

Galatians 1 pt. 2 Read through v.10-24

Paul is writing this letter to address bad instruction that has found its way to the Galatian churches. This bad doctrine is a form of legalism that teaches adherence to the Jewish law and restricts freedom in Christ.

V.10 is a bit of a reflection on his bold correction to those who would trouble the churches with fantastic revelations from angels, and other extra-biblical teachings that diverged from the true gospel.

Paul understands that in doing so there will be a certain number of people who hear these words that will be sorely offended.

Some of those people may in fact be responsible for perpetrating that fraudulent doctrine and of course when they are unmasked they will be offended, but more hopefully, repent.

Some people, taken in by the flash of such teaching, may fight dearly to defend their position because to admit when we are wrong or gullible is a humbling experience.

His adversaries accused him of being an interested flatterer of men, "becoming all things to all men," to make a party for himself, and so

observing the law among the Jews (for instance, circumcising Timothy), yet persuading the Gentiles to renounce it (Ga 5:11) (in order to flatter those, really keeping them in a subordinate state, not admitted to the full privileges which the circumcised alone enjoyed).
(Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D.)

But part of this whole faith in Christ, discipleship, Christianity thing is being teachable, being humble - humbling ourselves as it were. Listening and receiving sound, good doctrine and being discerning enough to shun bad doctrine.

Paul points out to the Galatians that if he were still in the people pleasing business he would not be a servant (δουλος = slave) of Christ.

What true words! Words we each individually find to be true as we live out this life.

[Mat 16:24-25 NKJV] 24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

The call to the cross is not a call to comfort. The cross was a brutally shameful and public means of execution. This is what Jesus calls us to.

To be sure some people will be over the moon that we are Christ-followers, and some will not. People want different things from each of us and may often try their best to guide out or nudge us in the direction they wish us to take.

But we must ask ourselves in those times, “Is Christ our Lord in the fullest sense of the word? Does he rule over our lives and all realms of our lives? Is He the one who directs our steps in His Kingdom?”

The very act of declaring oneself a believer will upset some people. Walking out our faith will ruffle some feathers and draw pronouncements of “self-righteousness,” and the critical eye seeking to catch us slipping in order to be the first one to cry “hypocrite.”

Even other Christians have a mapped out plan for how our walk and discipleship should go!

But who is the Lord of your life? Who are you pleasing? People or God?

That doesn't mean we SEEK to offend others, but if we keep adjusting our course each time another person desires to unbiblically direct our path we will be lost adrift with no real direction at all, no anchor to hold us steady. Only Christ can keep us going straight, not turning to the left or to the right.

V.11-12 Paul discusses some important points about the gospel relative to his own conduct and conversion.

The first thing is that the gospel is not according to man - it is not a contrivance of mankind as some suppose but rather God-wrought truth; observed and documented history that reconciles mankind to God.

The second thing is that Paul did not receive nor was he taught this gospel from man - meaning that he was not converted on the mission field by some faithful messenger but by Jesus Christ Himself.

Consider the uniqueness of this position. This is in fact one of the key hallmarks of an Apostle in the proper sense (Apostle as a proper noun).

He received this message directly from Jesus! Paul, at that time Saul, saw with his own eyes, heard with his own ears - what he witnessed

turned his world upside down, changed him completely and was the impetus for 13 books of the New Testament, multiple journeys to preach this message, many many churches established, and ultimately his own execution.

While Paul experienced a direct face to face meeting with the risen Lord Jesus that is not true for us.

We have received the gospel from men, we have been taught and are taught this gospel by people. That is how we received this message.

That doesn't make us less than the eyewitnesses of Paul's day, just different. We have a particular place and purpose in God's kingdom that we should diligently apply ourselves to.

In fact Jesus teaches one of his disciples - Thomas: [Jhn 20:29 NKJV] 29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed [are] those who have not seen and [yet] have believed."

[1Pe 1:8-9 NKJV] 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see [Him], yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of [your] souls.

But Paul points out here that what he has received is special and that it is the foundation for his calling and his work in the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ intentionally and specifically met with Paul for a divine purpose.

Those events are recorded for us in Acts, and Paul is going to shed some light on those events here as well.

[Act 9:3-6, 13-16 NKJV] 3 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. 4 Then 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?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It [is] hard for you to kick against the goads." 6 So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord [said] to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." ... 13 Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. 14 "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." 15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the

children of Israel. 16 "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

V.13-14 Paul looks back in time - he recollects his past alienation from God.

