

**Galatians 1: 13-17; “Christ Revealing Truth to Paul”, Message # 6 in the series –
“Christ has made us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on May 17th, 2020, as the Afternoon Worship message.**

We have seen in past studies the great concern of the Apostle Paul, that these churches of Galatia would not be deceived by the false gospel of the Judaizers. The false gospel which they preached was a gospel made up by legalistic men who were imposing their own additions upon the true gospel of faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. They were saying that circumcision and keeping of the Mosaic law, was something that needed to be added to Christ’s finished work on the cross, if a person was to be saved. Not only were the churches in Galatia in danger of being carried away by this false doctrine, they were also in danger of not receiving the apostle Paul’s words to them. They had been turned away from believing in Paul’s apostolic authority as well.

And so, Paul knew that he needed to address these issues. His answer to them would be, to tell them that the gospel which he preached to them was not from men, but it had come to him by revelation of Jesus Christ. Christ had revealed to Paul certain truths which totally changed his life. And so in these verses, we find that Paul knew that it would be important for him to remind them of what Christ had revealed to him. Christ had revealed to Paul certain truths which saved his soul. Christ not only saved Paul but He also taught him truths which He would build upon to in order to establish Paul’s Apostolic authority to all whom he preached to, and wrote to, in his apostolic letters.

These truths were very needful to the brethren in these Galatian churches the real truth about the gospel itself, which would hopefully confirm to them that they were true Christian, and that it was right for them to listen to him, and not to the false teachers. So, at this time I want us to take a look 1st – At Christ’s revealing to Paul the sinfulness of his former conduct. 2nd – Christ’s revealing Himself to Paul that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. And 3rd – Christ’s revealing to Paul his need to be taught and led by Christ Himself, rather than by others of the apostles. (verses 17-24) What Christ taught Paul will also be helpful for all of us as Christians, who need to understand more about how Christ reveals truth to us.

1st – Christ’s revealing to Paul the sinfulness of his former conduct. (verses 13 and 14)

“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.” The facts were these: Paul was a Jew who was advanced in his Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries. He persecuted the church of God beyond measure and he tried to destroy it. And the reason for this was that he was “more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers.” What was Paul using for his supposed authority to persecute Christians? It was the “traditions” of the Jews; not only the Old Testament Scriptures, but also the writings and the oral traditions of the Pharisees. Many of Paul’s teachers had taught him that the righteousness which is of the law was something that could be attained; not by faith in Christ, but by ceremonial works and good outward moral behavior according to the law of God.

And so, you see, as Paul related these facts in this letter, it was no doubt his prayer that they would be reminded of the fact that he no longer believed as the scribes and the Pharisees did, and that this would go a long way to convince of his true apostolic authority for them to realize that his former zeal had been a sinful zeal before he was converted to Christ. Turn to Acts 22, verses 1-5 with me. “Brethren and father, hear my defense before you now.” “And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent.” “Then he said: “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our father’s law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.” “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.”

So, you can see here that Paul’s persecuting zeal came to him because he was so zealous for the truth of the traditions of men; men who taught that ceremonial and moral righteousness could be attained by works which proceeded from self-righteousness. These men did not believe that Christ’s righteousness alone could save them from their sins. They thought that they needed to add something to it of their own. They did not yet understand, until Paul came, and preached to them, the truth of God’s imputing Christ’s righteousness for justification, to the person believing in Him. Paul, before he was converted to Christ, was zealous toward God according to the strictness of “our father’s law”, he said.

This was why he had gone to get his authority to persecute Christians, from other men who believed like he did. He went to the high priest and the chief priests for his authority to persecute. Let us realize that it is only the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ that can so change a person’s heart that they go from being a persecutor to being one of God’s saints, and an Apostle. Paul was exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers. Paul’s former conduct could be termed, “his manner of life.” It was the way that he lived, and what he pursued.

Turn with me over to Acts Chapter 26, verses 4-11. “My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.” “They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived as a Pharisee.” “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.” “To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving Do night and day, hope to attain.” “For this hope’s sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.” “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” “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.”

There are several things that ought to be noted about Paul’s experience here. The people at Jerusalem and all the Jews knew Paul’s manner of life. He was in the strictest sect of the Pharisees. But once he had come to know Christ he was not the angry man that he had once been. Before conversion, he had thought that he had to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus Christ. And he says that he was exceedingly enraged against all Christians. But once he came to Christ, then he became a gentle man. Look over at 1st Thessalonians 2: 4-8. “But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts.” “For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, or a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.” “Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.” “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children.” “So affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”

What a change! What a transformation! Only the grace of God could have brought about such a thing; taking a persecuting violent, aggressor, and change him into a man who loved the brethren; a man who was gentle to them, and who would impart his very life to them because they were dear to him. I hope that you can see the difference between these two gospels. The gospel of self-righteousness and trusting in ceremonial works or in your own outwardly moral works to save you. If you believe in the gospel of self-righteousness, it will ultimately lead you to think that you have to do many things against the name of Jesus. That is; if you are consistent and zealous for this false gospel of yours. You will find that you will become upset and angry with those who tell you that you must be born again to see the kingdom of God; that you must be converted, and that

you must trust in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. At the very least you will suppress and oppose the truth of the gospel in unrighteousness when you realize the implications of it. Paul realized the implications of the gospel of Christ, and this is why he persecuted those people who were Christ's followers. But when the Lord saved Him everything changed. It is this fact, of what Paul once was, before conversion, that should cause us to see that God did indeed call Paul to become His instrument to preach the gospel, to sinners who he once was like.

