

Galatians

Lesson Three

Galatians 1: 15 – 2: 10

Paul's Revelation

15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,

16 was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;

Note that Paul said he was separated (set aside for service to God) before he was born.

Remember what Paul said in *Ephesians 1: 3-4; Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*

4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

I can't help but believe that, because of this verse, God has a plan for our lives, maybe not on the scale of Paul's life, but certainly God has a plan for each of us.

Now look at the latter part of *verse 15, and who called me by his grace.*

If God chose Paul before he was even born, that must be grace, because how could Paul have worked for something that was bestowed on him in his mother's womb?

I believe that grace and obedience are somehow intertwined.

Even though God had a plan for Paul's life and ministry, evidently before he was born, he still had to obey God for the plan to be fulfilled.

Into the Wilderness

17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

At this time in the history of the Church, Jerusalem was the capital much like Nashville is to the Baptists and Springfield is to the Assemblies of God.

Yet Paul didn't feel compelled to go there right away.

Neither did he feel that it was necessary to consult with the Church leadership of that day.

Instead, he went to Arabia.

How long Paul remained there is unclear.

The interesting thing about this passage of scripture is that Arabia was Gentile territory.

It was there that Paul received the full revelation from God which he would later share in his writings.

I call Paul the second graduate of Arabia.

Ironically, Moses was the first.

You remember how Moses spent forty years tending sheep in Midian before he received his call to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.

When Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism, He too was led into the wilderness.

It seems that there is always a time of solitary reflection and preparation which accompanies the call to the ministry.



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... *and returned again to Damascus.*

The word **again**, indicates that Paul left from Damascus (after his conversion on the road) to go to Arabia, and then returned to there after his time with the Lord.

We read about this in Acts 9: 1-18.

Immediately following his conversion, we find him preaching the Gospel in the synagogues in **verses 19 - 22; and taking food, he was strengthened. For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus.**

20 And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."

21 And all who heard him were amazed and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called upon this name? And has he not come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests?"

22 But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Notice in **verse 20**, it says, **Immediately**, after his conversion he began to preach a basic salvation message.

You see, you can't preach what you don't have.

At this time, this is all that Paul knew about Jesus.

This what Paul could preach from his own personal experience.

After all, one can only be a witness to what they have actually seen, heard and experienced themselves in a court of law.

It's not any different when it comes to sharing the Gospel.

Paul in Jerusalem

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.



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**19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.
20 (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)**

When Paul got to Jerusalem, Paul spent two weeks with Peter.

Wouldn't we have loved to be a fly on the wall to hear all that Paul shared with Peter about what Jesus had shared with him.

I'm sure it was good for Peter, because no one needed a good stable foundation more than Simon (Peter).

Verse 20:I lie not.

The reason why Paul says this is because the legalistic Judaizers have come into Galatia behind him to stir up the people by casting doubt upon the message and his qualifications as an apostle.

If you should find yourself with a call on your life to the ministry, don't be surprised if the strongest opposition you face is from the established religion.

Like Paul, you may find yourself the object of ridicule.

If so, don't be overcome by it.

And above all, don't give in to anger and retaliation.

How can we ever convince the world (and the Church) of God's love for them, if we don't demonstrate that love ourselves.

The Proving Time

**21 Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.
23 They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."
24 And they glorified God because of me.**

After staying in Antioch for some time, Paul made his way into Syria and Cilicia but had not yet been seen by the churches of Judea, including the big established church in Jerusalem.

This seems a little strange.

Most preachers today, if they want to be recognized, it would be in the “First Church” of the big city, the capital.

A lot of young preachers today want to be known by the “the powers that be.”

Yet here is Paul, who is personally ordained by the Lord Jesus Himself, and he goes about launching his ministry in an out-of-the-way place like Damascus, not even bothering to try to make himself known outside his small area of influence.

That’s the way it should be done.

God may call you to some great ministry someday.

But if he does, more than likely, He will start you out in a small way.

Why is that?

Consider it God’s management training program.

Remember that David tended sheep before becoming the leader of the nation of Israel.

Just think, even Jesus Himself spent the first thirty years of His life in relative obscurity.

Verse 24 *And they glorified God because of me*, reminds us that Paul brought glory to God, God saw to it that Paul had favor and stature with the people.



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The Jerusalem Incident (Salvation by Grace)

Galatians 2

1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

2 I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised

8 (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Of course, you have noticed right away that we are considering this passage of scripture as one story, however, we will continue this portion by breaking it down verse by verse.

As we have said, the book of Galatians has a dual theme: 1) salvation by the grace of God versus salvation by works, and 2) spirituality by grace versus spirituality by works.

Both themes will be brought out in Chapter 2 of Galatians.

The first of these two is illustrated by this incident in Jerusalem which Paul relates to the churches in Galatia.

Verse 1a Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem.....

