

## **The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians**

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### **Chapter Three -**

#### **PAUL'S MESSAGE WAS A REVEALED MESSAGE FROM GOD--NOT A MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM OTHER APOSTLES**

Verse 10: **"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."**

What Paul is saying in this verse is simply this:

"Am I seeking to please men? or GOD? Am I seeking the favor of men, or the favor of GOD? If I were pleasing men, then I could not please GOD - and therefore I could not be a servant of Christ." (The Greek word used here for "servant" is actually "bond-servant" or "bond-slave.") Paul knew that since the Lord JESUS CHRIST was his Lord and leader, he had become a slave to CHRIST . . . and he gloried in the fact that he was a bond-servant of JESUS CHRIST.

He used the title with the right kind of pride: **"... the servant of Jesus Christ"** (Romans 1:1). A slave has only one person to please, and that person is his lord and master. The slave has but one thing to do - and that is the will of his master. The enemies of Paul said that he sought the favor of men, that he sought to please men. Paul replied, "I am seeking only the favor of my Lord, and if I were striving to please men - even if I succeeded in pleasing them - while striving for their favor I could not be the slave of Christ."

What was true concerning Paul is also true concerning us. We should settle the question, "Who is our Lord?"

Whose slave are we? As believers, who are we trying to please? Whose favor are we seeking? Are we seeking the favor of men - or the favor of GOD? If we please GOD we cannot please man. JESUS CHRIST never satisfied all of the people - some praised Him, while others blasphemed. Some honored Him while others dishonored Him with words of slander. The same is true today . . . the minister who preaches the true Gospel will be appreciated by some, and hated by many! Whose bond-servant are you? Whose bond-servant . . . whose minister . . . am I?

Verses 11 and 12: **"But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."**

Here Paul is stating again what he had already said in verse 1, declaring that the Gospel is not from man nor from any human source, but by revelation of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Paul did

not visit the apostles at Jerusalem and ask them what to preach, what message to deliver . . . what tradition to follow; nor did he ask them to give to him the apostolic commission (or authority) to minister.

He did not go to a denominational theological seminary to gain his knowledge from the esteemed faculty of such an institution. Paul was not ordained by man or by the laying on of human hands; he was ordained of GOD. There were three years between his glorious conversion on the road to Damascus and the beginning of his public ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. During these three years he received instructions from the risen CHRIST.

There are twenty-seven books in the New Testament - thirteen of them begin with the same word: "**Paul.**" If we accept Paul as the author of Hebrews, there are fourteen of the twenty-seven books written by the apostle to the Gentiles. Matthew wrote one book, Mark wrote one, Luke wrote two, John wrote five, and Peter wrote two. Jude and James each wrote one book. The other apostles did not write any of the Epistles.

Mark and Luke were not among the twelve apostles, and received much of their information from the Apostle Paul. Luke wrote the book of Acts, and over half of that book is given over to the account of Paul's conversion, experiences, and missionary journeys. Seventeen chapters of Acts deal with the life of Paul. After the fifteenth chapter of Acts, the other apostles are not mentioned. Their ministry to Israel disappears in the light of Paul's ministry, ordained of GOD to the Gentiles.

Because Paul's message was new and unique in every aspect - a different message from that delivered by the original apostles - it was not readily accepted by them. His message was a direct revelation from Heaven.

He was vigorously opposed by the legalizers and by the legalistic teachers of his day. They followed him from city to city, attempting to discredit the authority of his message of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing.

As a result, Paul was time and again called upon to come to the defense of himself against his accusers, and to prove his divine authority to speak as an apostle. In reading the Epistles dictated to Paul by the HOLY GHOST, you will note the following:

The Epistle to the Romans opens, "**Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle.**"

The first Epistle to the Corinthians opens with, "**Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God.**"

The second letter to the Corinthian church begins with, "**Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.**"

His message to the believers at Ephesus opens with practically the same words, testifying to his divine apostolic appointment and commission.