2nd – Christ's revealing Himself to Paul that he might preach Him among the Gentiles. (verses 15 and 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...” You can see here that it was God's effectual call to Paul that changed everything in his life. God is the One whose good pleasure is fulfilled, in relation to the calling of each and every one of His Elect, in His own good time. “When it pleased God”, He separated Paul from his mother's womb in his physical birth. And “when it pleased God”, He stopped Paul in his tracks, and changed his heart; He effectually called him through His grace, unto salvation, by causing him to be born again.

All of this was based upon God's having predestinated Paul to this good work of salvation , which had taken place in his soul. Listen to Jeremiah Chapter 1, verses 4 and 5. “Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: ‘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.’” You can see here how sovereign God was, in the work of the salvation which He did in Jeremiah. He knew Jeremiah before He ever formed him in the womb. That is, He had predestined Jeremiah unto salvation and He also predestined him to the work that he would do for Him. Before he was ever born he was sanctified to this; he was set apart to God's purposes in salvation and service. He was not only foreknown and predestined unto salvation, but he was also foreordained to the work that God would call him to; that of being a prophet to the nations.

You should know that all of God's works are known unto Him before the foundation of the world; from eternity. (Acts 15: 18) This includes all the people that He will save, and all of the good works that they will do. In Ephesians 2: 10 Paul says – “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. There are two kinds of calling which are mentioned in the New Testament. There is the general call, which takes place in connection with the preaching of the gospel by a minister, or by those who are sharing the gospel with others. It is God's using Christian ministers to preach and appeal to sinners to be saved. It is Christian people sharing with sinners around them, of their great need; to turn from their sin, and be reconciled to Him.

Think about what Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 5: 18-20 – “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.” So you see here that God has His ambassadors who call to men and who plead with them to be reconciled to God. But the call of men preaching, or the saint's sharing the gospel, is not in itself what produces the salvation of the soul.

Listen to what the Lord Jesus says in Matthew 22: 14 – “For many are called, but few are chosen.” No, when God chooses someone to salvation, and He effectually calls them, it is God's Holy Spirit who works powerfully and effectually to open the heart of the sinner. It is God who gives light and grace in connection with the truth of the gospel imparted, that enables the sinner to respond to the truth. Listen to James Chapter 1, verse 18 – “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” You can see from this verse that it is not our will which brings us forth out of darkness, or changes our hearts, it is God's own will; and that in connection with the preaching and sharing of the word of truth; the Bible and

the gospel contained within it. The Bible and the gospel reveal Christ to the one whose eyes God has opened.

What is beautiful, is that this is not simply the revelation of Christ in the gospel to a person's mind, if God is saving actually opening their heart. It is God's revealing Christ to them. It is His being revealed in them. The wording here is that God's calling of Paul was intended to revealed Christ in him, so that he might preach him among the Gentiles, and might be of service to Him. Acts Chapter 9, verse 15 – "But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go. For he (that is Paul) is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel." "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake." This was the effectual call of Paul. He had been radically changed by the grace of God because Christ was now in him by the power and presence of His Holy Spirit.

3rd – Christ's revealing to Paul his need to be taught and led by Christ Himself, rather than by others of the apostles. (verses 17-24)

Verse 16b Paul says, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to those who were apostles before me, but went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." Now this might seem to have been the wrong thing for Paul to have done. Some persons reading this might think that the right thing for Paul to have done would have been for him to go to Jerusalem and immediately join the church there, and submit himself to the apostles, who were apostles before Him, to be taught and evaluated and confirmed in his apostleship over time. But this was not how God led Paul. This did not take place because Paul was trying to be independent of their authority, or to act independently of other Christians. It was Paul's being trained by God Himself; by Christ Himself.

Christ Himself had revealed Himself to Paul, and He would personally reveal Himself to Paul on a number of occasions in his ministry. God often teaches the Christian his greatest lessons in solitude. I like what Matthew Henry says about this: "Being thus called to his work and office, he conferred not with flesh and blood." "This may be taken more generally, and so we may learn from it that, when God calls us by his grace, we must not consult flesh and blood." "But the meaning of it here, is that he did not consult with men; he did not apply to any others for their advice and direction, and neither did he go up to Jerusalem, to those that were apostles before him, as though he needed to be approved by them, or to receive any further instructions or authority from them." "But, instead of that, he steered another course, and went into Arabia, either as a place of retirement proper for receiving further divine revelations, or in order to preach the gospel there among the Gentiles, being appointed to be the apostle of the Gentiles; and thence he returned again to Damascus, where he had first begun his ministry, and whence he had with difficulty escaped the rage of his enemies, Acts 9." (End of quote)

Let us learn from this that you and I will be taught many important spiritual lessons by Christ Himself; lessons that we will learn in solitude, but alone with our God. We will learn lessons about our own hearts and how much remaining corruption exists in them. We will learn of how Christ wants us to serve Him in relation to the gospel, and how we might be able to help in the advance of truth in the kingdom of Christ. Psalm 16, verse 7 – "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons." And Psalm 32, verses 8-11 – "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye." "Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you."

So, as we close this message, let us remember the words of Psalm 25, verses 12-14. "Who is the man that fears the Lord?" "Him shall He teach in the way He chooses." "He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth." "The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." This is what God did with Paul, and he did it in a revelatory way. He will not do that with us, but He will lead us and guide us by His good Spirit.

