

PREACHERS' STUDY PAPERS

GALATIANS

BOOK 1

CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

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The Preachers' Study Papers were first written for South India where they were translated into Tamil. Each study was printed on an A4 size sheet of paper. 75 such studies were written covering the books of Galatians, Romans, Philippians and some of the Parables. These Study Papers are being reformatted and published in the spiral-bound booklet form you have now. This book, containing Galatians chapters 1 and 2, was the first one to be printed back in 2002. More study books have since followed.

The purpose of these Study Papers is to encourage preachers and pastors to present God's Word in its entirety. The apostle Paul was able to say that he taught the whole counsel of God. For us today that is the whole Bible, from its opening words in Genesis to the closing Amen in Revelation. Preaching on a text or a verse has its place, but it is difficult to cover the whole of the Scriptures in this way. When we think about this matter of teaching the whole counsel of God, does it not occur to us that the same Holy Spirit who inspired Paul should have inspired other writers to present God's truth in a format that would lend itself to being preached and taught? By working through the different books of the Bible as they are laid out for us, a preacher will have, over a period of time, presented to his congregation the whole counsel of God.

Each Study Paper in this book covers a passage of Galatians, which follows on from the passage considered in the previous study. There is an introduction to the passage being considered. Then the phrases of each verse are examined and explained. The study is then concluded with a summary. A section then follows with an outline of what could be preached on from the passage. These are only suggestions and there are many different sermons that could be preached. Some studies may include a Focus Point, which discusses in more detail a doctrine or other subject that arises out of the text. The study finishes with a series of questions for the reader to think about and consider within the context of his own situation.

In this, the fifth reprint, revisions have been made to the page layout and some minor amendments to the chronology of Paul's ministry. It is made clear that there are other acceptable interpretations concerning Paul's reference to his Jerusalem visit in chapter 2.

Grace Baptist Mission
2010.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the New International Version © 1978 by New York International Bible Society

Abbreviations for Bible Books

Old Testament

Genesis	Gen.	Ecclesiastes	Eccl.
Exodus	Ex.	The Song of Solomon	Song.
Leviticus	Lev.	Isaiah	Is.
Numbers	Num.	Jeremiah	Jer.
Deuteronomy	Deut.	Lamentations	Lam.
Joshua	Josh.	Ezekiel	Ezek.
Judges	Judg.	Daniel	Dan.
Ruth	Ruth	Hosea	Hos.
1 Samuel	1 Sam.	Joel	Joel
2 Samuel	2 Sam.	Amos	Amos
1 Kings	1 Kings	Obadiah	Obad.
2 Kings	2 Kings	Jonah	Jonah
1 Chronicles	1 Chr.	Micah	Mic.
2 Chronicles	2 Chr.	Nahum	Nah.
Ezra	Ezra	Habakkuk	Hab.
Nehemiah	Neh.	Zephaniah	Zeph.
Esther	Esth.	Haggai	Hag.
Job	Job	Zechariah	Zech.
Psalms	Ps.	Malachi	Mal.
Proverbs	Prov.		

New Testament

Matthew	Matt.	1 Timothy	1 Tim.
Mark	Mark	2 Timothy	2 Tim.
Luke	Luke	Titus	Titus
John	John	Philemon	Philm.
The Acts	Acts	Hebrews	Heb.
Romans	Rom.	James	James
1 Corinthians	1 Co.	1 Peter	1 Pet.
2 Corinthians	2 Co.	2 Peter	2 Pet.
Galatians	Gal.	1 John	1 John
Ephesians	Eph.	2 John	2 John
Philippians	Phil.	3 John	3 John
Colossians	Col.	Jude	Jude
1 Thessalonians	1 Thess.	Revelation	Rev.
2 Thessalonians	2 Thess.		

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WHY STUDY GALATIANS?



Many countries have a Constitution. That is a written statement which explains what are the rights of all its citizens. Even state and central governments have to obey what that Constitution says. If governments pass laws which contradict what the Constitution says, the law courts can instruct the government to alter the law and obey the Constitution. The Constitution safeguards the personal rights of every citizen. No-one can deny him those rights and every citizen should know what his citizenship privileges are.

Paul's letter to the Galatians is like that Constitution. It is a document which sets out clearly the freedom and personal experiences which every true believer should enjoy.

There are many religious teachers in the world today. There are many different ideas, even among Christian teachers, as to how believers ought to live! In those circumstances, it is a very good thing to read and understand this letter of Paul. As we do so, let us realise that we are discovering what are the privileges and experiences we should know, as true believers. No-one, not even any world-famous Bible teacher, has the right to take away from us the blessings that Galatians shows we have. Every believer should know what are his spiritual rights and privileges.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) wrote a famous commentary on Galatians, at the time of the Reformation,¹ because he was opposed to the way the Roman Catholic Church taught that Christians must obey many "man-made" rules and traditions of that church in order to be saved. "Not so," thundered Luther, with Galatians in his hand. "The just shall live by faith alone." No one man – not even a Pope or any famous church leader – has the right to deny that freedom to

¹ The Reformation was an historical movement of the sixteenth century when believers broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and made Scripture the standard for their beliefs and practices.

believers by making them work for salvation by rules and ceremonies.

Why did Paul write Galatians?

(All references are from Galatians unless otherwise stated.)

The Galatian believers first heard the gospel message explained to them by Paul himself (4:13). After Paul had left them and gone on his journeys, the Galatian believers continued well (5:7). But then some visiting religious teachers came and taught the Galatian believers differently from Paul (1:6,7). News of this evidently came to Paul's ears, and caused him great distress (4:19). The tone of the whole letter is that of a father, anxious, angry, pleading, arguing, rebuking, wooing a child who is foolishly allowing himself to be led astray (1:9; 3:1; 3:3; 4:16; 4:20; 5:12). So Paul is greatly concerned about his converts and the fact that these false teachers threatened the gospel at its foundations (2:4). Usually, he dictated his letters for a writer to write (Rom. 16:22). But this time he showed his love for the Galatians by writing this letter himself (6:11).



Suggestion

Read the whole letter right through – it is not a long book

The trouble among the Galatians had been caused by some Jewish religious teachers who tried to make the Galatian (Gentile) converts be subject to the law of Moses (Acts 15:1). It seems the Galatian believers had begun to observe Jewish holy days and ceremonies (4:10). The false teachers wanted the Galatians to be circumcised like Jews (6:12). These things must be done, they said, or you cannot be saved.

1. Paul writes to deny this. Salvation, says Paul, is not by anything we do, but only by faith in Jesus Christ (2:16). Salvation is not earned by our performing God's commandments (3:11). God's gracious gift of new birth is the only thing that makes a man or woman a believer (5:6; 6:15).
2. So, was Moses wrong? Is the Old Testament law useless? No! It has a very good use, and Paul wrote to explain what that use is (3:19-24). This is a very important section of the letter to understand.

3. But if believers now do not have to keep the old laws of Moses in order to be saved, can they live in a careless and immoral way? "Not at all," says Paul, and writes to explain that if God graciously gives new birth to a person, that new life in him is the life of the **Holy** Spirit (5:16). A believer will not be immoral.
4. In order to discredit Paul, and so cause the Galatians to reject Paul's teaching of the gospel, the Jewish teachers suggested Paul was not a proper apostle, but was simply teaching his own ideas. Paul writes to defend the genuineness of his apostleship and the authenticity of his teaching (1:11 – 2:9).

What is faith?

The theme of this letter is that salvation cannot be earned by human effort, but must be received simply as a free gift from a gracious God, **by faith** (3:26). So, what is faith?

Faith is a very important thing. Without it no-one pleases God (Heb. 11:6). The noun "faith" and its connected verb "to believe" occur almost 250 times each in the New Testament. But they are used to describe different kinds of faith. For example, Paul says that faith in Christ Jesus is the mark of a justified person (2:16). But elsewhere we read that **demons** believe (James 2:19). Jude talks about the faith **once entrusted** to the saints (v.3). Paul talks about living **now** by the faith of the Son of God (2:20).

Some different ways the word faith is used in the Bible are:

- i. *The Bible truths we believe*, i.e. articles of faith, or, the Christian religion. 1:23; Jude verse 3 are examples of this use.
- ii. *Mental conviction*. We all believe many things that we know in our minds, because they are obviously true. James 2:19 is an example of this sort of faith. Many people believe the fact that there was a person called Jesus Christ who died on a cross, but they are still not real Christians. There is a natural belief in God which is not of the Holy Spirit.
- iii. *An emotional attraction*, which causes us to trust someone. John 2:24 makes it clear that was not the true faith of real believers. See also Matthew 13:20,21, where Jesus speaks of this temporary, emotional, faith.

iv. *That new spiritual life* which the born-again person receives, causing him to rely wholly for salvation upon Christ. It is the capacity to see (or understand) the invisible realities of God.² This is the faith which is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8).

Faiths ii. and iii. above are human, natural faiths. By the faith in iv. believers have eternal life, being united to Christ and justified by God (John 17:3). This is the faith **that saves** from sin, and leads to good works (James 2:14-26), love (Gal. 5:6) and obedience (Rom. 1:7).

The question needs to be answered:

1. is my belief about Christ merely mental assent to historical facts?
2. emotional attraction to a remarkable person?
3. God-given **saving faith** that tells me that God declares me as not guilty?

Note Galatians 5:6 and 5:22-26. Jesus Christ is precious to him who has saving faith – 1 Peter 2:7. **Is** Jesus precious to you?

What is Galatians about?

Galatians was written as a letter; it was not originally divided into chapters and verses. The letter was intended to be read **as a whole**. That is how we ought to read it too. By reading the letter right through, several times, you can discover the pattern of Paul's argument. For example, chapters 1 and 2 are mainly about Paul himself; chapters 3 and 4 are mainly about the difference between the gospel and the old Mosaic law; chapters 5 and 6 are full of practical advice about daily living for believers.

In the earlier section **Why did Paul write Galatians?** it was explained that Paul wrote this letter because a wrong idea was being taught. Some teachers were trying to make Paul's Galatian converts keep the old law of Moses, as well as trusting in Christ's work, for their salvation. These teachers also tried to discredit Paul by saying he was not a true apostle. You can see how Paul's letter deals with these points on the next page.

² Edgar H. Andrews – "Free in Christ" (Evangelical Press).

False teaching	Paul's answer
<p>“Paul is not a true apostle; don't believe him!”</p>	<p>Biographical section (chapters one and two) I was appointed by God. I was taught by God. I was accepted by other apostles. I have never compromised.</p>
<p>“Christian believers must be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, to be saved.”</p>	<p>Doctrinal section (chapters three and four) Your conversion did not happen by your law-keeping. Grace and faith come <i>before</i> the law in the Old Testament history. The law is to point us to Christ. Law-keeping makes us slaves to human nature</p>
<p>“If we do not have a law to keep, how shall we know how to behave?”</p>	<p>Practical section (chapters five and six) There is a godly way of life, directed by the Holy Spirit who is in all true believers.</p>



Over to you

What do you think is the relevance of Galatians to your local situation?

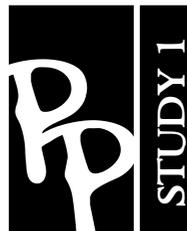
What answer do people give to the question, "What is a Christian?"

How would you answer that question?



Province of Galatia

DEAR GALATIANS



THIS IS PAUL



Galatians 1:1-5

This Study Paper contains the following :-

-  Introduction to the passage
-  What these verses mean
-  Summary
-  A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
-  Over to you

Introduction to the passage

Paul's opening verses identify both the writer (verse 1) and the recipients (verse 2) and then greet his readers (verses 3-5). In his greeting, Paul summarizes the essentials of the gospel, which means "good news". It was Paul's custom to begin his letters with a greeting, which contained in seed form his thinking behind the purpose of the letter. This is especially so in his summary of the gospel in verses 3-5 because, as the letter unfolds, we will see that this "gospel" was under attack.

What these verses mean

We will go through these verses phrase by phrase in order to understand their meaning.

Verse 1

Paul, an apostle —

The word "apostle" means "one who is sent on a special mission". (Acts 14:14 refers to Barnabas as an apostle). The word is usually used of the disciples of the Lord (Luke 6:13) who, with the exception of Judas, were later commanded by the risen Lord to be special messengers (Matt. 28:19).

sent not from men

“Apostle” was not a title Paul gave to himself. Apostleship is not of human origin.

nor by man,

“Apostle” was not a title given to Paul by other people. He was not made an apostle by other apostles.

but by Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ was the person by whom Paul was made an apostle. Jesus actually called him directly, in person (Acts 9:6), not using anyone else to take that message.

and God the Father, who raised him [Christ] from the dead —

Paul was called an apostle after Christ’s resurrection. So the Father, by raising Christ from the dead, was also involved in the calling of Paul. What the risen Christ does is the will of the Father also; compare verse 4.

Verse 2

and all the brothers with me,

There were other believers who agreed with Paul. Paul was not preaching his own ideas. Because Paul has to write to rebuke the Galatian believers, he first (verse 1) emphasises that he is a true apostle and now (verse 2) indicates that others believe as he does.

To the churches in Galatia:

See the map on page 6. Paul has no word of praise for these believers. He does not even call them “saints”. He is sad that the Galatians seem ready to give up the truths of the gospel which he had taught them. (See the Introduction WHY STUDY GALATIANS? and the section *Why did Paul write Galatians?*).

