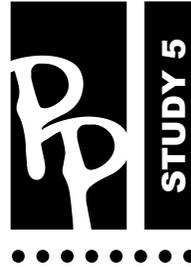


NO HUMAN CONTACT IN

PAUL'S TRAINING



Galatians 1:18-24

This Study Paper contains the following :-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what you can preach about from these verses
- 📁 Summary of Galatians chapter one
- 📁 Focus Point: What were the qualifications of apostles?
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

Paul continues to emphasise that the message (the gospel) he was preaching was revealed to him directly by God. In this passage, Paul describes his travels that followed his conversion. He is demonstrating to the Galatians that he did not come into contact with men who could have influenced his teachings. He did not see any of the apostles until three years after his conversion. Even when he did go to Jerusalem, he only saw Peter and James and stayed a short while. Other than that, Paul went to places where none had gone before to preach the gospel. Paul had no opportunity to learn the gospel second-hand. See Focus Point in Study No.6 for a chronology of Paul's movements after his conversion to Christ.

What these verses mean

Verse 18

Then after three years,

It seems most likely that Paul means three years after his conversion. Much of that time he must have been in Arabia, because his return to Damascus did not last long.

I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter

The Greek verb used here means “to inquire, to seek out”, as a sight-seeing tourist will search out the places to visit. Paul’s visit was deliberately to see Peter.

and stayed with him fifteen days.

It is clear from this that Paul did not learn his gospel from the apostles – see verses 12a (Study Paper 3), 16 (Study Paper 4). He only visited Jerusalem for 15 days; he only saw Peter and James; and this was a full three years after his conversion. Paul is giving all this detail to prove that he learned his gospel directly from God; see verse 12b.

Verse 19

I saw none of the other apostles — only James, the Lord’s brother.

Paul here indicates that James was called an apostle, though he was not one of the original twelve (Matt.10: 2-4). See Focus Point **What were the qualifications of apostles?** This visit is described in Acts 9:26-30. The word here for “saw” is different from the one used in verse 18, “acquainted”. Paul deliberately sought Peter but only casually met James. James was obviously an important leader in the Jerusalem church. Acts 12:17; 21:18. See also Galatians 2:9.

Verse 20

I assure you before God, that what I am writing [to] you is no lie.

Remember, Paul had seen something of the glory of God (Acts 9:3-6). So this verse is a most solemn affirmation. Paul felt deeply disturbed at the wicked way his Jewish enemies accused him of not being a true apostle and of teaching false doctrine. See the Introductory Paper to this series **WHY STUDY GALATIANS?** and the section **What is Galatians about?**

Verse 21

Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.

See Acts 9: 29-30. The map in Study Paper No. 2 (page 20) illustrates this journey; (see journey 5.) Several years of Paul’s life seem to have been spent in Tarsus and the surrounding areas of Cilicia and Syria. (See Focus Point 1 in Study Paper 6.)

Verse 22

I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

This really means, “I was remaining unknown.” Paul is continuing to argue he did not receive his gospel from the apostles or other believers. For years he was living a long way away from them, unknown to most of them. Paul does not write “the church of Judea” but “the churches”. Right at the beginning of Christianity in Judea, churches were evidently

local, independent, autonomous whilst at the same time fellowshiping together. By referring to the churches as being “in Christ” Paul makes it quite clear that he does not refer to Jewish assemblies, but to the new groups of converted believers. Compare 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Verse 23

They only heard the report:

This really means, “they kept on hearing”. News of what Paul was doing in Syria and Cilicia was reaching them. They never saw him, but continued to hear of his ministry.

“The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”

Paul’s conversion was a wonderful miracle which they talked about repeatedly. The person who zealously chased and captured Christians with death threats was now one of those Christians. He hadn’t just become a Christian, but was now preaching the Christian faith with that same zeal with which he had persecuted Christians. That was all they knew about him. But it indicates that though Paul’s enemies were accusing him of not teaching the true gospel, the ordinary believers in the Judean churches were rejoicing in Paul’s experience and preaching.

The word “faith” in this verse means “the truths of the gospel”. The word “faith” can have different meanings – see Introductory Paper **WHY STUDY GALATIANS?** and section **What is faith?**, sections (i) – (iv).

Verse 24

And they praised God because of me.

In verse 16 Paul says that God revealed his Son in him; in this verse Paul says that believers were praising God because of Christ’s life that they saw in Paul. Those believers had been persecuted by Paul but were not unforgiving or resentful or suspicious of him. They were ready to accept Paul as a fellow-believer and praise God for him. To be **so** forgiving shows that Christ’s life was in them too!



Summary

Paul continues to emphasise that man did not invent the message he preached. He retraced his movements and journeys after his conversion. His first contact with an apostle was after three years. He stayed briefly with Peter in Jerusalem and was introduced to James. Other than that his journeys took him to places such as Syria and Cilicia which

Summary continued from page 3

were areas where the other apostles had not gone before. Paul was unknown to the established churches in Judea where the apostles were teaching. Yet the people there heard of what Paul was doing and this brought them great joy because they knew of his former life of persecuting Christian believers. This caused them to praise God because they recognised that all this could only have come about by God’s doing and not Paul’s own will.



