

**GALATIANS - SERMON 5**  
**GALATIANS 1:11-17 — PAUL'S DEFENSE OF HIS APOSTLESHIP**  
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INTRODUCTION:

Read Galatians 1:11-17

Paul is involved in defending two things; the gospel of grace against perversion and his authoritative office of apostle against accusations of subordinate authority. Both of these attacks were the product of the Judaizers who were circulating among the Galatian churches. It is a sad reality that every true preacher of the gospel will undergo the personal attacks upon his character ultimately designed to undermine the accurate presentation of the gospel of grace. Most such attacks are wisely left unattended and without counter defense or attack. In time the Lord will vindicate his servants and the perpetrators of the attacks will be made manifest. Their own lives will eventually testify against them. It is usually not necessary or wise to devote time to defending oneself. By giving time to defending oneself against every attack a true minister would find himself pulled completely away from the more important work of gospel ministry. This is actually a victory for the adversary. Also the minister given to defending himself against attacks will eventually begin to appear as one primarily concerned for himself and his reputation at the expense of gospel ministry. As a general rule a sound preacher must learn to live with the inevitability of such attacks awaiting the day of judgment when the Lord will vindicate those who are His own and mete out punishment to the evil ones.

Though not in the sermon presentation this quotation taken from John Brown's commentary on Galatians is good;

A minister of the gospel can scarcely, in ordinary circumstances, keep himself too much in the background. He should try to forget himself, and to make his hearers forget him, in his subject. His ambition should be to be a voice proclaiming, 'Behold Him! Behold Him!' attracting no notice itself, but fixing the mind directly and entirely on the subject of the message. (pg 54)

Nevertheless, there are times when a minister is put into a place where he must defend his ministry. Duty will occasionally require a minister to speak of himself and defend himself a great deal more than he is ordinarily disposed to do. Some attacks are of such a nature as to undermine the very confidence of his congregation with respect to the message he is preaching. If the attacks are successfully disturbing the preaching of the gospel of grace, then those attacks must be handled. This will require the minister to devote some time to defending his own character and person. To not defend oneself against direct and persistent attacks upon one's character may actually undermine the effect and success of the gospel message preached.

Out of jealousy for the gospel and its credibility Paul is compelled to defend his own integrity and to defend his own reputation. The attack against Paul centered upon their charge that he was not a true apostle but rather a secondary teacher, not equal to the original apostle. They charged that his message was gotten from the other apostles and subject to error and inaccuracy. This is why Paul opens this epistle with the words *Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father....* Galatians 1 and most of 2 are given to a defense of Paul's authoritative apostleship. He traces the conduct of his life from his conversion. The purpose in reviewing his history in

this letter is to demonstrate that he received his authority from Jesus Christ personally. He does so by tracing the periods or events in his life; his conversion, his attendance at the Jerusalem council, and his rebuke of Peter.

We will begin by examining the conversion of Paul. Galatians 1:13-16

*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 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, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. . .*

Paul's conversion is a remarkable demonstration of God's sovereign work of conversion. In the conversion of Saul of Tarsus we have a powerful testimony to the sovereign work of God in saving sinners who were formerly at enmity with Him.

#### OUTLINE:

- I PAUL'S CONDUCT AND CHARACTER APART FROM JESUS CHRIST.
- II PAUL'S CALLING AND CONVERSION TO CHRIST.  
APPLICATIONS

#### I PAUL'S CONDUCT AND CHARACTER APART FROM JESUS CHRIST. GALATIANS 1:13-14

There are two things that Paul addresses in this regard.

##### A Paul's conduct, verse 13

*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.*

Paul's conduct was one of relentless persecution. His manner of life was one of extreme loyalty to Judaism. The manifestation of his loyalty was his vigorous attack on Christianity which he saw as a threat to the Jewish religion. As a Jew Paul was advanced in it. When he was a Jew, Paul was certainly a better Jew than his Judaizing persecutors.

As such he persecuted the *church of God beyond measure*.