Verse 3

Grace and peace to you

Strictly God’s grace is God acting in love to unlovely sinners. Peace is the consequence of God’s love being known by a person. God is not angry with them any more. What a beautiful wish this is that Paul prays for the Galatians!

from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,

The Galatian believers were being influenced by those who taught that there were certain ceremonies a person must do in order to be

saved from sin. Paul is emphasising that everything necessary for salvation comes from God.

Verse 4

who gave himself

By emphasising that our salvation comes because Christ gave himself, Paul shows how people insult Christ if they insist on adding some works of their own for salvation. Was not Christ's giving of himself good enough?

for our sins

For whose sins did Christ die? Everyone's? For those of some people only? Paul is going to say next that God's purpose and Christ's coming were in order to "rescue us". So Christ must have died for all those who are being rescued from this present evil age. The evidence that anyone is being rescued is that they have saving faith which leads to holiness. Therefore we can confidently say that Christ has died for everyone who believes and seeks to be holy. If a person shows no signs of faith or holiness, there is no evidence that Christ died for him.¹

to rescue us

The idea in the Greek word literally means "to lift up out of". Because sin has made unbelievers unable to save themselves, someone else must lift them out of it.

from the present evil age,

The Greek word used here for "age" means "a period of history that is passing". This present world is temporary and is evil. The word Paul used for "evil" describes the trouble, pain, sorrow, weariness and degradation, which are all the deadly effects of sin in the world. This world is real but from the time of the events in Genesis 3 it is not normal and it is not lasting.

according to the will of our God and Father,

Believers are rescued from sin and its effects only because God intended to do this. Salvation is from God entirely, as Paul's apostleship was from God entirely (verse 1).

¹ For further reading on this subject, see Chapter 5 of "Life by His Death", an abridgement of John Owen's "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ". (Grace Publications ISBN 0 9505476 3 8). A copy can be obtained by writing to Grace Baptist Mission.

Verse 5

to whom be glory

It is the glory given to God that will be unending – his honour, wealth, authority, beauty, brilliance and goodness will never cease to be seen in full, after this present age ends!

for ever and ever.

Literally “to ages of ages”. This is the same word “age” as is used in verse 4. Now, in verse 5, Paul speaks of something that will not be temporary; not **an** age, but “ages of ages” – i.e. an unending time.

Amen.

This is a Hebrew word. In the New Testament the same sounds are spelt in Greek letters. The Hebrew word means “truth” or “let it be true”. The word expresses the thought that “what has just been said is true”. The word is used as a name of God (Isaiah 65:16 – “God of truth” = Hebrew, “God the Amen”), and as a name of Christ (Rev. 3:14).



Summary

The writer of the letter introduces himself as Paul, an apostle. He calls himself an apostle because Jesus Christ appointed him to be one for a specific task. The letter is written to Christians in the churches of the Galatia region. Paul greets the churches with an outline of the gospel. First of all he wants them to know God’s undeserving love in their lives through which they will experience an inner peace. This salvation can only come through Jesus Christ, who sacrificed himself for our sins by rescuing us from this sinful world. The amazing thing is that this was in accordance with God’s plan, so our response is to praise him forever.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: **The gospel is good news to people from God**

(See also: **What is faith?** in the Introductory Paper WHY STUDY GALATIANS?)

Introduction:

Note that Paul was not a self-appointed apostle:

- i He was called by God to preach (verse 1) and
 - ii Other believers recognised that call to be genuine (verse 2).
- Both these things should be true of any preacher. See Acts 13:1-3.

Paul's message was about:

The greatest rescue plan in human history

1. The need for it

We are prisoners in this present evil age. The present causes us to forget the life to come. The evil prevents us from loving God. Yet this age is only temporary; it will end in judgement, when God will condemn all ungodliness. We need rescue!

2. The means of it

Christ gave himself – to live a perfect earthly life, earning God's favour; to die as a perfect offering for his people's sin; and now, being raised again, to pray for his people and send the Holy Spirit into them, rescuing them practically.

3. The origin of it

God wanted to rescue a people from this evil world, to show his glory (verse 4).

4. The result of it

All the redeemed² give praise and glory to the God who willed their rescue (verse 5.) See Revelation chapters 9 and 10.

² The word "redeem" means "acquire out of the forum". It is a reference to the practice of freeing slaves through the payment of a purchase price. Christ, then, has "bought us back" from the slave-market of sin. (Edgar H. Andrews, "Free in Christ", Evangelical Press.)



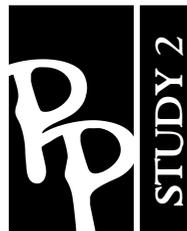
Over to you

Why do you preach?

What do you preach?

Look at your sermon notes and see if the truths of verses 3 to 5 are to be found.

“WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?”



Galatians 1:6-9

This Study Paper contains the following:-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Focus Point: Grace
- 📁 Over to you
- 📁 Map showing Paul's movements in his early years after his conversion

Introduction to the passage

Paul had preached the good news of Jesus Christ in the region of Galatia. Many had heard and believed. Churches were formed but it did not take long for certain false teachers to come in amongst these new converts. News reached Paul and he wrote this letter. The language he uses in these verses is among the strongest in the New Testament. The purpose of writing in this way is to stop the Galatians from falling away from the gospel.

What these verses mean

Verse 6

I am astonished

Paul had reason to be surprised. True believers know that they are sinners in God's sight. Therefore they are not able to earn God's favour by anything they do. The Bible teaching that God saves us by his grace alone is good news to such helpless sinners. How surprising then that the Galatians should give up this good news of

salvation by grace and try to earn their salvation by keeping the laws of Moses – which, as sinners, they had no ability to do! It **is** astonishing how readily people try to save themselves by their own hopeless efforts, instead of crying to God for mercy and grace.

that you are so quickly deserting

“So quickly” means “rashly” or “with so little thought”. Paul used the same idea in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 and 1 Timothy 5:22. Error spreads quickest when people behave thoughtlessly! The Galatians were deserting true Bible teaching about salvation without taking careful thought about their actions.

the one who called you

The Greek word to “call” was used in everyday Greece for a summons to a law court.¹ It was used of calling someone **for a definite purpose**. Believers are people who have been specifically called to be believers. See Romans 9:24, 1 Corinthians 1:2, 9 and 24.

by the grace of Christ

Paul wrote this expression to show that divine grace was the reason for their being called to be believers. They were not called because God was pleased with something they had done. They were called because God loved them even though they did not deserve it.

and are turning to a different gospel — 2

The Galatians were thinking that their idea of earning their salvation by keeping the laws of Moses was still a gospel, even if a different gospel from the gospel of salvation by God’s grace alone which Paul taught.

Verse 7

which is really no gospel at all.³

No! said Paul – it is not a different gospel. It is no gospel. There

1. A summons to a court of law carries with it the obligation to attend. It is **effectual** because even if someone does not attend voluntarily then law officers are sent to compel them to come. When God **calls** particular sinners to put their faith in Christ as their sin-bearer, he does so in such a way that those sinners believe in Christ. The **call** has its **effect**; it is **effectual calling**. The sinners have heard the call of God in their hearts, and respond. (A Dictionary of Theological Terms – M. E. Mantou.) “For many are invited [called], but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14).

2. In verse 6 Paul uses the word “heteros” for **different**. The word means **of a different kind**. Think of

- hetero-sexual / of different sexes
- hetero-dox / of different thinking i.e. heretical.

³ See page 15 for footnote

cannot be two types of gospel, but only one. There is only one way of salvation, not two possible ways.

Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion

Compare 5:10,12. The word translated “are throwing you into confusion” is used in John 5:7 of the water being “stirred up”. It is also used to describe a situation when calmness of mind is destroyed by fear, excitement or perplexity. There were teachers who travelled among the churches, insisting that Gentile believers must keep Jewish ceremonial laws, as well as believe in Christ, for salvation. See Acts 15:1,2 and 24. The Galatian believers heard one message from Paul (salvation by grace) and another message from these teachers (salvation by grace plus human effort). The Galatians’ loyalty to the truth was being shaken.

and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

The word Paul used for “pervert” means not merely to make a slight change of direction, but a complete reversal. Galatian believers were going from a gospel wholly of God’s doing to a “gospel” of believers strictly keeping ceremonial laws! Compare 3:3.

Verse 8

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you,

Would **you** refuse to listen to a glorious angel preaching, if he taught contrary to Bible teaching? Never forget 2 Corinthians 11:14! How important it is to test all the preaching we do, and all we hear, by continually asking, “Does this truly agree with Bible teaching?”

let him be eternally condemned!

Paul speaks very strongly and does so twice – verses 8 and 9. This shows us how serious a thing it is to teach what is not Bible truth. Those who do so will have God’s curse on them. Compare Matthew

³ In verse 7 Paul uses the word “allos” for ***different***. The word means ***different, but of the same kind***. A wonderful biblical example of this word is in John 14:6, where Jesus promises to send ***another Counsellor*** (Comforter). The Holy Spirit is not ***heteros*** (not of a completely different kind from Jesus), but ***allos*** (of the same kind as Jesus, though a different Person, i.e. they are both from God).

Illustration:

a mango is “heteros” from a guava (of a different kind)

one mango is “allos” from ***another*** mango (a different, another fruit, but of the same kind)

The Authorised Version in verse 7 has ***which is not another*** for the New International Version ***which is really no gospel at all***.

7:22,23; 15:13. Paul twice pronounces a curse here because in verse 8 he supposes something that would never actually happen – neither Paul, nor angels, would preach a false gospel. In verse 9 he speaks of something that is actually happening – men are preaching another gospel. Both the imaginary example and the example of what was actually happening merit God’s curse.

Verse 9

As we have already said, so now I say again:

The matter Paul is dealing with is serious. The Galatians have put themselves into a dangerous situation and Paul has to repeat his warning to re-enforce the point.

If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted,

False teachers were preaching a different message. Previously the Galatians “took to themselves” what Paul had taught them. Compare 4:14. Paul is reminding them how eagerly they received the gospel of the grace of God originally. How can they now reject it?

let him be eternally condemned!

This is Paul’s second pronouncement of a curse (see verse 8 above).



Summary

Paul is astonished at how quickly the Galatian believers had allowed themselves to be persuaded by false teachers to follow another gospel. In fact what these teachers were saying was not a gospel at all. It was not good news because it did not depend upon the grace of Christ. Anyone who perverts the gospel of Christ – and it doesn’t matter who it is, even if it were an apostle or an angel – would be eternally condemned.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: **Get the true gospel!**

There are many Christian preachers and teachers; there are many Christian churches; there are many religions; there are many philosophies; but there is only **one** true gospel.

1. The wrong gospel is not a gospel at all (verse 7). We must not say: “Any apparently good teaching will save us.” One drop of poison ruins a good drink.
 - a. There are not “many different roads to God”; see John 14:6, Acts 4:12.
 - b. The true gospel does not change with changing years.
 - c. The true gospel is not a mixture of other gospels.

(The false teachers were trying to mix together Judaism and Christianity.)

2. This is a most serious matter, so serious that Paul pronounces God’s curse on all teachers of a false gospel (verses 8,9).
 - a. The curse is spoken twice. That shows it was very deliberately intended; Paul is not speaking rashly.
 - b. The curse includes anyone, angels, apostles (“we”); Paul includes himself under the curse, if he teaches error! Teaching a wrong gospel is the devil’s work, deserving God’s curse.
3. A false gospel is **so** sinful because :-
 - a. It belittles the glory of Christ. Paul **knew** his previous law-keeping and circumcision had **not** made him a Christian. He knew he was a Christian only because of Jesus Christ. Only union with Christ alone makes a person a Christian. Any other teaching takes away from Christ’s work. It turns us “from him who has called us” (verse 6).
 - b. It misleads the hearers. If you teach people a way that does not go to heaven, you have taught them the way to hell! What could be more sinful than that?
4. The false gospel is:
 - a. Anything different from what the apostles taught (verses 8,9). The importance of the preacher does not make his sermon

truthful. The truthfulness of his sermon makes the preacher's rôle important. Any teaching or practice not clearly taught in the epistles is not truly the gospel.

- b. Any teaching that the grace of God is not enough for our salvation (verse 6). Believers are saved by grace (Eph.2:8), not by baptism, communion, confession, good works, last rites, mass for the dead – or anything else!!

Have you got the **true** gospel? Can you find **all** your beliefs and practices taught in the epistles?



Focus Point: Grace

What is grace?

Paul uses the word for grace seven times in this letter. (The word occurs 156 times in the New Testament.) Obviously it is an important word. The Old Testament has Hebrew words for God's favour and his lovingkindness – ideas which are all included in the New Testament word for grace.

Grace means favour shown by a superior to an inferior, when there is no reason for it. Indeed, it is **not** grace unless there is every reason not to expect it! Grace, in the New Testament, always originates from God. He is superior to all other persons. No-one can compel God to be favourable to him or her. And since all men are sinners (living disobediently to God's Word) there is no reason to expect that God should favour anyone. So everything outside of hell (which is the only thing we really earn) comes to us from God's gracious kindness. Paul uses the word grace in this sense in 1:3; 2:21; 6:18.

Grace also means the work that God does in changing men and women. God does this work through Jesus Christ. Grace is the force of God's love, in Christ, actually affecting people. Paul uses this word in this sense in 1:6 and 1:15.

Grace also means the effect produced in believers as God's Spirit changes them. Grace is the spiritual beauty, gentleness and holiness which the Spirit causes to grow in the believer. Paul speaks of grace in this sense in 2:9 and 5:4.

