

The Church of the Servant King

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Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

(SB_Galatians_Lsn3_Chapter 2)

Prior to beginning our study of chapter 2, let us re-read chapter 1 and reflect upon the amplification of the meaning of Paul’s words that was presented in our prior lesson. As we re-read this first chapter, see if the words are more meaningful and whether you possess deeper insight based upon what we studied.

Galatians 1

THE GREETING (1:1-5)

1:1 PAUL, an apostle (not *sent* from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.¹ (Gal 1:1-5)

Questions for reflection:

- Why did Paul find it necessary to highlight his status as an “apostle?”²
- Why did Paul choose to highlight the fact that other men were not needed to validate or affirm his apostleship?³
- What is the significance of the choice of the words “grace” and “peace” given the historical context?⁴
- What did Paul mean by the phrase “this present evil age?”⁵

THE REASON FOR THE LETTER (1:6-10)

6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; 7 which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. 8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should

¹ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

² Answer: The opposition and attacks against his credentials that were being launched by the Judaizers.

³ Answer: The Judaizers were challenging whether Paul had met the criteria of Acts 1:21-26 for an Apostle: 1) eyewitnesses to the public ministry of Jesus from the time of John’s baptism to the resurrection; and 2) selection by Jesus.

⁴ Answer: “Grace” – an allusion or reference to salvation by faith in Christ alone without the necessity of any works or rituals associated with the Mosaic Law; a veiled attack against the legalism of the Judaizers. “Peace” – the result of freedom from legalistic bondage and guilt and the word builds upon the concepts found in Numbers 6:22-26.

⁵ Answer: A period in which the distortion by the Judaizers was prominent and consistent with Satan’s rulership.

preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. 10 For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. (Gal 1:6-10)

Questions for reflection:

- Paul used a strong Greek word that is translated “deserting.” Do you recall the word and what it meant?⁶
- Paul also used a strong Greek word that is translated “accursed.” Do you recall an alternate translation that we used and that may have more resonance today?⁷

PAUL DEFENDS HIS MINISTRY (1:11-24)

Paul's Call to Be an Apostle (1:11-17)

11 For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but *I received it* through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; 14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. 15 But when He who had set me apart, *even from my mother's womb*, and called me through His grace, was pleased 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Questions for Reflection:

- What is the significance of the fact that Paul did not first go to Jerusalem immediately after his conversion? What did Paul likely do while in Arabia?⁸

Tangential Issue Not Previously Developed:

- What did Paul mean by the phrase “He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb” mean?⁹
- Does this phrase support the Calvinist concept of election and predestination, i.e. God predestined the election of certain individuals before their birth?¹⁰

⁶ Answer: Metatitheste (⊙Ⓜ◆⊕⊖◆⊗⊘⊙Ⓜ◆⊕Ⓜ) – military revolt, mutiny.

⁷ Answer: Anathema (⊕⊖■⊕⊖◆⊕Ⓜ⊕⊖) – “Let them be damned.” People who are in ministry for personal gain and approbation (as alleged by Paul's accusers) do not pronounce themselves damned if they deviate from their message.

⁸ Answer: The significance is that the leadership at Jerusalem never became institutionalized and a sanctioning body for every subsequent activity within Christianity. The Holy Spirit is free to work in God's people be they Jew or Gentile without consideration of that person's standing in the world or in the eyes of other men. At a more granular level, Paul knew that it had been the resurrected Jesus Who had commissioned him and he had received revelation directly from the Lord Himself. He needed no man to direct him or validate his status as an apostle.

⁹ Answer: Paul was simply emphasizing the fact that God's purpose for his life from the time he was born was now finally being realized.

