

Paul - an Apostle

September 26, 2010

Galatians 1.1-5

“Do you have a favorite book of the Bible?”

- I’ve had different favorites at different times
 - I first fell in love with the Gospels ~ with Christ (*only had a New Testament*)
 - Then I loved Acts and the letters of Paul ~ the logic and beauty (*red bible*)
 - Then the history – Genesis, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings (*real bible – KJV*)
- Googled *“favorite Bible book”* ~ Here are some answers
 - Some say we shouldn’t have favorites – it’s wrong – like favorite kids
 - *“Revelation. It’s scary.”*
 - *“Jude. It’s short.”*
 - *“Proverbs. It’s practical wisdom that even a knucklehead like me can understand.”*
 - *“Galatians, because that’s the book that tells you how to get to heaven!”*

Praise for Galatians

- *“The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle. To it, I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine.”* ~ Martin Luther said this concerning Galatians
 - Luther wrote over a 1,000 page commentary on Galatians (*149 verses*)
 - Of all the books he wrote this was his favorite
 - For Luther, the message of Galatians was the **beating heart** of the Bible
- Galatians has been referred to as:
 - *“The battle-cry of the Reformation”*
 - *“The Magna Carta of religious freedom”*
 - *“The Christian Declaration of Independence”*

Background on Galatians ~ Who, To Whom, When, Why

- *Who wrote it?* Paul
- *To whom was it written?* ~ 2 answers
 - Ethnic Galatians ~ Northern Galatia
 - Political Galatians ~ Southern Galatia
- *When was it written?*
 - Northern view ~ after 2nd missionary trip (~54 AD)
 - Southern view ~ after 1st trip (~49 AD) or during 2nd trip (~52 AD)
- *Does Northern or Southern matter?*
 - No, not a whole lot to us...
 - **What matters is WHY it was written...**

Xition: Why did Paul write to the Galatians?

Why Paul wrote to the Galatians becomes immediately obvious . . .

- *“To prevent the flame of the gospel from going out.”*
- Paul was upset with the Galatians and this letter clearly reflects it
- Everyone can see this by verse 6
 - *“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel”*
- But when you compare this greeting with all others, you see it earlier as well

Abrupt Greeting

- Every one of Paul’s letters begins with a greeting
- All 13 of Paul’s greetings have 3 parts:
 1. First he identifies himself,
 2. then he identifies his readers,
 3. and last he blesses them
- 1. Paul identifies himself:
 - Romans – *“Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God”*
 - 1 Corinthians – *“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God”*
 - Ephesians – *“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”*
 - Galatians – *“Paul, an apostle (**not** from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)”*
 - In only 1 of 13 greetings does Paul use the word **not** ~ Galatians
 - No other letter begins with a negative sentiment ~ even 1 Corinthians
 - Paul is more harsh in his rebuke of legalism than incest
- 2. Paul identifies his readers:
 - Romans – *“To **all** who are in Rome, **beloved** of God, **called** to be saints”*
 - Ephesians – *“To **the saints** who are in Ephesus, and **faithful** in Christ Jesus”*
 - Philippians – *“To **all the saints** in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the **bishops and deacons**”*
 - Galatians – *“To the **churches** of Galatia”*
 - His greetings are usually **personal**
 - But here the greeting is formal and aloof
- 3. Paul blesses his readers:
 - *“Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord”*
 - (3) ~ 1 Tim, 2 Tim, Titus
 - *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”*
 - (9) ~ Rom, 1 Cor, 2 Cor, Eph, Phi, Col, 1 The, 2 The and Philemon
 - *“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.”*

Xition: Galatians comes at you like a fast moving storm

Galatians Letter is Like a Storm

- ///: Driving home through storm once
 - Walked to car and saw the storm coming in from Northwest
 - I was parked under Interstate 480 north of UP Bldg
 - Since I was heading Southwest I thought I could beat it...
 - Two minutes later as I'm entering the interstate
 - The sky is grayish-yellow, huge clouds, very windy, sheets of rain and hail...
- This is how I view the first **5 verses** of Galatians
 - The warning signs are all there if you're looking for them
 - With **verse 6** comes the first deafening thunderclap, and they just continue

Galatian Greeting is Unique in Another Respect

- It summarizes the intentions of the entire letter
- Again, none of Paul's other letters are anything like this
- Paul is writing with 2 topics uppermost in his mind
 1. Defending his apostleship, and
 2. Defending the gospel
- He defends his apostleship when he identifies himself (**v1**)
- He defends the gospel when he blesses them (**vss 4-5**)
 - A commentator said, "*The entire message of Galatians is contained in these words.*"
 - And this two-fold purpose is retained through the entire letter
- **Read Gal 6.17-18** ~ "*From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*"
 - Paul seems exhausted at this point
 - He has poured all of his energy into writing this letter

"What is an Apostle?"

