

2/1/26

The Acid Test Of Life Is Time
Gal. 1:15-24

The apostle Paul was forever being followed by the Judaizers in attempt to make proselytes of the Gentiles Paul had won to Christ.

1. He calls them men pleasers. Gal. 1:10a-b
2. He calls them false brethren. Gal. 2:4a
3. He calls hem opportunists. Gal. 4:17
4. He calls them leaven and hinderers of the faith. 5:7, 9
6. He calls them boasters in and of the flesh. Gal. 6:13

Paul pens his own autobiographical section in the first two chapters in order to establish beyond any shadow of a doubt the genuineness of his gospel and his apostleship, being independent of man and dependent On God alone.

1. The independence of his gospel is recored first. Gal. 1:11-14
2. The Independence of his apostleship is recorded next. Gal. 11:15-17

Then Paul declared that time bore witness of his gospel and apostleship being independent of man and acknowledged in three regions. Gal. 1:15-24

- I. The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Damascus. vs. 15-17

- II. The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Jerusalem. vs. 18-20
- III. The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Judea. vs. 21-24

- I. **The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Damascus. vs. 15-17**
 - A. Paul preached during three years in Damascus. vs. 15-17
 1. The sovereign choice of God and perfect timing is stated, “But when it pleased God”. vs. 15a
 - a. This was not some contanquerous move on God’s part to do what He wanted when He wanted, but rather the epitome of God’s Omniscience and wisdom for the appointed time.
 - b. The word “but” marks the contrast between the course Paul had chosen, to persecute the church in the previous verse, and the one God had chosen for him.
 - * It was God’s good pleasure to act!
 2. The Omnipresence of God is also stated, “who separated me from my mother’s womb.” vs. 15b
 - a. God being Eternal can see our birth, life, death and glorification all at one time!

- b. Like He told Jeremiah. He knew him before He formed him in his mother's womb. Jer. 1:5
* Moses, Samuel, John the Baptist, etc.
- 3. The basis for the calling Paul by God is also stated, "and called me through His grace." vs. 15b
 - a. Having called him, God enabled him. 1Tim. 1:12-14
 - b. Grace is that undeserved favor that looks to God alone!
* Paul said to King Agrippa that he had not been disobedient to the vision. Acts 26:19
- 4. The purpose of God for calling Paul was two-fold. vs. 16a-b
 - a. To save Paul, "to reveal His Son in me." vs. 16a
* This is the foundational step for all, to know Jesus as their own Lord and Savior.
 - b. To make him a preacher of the gospel, "that I might preach Him among the Gentiles." vs. 16b
 - 1) This is Paul's personal call, and he calls himself "the apostle to the Gentiles".
 - 2) All believers are called to share their faith with the lost world. 2Cor. 5:20
- 5. The apostle's response to God's revelation was immediate. vs. 16c-17

- a. Paul separated himself from all human contact, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood." vs. 16c
 - b. Paul did not go seek to join the apostles, "nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me." vs. 17a
 - c. Paul was discipled by Jesus, "but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus." vs. 17b-c; vs. 18a; Acts 9:25-26; 2Cor. 11:32-33
- B.** The preaching of Paul during these three years in Arabia and Damascus are recorded in detail in the book of Acts. Acts 9:20-22
- 1. Paul immediately preached to the Jews the Christ in the synagogues. vs. 20a
 - a. The word preached "kerusso" means to herald, to proclaim, found sixty-one times in the New Testament.
 - b. A herald was one who was sent or hired to proclaim, usually a king.
 - c. The message was not his, but was given him, the authority was not his, but vested to him.
 - d. He was not responsible for the response of the people, but only to make the proclamation clear.
 - e. So was Paul with the gospel of Christ!
* Jesus had revealed the gospel directly to Paul on the Damascus road, no man taught it to him. Gal. 1:11-12