In this verse Paul reveals that this was his second trip to Jerusalem after his conversion.

The first was three years after that event when he went to see Peter and spent two weeks with him.

Now this second trip comes fourteen years after the first.

In this passage, Paul reveals to us the reason for the second journey.

Verse 1b with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

This statement is significant because Titus is the key person in this story.

It is now that we began to get an understanding of why Paul has come back to Jerusalem.

Why?

The answer has to do with what Paul perceived as a growing menace to the Gospel of grace which he is defending to the Galatians in this chapter.

With the passage of time, the church in Jerusalem had begun to become more legalistic.

It had originally come into existence as a result of thousands who came to the Lord through the preaching of the disciples on and after the day of Pentecost.

Jerusalem had become the center of Christian missionary activity as evangelists were sent out in all directions to carry the Gospel message.

But as the site of the Jewish temple and the center of Hebrew culture, Jerusalem was also a center for Judaism which had infiltrated the church through the years.

We do not have a written record of how Paul came into this information, however, I would not be surprised if he came into this knowledge by revelation from the Lord Jesus Himself.

At any rate, the timing could not have been more critical.

For over fourteen years, Paul had not gone to Jerusalem to tell them face to face, of his ministry and message.

What the believers knew of him and his ministry came to them as rumors and hearsay.

Only Peter and James had talked to him firsthand according to ***Galatians 1: 18-19.***

Now he is to arrive on the scene at a crucial moment, bringing with him one of his Gentile converts – an action that will bring important matters to a head.

So, lets look again at ***verse 1b taking Titus along with me.***

I believe that it was at the time of his journey to Arabia that the Lord revealed to Paul His marvelous plan of salvation which he wrote about from then on until the end of his life.

If this is true, Then Paul's remarks to the Galatians underline his motive for taking Barnabas, and especially Titus, with him to Jerusalem.



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As a Gentile convert to Christ, being uncircumcised, Titus would be a living example of the doctrine of salvation by grace rather than the keeping of the Jewish law.

So, Titus presence with Paul was not at all incidental; it was the crux of his visit to the Jerusalem church.

If Titus was accepted by the brothers of Jerusalem, it would stand as irrefutable evidence of the validity of Paul's apostleship and of his message of salvation by grace.

Verse 2a I went up because of a revelation and set before them.....

This the passage of scripture that I base my belief that Paul is sharing what he knows about grace and the present condition of the church at Jerusalem strictly by revelation.

That makes this trip well planned and by divine appointment.

Verse 2b (though privately before those who seemed influential)

The people Paul is referring to here are Peter, James and John, the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Almost sounds like a modern-day rock band, but I digress.

Paul was a wise diplomat.

Before he took his message to the entire church body, he arranged for a private meeting with the church leaders.

Verse 2c in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

By this expression, Paul is simply saying, "I was aware that if I didn't handle this situation very carefully, I could destroy everything I was doing and had already done up to this point.

That's a good lesson for us in the ministry today.

Nowhere is humility, tact, diplomacy, discretion and wisdom needed more than when presenting the gospel.

On the other hand, if someone is threatening your life if you don't stop preaching, then just preach, no matter what.

Verse 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

This verse of scripture is result of Paul's meeting with Peter, James and John.

They were not going to require Titus to be circumcised to be a Christian.

This was an extremely forceful and positive endorsement of Paul's ministry.

One of the reasons why this was of vital importance to the Galatian churches was because Titus was one of them, a Gentile Christian.

They could identify with Titus.

However, don't think for a minute that Paul's victory was won easily.

When legalistic Judaizers heard of Paul's meeting with the church leaders, they came in force to challenge him before the elders.

Paul used Titus to convince all that were present that salvation and spirituality were by grace alone.

Since they could not withstand Paul face to face, Paul's enemies began to follow him around and undermine him behind his back after he had left a city so that he would not be there to defend the Gospel message.

This is what had unfolded in Galatia.

And what was the opposition's purpose?

Verse 4, (ESV) Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—

Verse 4, (NIV) This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

To pose the question again, what was the opposition's purpose, ***to make us slaves.***

That's what legalism does.

It always tries to bring into bondage those who have been set free by the Gospel.

Verse 5, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Paul was not fooled by these people nor was he intimidated.

He stood his ground against them and their attempts to bring him and his followers into subjection to legalism.

Versus 6-10 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised

8 (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.



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So Paul was fully recognized and accepted as an apostle by the church in Jerusalem which also endorsed his message of salvation by grace.

They made no attempt to impose any restrictions whatsoever on Paul and his ministry or upon his Gentile convert, though it was fully known that Titus was an uncircumcised Greek.

So Paul relates this Jerusalem incident to the believers in Galatia to impress upon them his full and complete vindication before the, “church fathers” in Jerusalem to emphasize to these people the completeness of their salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross.



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