So grace is:

- (i) a fountain of lovingkindness which springs up within God
- (ii) a river of mercy pouring out which washes all believers
- (iii) the Spirit filling them up like little vessels full of the very nature of God.

We cannot explain why God should act like this. There is no reason for it. Indeed, everything we sinful humans have done deserves everlasting punishment! No wonder Paul is full of praise for God's gracious ways. See Romans 11:33-36.

Once these meanings of grace are understood, then any teaching which excludes grace as the way of salvation, or makes grace only one part of the way of salvation, is shown to be unscriptural, and must be rejected. Sin has robbed us of all spiritual abilities. Only a salvation fully of grace **can** be any use to us! We can do absolutely nothing to earn our salvation.



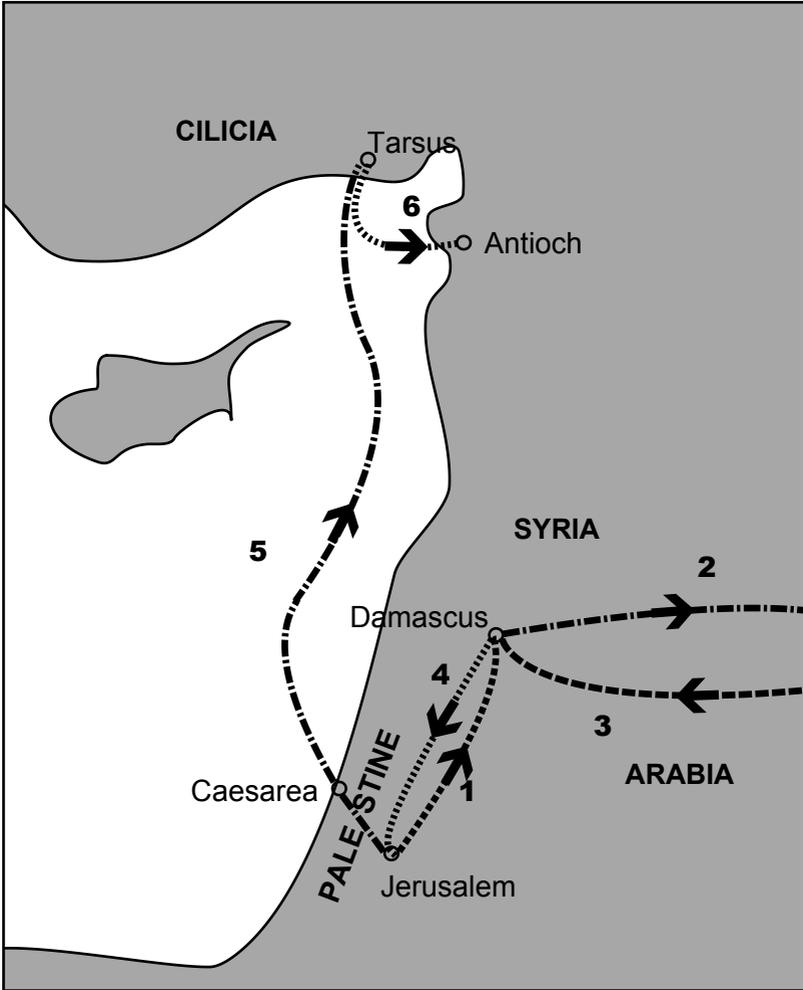
Over to you

How is the Christian gospel attacked/perverted today in your area?

How would you answer the person who says, "Religion is just a matter of opinion - people should believe whatever is true for them?"

How faithful have you been in preaching the one true gospel?

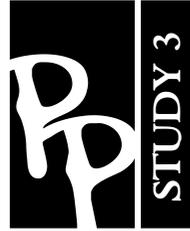
Paul's early years



- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Jerusalem to Damascus | Acts 9:1-18 |
| 2. Damascus to Arabia | Galatians 1:17 |
| 3. Arabia to Damascus | Galatians 1:17 |
| 4. Damascus to Jerusalem | Galatians 1:18 |
| 5. Jerusalem to Tarsus | Acts 9:29-30 |
| 6. Tarsus to Antioch | Acts 11:25, 26 |

THE MESSAGE WAS NOT

INVENTED BY MAN



Galatians 1:10-14

This Study Paper contains the following :-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

The attack by the false teachers was subtle. They attacked the message by getting at the messenger. They did not tell the Galatians to forget what Paul had taught them. Their approach was that what Paul had said was fine but it was not quite complete. Something else has to be added. The false teachers tried to do this by undermining Paul, by attacking him for not being a proper apostle and a proper Jew.

What these verses mean

Verse 10

Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.

Whom was Paul serving? **Whom** was he trying to please? Was he trying to win the favour of men or God? There was a time when the things he did were to please men. Now it was all so different; he has become a servant of Christ. He no longer tries to please men and boast of his religious successes. Paul is only interested in one thing,

pleasing God. Otherwise, he would be a servant of men and not of Christ.

Verse 11

I want you to know,

This comes at the beginning of the verse in the Greek. By coming first, it indicates that a solemn and important statement follows. What Paul says here in this verse 11 is **very** important.

brothers,

Nine times in this letter, Paul calls the Galatians his brothers! In the Greek in which the letter was written, “brethren” is the last word before “Amen” (6:18) as though this is the thought he wants to leave in their minds. Even though the Galatians caused Paul such sorrow (see **Why did Paul write Galatians?** in the Introductory Study Paper), still he calls them “brothers”. Paul exposes the error the Galatians were about to fall into but does not cut them off from his friendship.

that the gospel I preached

Of several Greek words used of preaching in the New Testament, two are most common.

- One means to be a herald, or make a proclamation. It expresses the thought of the authority of the preacher – God’s herald!
- The other, ***and this is the word used in this verse,*** means to bring **good** news. It expresses the thought that the gospel is joyful news to anxious sinners. Perhaps Paul uses this word here to remind the Galatians that the gospel was a joy to them when they first heard it. Why therefore do they now pay heed to the false teachers who say that their first joyful faith in the gospel is not now enough for salvation? See 3:1.

is not something that man made up.

Paul means that the gospel message is not a human invention. The message of the gospel is therefore different from every other faith in the world for **they are all human** inventions. The Christian faith is something divinely revealed. See verse 12.

Verse 12

I did not receive it from any man,

The gospel was not a traditional message handed down from his fathers.

nor was I taught it;

The gospel was not a lesson learned from any teacher. See verse 1 also. His apostleship was not a human appointment, neither was his message!

rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

The word “revelation” literally means “taking the cover off something and so making it fully visible”. Paul is saying that, as with the other apostles, he too had been convinced about the rightness of the Christian message because Jesus Christ made himself directly known to him. See Acts 9:5.

Verse 13

For you have heard

It may have been that Paul himself told them these things at the time he preached to them. The history of his old life was a part of Paul’s preaching. See Acts 22:4; 1 Corinthians 15:9. “You heard” begins verse 13 in the Greek. It is therefore very significant. In effect, Paul is saying: “You ought to know that the gospel is not something I got from my traditions because ***I told you*** I was a convinced Pharisee and no Pharisee would invent the Christian faith.”

of my previous way of life in Judaism,

Paul does ***not*** mean the Old Testament faith, for that should have led him to accept the Messiah (as some Jews did; see Luke 2:25,38). Paul means all the ceremonial rules and regulations worked out by the Pharisees and others, e.g. Matthew 23:3–7; 15: 1–9. This was a religion of ceremonial observances which Jesus condemned. Before his conversion Paul excelled in ***this*** religion! It was most unlikely that the gospel would be an idea Paul invented. Until Christ met him, Paul was content with Jewish ceremonies.

how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

A better translation is: “I was persecuting” and “I was laying waste”; i.e. he did not succeed in completely doing either but was in the process of trying to. See Acts 8:3,4.

Verse 14

I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age

The Greek word to “advance” means “to cut down things that block one’s path ahead”. Paul is indicating how vigorously he tried to

climb to the top as the most zealous Pharisee, over all his contemporaries! All this emphasises how unlikely it was that Paul's gospel was a human idea. His purpose is to show that the gospel he preached is from God and not from himself.

and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

The same Greek word "traditions" is used by Jesus in Matthew 15:3,6 to mean the extra rules and ceremonies devised by the Pharisees. See note above on "Judaism" (verse 13) and Focus Point in study 20, Book 3, page 194 on Pharisees and Sadducees.



Summary

In this section of the letter Paul is answering those teachers who were trying to mislead the Galatian believers. They were attacking Paul's gospel of salvation by faith alone. Paul is proving here that his gospel is not a mere human theory. It was a message received from God **which completely altered his previous human religious thinking**. Paul's gospel therefore is divine. To attack it is to attack God! The Galatians should not be deceived. Since Paul's message was given him by God, no man should try to add to it, or alter it.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: The gospel is the power of God

Introduction

In Romans 1 Paul describes the gospel as the power of God. Galatians 1:6-14 shows how true this statement is. Only a divine and miracle-working power could make Saul of Tarsus into Paul the Christian, because:

- a. He hated the Christian faith (verse13)
- b. He loved his ceremonial religion (verse14)
- c. He was a fiercely ambitious Pharisee (verse14).

When he was converted, the early Christians could hardly believe it! (Acts 9:13,26). Such a man being changed into a Christian preacher can only be explained as a miracle of God's power. Paul knew what he was talking about when he wrote Romans 1:16. Can we say that God's power, the gospel, has changed our lives? See what changes took place in Paul's life:

1. What he formerly hated, now he loves

He hated the church, verse 13. The reason for Saul's hatred of Christians was not that they lived evil lives, nor that their beliefs were wicked. Like Jesus before them, they went about doing good! Yet Saul was so influenced by his religious ideas that he was too blind to see their good lives and was prepared to do harm to the Christians. Now, however, he calls them his "brothers" (1:2,11). Compare 1 John 3:14. He now writes in praise of "the grace of Christ", verse 6; and he defends "the gospel of Christ", verse 7.

2. What he formerly loved, now he hates

He used to love performing the many religious ceremonies of Pharisaic tradition which he felt sure would make God pleased with him. Compare Phil. 3:5,6. Now he knows that salvation is by being "called into the grace of Christ", verse 6; and that "Christ gave himself to deliver us", verse 4. Salvation is "according to the will of God", verse 4, **not** according to the will of Saul! Any other teaching is now called "another gospel" by Paul, verse 6, which has God's curse on it, verses 8 and 9.

3. Instead of human traditions he now has divine revelation

All his earlier religious ideas come, he says, from "the traditions of my fathers", verse 14. Things that we learn from our fathers may be right – they may also be wrong. Our fathers can easily make mistakes. But now Paul has been shown the truth by Jesus Christ himself, verse 12. Compare John 14:6. Paul knows his fathers were wrong and he rejects their teaching. We must examine our ideas by comparing them with what the Bible teaches (2 Tim. 3:16).

Conclusion

Can you say that God has, through your understanding of the Bible and by the Holy Spirit's persuasion in your thinking, changed you in three ways? Can you identify something you hated which now, as a Christian, you love? Or something you loved which now, as a Christian, you hate? Do you regard Bible teaching as more

important than your local religious customs? If the power of God has not changed your life, are you a Christian?



Over to you

When you preach where do the words you are using come from?

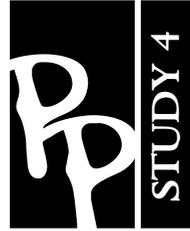
If you were criticised for the content of your preaching, how would you defend yourself?

Can you trace the way God has called you to be a preacher from the time of your conversion?

HOW THE MESSAGE



CAME TO PAUL



Galatians 1:15-17

This Study Paper contains the following:-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Focus Point: The importance of Paul's conversion as an evidence of the supernatural power and truth of Christianity
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

False teachers were troubling the Galatian believers (1:7) by teaching differently from the true gospel taught by Paul. Paul insists that what he taught was the truth because it was a message from God and not a human message (1:11, 12). Now Paul tells how he had received this gospel from God.

What these verses mean

Verse 15

But when God,

Paul has just been describing how he once behaved. He had been zealous for what he considered to be right (Judaism) and persecuted those (Christians) who he thought were wrong. What brought about the change? The answer is in the opening words of verse 15, "But when God". The reason for Paul's having a complete change around in his life is that God intervened.

who set me apart

The Greek word used here for “to set apart” is also used in Acts 13:2 and Romans 1:1. It means “to set apart for a special purpose”. A similar word in Ephesians 1:5 is translated “predestinate”. Paul is saying that God had settled his destiny before he was born – before he could do anything himself.

from [before my] birth

Paul has realised that before he was born God had intended that he would be a Christian. Compare Ephesians 1:11.

and called me by his grace,

Paul here refers to what happened on the Damascus Road (Acts 9: 3-6), and to the time when he was called into missionary service (Acts 13:2,3). “By” literally means “on account of, for the reason of” his grace. It **was** an act of grace for God to save one who so hated Christ! Paul certainly did not deserve this.

Verse 16

was pleased

The work of God alone (with no human involvement) is stressed by this, and other phrases here, such as “he set me apart” – “from before my birth” – “he called me” – “by his grace”. Paul’s becoming a Christian was entirely of God’s doing! Paul could not have done any of these things for himself; nor did he, as a Pharisee, even want to do them!

to reveal his Son in me

It is significant that Paul uses the word “Son” about Jesus. As a Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus denied that Jesus was God’s Son. Now he knows better! The Greek word “to reveal” means “to uncover something previously hidden”. Paul says God was revealing his Son “in him”; i.e. God showed ***in Paul’s greatly changed life***, as he had not shown before, how the greatest of sinners could be saved. Compare 1 Timothy 1:16. Paul’s conversion was a pattern of what God can do in any person’s life, when Christ lives in them. Compare 2:20 and 4:19. The spiritual beauty seen in any believer is the beauty of Christ’s life in them.

so that I might preach him among the Gentiles,

Paul understood that his conversion was for a special purpose; he was to be the apostle to the non-Jews (Acts 9:15).

