

Date: 19 Feb 2023

Scripture Passage: Galatians 1:11-24

Title: An Apostle Of The True Gospel

Introduction

- We learnt from v6-10, there is only one true gospel: it must be valued, defended, and propagated.
- Gospel message summarized in v3-5: Jesus Christ and Him crucified, to save helpless sinners, by God's grace. Not because of any good done by the sinner. It is freely given to those who are undeserving.
- The Judaizers were challenging Paul's gospel and his apostleship. Judaizers were claiming that faith in Christ alone was not enough. You must continue to practice the laws of Moses to be saved. They were attacking not just the gospel, but also Paul's apostleship.
- Paul is going to expand on the gospel later in the subsequent chapters, but first he provides sufficient to convince the Galatians he is a true apostle, preaching the true gospel. Paul is showing that the origin of his gospel and apostleship was from God, revealed by Jesus Christ.

I. The gospel preached by Paul was of divine origin (11-12).

- Paul is appealing for a careful hearing, for (i) the issue is serious ("I make known to you"); (ii) they were brethren (Judaizers not brethren, cf. 9). Brethren, appealing to their good sense as fellow believers. Because they have come to faith in Jesus Christ, they are bound together as brothers and sisters in Christ. There is an expectation of them as fellow believers, that they know the faith and they know the same God.
- Not according to man (11): (i) not from man; (ii) not taught, in Jewish method of rote (12). Paul is saying that the gospel he preached came through the revelation of Jesus Christ (12). The gospel is (i) from Jesus Christ; (ii) by revelation, i.e. given by Spirit (Acts 9:1-16; John 14:26).
- If Paul's gospel was of divine origin, the Judaizers could not be teaching the true gospel. The Judaizer's teachings are of human origin. Permeated with works of righteousness, arising from man's pride & Satan's deception (Rom. 1:16-17, 20-23). If gospel of divine origin, the enlightenment of Spirit needed to understand it (1 Cor. 2:13-14). Humans have limitations. Something that is of divine origin, will require the Holy spirit to enlighten our understanding. There is a difference between an intellectual understanding vs. a spiritual understanding. Those who are truly converted will know that before they were saved, they only had intellectual understanding. Upon being born again and saved, they appreciate the gospel so much and the word of God speaks to them in a different way. Our confession LBCF 1:5 states "full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures comes from the internal work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts". As we preach the gospel, we cannot rely on our persuasion on how good we are in explaining. The spirit of God needs to work in the person to give spiritual life. Word and spirit always go together. We preach the word of God, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

II. Paul's apostleship was of divine origin (13-17).

- Before conversion, Paul was a religious fanatic (13-14). He persecuted the church "beyond measure", destroying (devastating city with sword & fire, Acts 9:21). He was deeply convinced of traditions of "my fathers", ref. to own ancestors, not national ancestry. God chose Paul by his own good pleasure (15-16). Paul was (i) separated, or set apart to serve, from mother's womb; (ii) called to faith "through His grace"; (iii) made an apostle to the Gentiles. Ephesians 1:3-4 talks about predestination. God had already chosen certain people before the foundation of the world. Not because of any good in them, but because of God's won good pleasure.
- Paul moved from Damascus where he was converted (Acts 9) to Arabia, i.e. area under rule of Aretas, before returning again to Damascus. It was only after three years of ministry, before he went down to Jerusalem to meet the apostle Peter. This was to prove to the Galatians that his apostleship and the gospel that he received was directly from God through Jesus Christ, not from the apostles in Jerusalem. It was God who revealed His Son (16). Christ the revealer (12), Christ is the Son of God. That is why Paul is able to say "imitate me" (1 Cor. 11:1) as he imitates Christ. The apostles and prophets were used by God to write down scripture. Today we preach and read from the complete scriptures. There are no more prophets and apostles.

- Humanly speaking it was impossible for Paul, by his own effort, or by persuasion of anyone, to be apostle. The Galatians had heard of his past (13), and known of his present (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12). Paul's apostleship is from God (1:1 cf. Jer. 1:5), to proclaim gospel among Gentiles. The teachings of the Judaizers are not from God (cf. Acts 15:1-2). The Galatians have the choice between true or false Christianity, freedom or bondage, salvation or damnation. What about us here? The truth is from scripture. Let people call us extreme. We stay faithful.

III. Paul's call and gospel were recognized by the leading men in Jerusalem (18-24).

- Paul made a trip to Jerusalem after 3 years of his conversion (18). He met the apostle Peter (cf. Acts 9:26-30) to get acquainted with him, not to learn the gospel from him. Paul's apostleship and gospel was accepted by the other apostles in Jerusalem. The Judaizers were accusing Paul, but with calmness and sincerity he says he is not lying (20). After 15 days, had to escape to Syria & Cilicia, including the home-town of Tarsus (Acts 9:29-30). Many churches in Judea (Acts 9:31) heard of him, never met him, glorified God.
- Paul had his own ministry, given by the Lord. He was as much an apostle as the twelve. No man contributed to his gospel or apostleship. None of the apostles and men in Jerusalem opposed Paul's message or denied his apostleship (2 Cor. 10:13-14). Instead, they affirmed his gospel message and his apostleship.
- There is no novelty or glory in new doctrine. That is why the confession of faith and catechism is so helpful. Anything novel, anything new, hold it with suspicion. More important is to be faithful. Scripture is complete, and sufficient for our needs until Jesus Christ comes again.

IV. Summary and Application

- Sola scriptura! Scripture is written by chosen men such as Paul, inspired by Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). We ought to trust and obey.
- Reject claims of apostles & prophets. Reject false teaching, especially gospel. Anyone who claims that they are apostles, claiming to be prophets, are all cons. There are no more prophets or apostles around to heal people or perform miracles. Those have been withdrawn. We now have pastors, we have elders, we have evangelist to preach the gospel.