Writing to the Colossians, chapter 1, verse 1, he makes the same claim.

In I Timothy he opens with, "**Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God.**"

II Timothy opens by declaring Paul's apostolic authority.

In writing to Titus he again asserts his claim to be an apostle ordained of GOD.

Galatians opens, "**PAUL, AN APOSTLE (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and GOD the Father, who raised Him from the dead).**"

Someone may be asking why all this personal reference; why this unusual emphasis. Why did Paul have to defend his authority as an apostle in every city where he preached? There are many reasons . . . we will name just a few:

Paul was not chosen by the apostolic band in Jerusalem - and you must not forget that they were human, just as we are. It was true then as it is true today, that in the religious realm men honor those whom they appoint. Today if a minister hopes to get very far in the denomination to which he belongs, he must seek the good graces of the religious leaders by allowing them to make his appointments and give to him his itinerary. Paul received his appointment directly from Heaven, and therefore the apostles were just a little skeptical. They refused to take him into their arms wholeheartedly.

Again - Paul's message was not the apostolic message that the other apostles had been delivering. He preached a Gospel of the grace of GOD, salvation provided for every creature, whereas the other apostles had ministered to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Paul's ministry was not exclusively for the Jews, and therefore the others were a bit hostile because of this. Paul preached to the Jews, to be sure - but he was a minister to the Gentiles, and his message was primarily for them.

There are other reasons which time and space will not permit us to discuss here - but these are the primary reasons why Paul met with opposition.

He was bitterly opposed by the Judaizers and the legalizers, and the apostles at Jerusalem questioned his authority to be a minister of JESUS CHRIST. They refused to accept him as an apostle. They had already filled the vacancy left when Judas stepped out of the picture and committed suicide . . . they had cast lots and appointed Matthias to take the place of Judas. Please read Acts 1:15-26. Of course, when this was done, they did not have orders from JESUS CHRIST to hold such a meeting nor to have such an election; on the contrary, they violated the instructions JESUS had given to them. "**And being assembled together with them, (JESUS) commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, BUT WAIT FOR THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER, WHICH, SAITH HE, YE HAVE HEARD OF ME**" (Acts 1:4).

The apostles had strict instructions from JESUS to tarry, to wait for the HOLY GHOST, before they moved one inch in the ministry left to them. They were commanded to do nothing until the coming of the Spirit, the HOLY GHOST, who would lead them into all truth. There remained ten

days from that time until Pentecost; but in spite of the command, "Do nothing until the Spirit comes to guide and direct you," the disciples did not wait for the Spirit. They immediately called a meeting, and in the energy of the flesh they elected a twelfth apostle. They were informed: **"But ye shall receive power AFTER that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses . . ."** (Acts 1:8). But they went ahead with their election.

Peter was the impatient one. I am sure that to him ten days seemed a long, long time to be without a twelfth apostle. He suggested that they elect someone to replace Judas. Instead of waiting as they had been instructed, they proceeded with the business of the Lord without the blessing of the HOLY GHOST.

Please read carefully Acts 1:15-26. You will find these words:

**"And in those days (before the HOLY SPIRIT came . . . before Pentecost) Peter stood up . . . and said . . . Men and brethren . . . of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us . . . must one be ordained to be a witness with us of HIS RESURRECTION"** (Acts 1:15, 16, 21, 22).

In reading I Corinthians, especially chapter 15, you will note that GOD gave to Paul a very clear picture concerning the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. It was Paul who said, "If there be no resurrection, our faith is vain, our preaching is vain, we are false witnesses, our loved ones who have died are perished, and there is no hope." This message was given to Paul to be preached to the church. Certainly the Head of the church is the Lord JESUS . . . crucified, buried, and risen.

It is absolutely impossible for any person to be saved if he refuses to believe in the bodily resurrection of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. It was Paul who said, **"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"** (Romans 10:9).

