

Galatians 1: 17-24—“But when God...was pleased to reveal his Son in me ...I did not consult any man, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. ¹⁸Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. ²¹Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²²I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only heard the report: ‘The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.’ ²⁴And they praised God because of me.”

- Paul wrote the book of Galatians to defend himself against Judaizers. Judaizers are those who teach, or were those who taught that in order to be saved, an individual had to have undergone circumcision.
- If you’re going to wipe out another man’s teaching, the first place to start is to wipe out his authority.
 - **Ills.** Movie: When attempting to take over the base, the first thing the enemy must do is undermine the people’s confidence in the leader’s decisions—in the leader’s loyalty to them. They usually don’t try to simply say that the leader doesn’t care, but they begin to raise rhetorical questions that suggest that the leader is only looking out for him or herself.
 - **Example:** Friends that began to study Judaism. As they delved deeper and deeper into it, and were lead where to read and how to understand each section, they all but stopped reading the New Testament. By the time they finally did return to the New Testament they had lost all confidence in Paul.
- They denied his apostleship. Secondly, they denied his gospel of pure grace. Thirdly, they denied that the Christian can live a life of grace and they wanted to impose faith/works as a system.
- **John Bunyan:** “But before I had got thus far out of these my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man's experience... Well, after many such longings in my mind, the God in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hand, one day, a book of Martin Luther; it was his comment on the Galatians -- it also was so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition, in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart. This made me marvel; for thus thought I, This man could not know anything of the state of Christians now, but must needs write and speak the experience of former days. But, of particulars ...I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians, excepting the Holy Bible, before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.”¹
- About a century later Charles Wesley and William Holland were both in a highly distressed state of mind and heart; and Charles, under the influence of his spiritual depression, was also physically ill. Both knew themselves sinners and under the wrath of God but could not find faith and peace. They knew they needed Christ, but could not seem to find him. Holland, a

¹ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (Hertfordshire: Evangelical Press, 1978), paragraphs 129-130.

commercial painter, called on Charles and gave him a copy of Luther's Commentary on the Galatians. The following is from Charles Wesley's *Journal*.

- **Charles Wesley:** “May 17 (1738). To-day I first saw Luther on the Galatians, which Mr. Holland had accidently lit upon. We began, and found him nobly full of faith. My friend, in hearing him, was so affected as to breathe out sighs and groans unutterable. ... I spent some hours this evening in private with Martin Luther, who has greatly blessed to me, especially his conclusion of the 2nd chapter. I laboured, waited and prayed to feel 'who loved **me**, and gave Himself for **me**.”
- But William Holland's own account of this same reading of Luther on Galatians together is more triumphant.
- **William Holland:** “Mr. Charles Wesley read the Preface aloud. At the words, ‘What, have we then nothing to do? No! nothing but only accept of Him, ‘Who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.’” There came such a power over me as I cannot well describe; my great burden fell off in an instant; my heart was so filled with peace and love that I burst into tears. I almost thought I saw our Saviour! My companions, perceiving me so affected, fell on their knees and prayed. When I afterwards went into the street, I could scarcely feel the ground I trod upon.”²
- The early church had no question about the apostles. The only one who seemed a bit off-center for some was the apostle Paul, and the reason is simply because he was not included in the original 12.
- All of the early church knew that the apostles were God’s spokesmen. And it’s interesting that in the early years of Christianity. We don’t find any other occasion in the New Testament where any other of the apostles’ authority is questioned.
- In addition, the apostles ruled in the early church.
 - That is, they were authoritative.
- When they spoke, it was as if God Himself was speaking, and indeed He was,
- Paul came along and Paul claimed to have the very same authority. And the Judaizers just decided we’ll just knock the props out of his authority
- After the death of the apostles the leaders of the church viewed themselves as standing in a very different kind of position (i.e., not standing in succession).
 - This is the irony of people and groups today that so light call themselves apostles.
- **Ignatius of Antioch:** “Not as Peter and Paul did, do I command you [Romans]. They were apostles, and I am a convict.”³
- The Old Testament was not written by men’s minds; it was written by the Holy Spirit through men. The same was true of Paul, and he was forced to defend it.

² Cited from Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield*, 2 vols. (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), 1: 183.

³ Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Romans* 4:3, http://www.crossroadsinitiative.com/library_article/244/Letter_of_Ignatius_of_Antioch_to_the_Romans.html. Ignatius lived approximately 35-107 A.D., and is supposed to have written this letter on his way there to be thrown to the lions. In the same section of his letter to the Romans Ignatius wrote, “Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my body” (4:2).