- Much of Galatians hinges on what being an Apostle meant
- We must address this question
- First note that apostle is used in more than one sense in the New Testament
 - In **Acts 14.14** Luke refers to Barnabas and Paul as apostles
 - Paul refers to two fellow countrymen and prisoners in **Rom 16.7** as apostles
 - And in **2 Cor 8.23** ~ he refers to some brothers of the churches as apostles
- So there are "little a" apostles and "big A" Apostles
 - But writers then didn't always differentiate proper names with capital letters
 - So context is used to make that determination
- A "big A" apostle was chosen, trained and commissioned by Christ
 - **Read Mark 3.13-15** ~ Jesus calls them, trains them and sends them

Xition: Everyone knew the Apostles of Christ...

The 12 disciples Jesus chose (less Judas) were big “A” apostles

- Everyone of that day realized who the Apostles of Christ were
- The girl in the court of the High Priest recognized Peter ~ that he was a Galilean
- They’d been with Christ for 3 years and became very active after Pentecost
- In **Acts 5.18** it appears that all of the Apostles were imprisoned
- When Saul’s persecution started in **Acts 8.1** all were scattered, except the Apostles
- “But what about Paul?” ~ Paul was this persecutor of the young church
- “How could Paul be an apostle?”
- “How could he have been chosen by Christ, trained by Christ and commissioned by Christ?”

Paul Described Himself as an Apostle “Born out of due time” (1 Cor 15:8)

- An apostle is chosen by Jesus
 - Read **Acts 9.1-9** ~ Saul confronted by Christ
 - **v5** ~ “I am Jesus who you are persecuting”
 - **v7** ~ “The men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one”
 - Paul was chosen by Christ before witnesses
- An apostle is commissioned by Jesus
 - **v6a** ~ “Lord, what do You want me to do?”
 - **v6b** ~ “Arise and go into the city and you will be told what you must do”
 - **v15-16** ~ The Lord said to Ananias... “Go, for he 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.”
- An apostle is trained by Jesus
 - Paul was trained in Judaism by the most famous teacher of his day ~ Gamaliel
 - And Paul was trained in Christianity by Jesus Himself
 - We have the proof here in the letter to the Galatians
 - But training largely speaks for itself
 - **Acts 9.22** ~ “[Saul] confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.”
 - **Gal 1.15-19** ~ Paul did not confer with flesh and blood ... He went to Arabia

Paul is a “big A” Apostle

- “But why was it so important that he be recognized as an Apostle?”
 - Because the “prophets and apostles” were the foundation of the church (**Eph 2.20**)
- Paul was laying the foundation of the church
 - And he has found people messing with that foundation
 - **1 Cor 3.10** ~ “As a wise master builder I have laid the foundation”
 - III: “Have you ever seen Extreme Home Makeover?”
 - It’s amazing what those people do in a few days
 - Paul worked like that for 30 years

Xition: Paul defended his authority as an Apostle... What does that tell us?

1. Some Things are Worth Fighting For, and...

2. Sometimes we Must Defend Ourselves to Stay in the Fight

- III: “Who here has seen Disney’s Beauty and the Beast?”
 - Scene where villagers storm the castle
 - And Gaston enters Beast’s bedroom ... Beast is in chair ...
 - He turns sadly ... shot with arrow ... about to be killed ... hears Belle scream
 - Then he comes alive ~ Belle is back so he wants to live...
 - This story is not childish ~ This story is not beneath the dignity of God
 - Stories such as this move us because we’re made in His image

“Why did Paul Defend Himself?”

- “Was it to protect his ego?”
 - No... He had trashed his ego when he left the Pharisees
- The **issue** was **not his ego**... **but his message, the gospel**...
- If Paul was not a true Apostle then he was just another man
 - with no authoritative claim on the truth
- But if he was an Apostle of Christ
 - A man **chosen** by Jesus, **trained** by Jesus and **commissioned** by Jesus
 - to take the message of the gospel throughout the world
 - Then he dare not allow his authority to be questioned and his reputation slandered
- Paul’s defense of himself was a defense of the gospel itself

Paul Shows that we must Defend Ourselves Sometimes

- Not to protect our ego ... but to fulfill the roles to which God called us
- If an intrusive state wants to indoctrinate our children in humanism
 - we fathers and mothers must fight them
 - not primarily to defend our personal liberties, but to save our children
- If the state wants to silence Christians if they oppose:
 - **homosexuality** or **abortion** or **euthanasia** or
 - the follies of **socialism** or government–sanctioned **theft**
 - we must **oppose** them and sometimes **disobey** them
- Not because we are merely defending our personal liberties
 - But because we are defending the truth and honor of God
 - against the malicious lies and dishonor of Satan
 - “Let God be true but every man a liar...” **Rom 3.4**
- We do not fight battles on earth for ourselves
 - We fight them for our Lord and King
 - We are soldiers in a battle between two kingdoms that will never make peace
 - Earthly wars begin and end and have lulls ~ spiritual wars are active every second
 - This is a battle to the death whose end has been determined

So let us, whenever possible, **live at peace with all men**,
but let us resolve to fight should we need to in service to God...