I did not consult any man,

Paul did not give anyone the opportunity to impose their teachings on him at his conversion. The Greek word for “to consult” was often in daily life used of consultation with fortune tellers. Paul had no such consultations! Paul is making it quite impossible to say that the gospel he taught was of human (“flesh and blood”) origin. Compare Matthew 16:17.

Verse 17

nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was,

Again there is the emphatic denial that Paul gained his teachings from any human source – not even from the apostles in Jerusalem.

but I went immediately into Arabia

The area known as Arabia was the vast desert country between the Red Sea on the west, the Euphrates river on the north and the Persian Gulf on the east. We do not know exactly where, in this great area, Paul went. But to go into such a desert place indicates a determination to be alone. Isolated from all human contact, alone with God, Paul doubtless studied again all the Old Testament scriptures he knew so well, in the light of his new knowledge of the risen Christ who had now met him.

and later returned to Damascus.

In the Acts there is no record of the visit to Arabia and this return to Damascus. This possibly happened at a time in the middle of verse 19 of Acts 9. We can understand that, ***upon his return*** – “Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus”. He would be far better able to preach the gospel powerfully (Acts 9:20) ***after*** his time of meditation and prayer in Arabia, than immediately after his conversion.



Summary

The gospel that Paul had preached and taught the Galatian believers was not invented by him or any other human being. Its origin is God himself. Look at the life of Paul himself as an example. His life was devoted to destroying anything and everything to do

Summary continued on page 30

Summary continued from page 29

with Jesus Christ. Paul then became a follower of Jesus. This came about through the grace of God and nothing else. Paul never deserved to be saved by the one he hated whose followers he persecuted. After his conversion outside Damascus, Paul had no contact with the other apostles, so he could not have learnt anything from them. What he taught came through his own experience of meeting Jesus Christ and then studying the Old Testament afresh.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: **How Christians are made**

Introduction

a. In verses 13,14 Paul describes his own efforts to be religious:

“I persecuted . . .”

“I tried to destroy . . .”

“I was advancing . . .”

“I was extremely zealous . . .”

There are natural religions that can be designed and carried on by human wisdom and strength.

b. In verses 15, 16 there is a complete contrast:

“God set me apart . . .”

“God called me . . .”

“God revealed his Son in me . . .”

Biblical religion is supernatural in origin, and cannot be gained by any study or human effort. It is revealed by God.

Which religion is yours?

How does biblical religion come to us?

1. There is the outward hearing of the Word of God

Paul had no inward understanding of the gospel until he had heard the words of Christ (Acts 9:4). Paul speaks of his being “called” (1:15). Compare Romans 10:17.

Preaching is the means God uses to cause people to hear his Word. Not all who hear the preaching believe (Matt. 22:14). But all who become true Christians do so having first come to know the message of the gospel, usually through hearing a preacher or Bible teacher (1 Cor. 1:21). How important it is, then, to make sure everyone hears and understands the gospel message.

2. There is the inward experience of the truth of God's Word

Paul says God revealed his Son “*in* him”, not merely “*to* him” (verse 16). Paul did see the glory of the risen Christ (Acts 9:3; 1 Cor. 15:8). So a revelation was made to him. But that was not the end of the matter – Paul rejected all his old beliefs and received the teachings of Christ; moreover his whole way of life changed and he became Christ-like; compare 4:14. So the hearing and seeing of the outward revelation in Acts 9 was accompanied by an inward conviction of the rightness of the gospel and a determination to live obediently to Christ. It was not merely that Paul had a revelation of Christ; other people could now see Christ revealed in Paul (2:20). How much does our knowledge of the gospel alter our lives? Knowing the truth is not Christianity, but knowing *and* doing. Compare James 4:17.

3. There is a growing understanding of the significance of being a Christian

- a. Paul came to realise that if God had so made him a believer, it must have been God's eternal purpose to do so. God has always known everything he will do. So Paul speaks of God's choice of him before he was born (verse 15). God's preparation of Paul included his education as a Pharisee and his having the rights of a Roman citizen (Acts 22:26). All the details of his providential circumstances (God's plan for his life) combined to fit him for the task he was to do. So for us also.
- b. Paul came to learn that God's purpose was not simply to save him, but to use him in the salvation of many others (Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:16). There is a similar divine purpose for all Christians. Compare Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; Acts 8:4; 1 Peter 3:15.

Conclusion

What Paul had experienced himself he longed to see take place in the lives of others – see 4:19. This kind of longing is something all

spiritually healthy Christians must know. There is something wrong if it is absent from us!



Focus point:

The importance of Paul's conversion as an evidence of the supernatural power and truth of Christianity

1. By becoming a Christian, Paul had everything to lose and nothing to gain.

- a. Christians at that time were a persecuted minority (Acts 8:1).
- b. All the religious authorities of the time – the Sanhedrin, the High Priest, etc. – were convinced that Christ was an impostor (John 7:12,47; 9:16; 10:20).
- c. All his previous education would persuade Paul that no true Messiah would die, cursed, on a cross (3:13). The cross was a stumbling block to Jews (1 Cor. 1:23).
- d. From being a Pharisee, highly thought of by the Jews, Paul became a hated enemy. No-one deliberately rejects fame and chooses hardship easily!

Yet, in spite of all these immense difficulties, Saul the Pharisee became Paul the apostle and preacher of Christ. Such a change is only accounted for if Christianity has a supernatural power and convincing truthfulness.

2. By teaching all the basic facts of the life of Christ, Paul confirms the truthfulness of the Bible account.

In his epistles, Paul makes many references to the incarnation of Christ, his life, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again.

- a. Paul lived and experienced the events of gospel history as they unfolded. He had mingled daily with the people who had talked with Christ. If there were untruths in the gospel history, **he would know**.
- b. Paul was not likely to be favourably impressed, as we can be, by the long continuing history of the growth of the church in

all the world. He had to face the fact that the church of his day was everywhere oppressed. If he thought the facts of Christ's life were false, **he could not have endured** such hardship for Christ's sake.

- c. Paul had every opportunity to disprove the resurrection of Christ, which would have destroyed Christianity at its very beginning. Clearly **he did not accept** the story made up by his chief priests and elders (Matt. 28:12-15).

As a Pharisee Paul was in the best possible position to expose Christianity as a fraud, if it were. Instead he preached all the gospel facts as truth! He became a member of the very church he tried to destroy. Therefore, Paul's conversion and Christian life are very impressive evidences of the truth of Christianity.

Tarsus and Paul's early life

Paul was born in Tarsus, a city on the plains of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor. He was proud of his birthplace, referring to it as "no ordinary city" (Acts 21:39). Indeed it was a prosperous and important city. It was the capital of Cilicia and a centre of trade by land and sea. It had a fine natural harbour and ships from all parts of the maritime world came into its port. Located in the curve where Syria and Asia Minor come together, it was a meeting place for Asia and Europe. It was a city of many languages – a centre of Greek and Latin culture, literature and philosophy. It had schools equal to those of Athens and Alexandria.

Tarsus had become a city of importance under the Roman emperors. It was made a "free city" governed by its own laws. Antony had bestowed Roman citizenship on all its citizens. They paid no tribute to Rome. Augustus Caesar confirmed these privileges. There was a large colony of Jews in the city. They were successful, for the Romans realised that they were an industrious people who encouraged business. These Jews enjoyed all the privileges of citizenship. Thus Paul was born a Roman citizen and could command the protection given to a citizen throughout the Empire.

As a Jew and a Pharisee from a family of Pharisees, he was well educated by his own people. After he had finished his studies in Tarsus, he went to Jerusalem to continue his learning under Gamaliel, one of the great Hebrew scholars of his time. Paul's family must have been wealthy to be able to send their son away to study.

We learn from a reference in Acts 22:28 that Paul had a sister and a nephew in Jerusalem. Whether there were other brothers and sisters we do not know. Through this period of his life Paul was called Saul, for he came from the tribe of Benjamin and was named after Saul who became the first king of the Hebrews. In the beginning of his career he was known as Saul of Tarsus.

Young Saul had been schooled in classical Hebrew and also spoke Aramaic, the language common to the Jews of Palestine. As a citizen of Tarsus, he spoke Greek, which was practically an international language. This fluency in language was of great advantage to him in his journeys.

In addition to his academic and religious studies, Saul was also taught a trade. Tarsus was famous for its weavers. Its speciality was a tough fabric woven from goats' hair. It was used for sails, tents, and heavy cloaks. Somewhere along the city's street of weavers, Saul learned the art of tent making (Acts 18:1-3). This skill, too, was to prove useful in later life.



Over to you

Do you think the message of your preaching is ever influenced by what people want to hear?

Would you be troubled if you discovered that the content of your preaching was different from that of the other preachers in your area?

When you stand as a preacher before a congregation, do you consider that this is something that is of God's doing?

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 to 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, page 50 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 had not 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 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 to preach about from these verses

Theme: 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:

- a 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).
- b 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.



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?



Galatians 2:1-5

This Study Paper contains the following:-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Focus Point 1: Chronology of Paul's movements following his conversion at Damascus
- 📁 Focus Point 2: The Church Meeting
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

When we first read the beginning of chapter 2, we could think that Paul is continuing with his biography. But this is not the case because in chapter 1 Paul has dealt with the source of the gospel. That is the gospel which came to him by revelation from Jesus Christ. Now Paul is moving on to something different. What he is going to set out now is crucial to understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ. It affects us today because Paul, at the beginning of chapter 2, is telling the Galatians about a visit to Jerusalem.

This visit to Jerusalem is recorded in chapter 15 of Acts. A meeting took place of the church leaders and became known as the Council of Jerusalem. This Council made clear, once and for all, a subject that has implications for us today. If this Council had not come to the conclusion it did, the Christian Church would not be as we know it.

What these verses mean

Verse 1

Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem,

This is probably fourteen years after the visit to Jerusalem (1:18). Paul had visited the city since then and before the current visit. Paul does not mention the second visit in his Galatians letter, but it is referred to in Acts 11:29-30. This took place whilst Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, when they were sent to Jerusalem by the church with gifts that had been collected for the famine relief. It is likely that Paul did not mention this visit in his letter to the Galatians, because it would have taken him from the main thrust of his argument of being independent from the apostles. Having set out his case in chapter 1, he now moves on to the visit for the Jerusalem Council. By the time of the relief visit, his ministry (i.e. the gospel he preached and taught) in Cilicia and Syria was well established. According to this sequence, the visit Paul is now referring to would have been his third one to Jerusalem.¹

this time with Barnabas.

When Paul made his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, the disciples were afraid of him, not quite believing that he was a follower of Christ. It was Barnabas who took Paul and introduced him to Peter and James (1:18 and Acts 9:26). Paul had to make a hurried departure from Jerusalem after his life was threatened. He was taken to the port of Caesarea from where he sailed to his home city of Tarsus. (Acts 9:30). Tarsus was the chief city of Cilicia, the region Paul mentioned with Syria in 1:21. Paul remained there until Barnabas sought him out to go to Antioch. There the two men worked together for a whole year teaching the people (Acts 11:26-27).

I took Titus along also.

Titus was an uncircumcised Greek (see 2:3). The false teachers had been teaching that the true gospel message was “Believe in Jesus **and** keep the ceremonies of Moses (circumcision).” Paul takes Titus, as a representative of true Gentile Christians who were not keeping the ceremonies given by Moses. It shows to us how important the purpose of the Jerusalem Council meeting was.

¹ Not all scholars are agreed that Paul is referring to his third visit to Jerusalem. A number consider that the reference in 2:1 is to Paul's second visit, the famine relief trip recorded in Acts 11:27-30. Paul was using this mercy mission to discuss with the Jerusalem leaders his law-free gospel. Whichever one it was does not alter the force of the argument

Verse 2

I went in response to a revelation

Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem because of a revelation. In other words they went under God's directions. However Acts 15:2 tells us that their going was the decision of a church meeting. Can both statements be true? The answer is yes. Paul was prepared by a direct revelation for the task that the church gave him. We learn therefore that decisions of a church meeting may be the way God confirms his will. Compare Matthew 18:18 and Acts 13: 2 – 4; in both these cases church decisions are said to show God's will. See **Focus Point 2** at the end of this Study Paper, **The Church Meeting**.

and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles.

Paul communicated to the leaders who gathered for the Council meeting the gospel he preached. This was the gospel revealed to him by Christ and he considered it to be absolutely crucial. The word "preach" is in the present tense; Paul is still preaching the same gospel he formerly declared to them at Jerusalem.

But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders,

The gospel Paul declared was the same gospel that was accepted by those Paul recognised to be leaders. This fact may have been confirmed in one or more private meetings – perhaps described in Acts 15:4, most probably before the Council itself. He did this to check out some information and facts. At Antioch, some Judaizers had come from Jerusalem and were teaching that people could not be saved unless they were circumcised. Paul needed to know if these men had been sent by the Jerusalem church. Paul told this private meeting the gospel of Christ he preached, so that, if anyone disagreed, then they could say so.

for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.

Paul is sure and confident in the gospel he preached. He is not wavering or doubting. He was anxious that Jewish Christians should not impose Mosaic laws on Gentile believers, whom he had taught that the work of Christ had made them free from the old Jewish ceremonies of worship. If Jewish laws were now imposed on Gentile believers, all Paul's work would be in vain.

