

Galatians 1b - Tricity Baptist Church - YAH - August 2, 2020 - Steel

Introduction - Let's Be Clear!

We are in the second half of Galatians 1. Paul has authenticated the gospel.

Let's read from verse 10 to the end of the chapter.

Just as a segway, let's keep in mind that Paul has used the strongest vocabulary available to remind us how offended God is by those who corrupt the precious gospel of Christ. The scope of God's wrath extends from men to angels - or all of God's created beings.

While the angel Moroni may top the head of our list, we need to be increasingly aware that the influence of angels of light are increasing exponentially. We could devote many hours to this theme. We shall settle for Colossians 2:18:

"Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,"

- Satan disguises his messengers as angels of light, 2 Cor. 11:14. 2 Timothy 4:1 reminds us that some will turn to the doctrines of demons. I would be more than happy to spend time with anyone discussing the *present influences* of the doctrines of demons within and outside of our churches today. By the time we get to Revelation 9:20 we see a world that is totally engaged with demon communications. Now, is the time, more than ever before, to try the spirits (1 John 4:1).

- Keep in mind that much of the origins and contemporary practices of the spiritual formation and contemplative prayer movements have to do with contact with the spirit world. Stay away.

But, let's get on with today's goals and begin with verse 10.

I. Let's talk about testing our servanthood.

When something is certified it means it has passed the test.

10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

1. The first test of the servant: Persuading men and pleasing men.

You'll probably hear me slip into a rant before we're done today, because this matter of pleasing men is what ministry is all about today. Evangelicalism is one big convention of the National Association of Good Old Boys.

One of my favorite, albeit somewhat droll, hymns is “*Once To Every Man and Nation*” - Because it speaks to an important testing point in all of our lives. There comes a point in all of our lives when we must decide whether we obey God or man. And this test, is not usually about turning away from sin per se, or about doctrine per se. This test always boils down to one thing: Whether we choose to please men or God. I could recount a long history of men and boards who, when brought to this testing juncture... have caved to the pressure of men around them.

Paul wants us to know that this is the first crossroads in the life of the servant of God. We cannot please both men and God. You will be required to stand - perhaps against parents or a mate or children or church or friends or whomever. No one gets to skip the test. While we don't get to it until verse 14 - Paul passed the most difficult test of all - He was willing to walk away from the traditions of his fathers. Every native American who comes to Christ has to do this. Every good Roman Catholic who truly comes to Christ has to do this. Ultimately, tradition is the greatest and most ultimate barrier to the gospel.

“In these verses we read the defense Paul offers against the attacks critics were leveling against his credentials as an Apostle. We've previously studied that Paul was an authentic Apostle who was

- Personally called by Jesus in Acts 22:10 and Galatians 1:1.
- Called to be an Apostle by the will of God in Colossians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1.
- Set apart to be His minister and witness in Acts 9:15; 26:16; Romans 1:1.

We've also studied that the Judaizers were attempting to pervert the Gospel Paul taught by telling the Galatians they needed to keep the Law in order to be saved.

One way to convince them of this was to attack Paul's authority as an Apostle in an effort to render his message invalid. Thus, Paul was defending against these personal attacks from the Judaizers that included:

1) He was not a real Apostle,

2) He was attempting to please men by adopting the customs of the surrounding peoples, and

3) He was trying to build up a following for himself. However, even after all that Paul had done to try and destroy the Church, God provides us with ample witness that Paul was, indeed, His chosen vessel. (2 Corinthians 2:11,12, et.)” - End Dr. Thompson quote.

2. Now, the second test of the true servant is similar: Know that our credentials will be challenged at some level. In my opinion, no bona

fide servant of Christ who ministers the Word of God over any significant period of time escapes this. This is because Satan hates the Christ who is within us. He has always persecuted the messenger.

I have had my own credentials challenged, I've had it suggested that I am a follower or puppet of others and that my motives were impure. And, by the same token, I have experienced most of this kind of opposition from the very folks whom I FELT were unduly influenced by men and long standing traditions.

11 But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

II. Let's Talk about our integrity in certifying our servanthood.

Now, when Paul says, "I certify you, brethren," in verse 11 there are some who suggest that the best words we can choose in bringing this into our language is to say "Let me make this perfectly clear!" In any case, Paul is certifying the gospel he carries and he is certifying his own apostleship.

