the risen Lord Jesus Christ as he stated in Gal 1:1 [*"Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead."*]

Application: It is VERY important to make SURE that the message we believe & preach is truly from God ... that it is the truth & not something less ... we need to study the Scriptures carefully & diligently to ensure we understand God's Word correctly ... it is dangerous & a tragedy to believe & preach a corrupted, man-made message!!

(Check out what you have been taught ... don't just believe every preacher, theologian, commentary or Christian book ... don't easily accept what you hear at every conference or seminar ... there are MANY wrong teachings & misinterpretations ... many professing believers are led astray in doctrine and practice ... it is each one of our responsibility & privilege to study God's Word for ourselves & not rely on 'second -hand' teaching)

B. Paul's testimony Gal 1:13-17

By appealing to his personal history & testimony Paul clearly showed that he did not learn his gospel from men or human institutions, but from God.

1. His Jewish zeal before he was saved: Gal 1:13-14 *"For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers."* He understood Judaism inside out! He ate, slept, lived Judaism. Such a man could only be turned around to believe in Jesus by the direct intervention of God!

Note how keenly aware Paul was of his former sinful life: in both vs 13 & vs 23 he confesses he used to ravage & persecute the church.

Cf. In 1 Tim 1:13-16 he says: *"13 ...I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy ...14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus....15 ... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."*

God worked in Saul of Tarsus, and miraculously changed a vile man into a wonderful preacher of the glorious good news of God's redemption in Christ! **He can, & wants to, change you & I too.**

Whatever the condition of your heart and mind and thoughts - no matter what secret sins or public sins you have done - no matter how bad you may have been or are - Christ can save & change you for His service & glory!

There is no sin too small or too big for the blood of Jesus to cover & cleanse. God changed Paul from an apostate (=one who is totally lost and hopeless) into an apostle (one sent as a preacher of truth & a servant of God).

2. God's call on Paul's life: Gal 1:15-16 *"But when it pleased God, who set me apart/separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen (=Gentiles)"* In other words, he says he was divinely commissioned by God. Though his own intention was to oppose God, in the Lord's will, the plan was to save and engage him in service. God was working in Paul's life even before he knew it!

Cf This is similar to the prophet Jeremiah: Jer 1:5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations." Cf also John the Baptist

3. God's preparation of Paul for ministry: (vs 16 b - 17) *"I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus."*

Why did he go to Arabia? To spend about 3 years with Lord in prayer, meditation, and being taught by the Lord. That's where he got his message from!! (This is a frequent pattern: God calls and saves a man, and then puts him aside for a time of preparation alone with God. Jesus did this with the disciples; many of the prophets; Moses, & David..)

C. Paul's first contact with the apostles at Jerusalem : Gal 1:18-24

- ◇ vs 18-20 *"Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles--only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie."* - his point is that he only met the other apostles after 3 years! Even then he only saw 2 of the apostles, and only for a short while; he did not receive his message or authority from these men.
- ◇ vs 21 *"Later I went to Syria and Cilicia"* - this is Paul's home territory. This was far away from any influence of any of the Jerusalem church. *Historians have concluded that he remained there perhaps seven years, until Barnabas recruited him for the work in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26).*
- ◇ vs 22-24 *"I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they praised/glorified God (in) because of me."*
What a transformation what a testimony!! Only the powerful grace of God could change a person like that!

(Application: Do others praise, honour & glorify God because of the evidence that God's grace is at work in you? Has there been a change? Are you radically different from the non-Christian world?)

D. Paul's second contact with the apostles at Jerusalem . 2:1-10

Note that up till now, he had defended the source of his Gospel (Galatians 1:11-24). In Galatians 2:1-10 he now defends the content of his Gospel (ie. What he actually taught).

- ◇ Gal 2:1 *"Then fourteen years after/ later I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 I went in response to a revelation"*

WHEN did this visit take place? It most likely is the occasion described in Acts 11:27-30 "During this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul."

- ◇ Gal 2:2 *"I set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain."*

Perhaps because of the pressure and opposition Paul was facing from his detractors, he became discouraged. Instead of being self-sufficient, he was humble enough to be willing to submit himself to the wisdom of older believers, and so he went to the recognized leaders in Jerusalem for counsel & advice! Even though he felt called of God to a ministry, he was not arrogant to feel he needed no input or direction! (*What a beautiful lesson!*)

He explained to them the CONTENT of his Gospel that he had preached and was preaching.

- ◇ an important thing happened at Jerusalem - *"not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek."* Among the Jewish church at Jerusalem - among the recognized leaders of the Christian church - circumcision was NOT required of a Gentile who had become a believer!! This is very significant!! The outward sig of circumcision was not necessary for salvation!

◇ “4 This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.” These false believers were putting pressure on Paul to have Titus circumcised - but says Paul “We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.”

◇ “6 As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance--those men added nothing to my message.”

Paul reminds them that all people are equal before the Lord - there is no “hierarchy of value” in God’s sight ... one is not more important or valuable than another.

Paul also stresses that nothing was added to his message by the believers at Jerusalem - rather “they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.⁸ For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

They did not correct or modify Paul’s message but recognized its divine source and affirmed its truth and completeness.

◇ 9 “James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.”

The ‘pillars of the church’ agreed that Paul’s doctrine was correct, and that he had an authentic ministry from God. They “gave them the right hand of fellowship” - this was a sign of acceptance, agreement and trust.

◇ “They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.” An interesting point, is that it is legitimate to focus the Gospel towards a particular group of people. The message stays the same, but the method of delivery will vary. [E.g. the way you speak to teenagers is different from the way you address a group of business men. [Of course one has to be careful how far you take this!!] We need to recognize & respect that the Lord gives different gifts to different people, and that God does call some people to a ministry that is different from what he calls others to.

◇ another point that arises is : “10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.” In the midst of our work for eternity, pointing souls to Christ for salvation, we are also remember the physical needs of the people around us. We are to care for the poor! This demonstrates genuine concern for others, motivated by the love of God.

Cf Jas 1:27 “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions”

In the ministry of Jesus, He often responded to physical needs, and relieved physical suffering - not just the spiritual needs - because He loved people & cared about the whole person. We are to follow His example in this.

But of course, we must be careful not to get side-tracked to lose the focus of what is ultimately of eternal importance! It is wonderful to feed a person ... but we should also be concerned to lead him to feed on the Bread of Heaven! It is good to rescue someone from slavery ... but we should also bring him to redemption from sin!

Like Paul, we must be diligent to know the truth & preach the truth. We should not be zealous for our ideas & opinions ... rather we should faithfully & accurately represent the Lord Jesus Christ.