Paul is now advancing to his Galatian readers. Paul could not be seen as preaching a gospel that was different to what the other apostles preached. The Jerusalem leaders not only recognised the gospel that Paul preached was authentic but also that he was an authentic apostle.

Verse 3

Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

Paul's taking Titus to the Jerusalem Council was important. Titus was, like many of the Galatians, a Gentile. Paul is emphasising to the Galatians that the Council did not require Titus to be circumcised. Here is proof that salvation is found in Christ alone, outside of the law of Moses. Later on in the letter, Paul writes that it makes no difference if people are circumcised or not; the only thing that counts is faith in Christ that will show itself in love (5:6).

Verse 4

[This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks

Who were these false brethren? It seems that within the ranks of the church there were those who were hankering after the old ways. They were acting in secrecy intermingling with the **true** believers. There is no place for secrecy amongst believers when they gather together. Now these false brethren were represented at the Council meeting but in a deceitful way. Their plan was to hi-jack the meeting to try and get their teaching accepted. It is because of their presence and argument that Titus was such an important test case.

to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

We are now getting to the crucial issues. There are two positions. We are either free in Christ or we are slaves, bound in chains like prisoners. The gospel which was revealed to Paul and which he has preached and is now defending actually rescues us from slavery. We are slaves to sin and Satan and it is only the good news of Jesus Christ's dying on the cross to take the punishment we deserve that can rescue us and free us from Satan's imprisonment. It is this [Christ's] work of atonement ² that makes the difference, not anything that we might do, whether it is religious ritual, observances or good deeds.

Putting it another way, Christ has fulfilled the Mosaic law on our behalf; we believers do not have to keep it to earn our salvation. We

² Atonement. This is one of the few theological terms that are wholly English in origin. It means 'At-one-ment', the bringing of two estranged parties together. This is accomplished by the death of Christ on the cross by which he satisfied the demands of the law of God and obtained salvation for his people. *A Dictionary of Theological Terms* (M. E. Mantou).

have this great liberty by trusting in Christ's work. Compare Romans 8:3. To try to earn our salvation by perfect law-keeping would make us hopeless slaves to the law; hopeless, because - being sinners - we could not keep it perfectly, anyway! See Acts 15:10.

These false brethren were not acting honestly. Instead of engaging in an open discussion, they spied. This suggests that they were seeking opportunities to discredit Paul's gospel. Satan is the deceiver; having started with Adam and Eve he has continued with all generations ever since. If Satan can use people within the church, he will.

Verse 5

We did not give in to them for a moment,

Paul would not allow Titus to be circumcised. He spoke against the teaching of the false brethren. He did not alter his gospel. The conference in Acts 15:1-24 was a critical time in early church history. If Paul's defence of the gospel had failed, Christianity either would have become corrupted by being mixed with old Jewish ceremonies from then on, or would have split into two churches, Jewish and Gentile. Either would have meant a tragic loss of pure gospel truth.

so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

The truth is that Christ has done all that is necessary for the salvation of every believer. Salvation is God's gracious gift. To suggest that the believer must also do some ceremonies means:

- i Christ's work was somehow incomplete
- ii God is not satisfied with what Christ did
- iii Sinners are able to please God by what they do

These three things deny that salvation is by grace, which is the heart of the gospel. Therefore, says Paul, he could not agree with and give way to these false brethren.



Summary

The gospel that Christ revealed to Paul was simple. Man's salvation was achieved by Jesus Christ dying as a substitute for him on the cross to satisfy God's law. Simple faith in that atoning work enables a person to be saved from God's anger and inherit eternal life. Such a person is justified in God's sight. But man's corrupted nature makes him think that he has to add to that and do something special. There were those in the early church who felt that the law of Moses had to be observed as well. Paul calls them **false**, recognising the damage they would do to the gospel message if their teaching were allowed to prevail. They had come into the Galatian churches and subverted the minds of the Christians who were young in the faith. "Look," Paul is saying to them, "this is not the first time." These false people have been around for a while. There was a special meeting held in Jerusalem, attended by the church leaders (including apostles), who considered this matter. Titus, the Greek, was there too and he became a test case. He, being a Gentile, was accepted as a Christian without the need to observe any Mosaic law, despite the presence of false brethren who had infiltrated the meeting. If that were not so, he would have still been in slavery to sin, because the law cannot save. The true gospel gives us freedom in Christ.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: **Our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus** (Gal. 2:4)
(Read also Galatians 5:13-26).

Introduction

There are two kinds of freedom. There is human freedom, when people are free **to do whatever they like**. This is not true freedom because we are all sinners and therefore do not like to do godly things. To be free to do what we sinners like leads to increase of sin. Galatians 5:19- 21.

There is, secondly, spiritual freedom. This is when people are free **to do what they ought**. This is the freedom which Christian believers can experience because Christ has fully atoned for all their sin. This liberty means that the believer's conscience can be free from fear of accusation of fault by God, or Satan, or itself! Galatians 5: 22,23.

1. The believer is free from the curse of God's law. Every unbeliever is under the wrath of God – John 3:36. God, as our maker, requires of us undivided love and unfailing obedience; see Galatians 3:10. To do less than this is to be in peril of his judgement. But the person “in Christ” is in a different situation. See Galatians 3:13.
2. The believer is free from the slavery of having to keep God's law to earn his salvation. Because we are sinners nothing that we do to please God can be successful. Our best efforts are still sinful in God's sight – Romans 3:23. Therefore any attempt to please God by our efforts to fulfil his law is a hopeless form of slavery. The unbeliever trying to do God's will is like the fly struggling in a spider's web. Every effort of the fly entangles him more. Every inadequate effort of the sinner to please God actually adds more to his condemnation.
3. The believer is free to serve Christ because:
 - i by his new birth he now sees a preciousness in Christ
 - ii by the indwelling Spirit he is made spiritually strong to serve Christ (Gal. 5:22).
 - iii by experiencing God's grace to him, he is motivated to serve by grateful love to God.

(None of these things were true when he was an unbeliever, dead to God!)

Conclusion

Satan tries to rob believers of their experience of this liberty by making them feel that they can earn merit with God by good deeds. Such ideas were “creeping in secretly” in Galatia and are still about. Believers do good works out of gratitude to God, to show love. God's grace and forgiveness to us are so great. We should be utterly devoted to him. Our devotion is not a credit to us, merely a holy duty.



Focus point:

Chronology of Paul's movements following his conversion at Damascus ³

- Year 1 First period in Damascus preaching Christ (Acts 9:19-22).
Visit to Arabia, the gospel revealed to him. Returns to Damascus (Gal.1:17).
Second period in Damascus preaching Christ (Acts 9:23).
His life is threatened, he escapes from Damascus (Acts 9:23-25)
- Year 3 First visit to Jerusalem. He sees Peter and James (Acts 9:26-28, Gal.1:18-19).
His life is again threatened; he escapes from Jerusalem. (Acts 9:29).
Journey to Tarsus in Cilicia, his home town (Acts 9:30).
- Year 3 Preaches in Syria and Cilicia (Gal.1:21).
onwards Barnabas seeks him out in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch. He becomes a preacher/teacher in that church (Acts 11:25-26).
Whilst in Antioch, Paul and Barnabas take gifts for famine relief to Jerusalem (second visit) (Acts 11:30).
Paul's first missionary journey. He plants churches in Galatia (Acts 13 and 14).
He returns to Antioch. Dispute arises with Judaisers who had come from Jerusalem (Acts 15:1).
- Year 17 Fourteen years after his first visit Paul goes to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. Paul consults with the apostles, participates in the Council of Jerusalem. The Judaisers are defeated (2:1-5).

³ Not all commentators are agreed on the sequence outlined in this chronology of events. The timetable here follows the basis set out in "Free in Christ" by Edgar Andrews, published by Evangelical Press.



Focus point 2: The Church Meeting

From time to time the baptised members of a local church will need to meet in addition to their normal worship service, in order to discover God's will for them in various practical matters. The following list indicates the purposes for which the early churches met:

Acts 1:15-26	To replace an apostle
2:1	To wait on the Lord
6:2-6	To set aside men for special duties in the church
11:22	To provide for inter-church fellowship
13:1	For the ministry of the Word
13:2,3	To send missionaries
14:27	To hear about God's mighty acts
15:1-29	To defend and confirm biblical truth
15:30,31	To receive news from other churches
1 Corinthians 5:1-5	
Matthew 18:15-20	To discipline offenders
1 Corinthians 11: 17-34	To observe the Lord's Supper
1 Corinthians 14:26	For the exercise of spiritual gifts
2 Corinthians 8:19	To deal with monetary gifts
Colossians 4:16	For the reading of the Word
Hebrews 10:25	For mutual exhortation

If we are to follow the example of the early church, therefore, matters like the ministry, the diaconate, finance, eldership, evangelistic outreach and fellowship with other churches are all matters to be discussed and decided on by the gathered local church. The deacons would normally work in close relationship with the elders, who have the responsibility of the oversight of the church.

It is important that all members of a local church should try to be present in such meetings and all matters should be discussed in an attitude of prayer and worship. The Lord is present! (James 5:8,9).

The aim of the church meeting should be to try and reach a unanimous agreement about the matters discussed (Acts 15:22-25). Some practical matters (i.e. building, repairs etc.) can be decided by the deacons of the church without necessarily referring all the details to the full church meeting. It is enough if the church meeting is merely informed of the deacons' plans in such matters (1 Thess. 5:12).



Over to you

If a person in your church came to you and shared a burden for a particular work of mission, how would you respond?

What kind of gospel do you preach to your hearers? Is it based on God's grace or human effort?

What do you think is more important: keeping peace in the church or being faithful to the truth of God's Word? When you have answered that, consider how you are applying it in your own situation.



Galatians 2:6-10

This Study Paper contains the following :-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 Summary note on the letter so far
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Focus Point: Justification by Faith
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

The leaders of the Jerusalem church had accepted Titus as a Christian without the need for circumcision. Paul now reports, in brief, the outcome of the Council of Jerusalem. The full details are found in Acts 15:6-31. Paul restricts himself to two main points: the authenticity of the gospel that he had been preaching (the same gospel the Galatians had heard) and the fact that all the leaders were united behind this gospel, demonstrated by the shaking of hands.

What these verses mean

Verse 6

As for those who seemed to be important — whatever they were makes no difference to me;

Paul is referring to the leaders of the Jerusalem church. He is not being disrespectful, for in verse 9 he describes these same men as pillars. What Paul is doing is emphasising that natural and physical circumstances are never to be thought more important than spiritual

experience. Church leaders are to be respected if they are faithful but they are only mere mortal beings, sinful and weak. When Peter wrote his epistle, he warned elders not to lord it over the flock that is entrusted to them (1 Pet.5:3). Remember the context of this letter. Paul is addressing people who have blindly followed false teachers. It is important for Paul to stress to these Galatians that we do not put our trust in men, no matter how famous they are and what position they hold; God's truth overrides.

“In matters of society, God will have us honour and reverence persons, as His instruments by which He governs the world. But when the question touches religion, conscience, faith, the fear of God, we must not fear persons, put no trust in them; for we must trust and glory in God alone.”

Martin Luther writing on Galatians 2:6.

God does not judge by external appearance —

The way we assess people is very much by external characteristics. There is a natural tendency in our hearts to follow certain personalities and idolise them. This is common in the Christian Church today, when some preachers have a following as if they were film stars. God's criterion is different. See the words God spoke to Samuel when he was to anoint David to be the next king of Israel after Saul (1 Sam. 16:7). This principle continues into the New Testament as God gives leaders to his church (Eph. 4:11-16).

those men added nothing to my message.

The Council of Jerusalem confirmed that the gospel Paul had been preaching was the apostolic gospel, even though no apostle had instructed him in it. This was because Paul received his knowledge of the gospel in a glorious encounter with God; nothing on earth can have more authority over him than that. Compare 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 22:16; Acts 4:19,20.

Verse 7

On the contrary,

Those who had troubled Paul's Galatian converts had insisted that Christians must keep Jewish ceremonial law. Compare 1:7; 3:1-5; Acts 15:1. On the contrary, says Paul, when I went to Jerusalem the apostles there made no rule such as the false brethren are trying to impose. So the false brethren are not true messengers.

they saw that

I had been given the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been given the task of preaching the gospel to the Jews.

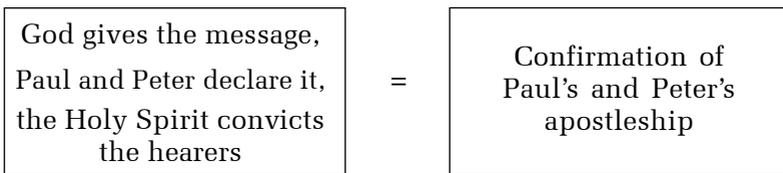
Paul recognised that God used Peter as a preacher in a remarkable way – see Acts 2:41. Paul claims that God has used him as a preacher also in a remarkable way – see Acts 15:12. God worked equally greatly through both Peter’s and Paul’s ministries. On the basis of that evidence, Paul says, the Jerusalem elders agreed that Paul’s gospel was the true gospel. Again, the false brethren are hereby exposed as frauds.