So, first, we want to separate out a few thoughts which apply to us all, and then we want to talk about Paul's own certification.

A. Let's talk about our certification.

1. First, don't miss the obvious. Keep in mind that it is OK to certify our servanthood. *There is a proper time and manner in which to assert our credentials. This should be true of all Christ's servants.*

When I fellowship with folks on a day to day basis I like to go by the word Jim. I really like that title. My mommy gave it to me. I'm glad I was given a common name because I am just a common guy. I really do like being ordinary. Of course, I have a duty to that name. I think my name should carry the weight of my reputation. That is enough certification.

However, sometimes, I need to escalate that and remind folks that I also speak as a **servant of Jesus Christ**. Now, that's a title and it is the best title of all, but let's face the facts, it would sound awkward if we all used it! "*Hi! I'm Jim, a servant of Christ!*" Most of the apostles were quite satisfied just calling themselves servants of Christ when they wrote to their fellow believers. In other words, they used the term to authenticate their ministry.

Now, about other titles. During my years as a pastor, I was more comfortable being **called Pastor Steel**. Some say I should not use that title anymore because I am not the pastor of a church, so I am very careful about that. However, in the end, I believe God gave me that title in the womb. I still find myself shepherding - just in other ways. By the way, I never did like the title preacher, though I have certainly done

my share of preaching. On other occasions, I have used **an academic title**, especially when I am writing a technical article.

And, what is the point? *Our efforts to certify ourselves should be appropriate to the need.* We don't flash our drivers' licenses when meeting new friends. Frankly, it is very clear that Paul hated to waste good sheepskin on this practice, but he defended his name so as to protect his authority in proclaiming the Word.

2. Secondly, keep in mind that our servanthood is based on the gospel. That's not too much to ask, is it? This should also be true of all Christ's servants.

In Paul's case, he knew that his personal credentials also tempered the reception men gave to the gospel. To be clear, charlatans like Jimmy Baker selling his divine bees' wax or whatever he's selling now, has not helped the gospel!

But here's the headline. Our authority always begins with the gospel! A man who does not embrace the true gospel of Jesus Christ has absolutely **no spiritual authority**. Yet, sadly, we use and quote unsaved folks all the time. We say that God's truth is not limited to God's people. Don't ever believe that lie. Our authority begins with that gospel. In fact, the gospel is all about authority. Remember the words of our Lord,

Note: Our authority to preach the gospel extends far beyond this verse. It is rooted in our New Covenant in-Christ relationship. It is adoption based.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Mt 28:18-20 AV)

There is another side to this coin: Stop listening to false teachers!! Turn away from the Henry Nouwen's and Tony Campollo's of this world and their likes!

B. Now, notice what was unique about Paul's certification.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ

1. Paul was claiming that he received his message directly and personally by the immediate revelation of Jesus Christ. We are now learning something that set Paul aside from every other human being:

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals (or unveils) *Himself* to each of us when we receive the gospel. We receive a Person, not merely a creed. This wonderful Person lives and abides within us. This pastor has witnessed far too many intellectual conversions. Paul had a full-on spiritual encounter with Christ. But, *Paul is claiming more than that here.*

However, Paul is making an outrageous claim. Paul is not merely saying that he has had a personal, saving encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is asserting that he has learned even more about this gospel than what Christ illuminated when He was on earth. He has received this truth directly from Christ who did several things:

- First, Christ unveiled *Himself* to Paul uniquely. (Acts 9:5)
- Secondly, Christ unveiled *the gospel* uniquely to Paul.
- Thirdly, Christ *illuminated those mysteries* which had been kept secret from the foundations of the world to Paul. (Romans 16:15). Paul was a unique steward of these mysteries.
- And finally, Christ even gave *new information or revelation* to Paul.

Why, it's no wonder Paul had to make this gargantuan effort to certify his message! The detractions of the Judaizers and the rest of Paul's protagonists went far beyond the mere issue of circumcision. That was just the flash point. Paul is making a very, very broad claim here.

In doctrinal terms we call this idea that Christ continued to reveal Himself *progressive revelation*. The Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have revealed more of the doctrine of Christ to Paul than to those who had gone on before.