- Does this phrase support the view of today's anti-abortionists who interpret such passages as evidence that there is human life in the womb?¹¹

Paul's First Trip to Jerusalem – Three Years After His Conversion (1:18-24)

18 Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. **19** But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. **20** (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) **21** Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. **22** And I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; **23** but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." **24** And they were glorifying God because of me. (Gal 1:18-24)

Questions for Reflection:

- In your opinion, when did this trip to Jerusalem to which Paul refers occur?¹²
- Was it the same trip as the trip that resulted in what is commonly referred to as the Jerusalem Council?¹³
- What reasons can you provide for your answer?¹⁴

Chapter 2

In this chapter, Paul mentions a trip to Jerusalem after "fourteen years." The question that naturally arises is fourteen years from what event or date? As discussed in the opening lesson in this study of Galatians, I have opted for the view that Galatians was a letter written by Paul at the end of his first missionary journey and prior to the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. This would translate to a date of writing of around A.D. 49. The exact sequence or chronology of events is difficult to extract from Luke's narrative in Acts and Paul's letters. (Ultimately, we must accept that an exact chronology of events is not as essential as a general understanding of the historical backdrop and the theological issues with which Paul dealt).

¹⁰ Answer: No. How can it? The context of the passage is not addressing the subject. Furthermore, even if one attempts to use this passage to support that point, it doesn't work with the passage. Paul says "from the womb," not eternity past.

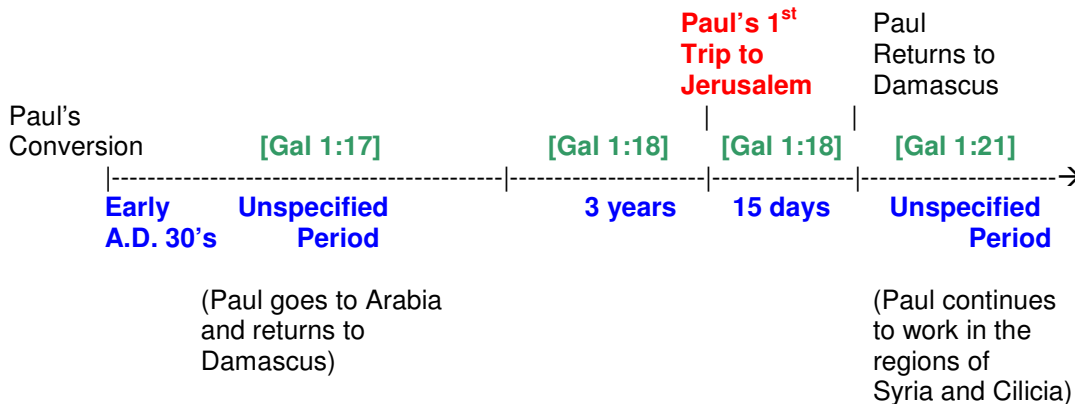
¹¹ Answer: No. Any such attempts to use this passage are simply wrong and ignore every principle of sound hermeneutics that exist. It would be a classic case of eisegesis – holding an opinion and then seeking texts to support that opinion without consideration being given to the context.

¹² Answer: The trip mentioned in chapter 1 occurred approximately three years after Paul's conversion. While we don't have specifics of Paul's whereabouts, we do know that he spent this period in Damascus and Arabia and did not travel to Jerusalem until the end of this period. The end of this period is marked by an attempt on Paul's life in Damascus which caused him to flee the city via a basket over a wall at night. He then made his first trip to Jerusalem after his conversion. (See Acts 9:20ff).

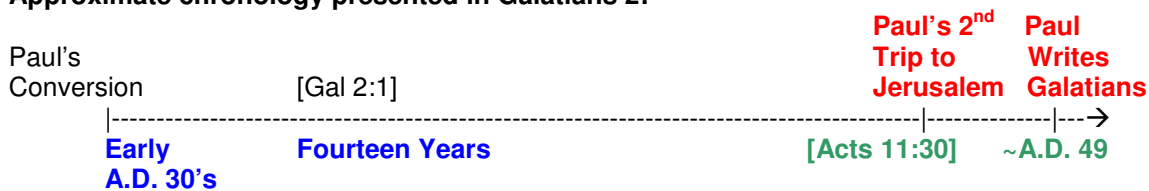
¹³ Answer: No, I don't think so, but there are differences of opinion between commentators, especially with regard to the 2nd visit mentioned in chapter 2. Paul states that during the visit mentioned in chapter 1, he only met with Peter and James, the Lord's brother. That scenario doesn't match with the account of the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. Also, the 2nd visit mentioned in chapter 2 does not involve an audience such as that which is demanded by the description of events in Acts 15.