*beyond measure* . . . means according to excess. Paul was an excessive persecutor. He persecuted the church more than any other persecutors of it.

*to destroy it (wasted it - KJV)* . . . means to ravage or destroy like going through a cornfield with a machete.

Both of these descriptive phrases are recorded in the imperfect tense, signifying an on-going endeavor by Paul. He did not merely persecute the church once for a while, but he was devoted to continually persecuting it. In Acts we have a record of what this persecution was.

Acts 7:57-58, 8:1-3

*Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him (Stephen) with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*. . . Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.*

Acts 9:1-2

*Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.*

Paul was not asked to persecute the church, he sought out permission and opportunity to do so from the high priest. Paul was eager to persecute the church of Jesus Christ.

Paul's reputation was known.

Acts 9:13-14

*Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."*

Paul acknowledged his evil reputation.

Acts 22:4-5

*"I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished."*

Acts 26:9-11

*"Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities."*

B Paul's character was one of religious pride, v 14

Galatians 1:14

*And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

Paul was a devoted and faithful Jew. He was proud of his advanced knowledge and practice of Judaism.

Note that Paul as Saul was not zealous for the Word of God or for God Himself, but *for the traditions of my fathers*. Jesus continually rebuked and criticized the Jewish traditions which perverted and distorted true religion.

We have a classic example of these perverting traditions in the gospel according to Mark.

Mark 7:1-13

*Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders (not the commandments of God). When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:*

*'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*

*"For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men; the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do." He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition (Jesus notes that there is a stark contradiction between the commandments of God and the traditions of the Jews). For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban"; ' (that is, a gift to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Twice Paul uses the label *Judaism (the Jew's religion - KJV)* in Galatians 1:13-14. He referred to it as such for it was a religion invented by the Jews and not from God. Paul acknowledges that the religion that he had formerly pursued was not that of God, but of men, Jewish men. Paul had been ignorant of the righteousness of God and was busy at trying to establish his own righteousness. Paul was not a good candidate for conversion from a human perspective. He was not merely indifferent to Christianity, he was actively opposed to it.

Paul was not brought to saving faith and conversion by the message or preaching of any man or of any of the apostles. What Paul taught the Galatians had not come to him from other men or apostles. In occupying himself with the desire and attempt to exterminate the faith of Jesus Christ, Paul was interrupted by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on the road to Damascus and saved.

This was Paul's condition before his conversion. He was full of pride and confidence in his own standing before God (Philippians 3:4f). This should be a counsel and hope to those of us with friends and loved ones who are confident of their standing before God

apart from faith in Christ. There is yet hope for God is sovereign in the salvation of the elect.

## II PAUL'S CALLING AND CONVERSION TO CHRIST.

Galatians 1:15-16

*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, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. . .*

- A This passage begins with the word **but**. Looking at men from the human perspective all may look and appear hopeless . . . **but**. . . This word is often used to introduce a divine intervention in a natural course of human affairs. This word says that in spite of the state of affairs God is going to accomplish His will by His power and grace. He is going to change the course of things in this one's life.

Titus 3:3-5

*For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. **But** when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved . . .*

Ephesians 2:1-5

*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. **But** God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ . . .*

Romans 3:19-22

*Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. **But** now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who . . .*

By God's intervention what may have seemed insurmountable is overcome and sorrow is turned to joy.

- B What was it that caused this intervention by God?

Galatians 1:15

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace. . .*

The cause of the divine intervention of God in the life of Saul was the pleasure of God.

- 1 Paul was not saved because he wanted to be saved, but he was saved because it pleased God to save him. Paul was an opponent of the saving gospel and of the people of God, but it pleased God to save Paul.
- 2 Paul was not saved because he needed to be saved, though he did need such. The divine intervention of God was not based upon Paul's need, but upon God's pleasure. All men need to be saved, but now all men are saved. Men are saved because God has wanted those men to be saved.

Notice how the saving work of God is attributed to God's pleasure and will as its ground and not man's pleasure and will.

Ephesians 1:3-5

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will . . .*

Ephesians 1:7-9

*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself . . .*

Salvation is not attributable to our needs or our wills, but to God's good pleasure and purposes.

