

GALATIANS

The Origin of Paul's Theology

Introduction

- Galatians was written to churches in Galatia planted by Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14)
- The letter addresses a situation in which Paul's Gentile converts were being told by a new group of teachers that in order to be fully integrated into God's covenant people they need to enter into the Mosaic covenant by circumcision (2:3; 5:2-6, 11-12; 6:12-13, 15)
- He wrote to refute the Christ-plus gospel that churches have embraced (1:6-7)

Background

- Christianity was birthed out of Messianic Judaism
- The gospel spreads to Gentile areas
- Revival of Jewish nationalism, Judaizers, and their practices
- Gentiles have to become Jews to become Christians
- The resolution of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)

Major Sections

- Paul challenges the Galatians with the true gospel of Jesus Christ—his biography (1-2)
- Paul argues that the true gospel creates the new, multi-ethnic family of God—his theology (3-4)
- Paul shows how this gospel transforms people by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit—his application (5-6)

No Other Gospel

- ⁶I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ (1:6-7)

Paul Called by God (1:11-24)

- Paul's message is the product of direct revelation from Jesus
- Even after this revelation, Paul's contact with other apostles was too limited to have received his message from them:
- ¹¹I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. ¹²I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ (1:11-12)
- Paul's pre-conversion devotion to Judaism shows that God has transformed his life. Here, he sort of gives his personal testimony:
- ¹³For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it (1:13)

Paul Called by God (1:11-24)

- Since he was a Pharisee, Paul was well-known for adhering to traditional observance not prescribed in Scripture:
- ¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers (1:14)
- But God set him apart from his mother's womb and called him into service:
- ¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased (1:15)

Paul Called by God (1:11-24)

- But God revealed his Son, Jesus, to Paul that he would preach among the Gentiles:
- ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles. my immediate response was not to consult any human being (1:16; cf. Acts 9)
- After his conversion, Paul went to Arabia, suggesting that he had no contacts with other apostles:
- ¹⁷I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus (1:17)

Paul Called by God (1:11-24)

- Only after three years did Paul managed to go to Jerusalem to meet Peter for a period of only 15 days. He did not meet other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother:
- ¹⁸Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas 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 (1:18-20)
- Then he spent time in Syria and Cilicia (1:21)

Introducing Paul in Acts 9

- 7:58—first appearance of Saul at Stephen's stoning
- 8:1-3—identified as an enemy of the church
- 9:3-9—incapacitated by the light of the risen Christ
- 9:15-17—called to be an apostle to Gentiles through Ananias
- “God does not call the qualified ones, but he qualifies the ones called”

Conclusions

- Paul's Christophany on the road to Damascus constituted for him not only his gospel but his commission as an apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 1:12, 16)
- Paul saw his Damascus experience in light of Isa 6 and Isa 49:1-6
- ⁵“Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty” (Isa 6:5)
- ⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa 6:8)

Conclusions

- he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isa 49:6)
- The combination these two passages explains Paul's Gentile apostleship and the mystery of Rom 11:25
- ²⁵I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in (Rom 11:25)

Discipleship Pointers

- How is the Christ-plus gospel manifested in Singapore?
- In a society built on meritocracy, the notion of grace is counter-intuitive
- If there is a weak grasp of the gospel, Christianity can easily slip into some form of moralism or legalism, where one is accepted by God by virtue of works, service, and behavior