We want to tread carefully, here: *Paul's gospel* does not replace the truths found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. It expands, enriches, and enlarges the truths which were revealed earlier. Mormons, like to claim progressive revelation, but their message is non-contiguous. It contradicts Paul's message and the message of Christ. It is not progressive, it is *re-gressive* because the LDS gospel is a gospel of works which nullifies the New Covenant.

2. Paul's Certification Placed His Message on an Equal Plane with Christ's.

It important for us to understand what God was doing through Paul?

Modern Bible readers often make a sad mistake here. For example, when we encounter something which the Lord Jesus taught and something which Paul taught and they *seem* to contradict, how do we respond? Typically, someone asserts, "Well I may not understand this completely, but I am certainly going to take the words of Christ over the words of Paul."

Now, why would that be wrong? It would be wrong because the Lord Jesus Christ personally taught Paul the gospel! There cannot possibly be a contradiction! It would be wrong because Christ revealed even more truth about the gospel to Paul than He did while He was on earth. And why would Christ do that? Christ's ministry on earth was primarily toward the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His primary (not sole) ministry centered around presenting the gospel of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

We might say there were four phases of understanding Christ and His ministry.

- **First** there was the fully fleshed out proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom during our Lord's three year ministry. That was His main focus, but, of course, many were also saved during this time.
- **Secondly**, there was the teaching of Christ after the resurrection where He began to connect the Old Testament scriptures with the facts of the gospels, so opening the eyes and understanding of the apostles. (Luke 24)
- **Thirdly**, there was the full acknowledgment of the apostles that they too, like Christ, were to be a light to the nations and were carrying out that special phase of ministry to the nations that was heretofore unknown. (Acts 13 and Acts 15).
- **Finally**, there was the full illuminating of all the mysteries associated with this age of gentile outreach. This included all the biblical doctrines embodied in the doctrine of the church which is His body. The "church which is His body" did not exist until Pentecost.

So, what did Christ teach to Paul that the apostles did not understand prior to the resurrection? He taught him all of the above! Wow!

3. Paul also certified his message with his own personal testimony.

13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

Now, this begs a general question before we look directly at Paul. Why are **personal testimonies** so important? Why do sound pastors always welcome testimonies? Frankly, I get weary of some folks who deliver the same testimony over and over to the same group. They seem as stale to me as last week's soda crackers. Left unmonitored and unabated, they do more to inflate personal egos than they ever do to glorify Christ. I shall leave that subject alone. But I do want you to notice that testimonies are important for many reasons.

- 1. First testimonies make the message personal. They take it out of the realm of the mind and move the discussion to the heart. They help us relate the truth to ourselves and our own experience. A testimony must not end with anecdotal information, but it certainly needs to begin there. This is *personal!*
- 2. Testimonies affirm that the message is true. They validate the truthfulness of the message.
- 3. Most importantly, testimonies are legal records. The word testimony (similar to the word martyr) speaks to a legal witness to which someone is held accountable. When we give a proper testimony which includes a rich proclamation of the Word of God, our listeners will one day give account for what they have heard.

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.

19 But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.

20 Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.

21 Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;

22 And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:

23 But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past

In this case, Paul's testimony accomplishes a number of things.

- It validates Paul's gospel by showing the dramatic and miraculous change it brought about in his life. He had been voted "Least likely to convert!"
- Secondly, it earned him the right to have the ear of other enemies of Christ. He had been one of them. And not only was he one of them, he was the creme de le creme!
- He had also put his actions where his mouth was. No one could equal Paul's zeal in persecuting Christ.
- He was historically validated. Zealous of the traditions of his fathers.
- Paul was not bragging about the life he was saved out of, he was commanding the attention of those around him.

Finally, for today, let's make sure we have some take aways:

Paul was called from the womb. I believe every servant of Christ is called from the womb.

The level of our success is irrelevant. Paul happened to have great suffering and great success. Jeremiah who was also called from the womb had great suffering and little success.

Paul acted immediately - Be obedient!

Now, just for the record, I think it would be good at this point to remind ourselves that the other apostles readily accepted what God was doing through Paul and they endorsed it. They laid hands on Paul for the ministry and acknowledged his unique calling (Acts 13:1-3).

If you happen to be accepted by the apostles, all the better, but that is not the lesson. Remember, in the end, if the apostles had had their way, the Gentiles may never have been reached!

The reminder is, that in the end, we are answerable to God alone. Do what God has called you to do and do it in the way that God tells you to do it.

When God calls, God enables, and God affirms.