¹⁴ Answer: See previous answer.

Approximate chronology presented in Galatians 1:



Approximate chronology presented in Galatians 2:



There are two views regarding when the fourteen year period began: 1) from the date of Paul's conversion in the early A.D. 30's; or 2) a period which is dated based upon his first trip to Jerusalem that is mentioned in Galatians 1:18, i.e. at the end of the three year period that he was in Damascus. The Expositor's Bible Commentary has suggested that the following dates are possible and they reflect a view compatible with the 2nd option.

- A.D. 32 – Paul's conversion
- A.D. 35 – Paul's trip to Jerusalem from Damascus (Acts 9:23-30 cf. Gal 1:18-20)
- A.D. 49 – Paul's 2nd trip to Jerusalem that is the subject of Galatians 2

I think either view is possible, but the dating scheme proffered by the Expositor's Bible Commentary is helpful and consistent with the number of years mentioned by Paul in Galatians for certain periods of time.

There are five trips by Paul to Jerusalem that are mentioned in Scripture. The first two of his visits are mentioned in Galatians 1 and 2. The remaining three visits are not mentioned by Paul in any of his letters.

- Paul's visit when he left Damascus after the attempt on his life there by unbelieving Jews (Acts 9:23-30; **Gal 1:18-20**)
- The famine visit (Acts 11:27-30; **Gal 2:1-10**)
- The visit to attend the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29)
- The visit at the end of the 2nd missionary journey to complete a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:22)
- His final visit after his 3rd missionary journey that resulted in Paul's Caesarean imprisonment in order to protect him from the unruly, unbelieving Jewish mob (Acts 21:15-23:35)

Paul's Relationship with the Other Apostles (2:1-21)

This chapter provides us with unique insight into Paul's relationship with those apostles from the Twelve who resided and ministered in Jerusalem. Paul has already alluded to the fact that he did not find it necessary to receive instruction or validation of his status as an apostle from

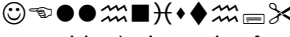
any of the Twelve immediately after his conversion (1:11-12, 16-17). He probably spent his time in Arabia searching and examining the Hebrew Scriptures through the grid of his newly found paradigm which identified Jesus as the promised Messiah.

The Famine Offering and Meeting At Jerusalem (2:1-5)

2:1 THEN after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2 And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. 3 But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 But *it was* because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. 5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (Acts 2:1-5)

These first verses of chapter 2 are very enlightening. When these verses are read with the contextual backdrop of the growing rift between Paul's message of grace and the Judaizer's message of bondage to legalism in mind, we are able to identify Paul's thought process and grasp the meaning of certain nuanced phraseology much more readily.

The famine relief offering discussed in Acts 11 sets the context for Paul's visit on this occasion to Jerusalem. As you may recall, Jewish believers were dispersed and scattered after the persecution that arose after Stephen's martyrdom. These Jewish believers evangelized Jews exclusively as they traveled (Acts 11:19). Eventually, converts were won in Cyprus and Cyrene.

Luke specifically mentions that these converts from Cyprus and Cyrene traveled to Antioch and spoke to the "Hellenists" (NKJV) or "Greeks" (NASV) – translated from the Greek word  (Hellenistes). These were Greek speaking (as opposed to Aramaic speaking) Jews in Antioch who were unbelievers and not "God-fearers" as was the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 10).

It is likely that the converts from Cyprus and Cyrene had been of the same ilk as the "Hellenists" or Greek speaking Jews of Antioch. Some of these converts from Cyprus and Cyrene made their way to the very cosmopolitan city of Antioch. (As a city located on a major trade route, Antioch attracted people from distant locales such as Persia, India and China).