- The doctrine of inspiration:
 - *Luke 1: 1-4*—¹“Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ²just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”
- Interesting note: He calls it “the gospel of God” *and* he also calls it “my gospel.”
 - Now to support this astounding claim he brings three things out of his biography:
 - His pre-conversion—what happened before he was saved
 - His conversion and—when he was saved
 - His post-conversion—after he was saved

• His conversion wasn’t any kind of educational process.

“But when God...was pleased to reveal his Son in me ...I did not consult any man, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

- *2 Cor. 11:32-33*—“In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.”
- This at least suggests that the apostle also preached in Arabia and had aroused the displeasure of its king. In any case, the Gentile civil authorities of Damascus supported the efforts of the Jewish leaders to arrest and execute Paul.
- *Acts 9: 19-29*—“Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²²Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ. ²³After many days had gone by, the Jews conspired to kill him, ²⁴but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall. ²⁶When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. (In all likelihood this was Peter and James the brother of Christ—by this time James was already viewed as one of the “Apostles.”)He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus. ²⁸So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰When the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him off to Tarsus.”

¹⁸**Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter**

- Martin Luther noted that Paul went to Jerusalem “uninvited” **and stayed with him fifteen days.**
- So if Paul didn’t meet with Peter to get the gospel from him what did they meet to talk about? Obviously, that’s not something the New Testament answers for us. But we can speculate.

- **Hendriksen:** “Paul the escapee gained valuable information about the life of Jesus while still on earth, about the present state of the church in Jerusalem, and about plans for the future; while, in all likelihood Peter gained first hand knowledge concerning Paul’s unforgettable experience as he drew near to Damascus, concerning the state of religion in that city and concerning the clever—and providential!—manner in which the plot of the Jews had been foiled. But whatever may have been the topics of discussion, one fact requires emphasis: the two men were meeting on a footing of perfect equality. Neither received his commission or his gospel from the other!”⁴
- **Note:** Paul’s candid reporting of this visit with Cephas proves his honesty and historical objectivity. Had he been lacking in these qualities he would, no doubt, have left this incident unmentioned, for fear that the Judaizers would take advantage of it in support of their theory that Paul had received his gospel not from God but from men. Paul, however, is not trying to hide anything that might be construed as being pertinent, one way or the other, to this basic point of contention (the gospel’s origin).
 - **Ills.** My deposition. When they read about ideas of doing some sporting events they attempted to use that against me.

¹⁹I saw none of the other apostles—

Luther: “Why does Paul harp on this seemingly unimportant fact? To convince the churches of Galatia that his Gospel was the true Word of Christ which he learned from Christ Himself and from no man. Paul was forced to affirm and re-affirm this fact. His usefulness to all the churches that had used him as their pastor and teacher was at stake.”⁵

only James, the Lord’s brother.

- This was not James the brother of John (as in “Peter, James and John.” This was one of Jesus’ half brothers. (Jesus had four brothers and at least three sisters—James, Joseph, Simon and Judas. See Matthew 13: 55-56.) James the Apostle, the brother of John, was executed in Acts 12:2. James “the Lord’s brother” came to a position of great prominence within the church in Jerusalem.⁶

⁴ William Hendriksen, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon in the New Testament Commentary*, 12 vols. (Grand Rapids Baker, 2002), 60.

⁵ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Fleming Revell, 1994), <http://www.study-light.org/com/mlg/view.cgi?book=ga&chapter=001>.

⁶ Those that argue that James was not really the half brother of Jesus but was only a cousin are the ones that bear the burden of proof since all of the relevant texts indicate the relationship of brotherhood. F. F. Bruce writes, “With these women Jesus’ brothers are also mentioned. It has been warmly debated whether these were his uterine brothers or more remote relatives.⁵³ The burden of proof lies on those who would understand the term in another than its usual sense. Jesus’ brothers did not believe in him during his ministry (cf. John 7:5), but after his resurrection they figure prominently. [In the fourth century Epiphanius (*Panarion* 78) argued that these brothers were sons of Joseph by a former wife. He was not the first to hold this view, but others, such as Tertullian (*Against Marcion* 4.19; *On the Flesh of Christ* 7) had understood them to be uterine brothers, sons of Joseph and Mary. This latter view was championed about A.D. 380 by Helvidius, a Roman Christian (as part of his campaign against the prevalent teaching that virginity was a superior way of life to matrimony). In reply to him Jerome wrote a treatise (*Against Helvidius: On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary*), in which he propounded a new view, that the Lord’s “brothers” were his first cousins, sons of Alphaeus by “Mary of Clopas” (whom he inferred, probably wrongly, from John 19:25 to be the Virgin’s sister). The perpetual virginity of Joseph as well as Mary was thus safeguarded. Of the sons of Mary of Clopas two are named in Mark 15:40 as James the less

²⁰**I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.**

- The point is that either Paul is unbelievably self-deluded or else he is a shameless liar. But the Judaizers don't want to paint him out to be either one of those.
- **Luther:** "Paul, the elect vessel of God, was held in so little esteem by his own Galatians to whom he had preached Christ that it was necessary for him to swear an oath that he spoke the truth. If this happened to Paul, what business have we to complain when people doubt our words, or hold us in little regard, we who cannot begin to compare ourselves with the Apostle?"⁷

²¹**Later I went to Syria and Cilicia.**

- Tarsus was in the region known as Cilicia.