Verse 8

For God,

who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, [circumcised] was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. [uncircumcised]

There were not two gospel messages. The distinction is only in the areas in which the message was preached – Peter mainly to the Jews; Paul mainly to Gentiles. There was no difference in the content of the messages. The word “gospel” has only one meaning in both cases – see 1:6–9; Ephesians 4: 4 – 6. The message was from God and this was seen in the way men and women were being changed in their lives, through repenting of their sin and trusting in Christ (faith). This was as a result of the Holy Spirit’s working in the lives of these people. Hence this formula;



Verse 9

James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, ¹

Compare Revelation 3:12. The symbol of a building as a picture of the church of God is common in the New Testament. See Ephesians

See page 56 for the footnote

2:20 – 22. Peter, James (probably the Lord’s brother) and John were recognised as important to the wellbeing of the church. Peter, James, John and Paul wrote at least 21 of the 27 New Testament books and Peter probably helped Mark write that Gospel as well. Pillars of the church of God, truly!

gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognised the grace given to me.

This was the sign of agreement and of solemn covenant. They were all uniting behind one gospel but sharing the fields of labour. Giving the right hand often indicated that an agreement was made. See 2 Kings 10:15; 1 Chronicles 29:24 (submit = give the hand); Ezra 10:19; Ezekiel 17:18. It was a remarkable moment when Peter, James, John, Paul and Barnabas all shook hands together. It was a sign of complete agreement that the one gospel would go to all peoples.

They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.

They agreed that this should happen. This was not an unhappy compromise but an arrangement for enthusiastic support of each other. Thus Paul and Barnabas are to give their main energies to reaching Gentiles, Peter, James and John to reaching Jews. (N.B. Always remember this when reading their respective letters in the New Testament). Nevertheless, Paul sometimes spoke to Jews and Peter sometimes spoke to Gentiles.

Verse 10

All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, Martin Luther wrote: “Where the church is there must needs be the poor. For the world and the devil do persecute the church and bring many to poverty.” The verb “remember” is in the present tense in the Greek; i.e. “keep on remembering”. Paul had begun to do this (Acts 11:29 –30). Judaea often suffered from famines and Jewish Christians would receive least help from the Jewish authorities.

¹ It is interesting to see how the gospel message united people of very different characters in the one early church, as indicated by verse 9 above. James, the Lord’s brother, the conservative traditionalist, Peter, the impetuous, eager, practical man, Paul, the great thinker, yet a blazing evangelist, John, the quiet disciple, full of gentle love, yet with prophetic vision to write Revelation, Barnabas, the caring negotiator and encourager of others. The spiritual experience each of them possessed made it possible to combine all their different gifts in one harmonious fellowship. This illustrates how the life of Christ in believers can unite them.

the very thing I was eager to do.

Paul was eager and diligent to carry on with the ministry for the poor. Compare Acts 24:17; Romans 15:25; 1 Corinthians 16:1 – 3; 2 Corinthians 8: 1 – 4. Whilst the gospel of free grace does not require or involve any human contribution (i.e. works or good deeds), the consequence of the gospel upon a person is that good works should flow out of that person's changed life. Paul, having been a persecutor of God's people, has been saved from eternal death by the very one he persecuted. He has not deserved God's gracious love that has rescued him, but the effect it has upon him is that he wants to please God by living in such a way that God is glorified. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians says, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works . ." (Eph.2:10).



Summary

The gospel message these Galatians had heard from Paul was not man-made but had come from God. To stress this fundamental principle, Paul has been showing these Galatians that he had not been taught by the other apostles. He was taught by Jesus in the wilderness of Arabia. When Paul did finally meet the other leaders of the church, the meeting took place in Jerusalem against a background of some who were wanting to return to the old ways of Judaism. What transpired at this special meeting (Council of Jerusalem) was that the gospel Paul had been teaching was the same gospel proclaimed by the other apostles. This was that believers in Christ are justified by their faith and that the requirements of the law of Moses did not apply. The message was the same but there was an agreement as to the division of the work. Paul was to concentrate his work amongst the Gentiles whilst Peter stayed with the Jews. The gospel meets the needs of people, no matter how diverse are their languages and culture.



Summary note on the letter so far

So far in this letter Paul shows that it is not he who is presenting a false gospel. He is preaching what he received from God (chapter 1) and what the elders at Jerusalem agreed was the true gospel (chapter 2). It must therefore be the Galatians who are deserting the gospel, being misled by false teachers.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: “**Remember the poor**” – 2:10

Introduction.

True Christianity means living according to Bible teaching and not according to what other people may say or do. So what is the Bible teaching about the right attitude to those who are poor?

1. There will always be poor in the world (John 12:8).

Injustice, oppression, deceit, bribery, ill-health, laziness, carelessness, inequality of ability and opportunity, drought, famine, civil disorder, war – all these cause poverty; all are the result of humanity being out of fellowship with God; all will last as long as this sinful earth remains. There will always be the poor because society will never be sinless.

(Those who are the poor in this life are not so because of some wrongdoing in a previous life. God has established only one way of dealing with human sin and that is by the death of Christ. The Hindu doctrine of Karma is not the reason for the presence of the poor).

2. God in the Bible is often shown as a defender of the poor because he is against all the injustice which produces poverty.

This does not mean that God is always against rich people (see Deuteronomy 8:18; Ecclesiastes 5:19). Abraham, Job, David,

Solomon, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea and other Bible characters were wealthy. The Bible does not denounce wealth but only wealth unjustly gained or wrongly used.

The Bible does **not** teach that the poor of this world have some special merit in God's sight. The poor and the rich are equally spiritually dead in God's sight; each equally needs God's grace.

3. The church is a society of saved sinners who should always seek to alleviate poverty (6:10).

- a. In daily life believers must not themselves act in those ways which produce poverty in society but will always seek to support honesty and justice in public life.
- b. In church life believers must show love to one another by giving help to one another as necessary. See Acts 4:34 –35 and 2 Corinthians 8:1 – 14. This does not mean it is wrong for believers to have their own possessions (Acts 5:4); it is only wrong to use possessions selfishly or deceitfully.

4. It does not truly help the poor if only their physical needs are met while their spiritual needs are ignored (Luke 12:20 – 21).

A class war in society is not the cure for poverty because such revolutions do not remove the power of sin from people's lives. A society can only be changed by the people in it being born again. Therefore the poor always need the gospel message as much as (if not more than) they need material help.

Conclusion

In Psalm 73 Asaph begins by being envious of the ungodly rich (verses 1 – 16) but later realises that it is better to be **spiritually** wealthy (verses 17 – 28). Therefore to “remember the poor” must include giving them spiritual understanding as well as physical help. Are we, as individuals and as churches, truly remembering the poor in the way the Bible teaches?



Focus point: Justification by Faith

Justification **means** that a person is treated by God as

- (a) free from all wrongdoing
- (b) possessing perfect righteousness

Such a person is seen as having kept all God's laws perfectly. They enjoy God's full favour and blessing.

The Bible uses the word *justification* in a legal sense. When a person is justified, it means that God treats that person, who is guilty of sin, as being not guilty. The person is not made righteous but what it means is that the person is viewed by God as legally righteous. For example, the fact that a person is found "not guilty" in court does not change what actually happened. The court, on the basis of the evidence before it may have found such a person "not guilty", but the person may still have done the crime.

The Bible describes **two methods** of justification.

- (a) By obedience to God's command.

This was the case with Adam and Eve when they were first created. This method is suitable for those people who are already holy and sinless.

- (b) However, since Adam and Eve fell into sin, it has been impossible for mankind to be justified by obedience.

When they disobeyed, God spoke to Adam and Eve (Gen.3:14-16).

God was to take justification into his own hands.

He would send a Saviour, born of a woman to rescue sinners from Satan.

This was God's mercy (withholding punishment we deserve) and grace (giving us what we don't deserve), which is the second method of justification. Hence we have the phrase "to be justified by [God's] grace".

Justification in the Old Testament

Adam and Eve had received a promise of a Saviour. They were aware of mixed feelings, a dread of God because of their

disobedience at the same time as having a hope in God's promise of a rescue/deliverance. These feelings were expressed in animal sacrifices to God.

The animal was innocent, yet was killed as a substitute for sinners. Men did not invent these sacrifices, but they were initiated by God. God was illustrating the way that man was to be rescued. A person has to believe in God's way of salvation which is the death of an innocent substitute. The person who believes in this substitute is justified. This belief is faith. A person who rejects this way remains under God's judgement for his sin.

In the Old Testament, the people did not fully understand how a substitute would come (the Messiah) but the pattern had been provided through sacrifices and the way God dealt with his people e.g. Noah, Abraham. These sacrifices showed the people, in symbolic form, the work of Jesus Christ as Saviour. God also sent prophets to give the people more information about the coming of the Saviour.

Justification through Jesus

Jesus came down to this earth at the time God appointed just as all the prophets had foretold. Jesus was without sin; he was righteous and he gave his life when he did not deserve to be punished. So he was able to act as a substitute. The Christian's justification depends on that righteousness, there is nothing else. That righteousness is credited to the one who trusts and believes in Christ's death as his salvation.

A comment on the word *faith*. The phrase *justification by faith* can give the impression that it is our faith that justifies us. We are justified by Christ's righteousness. Faith is the means by which we receive that righteousness. Faith is a gift from God (2 Pet.1:1). For example, food nourishes our bodies. We take in the food by eating it. Is it the eating that nourishes our bodies? No, the eating [faith] is the means by which we put the food into our bodies.

Many people have a problem with the teaching of justification.

The **first group** is the rationalist. The rationalist will only believe if you can prove something to him. The rationalist is in error because he is ignorant of the demands God places upon us.

The **second group** is the ritualist. The ritualist is satisfied only when a ceremony or ritual is performed. The ritualist supposes that it is the ceremony that pleases God but such a person is in error because he has no proper sense of his own sin and guilt. He is unable to appreciate the excellence of what Christ has done. This was the problem for the Jews who were troubling the Galatian believers. Many sections of Christendom today are ritualistic, e.g. Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches.



Over to you

How much does external appearance or holding important position matter in your culture? How does that then fit with verse 6?

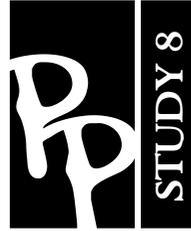
When people are affected by a message you have preached, how would you explain why they have been so moved?

Do you think that preaching which is not gospel-based can be accompanied by the power of the Spirit?

ACTION CAN SPEAK LOUDER



THAN WORDS



Galatians 2:11-14

This Study Paper contains the following :-

- 📁 Introduction to the passage
- 📁 What these verses mean
- 📁 Summary
- 📁 A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses
- 📁 Focus Point: Jewish rules for eating and drinking and the Christian difference
- 📁 Over to you

Introduction to the passage

An incident occurred at Antioch after the Council in Jerusalem. On the surface it may not have appeared to be of any significance. The apostle Paul, however, sees danger which will have very serious implications for the gospel. The staggering thing about all this is that the person at fault is the apostle Peter. In chapter 1:8-9 we saw what the consequences would be for anyone who did not preach the true gospel, even if it were an angel or an apostle. When we look at what happened we do not find the problem arising out of what was said, but from behaviour. Our actions can undermine the true gospel as much as our words.

What these verses mean

Verse 11

When Peter came to Antioch,

The Greek begins with the word “But”. This is to show that the happy fellowship of verses 9 and 10 is interrupted. It may seem strange to think of Peter and Paul now disagreeing, when they had

been in happy fellowship. Because of that it has been suggested by some that this was a different person who was also called Peter. That seems very unlikely indeed. In 1:18; 2:7, 8,9, it is Peter the apostle who is meant. So also in verse 11. We are not told why Peter came to Antioch. Acts 15:35 tells us that Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch for some time after the great conference.

I opposed him to his face,

Compare 1:8,9. The word “opposed” suggests that it was Peter attacking and Paul defending the liberty the Jewish and Gentile believers had to mix together as equals, without the need for Gentiles to keep Jewish ceremonial laws.

because he was [clearly ¹] in the wrong.

The great Council in Acts 15 had decided that Gentile believers should not be required to keep Jewish ceremonial laws. Peter himself argued that the way of salvation was no different for Jews or Gentiles. Salvation was by God’s gracious gift to both (Acts 15:7–11). Therefore there was to be no difference between Jewish and Gentile believers. In the church at Antioch, Jews and Gentiles were mixing happily together as equals, which is what Peter had told them to do. Peter also mixed with them all at first – but then withdrew and divided the church into separate groups of Jews and Gentiles (2:12). So Peter was to blame for saying one thing at the Council and doing another thing in Antioch. Peter was shown to be inconsistent.

Verse 12

Before certain men came from James,

The arrival of a certain group of men at Antioch influenced Peter’s behaviour. Who were these men and why did they come? The text tells us that they were in some way associated with James, the leader of the church in Jerusalem. James had earlier agreed with Peter, John and Paul (verse 9). Did James send them? It is difficult to understand why James should send messengers now to contradict that agreement. Perhaps these persons merely came from Jerusalem and were not personal messengers from James. These men were not necessarily Judaisers.

he used to eat with the Gentiles.

Peter sat at the same table and shared meals with Gentiles. He had done this regularly and consistently going back to before Acts 11:3,

¹ Added in some NIV versions

because God had showed him in a vision that there was to be no more difference between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:5–17). Coming to Antioch, Peter naturally mixed freely with Gentile believers, making a habit of eating with them without obeying Jewish ceremonial food laws.