Where did Peter get his authority to hold a meeting and elect a twelfth apostle? Where did he get his authority to ordain an apostle? Face it, beloved: Peter (like many of us, even ministers) did what he did in the energy of the flesh. Peter was not willing to wait for the Spirit to lead; he went ahead of the Spirit:

**"And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias"** (Acts 1:23).

Can you imagine the HOLY GHOST setting up two men to be voted upon? If GOD Almighty calls a man, He appoints a man - not two men to be voted upon by other men. It is true that they prayed for the Lord to show them which one was to be chosen - but their prayer was wasted and empty, because they asked GOD to pick one of the candidates they had chosen. It seems they would have prayed for GOD to show them which one of the one hundred and twenty should be appointed to fill the place left by Judas. Why did they select only two, when there were one hundred and twenty of them waiting in the upper room for the coming of the HOLY SPIRIT.

They prayed, **"Shew whether of these two . . ."** They did not get an answer; therefore they were forced to cast lots - or to vote - for the one to fill the place left vacant by the death of Judas.

**"And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).**

Can you imagine these dear men voting, instead of waiting upon the HOLY SPIRIT to appoint the apostle? The men who were there had been individually called by the Lord JESUS CHRIST, yet they were not willing to wait for Him to call one to take the place of Judas. I would like to point out here that a little later, the church was called upon to appoint the first foreign missionaries. Notice the record:

**"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, THE HOLY GHOST SAID, SEPARATE ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK WHEREUNTO I HAVE CALLED THEM. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth BY THE HOLY GHOST, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:1-4).**

Please notice: At the close of a period of fasting and prayer, the church was instructed BY THE HOLY GHOST to appoint Barnabas and Saul as missionaries.

You must agree that this was carried out in quite a different manner than casting lots to see who would go. Keep this in mind, beloved: In this age of grace (the dispensation of the HOLY GHOST), it has pleased GOD, through the HOLY GHOST, to call and ordain ministers, preachers, evangelists and leaders in the New Testament church.

When a church "politics" for a pastor, mark it down: The blessings of GOD will not be upon that church!

The Lord GOD Almighty is very capable of appointing ministers to preach the Gospel in the local assemblies where the HOLY SPIRIT has right-of-way; and instead of "politicking" for ministers by ballot, they should be chosen after prayer and fasting. If any church will fast, pray, and seek GOD's will concerning a pastor, GOD will certainly help them choose the right man.

It is very clear that GOD did not recognize the choice of Matthias, because this dear man is never mentioned again in all the rest of the Bible. GOD ignored man's ordination - and after Pentecost, when the HOLY GHOST had come, GOD chose HIS man to fill the place vacated by the betrayer, Judas Iscariot. GOD named Paul to be an apostle. It was not man's choice, but it was an outright call, commission, and ordination by CHRIST. Paul was ordained of GOD for the office of apostleship.

In I Timothy 2:7 Paul says he was **"ordained a preacher, and an apostle . . . a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity."** That is the paramount reason for the statement in Galatians 1:1: **"NOT OF MEN, NEITHER BY MAN, BUT BY JESUS CHRIST, AND GOD THE FATHER, WHO RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD."**

If Paul should come to this land of ours today, he would be rejected by the ecclesiastical bosses.

- He would be rejected by the ecumenical movement.
- He would be declared "not cooperative."
- He would be classified as a "free lancer."

It would be said of him, "He is not an apostle. We did not ordain him . . . he did not get his training at our seminaries. He is counterfeit. He was not officially chosen by us; we did not license him to preach in our denomination. We did not question him according to our doctrine, he does not have a degree from our seminary." That is exactly what they would say if the Apostle Paul came to town, organized a church and declared himself a minister of the Gospel.

Almost all of the first two chapters of Galatians is given over to the defense of (1) Paul's ministry, (2) Paul's method, and (3) his message of salvation by grace, through faith, plus nothing.

Galatians is the only one of the Epistles written by Paul which is directed to a group of churches - that is, several local assemblies. All of his other Epistles were directed to individuals . . . such as Timothy, Titus, Philemon . . . or to individual churches, one specific assembly such as the church at Rome, or to the believers at Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi and Thessalonica.