²²**I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.**

- He and Barnabas only made two visits to Jerusalem,
 1. To bring famine relief from Antioch in Acts 11:30, and
 2. The other to discuss the relation of the Mosaic Law to the gospel of grace in Acts 15.
 - Since Paul's presence there was so scarce for fourteen years (Gal. 2:1), most of the people did not know him except by reputation.

²³**They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they praised God because of me.**

- The fact that the people were praising God for the very same gospel they knew shows it was identical to that taught by the Jerusalem apostles and was truly from the Lord.
- **MacArthur:** "Paul's point through all of this detailed autobiography was that the charges of the Judaizers were just absurd. The church in Jerusalem, which was still overseen by the other apostles and James, the Lord's half brother, had long since recognized his apostolic office and authority and glorified God because of him."⁸
- In his second letter Peter not only acknowledges Paul's divine authority but asserts that his epistles even at that early date were already recognized as scriptural.
 - **2 Peter 3:15–16**—"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."
- **Hendriksen:** "Fully realizing that whatever comes from God must be returned to him in the form of praise and thanksgiving, and that this circle must never be broken, they declared the glorious character of God's marvelous attributes: power, sovereignty, wisdom, grace, mercy, etc., shown in saving a wretch, a relentless persecutor, and transforming him into a flame-tongued herald of the gospel! What depth of feeling must have overwhelmed Paul's soul as he wrote these last words: 'They were glorifying God *on my account!*'"⁹

and James the less (6 U.IXQ05) being so called probably to distinguish him from James the Just, soon to become leader of the church of Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 1:19).] See F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts in The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 41.

⁷ Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Fleming Revell, 1994), <http://www.study-light.org/com/mlg/view.cgi?book=ga&chapter=001>.

⁸ John MacArthur, *Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), n. p.

⁹ Hendriksen, 65.

Application:

1. Paul said, “I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie” (v. 20). Paul lived his entire life *Coram Deo*, literally “before the face of God.” He did not envision himself as having completely private time or space. He knew that God knew any and all things. There are times when our greatest problem is that we fool those around us and, even worse, we fool ourselves. **Jeremiah 17: 9-10** makes the terrifying statement that, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? ‘I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve.’” When it says that the heart is “deceitful,” it is literally, “self-deceived.” That is, perhaps, the most horrifying thing about our predicament. **Hebrews 4:13** says that “Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” And **Romans 14:12** states succinctly, “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” One day you and I will stand before God! Make no mistake about that. In fact, Paul warned the Ephesians about people who would come and say otherwise. We will have to give an account for the things we have done.
 - **Darius Salter**: “At many points the demands of time differ from the demands of eternity. The preacher who best equips his hearers to cope with the pressures of American society may not be the preacher who best prepares his people for heaven, an environment where they will operate by a totally different value system. We will walk on gold in the New Jerusalem, because that’s about the only worth that gold will have. Richard Neibur reminds us, ‘as the conception of nature to which man is always related has changed, churches and ministers have often succumbed to the temptation to substitute the needs of the natural man for the needs of the theological man’...it is this ever present sense and suggestion of the infinite which I think we need to recover in our modern preaching. Even when we are dealing with what we sometimes, unfortunately, distinguish as practical duties, we need to emphasize their rootage in the eternal...Lack of rootage in the eternal may be the greatest short-coming in the evangelical preaching that attracts large numbers of people....The ultimate aim of preaching should not be accruing benefits in this life for parishioners, but preparing individuals to stand in the presence of Christ. There is no greater goal or motivation than the knowledge that all of us are headed for eternity and that shortly.”¹⁰
2. Paul said that certain people “heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.”²⁴ And they praised God because of me.” Here’s my question: Do people praise God because of you? I realize that that may be a very general, a very generic question, but it’s also a legitimate question. In **Matthew 5: 14-16** Jesus said, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may **see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**” Do you live your life in such a way so that your neighbors and co-workers can actually see something? That’s what it says: “see your good deeds.” People had

¹⁰ Darius Salter, *What Really Matters in Ministry* (Baker: Grand Rapids, 1990),

heard about the way Paul had persecuted the church. After his conversation they heard about how he had changed and how he began to preach and defend the gospel. The result was they “praised God because of me.” Do people praise God because of you?