

New Creation Teaching Ministries

## Galatians

11 February 2010

Gal. 1:11-24 (cf. Acts 22:1-22)

### Introduction:

- (1) Last week we saw that there was really only *one* gospel, which is summarised in Gal. 1:4. This present evil age holds us in bondage by reason of our sin. Therefore, deliverance from it is by the forgiveness of sins.
- (2) This 'evil age' is not evil simply in its darkness, but in its 'light' i.e. in its righteousness by works of the Law. Guilt, fear, conscience, law, self justification the Flesh all work together as an unconquerable combination. The works of the law may take many forms, but the dynamic action is always the same. Guilt drives fear which is fuelled by conscience and leads to 'righteousness' that derives from ourselves in order to alleviate the fear, but then we cannot be certain, and any 'legal' view of our relationship with God leads only to more fear (LW Vol. 26, pp. 38-39; 70-71).
- (3) So there is only one gospel in the world, but the world has many gospels so called. In the Galatians' situation the issue was the 'gospel' of the people who had come down from Jerusalem, who were saying that 'works of the law' had to be added to faith. These were tied to the great Jewish/Gentile 'boundary markers' of Sabbath, dietary laws and circumcision, but 'works of the law' are an issue in every age and culture.
- (4) However, the true gospel is the gospel of God's Son (and in particular the message of him crucified for the forgiveness of our sins) through which we come to know grace and peace from God the Father, and the deliverance from this present evil age.
- (5) This gospel brings glory and praise to God, and is focussed on his grace (as seen in the cross) above all else. Compare this with 1 Corinthians 15:3 'For I delivered to you as of *first importance* what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures'. The gospel of Christ and him crucified is of first importance, meaning both foundational and primary to all other doctrines. Christ died (history, although the title 'Christ' is one of faith!) for our sins (gospel) according to the Scriptures (divine authority).
- (6) This gospel brings glory to God, as it magnifies him and takes our eyes off ourselves and the things we might seek to present before him as righteousness.
- (7) Paul is a case study of this action (of which he speaks in the passage before us today), and this experience of his conversion and his commissioning forms the basis of his authority to preach as an apostle.

### 1. Paul's 'Former Manner of Life' and His Conversion

(1) The passage indicates something of Paul's life as a religious Pharisee. There are other passages in which he gives an indication of his manner of life, and the mindset that drove him on.

- See, for example, the opinion of others about his life in Acts 8:3; 9:1-2, 13-14; and compare with his own comments in Acts 22:3-5; 26:4-5, 9-11; Phil. 3:4-6.
  - He was a man *driven* by zeal. One of the marks of the law: driving to get everything under control, in order, according to the way in which we think it should be!

- Absolutely convinced that he was right. Idealist, ambitious, ruthlessly efficient and deeply committed to the Law, but angry. Even more deadly because the anger was disguised as religious devotion.
  - He thought that he saw clearly, and that therefore he could act as judge of others. Compare John 9:40f. 'Some of the Pharisees said "Are we also blind"? Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, "We see," your guilt remains.'
- (2) Then he was confronted by the risen Lord, about whom he had heard!
- Paul had tried to get the Christians to blaspheme i.e. to recant. In other words, he understood their argumentation. He knew what they were claiming.
    - His definition of blasphemy changed! As Saul the Pharisee, he thought they were the blasphemers, now he saw that in trying to get them to renounce Jesus as Messiah he was causing them to blaspheme!
  - The great stumbling block for him was that a crucified man could not be Messiah! Messiah would be anointed by the Spirit, as the great Son of David, to rule over the nations with a rod of iron.
    - Deut. 21:23 (which Paul takes up later in Gal. 3:13), indicates that a man hung up on a tree was cursed of God, and polluted the land if left there. Therefore, Jesus of Nazareth *could not* be Messiah! To the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks, foolishness!
  - Then this Jesus met him on the road to Damascus! "Who are you, Lord".... "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting". Blinded by the physical light accompanying the revelation, but knew then that he had been blind spiritually!
    - Cf. John 3:3-6.
    - Titus 3:1ff.
  - Paul was 'apprehended' by Christ (Phil. 3:12)! I.e. 'captured', 'conscripted'. Not 'making a decision' for him! He must have been shocked to realise that what the Christians had been saying was true, after all!
  - The three days in darkness: everything racing through his mind and heart.
    - Notice Ananias' words in Acts 9:17 '*brother* Saul'. What a miracle of grace to bring him to this point (compare with Acts 9:13f.)!
- (3) The calling is also a commissioning, as always is the case.
- In the specific sense, Paul was called (i.e. effectually called, leading to conversion) to be an apostle.
    - His apostolic authority was no less than the others, who had seen Jesus and been with him. Therefore no need to get approval of the others, but straight into the action, preaching at Damascus, then into Arabia
      - § Not 'mediation time' but preaching! (See Luther)
      - § Gal. 1:11-12 is the foundation of Paul's discussion in this and the next chapter.
  - But the specific calling of Paul as an apostle, is in the service of the plan and purpose of God. The Father did not reveal his Son in Paul, in order that Paul might have an experience of having the Son come to him. It was for the action of God's plan and purpose!
    - Later in Galatians, the focus will fall on the Abrahamic covenant. This is for the nations' blessing! The blessing was to come to the nations through the chosen Seed, who had to come from Abraham's line, but the *nations* are in God's sights.

§ Gal. 1:16 cf. Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17 cf. Romans 1:5; 15:16.

The gospel of the crucified Son is the power to win the nations!

- The Son was revealed *in* Paul to bless the nations.
- This took place at *exactly the right time* (Gal. 1:15-16)... ‘when God... was pleased’. Set apart from mother’s womb cf. Jer. 1:5; Is. 49:1, 5.
  - Not just Paul, but all in Christ are set apart in this way. See 2 Thess. 2:13-15 ‘But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. <sup>14</sup> To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>15</sup> So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter’.
  - Also the sequence of Rom. 8:30 predestined, called, justified, glorified.

## 2. The Opening of Blind Eyes

(1) The wider point to be made from this passage is that there are no innocent bystanders in relation to Christ.

- The fact is that we are all enemies (see Romans 5:6, 8, 10; Eph. 2:3) and in this state we are blind (see 1 Corinthians 4:3f.)
- We are so blind that we do not see we are haters of God! In fact, we think that we love him and are good people who do his will!
  - Recently talking to a young woman, who during a time of spiritual renewal had a vision of Christ, and her with a baseball bat, wanting to bash his head in!
- What does it take for one heart to be converted? All the kindness, tenderness, mercy, love and grace of the entire Cross!
  - The fact that Paul had been a persecutor never left him (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13). He needed to look at his own past in faith. See the song ‘Surely, Surely’... “And when the time comes we must face, what mem’ry brings within God’s grace; for we are washed in love’s great flood of flowing, healing, cleansing blood’.

(2) Do we see that this is for the nations?

- Cf. Is. 42:7 I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness compared with John 10:21 and then to us as the servants of Christ. Acts 26:18 Sending you to the Gentiles...to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.