

GALATIANS

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TWO ANTIOCHS

Some key passages:

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| 1:3-4 | The Heart of the Gospel. |
| 1:8-9 | The Purity and Unity of the Gospel. |
| 2:16, 20 | The Life of the gospel. |
| 3:11 | The way of life for the Christian. |
| 3:22-24 | The schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. |
| 4:4-7 | The fullness of time. |
| 4:22-31 | The great allegory. |
| 5:19-26 | Works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit. |
| 6:7 | Law of sowing and reaping. |

Galatians 1:11-24

ONLY ONE PAUL

But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me... 1:15&c

We have seen that Paul insisted that there is only one Gospel. There is only one message of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus the Christ for sin. Paul, through the Holy Spirit, warned that any being who preached a different Gospel, which is not really the Gospel at all, should be condemned.

This text shows us that Paul himself is a unique person. God raised up a man, let him be trained as a Pharisee, even to the persecution of the church, and then called him to be an apostle.

This part of Chapter One and much of Chapter Two presents some facts that reinforce Paul's apostolic authority.

1. PAUL'S DIVINE REVELATION

1:11-12

Paul tells the Galatians that not only is the Gospel he preached unique, but that he received it in a unique way. Paul is not passing on what he learned from man, but what he received through divine revelation. He makes three denials and one assertion.

First, he denies that the Gospel is "something that man made up." When you think about it, the Gospel is the most unlikely thing that a man would ever come up with. Man, by nature, is proud and would not invent a way of redemption that leaves man out as far as merit is concerned. {Cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25}

Second, Paul denies that any mere human taught him the message he preached. Our own salvation experience may not have been as dramatic as that of the apostle, but we all are called by a revealed Christ. {Cf. Mt 11:25-30}

Third, Paul denies that he received the Gospel through instruction, i.e. by someone teaching him what he should believe.

Finally, Paul asserts that the Gospel came to him directly by revelation from Jesus Christ. This goes beyond Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. It implies more revelation as to the content of the Gospel in its relation to what he already had been taught. Paul gave us thirteen of the Books of the New Testament (counting Hebrews as one of Paul's letters).

2. PAUL'S LIFE IN JUDAISM

1:13-14

If "The Twelve" and the other disciples were asked to pick a man to become a preacher of the Gospel, Saul of Tarsus would have never occurred to them. Saul, who became the Apostle Paul, was a zealot for Judaism, who believed that this "Way" must be eliminated at all costs.

{Cf. Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2}

Paul remembered with regret his persecution of the church, which Jesus said was equivalent to persecuting Him. {Cf. Acts 9:4; Philippians 3:4-6}

3. PAUL'S CONVERSION and FLIGHT INTO ARABIA

1:15-17

After Paul was converted he realized that God had planned his life before he was born. {Cf. Jeremiah 1:5}

In comparing Acts 9:20-25 with Galatians, it would seem that Paul tried to preach in Damascus, was nearly killed, went into Arabia for three years to be taught by Jesus, and then return to Damascus.

4. PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM

1:18-20

It is not clear just what Paul means by "after three years." This could be the time after his conversion, or since his departure into Arabia, or since his return to Damascus.

Paul then meets with Peter and James for fifteen days. The point of this may be to show that there was hardly enough time for Paul to have been instructed by other men. His Gospel and his objection to the Judaizers were based on personal revelation from Christ.

5. PAUL'S MINISTRY in SYRIA and CILICIA

1:21-24

Before moving on to Jerusalem, Paul remembers his visit to Antioch, in Syria, The Book of Acts fills in more details of Paul's journeys. {Cf. Acts 11:21-26}

Paul was still unknown to the Christians in Judea. They knew of some unnamed person who had formerly persecuted the church who was now a preacher, but Paul was not a celebrity to them.

In our day when a person can become known worldwide overnight, it is important to understand how God prepared Paul for his ministry.

Galatians 2:1-10 THE ISSUE OF GENTILE BELIEVERS

God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. 2:7-8

What kind of person would be made to feel welcome at Vineland Park Baptist Church? Would an obviously poor individual, someone in rags who smelled bad, be greeted in a friendly manner? How about an apparently wealthy person? Would they be treated any better? How about someone of a different color? Do we tend to make distinctions that God does not make?