The evangelistic activity by these believers from Cyprus and Cyrene in Antioch was the first recorded instance of its kind where believers outside the circle of the official Jewish leaders were leading large numbers to Christ. While not specifically stated, it is certainly implied that there were Gentile converts as well in Antioch given the international stature of the city.

The activity in Antioch attracted the attention of the Jewish believer leadership in Jerusalem. Peter had already witnessed the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius and his household (Acts 10) and he had convinced the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem that the conversion of Gentiles apart from the Mosaic Law was consistent with God's desire (see Acts 11:1-18). In addition, it was Peter and John who had sanctioned Philip's work in Samaria (Acts 8). So, the Jewish leadership was already familiar and had been introduced to the issue of converts among Gentiles and Jews of a mixed background.

In Galatians 2, Paul documents his travel to Jerusalem with Barnabas to deliver the gift offering from the believers in Antioch to the believers in Jerusalem. Titus, a Gentile, accompanies Paul and Barnabas as well. The occasion of this gift offering was a famine that was prophesied by the prophet Agabus who traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch (see Acts 11:27-28).

In Galatians 2:2, Paul indicates that it was “because of revelation” that he went up to Jerusalem from Antioch. Paul was probably referring to the revelation that there would be a famine as prophesied by the prophets who had come to Antioch from Jerusalem (see Acts 11:27ff). Thus, Paul’s travel to Jerusalem was the result of revelation regarding the coming famine.

The language in the rest of this section strongly implies that quite a discussion and controversy ensued over the issue of Gentile conversion. It is quite probable, and in fact most likely, that the trip to Jerusalem that is referenced by Paul in our passage occurred prior to his first missionary journey. As such, it constituted, at least in part, an attempt on Paul’s part to gain some “buy-in” or acceptance by representatives of the Jerusalem leadership of his work among the Gentiles in Antioch prior to the launch of his first missionary effort (see Acts 12:25-13:3). His work among the Gentiles in Antioch effectively served as the platform used to test the prototype of his message there. The results had proved to be phenomenal in Antioch and they were endorsed by the Jerusalem leadership (see Gal 2:9). So, in a sense, Paul did seek and obtain the concurrence (vs. approval) of his gospel message to the Gentiles from the Jewish apostolic church leadership in Jerusalem.

Paul and Barnabas brought Titus with them to Jerusalem since Titus was a Greek or a Gentile believer. The Jewish believers in Jerusalem could not refute such direct evidence of salvation among the uncircumcised Gentiles as Titus. It was all theoretical discussion as long as the Jewish believers did not have to answer directly to a Gentile in their presence. However, such direct evidence forced the issue to be addressed forthrightly and decisively.

Finally, Paul notes that “false brethren” “sneaked” into the private conference that Paul and the Jewish leaders conducted. “False brethren” means that these were Jews that may have acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah; however, they aligned with the unbelieving Judaizers in regards to the issue of keeping the Mosaic Law as a requirement for salvation – specifically the rite of circumcision. They wanted to force the Law upon Titus and force Paul to acknowledge their position as legitimate; however, note that Paul states that he did not yield for one second to their position.

Why? The answer is because Paul had the salvation of Gentiles in mind. He is now writing to the Galatians and taking them back to a point in time before he had even met them and, as it were, telling them that he had strong opinions and convictions about the issue even prior to having met them.

Paul and the Jewish Apostles and Church Leaders (2:6-10)

6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that *we might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 *They* only *asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do. (Gal 2:6-10)

These verses speak for themselves. Paul gained nothing personally or spiritually from the Jewish church leadership. He did not receive additional enlightenment from them. Rather, the reverse appears to be the case. Paul was smart enough to realize that his position was controversial among the Jews and he realized the growing threat from the legalist Jews – those who expressed belief in Jesus as the Messiah and those who did not. It is my opinion that Paul

recognized that he would always face opposition to his efforts to spread the gospel among the Gentiles and that opposition would come from this very vocal group. While this may not have been “the” thorn in the side to which Paul would later refer, it was certainly “a” thorn with which he would always have to deal and which would at least indirectly lead to his death.