A suggestion of what you can preach about from these verses

Being a Christian we are to expect persecution

Introduction

Perhaps we have suffered persecution, as Christians. At two points in his life as described in these verses, verses 18 and 21, Paul tells of moving from one place to another. This was to avoid being killed. Acts 9:23 – 25 tell of the circumstances behind verse 18. Acts 9: 29 – 30 describe the events behind verse 21. Paul experienced persecution as soon as he became a Christian. He himself persecuted Christians in his former days as a Jew (verse 13). Persecution is something which Christians often have to endure.

Persecution of believers is the devil’s continual work. See 1 Peter 5:8. From the time of Genesis 3 until Christ returns, the devil continues his work of pursuing and attacking believers. Think of Job. Think of Esther. Think of Christ’s temptations. Think of the attack on the disciples (Luke 22:31). Think of the attacks on the early church (Acts 5:1 – 5 and 8:4). The devil has great wrath against all Christian believers (Rev. 12:17).

Because the devil is a person, his attacks will be carefully thought-out strategies; see 2 Corinthians 2:11. The word “schemes” means “something carefully worked out for a purpose”. Satan will try to deceive, to gain advantage without our being aware. Think of Eve. Satan will devise ways to make us doubt and disobey God’s Word.

Believers must expect persecution – see 2 Timothy 3:12. Godly living and gospel preaching will give rise to persecution, unless God specifically intervenes as, for example, in Acts 9:31; 18:11; 19:10.

We must understand that persecution:

- is for the spiritual good of believers (Rom. 5:3 – 5; 8:28)
- cannot rob believers of eternal life (Rom. 8:35 – 39)
- is used by God to the benefit of his purposes (Acts 4:26 – 28)

When we understand these facts, we can be helped to endure persecution.

Conclusion

Jesus taught his disciples: “Love your enemies” (Luke 6:37). We can only do this if the gospel has touched our lives. See also Romans 12:17-21 where Paul instructs us further in overcoming evil with good.



Summary of Galatians chapter one

Verses 1 – 10

Paul is distressed that the Galatian believers are being deceived about the gospel by some who teach differently from him and who accuse Paul of not being a true apostle or of preaching the true gospel.

Verses 11 – 24

Paul shows that the gospel he preaches is from God and is not a human invention. Paul gives two reasons for this:

He had hated Christ and Christianity. He was a devout Jew. He would not, therefore, have naturally preached Christ or the Christian message. Only an act of God could so change him (verses 13 – 16).

He had very little contact with other believers at his conversion, or for years afterwards. No one but God could, therefore, have taught him the doctrines of Christianity (verses 16 – 24).

Conclusion

Because Paul’s teaching was learned directly from God, no other teaching must be added to it, or substituted for it. God speaks through Paul, not through the false teachers.

We today are faced with a choice. If what Paul says is true, then we must accept Paul’s teaching as God’s truth. To reject Paul is to reject God.

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Focus point:

What were the qualifications of apostles?

The word “apostle” means “one who is sent”. But it means more than a mere messenger. An apostle is also a representative who can act on behalf of the one sending him. A mere messenger has no authority to act beyond telling the message.

When the office of apostle was first instituted by Christ, there were twelve apostles (Luke 6:13). The name is also given to Paul, to Barnabas (Acts 14:14), to James. In 1 Corinthians 15:5 Paul refers to the twelve; then in verse 7 he writes of “James and all the apostles”. See also Romans 16:7. It seems clear, therefore, that the term apostle was not limited to twelve men only; otherwise the many false apostles (2 Cor. 11:13) could never have laid claim to the name!

1. An apostle must be one who had seen the risen Christ (Acts 1:22). Apollos, and even Timothy, both prominent leaders, were never officially called apostles.
2. An apostle was one directly called of the Lord. The first twelve were called by his actual voice. Paul and Barnabas were called through the voice of the church after the Holy Spirit had said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul . . .” (Acts 13:2). Before this event Paul and Barnabas were called “prophets” or “teachers” (Acts 13:1); after it, they are called apostles.

3. An apostle was one used by God to bring unbelievers to conversion(1 Cor. 9:2).
4. An apostle was one to whom God gave the power to work miracles (2 Cor. 12:12).

All these four qualifications were present in the experience of the apostles of Christ in the early church. No one today has all these four qualifications. In this sense, there are no apostles in the church today.

There is another use of the term apostle in the New Testament, meaning “persons sent by a church on some specific task” – e.g. 2 Corinthians 8:23, “messengers (literally ‘apostles’) of the churches”; Philippians 2:25, “your messenger (literally ‘apostle’)”. Such apostles are not spoken of as apostles of Christ. They are representatives of churches. In this sense, there can still be apostles today. Churches can appoint some of their members to represent them for some special task.



Over to you

Do you think that it is right to give people the impression that becoming a Christian will make their lives much easier to live?

Jesus taught that we will be blessed if we are persecuted because we belong to him. Can we bring persecution upon ourselves because of our own foolishness? How?

One of the great dangers for a preacher is pride. We want people to praise God because of the message they hear. How should you deal with your own heart when the messenger is being praised instead of the message?