The Epistle to the Galatians was passed from church to church, and several churches in Galatia and Asia Minor received this message from the Apostle to the Gentiles.

When Paul made his first missionary journey, he preached in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra, and had wonderful success in leading men into a knowledge of the marvelous saving grace of GOD. These believers had gathered into local assemblies, had ordained elders, and were enjoying the liberty of salvation "**by grace through faith**" . . . saved by grace and kept by the power of GOD. That is, they enjoyed this liberty until the false teachers came and suggested to them that Paul was not an official apostle sent out by the church in Jerusalem.

These legalizers began to preach that the Galatians must be circumcised after the Law of Moses, that they must keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved and stay saved. It was because of this that Paul wrote the letter to the Galatian churches.

In this letter, he answers the false doctrine of the legalizers, and declares that salvation is totally and entirely apart from the Law of Moses, apart from works, or from any effort on man's part. The new message delivered by Paul (received from GOD out of Heaven but rejected by the legalizers and Judaizers in Jerusalem) was simply this: All men - Jews and Gentiles - are saved by grace. All men - Jews and Gentiles - are kept by grace. All men - Jews and Gentiles - are saved and kept, wholly and entirely apart from the works of the Law. The key word in the message delivered by Paul is "**GRACE.**"

The key verse in the Epistle to the Galatians is Galatians 2:21: "**I DO NOT FRUSTRATE THE GRACE OF GOD: FOR IF RIGHTEOUSNESS COME BY THE LAW, THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN!**"

According to the message delivered by the Apostle Paul, salvation is by faith in the person of the

Lord JESUS CHRIST and in His finished work. Salvation is simply believing what the Bible tells us about Jesus - His birth, His life, His death, burial, and resurrection. Salvation is not "religion," it is not good works, it is not reformation. Salvation is not education. It is not culture nor is it a group of ordinances. Salvation is not a ritual or a ceremony. It is not prayers nor deeds of charity or good works. Salvation is the poor, bankrupt, hell-deserving, helpless, ungodly sinner, simply coming to Jesus in faith, believing that Jesus died for our sins **"ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES!"**

You and I will never be able to boast about our salvation. Why? Simply because **"SALVATION IS OF THE LORD."** Salvation is of the Lord, ALL of the Lord, ENTIRELY of the Lord. Jesus IS salvation: **"Christ in you, the hope of glory!"** (Colossians 1:27).

We ministers today face the same problem Paul faced in Galatia. We still have with us preachers and churches who teach "salvation by grace - plus works," "by grace - plus Law," "by grace - plus ordinances," "by grace - plus do's and don't's." But as for me in my ministry, I will stand by what the Bible says . . . **"BUT TO HIM THAT WORKETH NOT, BUT BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT JUSTIFIETH THE UNGODLY, HIS FAITH IS COUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS"** (Romans 4:5).

Paul demonstrates his authority in Galatians 1:13 through Galatians 2:5.

Verses 13 and 14: **"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."**

The Greek word translated "**conversation**" here means "*conduct*" or "*manner of life*." The phrase used by Paul, "**the Jews' religion**" occurs twice here, and is referring to Judaism. The new dispensation (the Dispensation of Grace), having come, made the Mosaic system (or the practices of the Law of Moses) a mere "Jews' religion." Since the LAMB of GOD had been slain, there remained no more sacrifice for sin. JESUS offered Himself once, for all, forever, and of course the Jewish sacrifices and rituals became mere religious activity - or, as Paul states, "**the Jews' religion.**"

Please notice Paul states that he was far "**above**" some people of his own nation in religious ability and activity. I suppose there was no better educated man than Paul in his day, and certainly there was no more zealous man. When he consented to the death of Stephen, and permitted the young men to lay their coats at his feet while they stoned Stephen, Saul thought he was doing GOD a favor. He thought the Christian religion was an enemy to the religion of his fathers; therefore he was exceedingly zealous in defending the religion of the Jews.