Paul's past isn't a mystery or a big question mark. He has a past and he uses the story of his past to attest to the miraculous working of Christ.

In Paul's life, formerly Saul, he is two different people. The dividing mark in those two people, where the old man ends and the new man begins, is his encounter with the resurrected Lord.

He reflects on his former conduct in Judaism, his zeal, enthusiasm, love for the traditions and his ambition to exceed beyond his peers in a works based righteousness - just like many religions today.

He followed all of the rules, he read his Bible, and all of the extra stuff too! As a defender of the true faith he was determined to snuff out these heretical weirdos that called themselves Christians and had broken away from the straight and narrow.

Paul was RIGHT in his own eyes, and in the eyes of his religion, and in the eyes of his blood family. He was a GOOD man - defending the faith, tithing, going to church. BUT Paul was miles apart from God's heart, separated by a vast gulf that self-righteousness could not bridge.

V.15-17 God would have Paul by His grace and at His pleasure. God's sovereignty entered the picture in Paul's life.

This is one of those areas that we cannot deny. We often squabble about sovereignty and freewill but the reality is that God conquered his enemy - Paul - by knocking him off of his high horse, confronting him with the truth of the resurrection, and confronting him with GRACE.

Why is it that God didn't fry him right there? He opposed Christ? He imprisoned and executed the saints!

That is MERCY loved ones! While deserving of judgment God did not carry it out in His patience.

And then God placed Paul into the kingdom by Christ and into the blessed ministry of reconciliation - preaching the gospel. That is GRACE - receiving treasures he did not deserve because it pleased God!

And that is a crash course in sovereignty! God's pleasure will be carried out - His word will stand!

Is this the case for everybody? Certainly not, but it was the case for Paul - he was separated unto the kingdom for God's glory by the same God that separated him from his mother's womb by grace alone! Paul recognizes that this is the same God that he has been seeking his entire life and now has come face to face with and it looked so much different than he expected.

So what is he to do now? NOW his whole life pivoted toward following the sound of Christ's command as he separated Paul to kingdom work.

Paul didn't go ask permission to get going! He simply obeyed Jesus - what else could he do?

He does not have a conference with 100 people about the viability, feasibility, acceptability of ministry or how he's going to pay his bills or how he's going to raise enough support. He doesn't look for an endorsement for the work! He is so certain of his calling, so sure of the face of Christ and the words he has received that he needs none of that to validate his call!

Paul is sure of his calling and his election. Nothing will dissuade him from following Jesus.

Why? Because that's his personality? No. Because of God's grace.

So Paul does not go up to Jerusalem - not to purposefully offend the Apostles, but because his calling, and the gospel he received, is not dependent on man.

So he stays in Damascus (that's where he was heading to persecute Christians, and now he is one!) and does some travelling in and around Arabia - which would have extended to Syria/Damascus.

[Act 9:17-22 NKJV] 17 And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately there fell from his eyes [something] like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized. 19 So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. 20 Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. 21 Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who

destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?" 22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this [Jesus] is the Christ.

He lives as a Christian, learning, praying, studying no doubt - and fellowshiping for three years before going to Jerusalem.

This is important in our text because one of the main parties that Paul is pushing back against in the region of Galatia are Judaizers who would have had an over-inflated respect for Jerusalem because that was the home of the Temple.

Paul notes that there is not a requirement to visit Jerusalem. The center of the gospel is Christ - not a place, not a specific local congregation, not a specific man other than Jesus.

V.18-24

So after growing as a baby christian for three years he travels to Jerusalem but not as a Pharisee, as a Christian.

Jerusalem would have had such a draw for Paul. Keep in mind Paul wasn't FROM Jerusalem, he was from Tarsus - a city of Cilicia in Asia Minor/modern day Turkey - much like the Galatians.

The Jews venerated Jerusalem, and still do to this day, along with many Christians.

Paul is different now though. He's changed. He's new. He's seeing Jerusalem through a new lens - the lens of the cross.

He wasn't a rock-star to the churches, he was relatively unknown outside of his conversion story.

But what was remarkable was his testimony - He who formerly persecuted the church now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.

That word got around. For Christians of that era they were hearing that Jesus still did miracles. He was still snatching people into His kingdom by His grace. And listen, He still does that today.

Let us glorify God for whatever testimony we have, wherever we come from, whatever scar tissue we bear from our former lives. AND let the

saints hear that Jesus is still bringing people, who were once enemies of God, into His kingdom.