

Galatians

Paul's letter to the Galatians highlights the importance of having faith in Christ and a revelation of who Christ is. Paul is concerned that Christians have come to faith and are trusting God for their salvation, but then falling into the bondage by their thinking that their own efforts can supplement the work of God. This letter does not encourage us to be lazy, but instead it is urging us to walk by faith and not by sight.

Chapter 1.

Paul defines his apostolic ministry as being a gift from God. He has come to know the goodness of God even though once he was a blasphemer.

Paul states that Christ has rescued us from the present evil age (verse 4). This expression still applies today. Satan, the enemy of God, is still working hard to trap people in their sins.

Paul is disappointed that there are believers who were trusting in the grace of Christ and now turning to another gospel. He tells us that the true Gospel of Christ is to understand that there is nothing that they can do to earn their salvation. The idea that our good works are necessary is a false gospel. "Paul declares that people who preach this should be under God's curse" (vs 8-9). He knows that he would make enemies if he confronts those preaching this false gospel, but he knows to be a servant of Christ will result in persecution.

The Gospel Paul received.

We know after he was converted Paul spent time in a remote place. During that time he was waiting upon God and the Lord spoke to him. The Gospel that we should repent of our sins and put our faith in Jesus, He died and rose again was the Gospel that Paul had received. However this wilderness time enabled him to hear God speak to him directly into his heart, and so his understanding was not through anything that men said but it was the word of the Holy Spirit. This was the time when he experienced the love of God and the mercy of God in a deep personal way. (Verses 11-12)

The wilderness years.

When Paul was first saved he was eager to start preaching, but he was led to this place of quiet to reflect. This time in Arabia (verse 17) was so valuable. God confirmed his call upon Paul's life, he appreciated that it was always God's plan to not just give him work to do, but to reveal Jesus to him personally. his was the time when his call was confirmed and a time that would prepare him to meet the other apostles. He was

not one of the twelve, but it becomes clear that he has the same mission as that which was given to the twelve. He would particularly minister to the gentile and he would need to respect that Jews needed to receive Jesus as their Messiah, but his main work would be to bring gentiles to Christ.

Jerusalem.

At least three years had passed. He had particular time with Peter and James, the Lord's brother (verses 18-20). Peter of course was seen to be the senior leader in the Church and James would also chair the Council of Jerusalem, where Paul, Barnabas and Silas would be officially commissioned to reach the Gentiles. From then on Paul's ministry was not seen to be separate from the other apostles, but in fact was *complementary*.

Antioch would become a significant church. Paul had already established it as a base and had begun his ministry from there. Now everyone saw that this was all part of God's work and it was not renegade or a sect .

Syria and Cilicia.

Paul was not known to all the places he visited, but his testimony was well received (verse 22-24). Once Paul had been a persecutor of the Church, but now he proclaims that faith in Christ is the only true Gospel. People saw the difference in Paul and they gave thanks to God because of him.

Points to consider.

- 1) How seriously do we consider that we live in an evil age? What signs are there that we are in an evil age?
- 2) Are we living in the Grace of God or do we feel that our works are necessary for our salvation?
- 3) Is our faith based not just on what we have heard but what we have received in our hearts?
- 4) What was Paul's main call regarding who he was to reach?
- 5) How important was Galatians chapter one for Paul and life changing for him.
- 6) Why is it important that he should meet Peter and James?
- 7) How much has our understanding of the gospel and our testimony regarding Christ been backed up by a clear change of life?