The early church was made up originally of almost all Jews who had acknowledged Jesus as their Messiah, the Christ.

As the Gospel was preached, in obedience to the command of Acts 1:8, many Gentiles (non-Jews) were converted. This caused some problems with some of the "pure" Jews.

Soon the issue of circumcision was raised by some to insist that Gentiles must first be circumcised before they could be genuine believers. It took an apostolic conference in Jerusalem to settle that issue once and for all time. {Cf. Acts 15} In this first part of Chapter Two, Paul gives his interpretation of that Council. The remainder of Chapter Two and Chapters Three and Four give a thorough explanation of the results of that Council.

1. THE ISSUE PRESENTED

2:-12

Is the "fourteen years" from Paul's conversion or from his visit to Jerusalem? We just don't know for sure, but Galatians 2:1-10 and Acts 15 deal with the same event. Luke, in Acts, reports as a third party while Paul gives his own recollection of the same events.

As the disciples were scattered by persecution, Antioch of Syria {see below}, a great commercial port city, became a center for Christian witness, and many Gentiles became Christians. {Acts 11:91-21}. When the Jerusalem church heard about this, they sent Barnabas to Antioch to evaluate the situation {Acts 11:22-24}. Having befriended and defended Saul (Paul) earlier (Acts 9:26-30), Barnabas went to Tarsus to get Saul {Acts 11:25-26}. After ministering in Antioch for a year, Barnabas and Saul were sent to Jerusalem with supplies to relieve the famine there {Acts 11:27-30; 12:25}. At this point in Acts there is no mention of the issue.

When Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem to Antioch, they were called by the Holy Spirit for what is called Paul's "first missionary journey" {Acts 13:1-3}. This took them into Galatia where many Gentiles were saved, but there was much opposition from Jewish legalists {Acts 13:4-14:28}. At the same time some legalists came from Jerusalem to Antioch teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

Paul and Barnabas take Titus, a Greek, as an example of a Gentile convert.

2. THE ISSUE ILLUSTRATED

2:3-5

Titus became a test case as to whether or not circumcision is a prerequisite for becoming a Christian. Both Titus and Timothy were Paul's young lieutenants. Titus was a full-blooded Gentile, while Timothy's father was a Greek and his mother a Jewish believer {Acts 16:1}.

In the case of Timothy, Paul had him circumcised before taking him on his second missionary journey in order not to unnecessarily offend the Jewish believers, since Timothy's mother was a Jewess. Paul was willing to adapt - as long as it did not compromise principle. In the case of Titus, circumcision was the issue and to comply would be to abandon the very heart of the Gospel message of salvation by faith apart from works of the law.

3. THE ISSUE DISCUSSED

2:6-8

Review the events of Acts 15. Paul is not disparaging Peter and the other apostles when he says they "seemed to be leaders;" he is rather establishing his authority as an apostle. The idea may be that if Paul derived his Gospel from men, then other men, e.g., the Judaizers, would have some credibility. In fact, Paul points out, that God does not show favor to men based on outward appearances; so those men added nothing to his message.

4. THE ISSUE RESOLVED

2:9-10

The conclusion of the matter is that Gentiles are not required to be circumcised. In fact, the emphasis in Acts 15:11 is that Jews are saved the same way as Gentiles, not that Gentiles are saved as "Jews."

The conclusion lays down a principle that answers the question for all time, "Can anything be added to faith in the matter of salvation?" If circumcision is not necessary, as Christianity springs from Judaism, "for salvation is of the Jews," {Cf. John 4:22} then what else could possibly be added? Yet, down through the centuries men have tried to add such things as baptism, membership in a particular group, etc.

This principle is also the reason that we must not exclude anyone because of race, ethnic background, social standing from our fellowship. Otherwise we are no different from those Judaizers that the Word of God condemns (1:8, 9).

They agreed on a general division of labor, based on God's evident working. This did not discourage either group from preaching to anyone, Jew or Gentile. And don't forget the poor.