Philippians 2:13

*. . . for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

If it pleases God to save, salvation is certain.

#### C Four acts of God in saving Paul

- 1 ELECTION: Galatians 1:15 - *when it pleased God, who separated from my mother's womb.* From his very birth Paul had been set aside by God to be saved. This is another way to say that the salvation of Paul was predestined. The reference to birth serves to demonstrate that Paul's salvation was determined before he had any capacity to such a thing or inclination for it. Paul's statement is possibly an allusion to Jeremiah's testimony.

Jeremiah 1:5

*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations."*

Election is not salvation but rather it is a choice to save. Something must be done to actually bring the chosen sinner to salvation in his lifetime:-

- 2 EFFECTUAL CALLING: Not only was Paul separated from His mother's womb (elected), but he was also *called by God's grace* (v 15). Calling is the work of God that convicts men of their sin and danger and illuminates their mind to know and understand the gospel and brings them to embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior. This may take place over weeks, or days, or hours, or, like Paul, in an instant. Calling is that sovereign work of God whereby He calls out of darkness and into light those sinners He has chosen by election.
- 3 SANCTIFICATION: Not only was Paul elected then called, he was sanctified.  
Galatians 1:16  
*. . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood. . .*

Paul was elected and called so that *iva* in order to or for the purpose of revealing the Lord Jesus Christ in Paul. A reason for Paul's conversion was the revelation of Christ through Paul. On the road to Damascus Christ had been revealed to Paul. Many will and have experienced a revelation of Jesus Christ to them (Judas) and yet gone to hell. However, the mark of one who has been effectually called by God is that Christ is revealed in him rather than merely to him.

2 Corinthians 13:5

*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified.*

Galatians 4:19

*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you . . .*

There is no confidence in one's salvation until there is evidence of Christ in them. It is the character of Jesus Christ demonstrate through the individual that testifies to solid conversion and salvation.

Romans 8:29

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

The increasing manifestation of the character and conduct of Jesus Christ in us is the basis of our assurance that we are not reprobates. As one grows in Christ others should see something of Christ in you.

- 4 COMMISSION TO SERVICE: God not only elected, called, and sanctified Paul, He also gave him a commission for service. Christ was revealed in Paul *that I might preach Him among the heathen*. Everyone that God elects, calls, and sanctifies is also, by Him, called to serve in the kingdom of God. Paul was called to be an apostle to the Gentiles. In us our calling is congruent with our spiritual gifts and God's providences in your life. There are no spectators in the kingdom of God.

Even the Lord Jesus confessed that He was One who was sent to serve, . . . *I am among you as the One who serves* (Luke 22:27).

Paul's commission was directly from Jesus Christ Himself.

Acts 26:13-18

*". . . at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'*

APPLICATIONS:

- 1 We must not despair of the salvation of anyone around us no matter how hardened or rebellious or self-righteous they seem to be. Paul serves as a great example of the sovereign will of God in saving sinners. This is not the guarantee of salvation for our loved ones, but it is ground for hope and continuing prayers on their behalf.
- 2 Not only must we not despair of the conversion of others, but we must be careful that we do not walk in the steps of Saul of Tarsus ourselves. Persecuting Christians and being filled with a sense of self-righteousness must be avoided by us. In spite of doctrinal differences we must not become the persecutors of fellow Christians.

The sin of self-righteousness is devastating to the Christian life.

2 Corinthians 10:12

*For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.*

Whatever progress we have made in the Christian life is of God and not ourselves.

- 3 If we owe our salvation to anything or anyone, it is to God alone. If we are saved it is because of God's choice of us and not our choice of Him. God's election is not based upon foreknowledge, but fore-knowing, determining in advance according to the pleasure of God. Salvation does not lay in the hands of man. As Jonah says, *salvation is of the Lord.*
- 4 How shall we gain assurance? The answer is seeing Christ revealed in us and manifested in a spirit of service towards the kingdom of God.

Hymn # 96