But when they arrived, he [Peter] began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles

Peter did these things gradually. The Greek word for “withdrawing” can be used of partially rolling up the sails of a boat so that the wind does not strike it so fiercely. Peter was retreating to avoid criticism from the Jerusalem church. He was criticised once before (Acts 11:1–3). See also Acts 10 for the full details of Peter being shown that the gospel was for Gentiles as well.

because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

The primitive urge of the human being surfaces in Peter – the fear of others. Compare Proverbs 29:25. Why Peter, who before had spoken out, should now be afraid is not easy to explain. Perhaps this action merely reflects a weakness in Peter’s character. Several times it is recorded of Peter that he said one thing and did another. Compare John 13:37 and John 18:25. The problem lay in the attention that is given to the reaction and expectations of men, rather than to the truth of God.

Verse 13

The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy,

Peter’s action was not sincere. He acted out of fear, not out of changed conviction. He had already been happily “living as a Gentile” (verse 14). So clearly Peter **did** believe salvation was by grace and not by any Jewish ceremony. Once again, as before in his life, fear made him a hypocrite. The Greek word “hypocrisy” is made up of two words “under” and “judge”. A hypocrite like an actor is “judged under” or according to the mask he is wearing. Peter hid his true beliefs under a disguise of wrong actions.

so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

Barnabas had stood with Paul until now (verses 1,9). So Paul was left alone to insist that there is no difference between Jew or Greek and that salvation is received as a gift from God and not earned by human ceremony. What a lot would have been lost that day if Paul

had not stood firm, even though alone. This break between Paul and Barnabas soon became even more severe (Acts 15:39).

Peter was recognised by his fellow believers as being a leader amongst them. He may have felt that a withdrawal from the Gentiles would not harm them and at the same time no offence would be caused to the Judaisers. But his actions were repeated by others, as even Barnabas, that great encourager (especially of the Gentile believers), followed Peter in this behaviour. For the sake of an easy way out, Peter moved away from the truth and took people with him. Leaders have to be very careful about what they say and do.

Verse 14

When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel,

The phrase “the truth of the gospel” comes twice in this chapter (verses 5 and 14). The word truth means more than the facts of the gospel or the doctrines of the gospel. The Greek word means the **reality** of the gospel or the **essence** of the gospel. This heart of the gospel is *our acceptance by God, whoever we are, through faith in Christ alone*. By withdrawing and eating separately, Peter was suggesting that Jews are accepted by God in some different way from Gentiles. That was failing to walk straight (correctly) according to gospel reality.

I said to Peter in front of them all,

As far as Paul was concerned Peter’s behaviour was undermining the gospel. Because Peter’s deviation from true Christian behaviour was in public and caused other people to be persuaded by it, Paul rebuked him publicly, to his face. Compare 1 Timothy 5:20. But if we ever have to point out similar public failure in another believer’s actions, let us never forget Galatians 6:1–3.

“You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew.

The Jews, as God’s chosen people, had been given the law and a full set of instructions. These were a temporary measure intended for the people to understand God’s holiness and how human sin separates them from God. These laws also showed how people could be reconciled to God. These laws were temporary until Jesus Christ came down to earth, when his death on the cross became the means of God’s anger being turned away. The laws and accompanying instructions were foreshadows of the work that Jesus Christ came to

do. The Gentiles were those who were not Jews and, in general, were excluded from the privileges and favours the Jews enjoyed. Unfortunately, throughout their history, up until the coming of Christ, the Jews had developed the laws adding many of their own rules. The outward observation (ceremonial) of many of these rules became the way that they thought God could be pleased.

Peter was a Jew and had been brought up with all these Jewish traditions. He became a follower of Christ, accepting that it was not by following any ceremonial observances that a person is saved, but that Jesus Christ gave his own life for him. It was God's undeserved favour that Jesus should die for Peter and take God's punishment for his sin. There was nothing that Peter could have done to assist Jesus in his work.

When Jesus died and rose from the dead, the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile was destroyed (Eph. 2:14). For those who trusted in Christ for salvation, it made no difference whether they were from a Jewish or Gentile background. The Gentile became a follower of Jesus Christ in the same way that a Jewish person did. The Gentile did not have to become a Jew first (by going through ceremonial observances), but did so directly as a Gentile through God's grace. Peter demonstrated this principle by mixing with Gentile believers, having meals with them. This was very significant because under the Jewish laws preparation of food was to be done in a strict way (see the Focus Point at the end of this study). His upbringing is Jewish yet he is now, because of God's grace, able to be with Gentile believers because observance of the old Jewish rules are no longer valid. So he is no longer like a Jew of the old tradition.

How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"²

By no longer eating with the Gentile believers Peter is sending out the wrong signal. His actions could be interpreted that the Judaisers are right and that conforming to ceremonial ritual is required to obtain God's salvation. The Gentiles, with whom he ate, would now think that they had to become Jews to be accepted by God. Peter, through compromise, denies the truth of the gospel and inadvertently pressurises the Gentiles to follow a superseded tradition.

² The quotation marks finish at the end of verse 21 in the NIV. See the introduction to Study No. 9 . We have inserted the quotation marks because we end this study here.



Summary

In trying to show the Galatian believers how gospel truth must be guarded and upheld and not watered down, Paul gives them an example from a situation that occurred earlier in Antioch. Paul challenged Peter about his withdrawal from having meals with Gentile believers. Men had come from Jerusalem and Peter feared that they would criticise him for eating with Gentiles. In doing this Peter was denying the gospel by implying a separation of Jew and Gentile. The gospel has destroyed the barrier dividing Jew and Gentile and Peter's action suggested that he was advocating returning to the Old Testament covenant. Peter's thinking had in no way reverted to the former way, but he had not thought out the implications of his actions. The fear of man had overtaken him, which led him to seek a course of not offending critics. Christian believers have no option but to stand for the truth of the gospel, even if it means upsetting people who surround them. All of us have tendencies to think as Peter did. From his later epistles it is evident that Peter did accept his public rebuke and repented of his sin.



A suggestion of what to preach about from these verses

Theme: Disagreement between Christians (Gal. 2:11)

Points to notice:

- i When the disagreement occurred. The church was spreading geographically and numerically; it was growing spiritually (Acts 11:26). See map on page 20 (Galatians Study No. 2). Problems often arise when Christian work is successful.
- ii What the disagreement was about. Whether Peter's actions properly displayed the truth of the gospel. Problems often arise over questions of Christian behaviour. See notes on "The Christian difference" on page 70.

- iii Why the disagreement arose. From a wrong fear. We know that Peter knew better than he behaved. See Acts 10: 9–16; 28. There will be problems if we behave differently from the truth we know.
- iv How the disagreement ended. The truth of the gospel was preserved; Jews and Gentiles were one church. Peter had a great respect for Paul – see 2 Peter 3:15: “our beloved brother Paul”. What a happy thing when disagreements are reconciled in truth and love.

Principles to learn:

- i Peter’s character included this weakness – he could be affected by his surroundings. Honest, impulsive, enthusiastic, brave before enemies, he could also suddenly collapse. (All these things in his life can be traced in the Gospels). After Pentecost he had stood unshaken as a pillar in the church for 20 years or so. Yet, amid such a glorious career, the old weakness suddenly betrays him again. Compare Jeremiah 17:9. Old sins may break out again after years of absence. We must never cease to watch and pray.
- ii Peter’s conduct is reproved by Paul in the light of what they both knew to be gospel truth. See Acts 15:11 – Paul and Peter are agreed on this truth. It may seem a little thing for Peter to prefer to eat separately from Gentiles, but it was a denial of the basic gospel truth that all believers in Christ are one body. Paul was not opposing Peter on the grounds of personal ideas. It was gospel truth that was challenging Peter. We are to live not by personal opinions but according to gospel truth. Paul loved Peter; he loved Barnabas; but he loved truth more. Human examples are not reliable guides in Christian behaviour. Many disagreements ought never to take place if all persons would submit to their mutual understanding of the truth of the gospel, as taught in the Scriptures.
- iii On another occasion Paul says he is ready to “become a Jew when preaching to Jews” (1 Co.9:20). But here he refuses to “become a Jew”. Is Paul inconsistent too? No! There is a difference between adopting good cultural habits in order to be friendly and so have opportunity to preach the gospel and, on the other hand, suggesting that one can only be a true Christian if one observes certain cultural regulations. Paul was right to do the former; Peter was wrong to do the latter. A believer is free to follow whatever

cultural customs are not dishonouring to God. But such customs must never be made part of a special process of salvation.

Note

Paul here further demonstrates that he did not depend on the other apostles for his authority as an apostle (see 1:1,11,12; 2:6).

Peter is clearly not regarded by Paul as the first infallible Pope of the church.

The apostles were human and fallible. It is only when they were used to write Scripture that their words were inspired and infallible (2 Tim. 3:16,17).



**Focus point:
Jewish rules for eating and drinking and the
Christian difference**

In order to understand why it was hard for Jewish Christians to enjoy mealtime fellowship with Gentile Christians, we need to understand the many rules about food which the Jews had observed for centuries throughout the Old Testament period.

In Leviticus 11 God gave to the people of Israel strict instructions which divided their animals into “clean” and “unclean” kinds. No devout Israelite would touch or eat the flesh of any animal classified as unclean. People of other nations might well eat such flesh. God was teaching Israel that his people must live according to his Word and not copy unbelievers. There must be a difference between God’s covenant people and all others. So the Jew would not eat Gentile food.

Daniel gives us an example of the godly Jew who would not eat Gentile food (Dan.1:8–16). Possibly the meat that had been prepared was unclean according to Leviticus 11 and perhaps it had been offered to idols. Either way, it would be offensive to Daniel.

Over the centuries the teachers among the Jews had made many more rules and regulations to add to Leviticus 11 and to apply to situations where the Jew had to buy his food from a Gentile

merchant. Under these circumstances certain procedures had to be followed. There were also rules about using utensils that had been handled by Gentiles and were therefore thought to be unclean. The Samaritan woman (John 4:9) probably referred to this rule when she said that Jews and Samaritans “do not use things in common” as the literal meaning is. There were also rules about ceremonial washing before eating (Mark 7:1–5) and about what foods may be eaten on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28).

In view of all this it is easy to see how a Jew would find it difficult to eat in the company of a Gentile. Nevertheless, the coming of Christ and his death on the cross had fulfilled all the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and made totally unnecessary all the man-made rules that had been added to the Mosaic law.

Now everyone who believes in Christ, Jew or Gentile, is saved by the same grace of God. God’s people no longer belong to one race.

There is still to be a difference between God’s people and unbelievers but it is not a difference between one race and another; not a difference between foods or cultural habits. Now the difference is between those who have faith in Christ and those who reject Christ. All who are in Christ are equal, whatever their race (Eph.2:11–16). All who are in Christ are freed from the burden of law-keeping for their salvation, for Christ has fulfilled the law (Rom. 10:4). All who are in Christ, therefore, should be free to have fellowship together as equals.

Christians are still free to refrain from eating certain foods, or to keep good national traditions, if they so wish. But such habits must never be regarded as the reason why God should especially favour them, nor as the cause of their salvation. Moreover, no Christian believer should use his freedom to behave as he may wish, if his actions cause hurt and offence to another Christian believer (1 Co.8:1–13). Where Scripture gives clear instructions (e.g. John 4:24) there can be no discussion about how to behave. But in any matter in which there is no exact biblical instruction (e.g. whether to be vegetarian or meat-eating; whether to wear Indian, African or European dress, etc. etc) the believer is free to act as he wishes. We are to enjoy Christian liberty now that Christ has fulfilled the law’s demands for us. (See **WHY STUDY GALATIANS?** in the Introductory Study Paper.) This liberty is not lawless however. The believer will

test his behaviour by five tests and only behave in ways **that satisfy all five:**

YES, if

- NOT CAUSING OFFENCE
(Rom. 14:21)
- NOT HABIT FORMING
(1 Co.6:12)
- SPECIFIC REASON FOR
(1 Co.10:23)
- NOT DISRUPTIVE
(1 Co.14:40)
- GLORIFIES GOD
(1 Co.10:31)



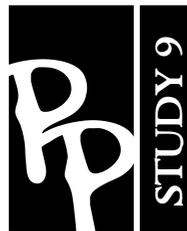
Over to you

As a Christian believer and one who is in a position of responsibility, are there actions you have taken that may have undermined the truth of the gospel in other people's eyes?

DEAD TO THE LAW



ALIVE IN CHRIST



Galatians 2:15-21

This Study Paper contains the following :-

-  Introduction to the passage
-  What these verses mean
-  Summary
-  Two suggestions of what could be preached on from these verses:
-  Focus Point: Further notes on justification
-  Over to you

Introduction to the passage

It is not clear at what verse the record of Paul's public rebuke of Peter actually ends. In verse 14 Paul uses the word "you". Some therefore suggest that only verse 14 was addressed to Peter. In verse 15 the pronoun changes to "we". However, in verse 18 the pronoun changes to "I" from the "we" of verse 17. Others therefore suggest that Paul's rebuke to Peter is recorded in verses 14 – 17.

Chapter 3 begins "You foolish Galatians". This perhaps suggests that Paul's argument with Peter goes from verses 14 – 21 of chapter 2. Whether addressed to Peter or to the Galatians, this whole section (verses 14 – 21) does expose and answer Peter's error.