Verses 15 and 16: **"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."**

The word "heathen" as used here means "Gentiles." Paul was slow to learn that from his birth GOD had chosen and dedicated him to preach the Gospel of the marvelous grace of GOD to the

Gentiles. Paul was a vessel chosen of GOD . . . even from his mother's womb. GOD called Paul, by His grace, to reveal His only begotten Son, and to preach to the Gentiles the Gospel of the death, burial and resurrection of JESUS.

I like what Paul says in verse 16: When he realized that GOD had called him as an apostle to the Gentiles, he said, **"IMMEDIATELY I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD: NEITHER WENT I UP TO JERUSALEM TO THEM WHICH WERE APOSTLES BEFORE ME; BUT I WENT INTO ARABIA, AND RETURNED AGAIN UNTO DAMASCUS."** Paul did not seek the good graces of the ecclesiastical bosses, or the ecclesiastical group of his day. He did not ask them what to preach, where or when to preach. It is true that Paul spent the time between his conversion and the beginning of his public ministry in Arabia; but he also spent a little time in Damascus. (Arabia reached almost up to the border of Damascus, but it did not include that city.)

You will recall it was in Damascus that Paul (who was at that time Saul of Tarsus) had been led by Ananias into the light of the glorious Gospel of salvation. GOD spoke to Ananias and made it clear that he was to tell Saul of Tarsus the way of life. Immediately after his conversion, Paul began preaching in the synagogues in Damascus, affirming that JESUS was the SON of GOD. He continued to preach there until his life was threatened, and some of his friends, by night time, let him down in a basket over the wall to safety. Read the entire ninth chapter of Acts - especially verse 25.

Verse 18: **"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days."**

The three years referred to in this verse are difficult to locate exactly; however, that is not important. Some believe it is the same time spoken of as **"many days"** in Acts 9:23. What Paul is trying to impress upon us is the fact that he preached the Gospel before he saw any of the apostles at Jerusalem; and that even when he did see them, he did not receive authority from them nor did they ordain him. His authority and ordination had already come from the Lord JESUS CHRIST. Paul wants it clearly understood that no man gave him his message or apostleship . . . He was a chosen vessel, set apart to preach the good news of salvation by grace through faith plus nothing.

Verse 19: **"But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother."**

This was a very, very short visit. The apostolic band was not even called together. Paul saw only two disciples . . . Peter and James. Paul wants it clearly understood that he sought neither advice nor instruction from the disciple band.

Verse 20: **"Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not."**

Paul realizes the grave responsibility that rests upon him, and realizes that he is discussing eternal things . . . very solemn things . . . concerning the eternal destiny of men. He wants it clearly understood that he is speaking earnestly and truthfully as the HOLY GHOST dictates to him. He wants it clearly understood that he is not a religionist - but a minister chosen and ordained of GOD.

Paul was very careful always, that he tell the truth, the whole truth, defending the truth once delivered unto all faithful ministers.

In Romans 9:1 he begins by saying, "**I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.**" He wanted those to whom he preached to know that his message was truth - fresh from the altar of GOD Almighty, not sent out by a group of religious leaders or ecclesiastical bosses.

Verses 21-24: "**Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: but they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. AND THEY GLORIFIED GOD IN ME.**"

Thus we come to the end of chapter one. It would certainly be very interesting to know more about this Syrian and Cilician ministry; but for some reason the HOLY SPIRIT did not see fit to enlighten us more at this particular point. Paul is hurriedly reviewing his ministry as an apostle. He is doing this to demonstrate the fact that authority in the spiritual realm is derived and received from Almighty GOD, and not from men.

It is refreshing to note that in all that Paul did, he sought no glory or praise from men for himself, but he was always glad to record the fact that men glorified GOD in him . . . that is, they glorified GOD when they heard the message GOD had given to Paul for them.

Note verse 23: The people of Syria and Cilicia had not seen the face of Paul, but had heard that "**he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed!**"

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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