What these verses mean

Verse 15

"We who are Jews by birth

Paul is now introducing the subject of the law.¹ He does so by emphasising a distinction between *Jews by birth* and *Gentile*

¹ See page 74 for footnote 1

sinners. He is addressing the Jewish believers - they are Jews both by birth and upbringing. To them it was second nature to revere and observe the law of Moses. It was part of their heritage and culture.

and not ‘Gentile sinners’

The Jews often regarded Gentiles as ceremonially unclean and forsaken of God, not having his laws given through Moses. This word sinners was used by the Jews as a name for Gentiles. Compare Matthew 26:45 with Luke 18:32. Paul is using the phrase *Gentile sinners* in this ironic way; i.e. “As for us, we are Jews by nature and so think ourselves better than Gentiles”. The word *sinner* used here therefore means a transgressor of the law of Moses and is not used in its primary sense that all men are sinners (Rom.3:23). The use of the two terms *Jews by birth* and *Gentile sinners* is directing our attention to the law of Moses, which the Jews obeyed and the Gentiles did not.

Verse 16

know that a man is not justified by observing the law,

i.e. “Even though we Jews had every religious benefit – God’s laws, the tabernacle, prophets, etc. – even we found we could not live as perfect people and so earn our salvation from God by the merit of our works.” Paul is challenging Peter! Gentiles cannot be taught that *they* must earn salvation by faultless obedience to laws, for even the greatly favoured Jews failed to do so.

but by faith in Jesus Christ.

There is only one way that a person can be justified and that is by trusting in Christ’s atoning work for their sin on the cross. It applies to both Jew and Gentile; there is no difference.

¹. The word *Law* can be used in different ways. In the New Testament the word can mean:

1. Old Testament Scripture (1 Co.14:21)
2. The Law of Moses given on Mount Sinai (3:17)
3. Civil Law, e.g. marriage (Rom.7:2)
4. Conscience (Rom.2:14)
5. An internal principle or power, such as the law of sin (Rom.7:23)
6. The Law of Christ (6:2)

The *law* in Galatians usually signifies the Law of Moses. This body of law was given to Israel at Mount Sinai and includes the Ten Commandments. (Ex. chapters 19-31 and 34:1-28) The law is presented in Scripture as a Covenant between God and Israel. (Ex.24:4,7)

Free in Christ, Edgar H. Andrews

So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ

“To be justified” means that God takes away from us the guilt and penalty of our sin (by giving it to Christ to atone for) and gives to us the perfection of Christ’s life. “By faith” does not mean that God justifies us as a reward for our belief, but means that faith is the way by which Christ’s perfect righteousness becomes ours.

and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no-one will be justified.

Paul is quoting here from Psalm 143:2 in order to confirm his own previous statement (verse 15). There is a progression in his arguments:

No man or woman has ever been justified by human efforts
(verse 15)

Even we Jews could not be so justified
(verse 15)

Scripture has always taught that self-justification is
impossible to anyone
(verse 16)

Verse 17

If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners,

People who look to Christ for their justification (i.e. through faith) are turning their back upon the law (i.e. through works). They therefore find themselves behaving like Gentiles rather than Jews in that they are not putting themselves under the law of Moses. In traditional Jewish eyes they are classified as sinners because they do not put their effort into keeping the law of Moses. The consequence of justification by faith is that followers of Christ are found to be sinners. They are like Gentiles who ignore the law.

does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

Shall we blame Christ, then, for causing us to give up keeping the law as a way of earning merit? Is it Christ who made us sinners like the Gentiles? Certainly not! To reject the law may make followers of Christ to be sinners in the eyes of the Jews but in God’s sight they are doing the right thing. Christ is not promoting sin but

righteousness. This righteousness can only be gained by abandoning the law (because it is impossible for a person to keep it in its completeness) and relying upon faith.

Verse 18

If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a law-breaker.

It is not a sin to cease from keeping the law because God has given us full salvation in Christ. But if we return to law-keeping and reject the salvation through Christ alone, we make ourselves sinners in God's eyes. Paul is showing Peter how serious was his error of turning back to Old Testament ceremonies after Christ had fulfilled them all; i.e. "We must not rebuild what has been destroyed." The Greek word used here for law-breaker is different from that used in verses 15 and 17. **This** word literally means "one who steps aside from" or "misses the meaning of". The law is fulfilled by Christ. It was a temporary Old Testament dispensation.² So, to go back to it after Christ is to miss the significance of it.

Verse 19

For through the law I died to the law

The climax to Paul's argument is reached in verse 19. The following verses, 20 and 21, will further expand what he is to say now. Paul is describing the Christian's relationship to the law of Moses. He makes it very clear by using the description of death. There is nothing so final as death. When a person dies, his relationship to his surroundings is finished. There is no relationship, the person is gone. In this way Paul is describing the Christian's relationship to the law. The law represents a way that is impossible for a human being to achieve salvation because it demands total obedience, in every detail and at all times. By trusting in Christ for salvation, that person finds that the way of the law is no longer valid. He is dead to it.

so that I might live for God.

Paul writes about this same subject in his letter to the Romans.³ There he is using the illustration of a woman whose first husband

² Dispensation. The original Greek connected verb means to manage, regulate, administer, and plan the affairs of the household. In this sense it is the plan of salvation being accomplished by God in this world and the law of Moses had a significant part in it which people had to administer until the next phase of the plan came into being.

³ Romans chapter 7:1-6

dies and then she remarries. The first husband is dead. While he was alive the law required them to be together; she was not free to marry someone else. Now the husband is dead, that law does not bind the woman and she is free. That is the picture for the believer (woman) in that the law (first husband) is dead and the Christian is no longer subject to that law. Instead a new relationship has been formed through the marriage of the believer to Christ. The old relationship was dependent upon the physical (outward behaviour to the law) whilst the new is spiritual (trusting by faith). Our old relationship is dissolved so that we can live spiritually; in other words, live for God. Paul develops the whole subject of how this spiritual relationship with God works out in a practical way in chapter 5, where he talks about the fruit of the Spirit.

Verse 20

I have been crucified with Christ

Paul develops further what this new spiritual relationship (marriage) means. A marriage relationship is a union of two people where their love, experiences and possessions are shared. The Christian believer died with Christ on the cross. Christ took the place of that guilty person, but it was the person's sin that had to be punished. Something belonging to that person was the cause for Jesus Christ to be crucified, so that person was intimately involved in Christ's death and then his resurrection.

and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

The Christian believer's relationship with Christ is not just based on Jesus taking the place of the person on the cross to have that person's sins punished. If that were the only thing that happened then it would leave the person unchanged. The believer's union in Christ means that person is not only legally righteous but an inward change has taken place. The Christian is associated with Christ in death (crucified with him) and it follows that he is associated with Christ in his resurrection (see also Romans 6:4-5). The old sinful nature died with Christ, a cleansing process took place (Titus 3:6), to make way for Christ to live in the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:9). Now after his conversion it is the Spirit of the risen Christ that motivates and guides Paul's actions. He cannot return to being motivated by the need to keep laws as a way of life.

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

By body Paul means *this natural life*. His new life as a believer is not limited to the ideas and facts of this natural life, but is directed by the ideas and desires of the spiritual life which is derived from Christ by faith. The Holy Spirit then lives within the believer enabling that person to use the faith which has been given to him as a gift, to have the ability to recognise spiritual realities. The life of faith is one that is lived looking to Jesus Christ in all matters, being dependent upon the inner strength of the Holy Spirit. This is so different from trying to please God by keeping the law.

Verse 21

I do not set aside the grace of God,

Paul now summarises. To seek righteousness through the law is to set aside the grace of God. Peter, by returning to law-keeping as necessary to salvation (verse 12) was, in effect, saying that God's grace was not itself enough to save. Compare Galatians 5:4.

for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

If it is possible for people to keep God's law perfectly and so gain acceptance with God, then there was no need for Christ to have died to redeem them, for they would have redeemed themselves!



Summary

Paul in this section of the letter introduces the law. The law was important for the Jewish person as it represented a covenant between God and Israel. In the law, God made provision for the forgiveness and reconciliation of those who sinned. The law was a temporary arrangement, which was in place until Christ came to the earth. The law was there to show that a holy God must be obeyed and how man could not keep it. Jesus Christ came to earth so that what the law required, punishment of sin by death, could be fully met. Christ died but rose from the dead, showing that his sacrifice was accepted by God and his law was satisfied. The

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law is not the way to salvation, because it is impossible for man to keep it, but it did show how a substitute could atone for sin through the shedding of blood. Christ did this when he was crucified and the only way to be reconciled with God is through associating with Jesus Christ and being united with him in his death and resurrection. The Jews no longer could rely on the law and so these teachers, who had come amongst the Galatian believers were totally wrong. Peter's example too was wrong, because he slipped back into the old way, even though he did not intend to or may not have fully realised he was doing so.



Two suggestions of what could be preached on from these verses

Theme 1: **I do not set aside the grace of God** (Gal. 2:21)

Introduction

To “set aside” means to displace, to reckon of no value. Because it is the grace of so great a Person as God, to regard it as of no value is a great sin indeed. “How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation?” (Heb. 2:3).

Main points that could be developed

- i When the grace of God is carelessly neglected, it is despised. Often people hear and ignore the message of God's grace . God can say concerning such people: “They will not so much as think about my message to them.” If what we hear of God's Word does not become part of our personal meditation, then we are receiving the grace of God in vain.
- ii When people do not see their absolute need of God's grace, it is despised. The natural man always has this dream, that he can be right with God by some other way than God's grace to him. He will not accept God's grace as being indispensable to him. Compare Luke 18: 10 – 14.
- iii When people do not accept that God's grace must supply **all** their needs, then it is despised. It is not that God graciously

gives new life and then leaves the believer to get himself to heaven. Salvation is God's gracious gift; so it is our justification, our adoption, our preservation, our glorification. Indeed, even in heaven we shall be still learning how much we depend on God's grace (Eph.2:7). We never get beyond the need for it!

Conclusion

The good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ's coming to this earth to save his people from their sin is God's gracious act to human beings. This is his grace, his love which we do not deserve. If we hear this gospel and do not believe it, then it will have been in vain for us to hear it.

Theme 2: I am crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20)

Introduction

The theological meaning of this is that the believer is united to Christ, in God's sight, so that all the merits of Christ belong to the believer and Christ takes all the demerits of the believer and atones for him.

Main points that could be developed

In practical terms, to be crucified means:

The believer is compelled to face one direction only

There can be no going back to former ways

There can be no further personal plans to behave as we like.

Conclusion.

People who are united to Christ are changed, their values have changed. They no longer look to themselves but to Christ; he is everything to them now. To the believing Christian, Jesus' death on the cross is the way that their own sins were dealt with and punished by God. They had nothing to do with their own salvation; it was Jesus who sacrificed his own life. The death of Jesus is what matters and the cross becomes the symbol that stands for Christ's work of atonement for the sinner. Hence, Paul can do nothing except boast in the cross of Jesus Christ (6:14).



Focus point:

Further notes on justification

There is an important word that occurs for the first time in Galatians, in the verse studied in this paper. It is an important word because it describes what is the centre of the gospel message, the central theme of Galatians and the heart of true Christianity. No-one understands Christianity who does not understand this word! It is the word “justified” (verses 16,17).

Martin Luther said: “Justification is the truth of the gospel. It is also the principal article of all Christian doctrine. Most necessary it is, therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it unto others, and beat it into their heads continually . . . if the article of justification be once lost, then is all true Christianity lost.”

There are two things we know for certain. The first is that God is righteous; the second is that we are not! These two facts comprise our human predicament (2 Corinthians 6:14 “Do not be yoked together” and “What fellowship can light have with darkness?”). How then can sinners be justified and be in harmony with God?

There are two answers given to this question. One is: “The way to be justified in God’s sight is by sheer hard work. You must do everything God commands and refrain from everything he forbids.” Supremely, for the Jews, this meant faultless observance of the Ten Commandments.

Such thinking is seriously mistaken. No-one has ever been justified by works, for the simple reason that no-one has ever kept any laws faultlessly. Yet millions in the world are still today deceived, in every religion, trying by their own efforts to live by perfect law-keeping! Paul says it is impossible to keep any laws perfectly (verse 16).

The second answer to the question of how to be justified is: “By faith in Jesus Christ” (verse 16). That means committing oneself to depend entirely on the life and death of Jesus Christ as the only reason for God to forgive us. No-one except Jesus Christ has done faultlessly everything that God required of him. No-one so perfect as Jesus Christ has ever given his life as a sacrifice for sinners. When we cease from trying to justify ourselves and call on Christ to

receive us mercifully, then God graciously declares us to be justified (Rom. 3:24).

This truth of justification freely by God's grace through faith was criticised in Paul's day. Critics said: "If God justifies sinners so easily, what is the point of being good? Can we not live as we like?" Paul's answer to that is: "Absolutely not!" (verse 17).

Justification takes place by our being united to Christ by faith. Believers who are united to Christ will never be the same again. Now they have the life of Christ in them by the Holy Spirit (verse 20). They cannot now live carelessly and sinfully.

It is **not** a noble thing to try and win our own way to God. To attempt to do that is to refuse to let God be gracious to us. It is to say that Christ need not have died. Can there be a greater sin than to insult God in these ways, by declaring to him that what he has done is unnecessary (verse 21)?



Over to you

As we conclude Study Book 1 in Galatians, consider on what basis you had thought yourself a Christian. Was there any tendency to observe a set of rules rather than to trust in Jesus Christ and nothing else?

In what way do people in your congregation/church think themselves Christians? Do they look to what they have done themselves or what Jesus achieved when he died on the cross and then rose from the dead?

In considering the above two points, write down a short outline of the way you would explain the gospel to a person in your congregation.

Galatians chapters 3 and 4 follow in Book 2
Galatians chapters 5 and 6 in Book 3

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