2. Paul proclaimed Jesus was the Son of God. vs. 20b
 - a. This implied that God had taken on a human body. Jn. 1:1, 14
 - b. This was the very reason the Jews crucified Jesus because he made Himself out to be the Son of God. Matt. 26:63-66
 3. Paul amazed those in Damascus because they knew who he was. vs. 21
 - a. Paul prior to being saved persecuted, imprisoned, caused to blaspheme and even killed Christians who called on the name of Jesus in Jerusalem. vs. 23
 - * “For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it.” Gal. 1:13
 - b. Paul in fact had come to Damascus to bind them and return them to the chief priests in Jerusalem. vs. 21d-e
 4. Paul confounded the Jews at Damascus by proving that this Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. vs. 22
- C. The Jews persecuted Paul, who plotted to kill him. Acts 9:23-24
1. The phrase “after many days” being passed refers to the end of the three year period. vs. 23; Gal. 1:18a
 2. The plot to kill Paul was persistent as they watched the gates “day and night”. vs. 24

3. They no longer saw Paul as a Pharisee, the number one enemy of the Christians.
 4. They saw him as a traitor to the Jews.
- D. The escape of Paul from Damascus was by the help of disciples, who took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. Acts 9:25; 2Cor. 11:32-33
1. Both accounts attest to Damascus being the place.
 2. Both accounts attest it was Saul.
 3. Both accounts attest to being aided.
 4. Luke in Acts places the emphasis on the Jews behind the plot.
 5. Paul in Corinthians places the emphasis on the authority of Aretas the king, as the instrument to accomplish it.
 - * This was his first visit to Jerusalem since his conversion three years before! Gal. 1:17

The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Damascus for three years!

II. The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Jerusalem. vs. 18-20

- A. First by Peter, the leading apostle, “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.” vs. 18

1. The reference to three years is the time Paul spent in Arabia being discipled by Jesus and preaching in Damascus, with his intent and purpose to go up to Jerusalem and see Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. vs. 18a
 - a. Peter was the apostle Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom as he confessed Him to be the Son of God and after his denial Jesus restored him to shepherd his sheep. Matt. 16:16, 19; Jn. 21:15-17
 - b. His name appears first in all the lists recorded.
 - c. His proclamation at Pentecost gave him credibility.
 - d. His name is prominent in the first 12 chapters of Acts until Paul enters the picture.
 - e. His name means rock in Greek as Cephas in Aramaic.
 - f. He was one of the pillars of the church. Gal. 2:9
2. The apostle Paul was who Jesus had chosen as a chosen vessel to bear His name before the Gentiles and the children of Israel. Acts 9:15
 - a. Paul attempted to join himself to the disciples at Jerusalem, but they were afraid, not believing he was a disciple at all. Acts 9:26

- b. Paul was brought to the apostles by Barnabas who gave testimony of his conversion and commission. Acts 9:27
 - 1) How he had seen the Lord on the road.
 - 2) How Jesus had spoken to Paul.
 - 3) How Paul had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus
 3. The apostle Paul was preaching at Jerusalem with them. Acts 9:28
 - a. There is no contradiction between Acts and Galatians for Paul is focusing on people who acknowledged his apostleship, where Luke in Acts focuses on the historical details.
 - b. Paul went to Jerusalem to see “historesai” Peter, we get our word history from it.
 - 1) The visit had the purpose of knowing and inquiring of each other.
 - 2) The visit without doubt had the purpose of inquiring about their life history in Christ.
 - 3) The entire account implies an equal standing in apostleship!
- B.** Second by James who was the leading authority of the church in Jerusalem, “But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord’s brother.” vs. 19
1. Paul called James an apostle in the general sense, not one of the twelve.

- a. Paul tells us that James saw Jesus after his resurrection. 1Cor. 15:7a
 - b. Peter after his release from jail by the angel sent a message to James, “And he said, “Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren.” Acts 12:17c-e
 - c. James was the recognized authority in the First church council as he spoke to all those present. Acts 15:13
 - d. James met Paul on his return to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey. Acts 21:18
2. Paul called James the Lord’s brother.
- a. The gospels list James as the first of four brothers of Jesus, the oldest. Matt. 13:55-56b; Mk. 6:3
 - * Matthew recorded, “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?”
 - b. James and the rest of his brothers and sisters did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Mk. 3:21; Jn. 7:3-5
 - * “His brothers therefore said to Him, “Depart from here and go into Judea, that Your disciples also may see the works that You are doing. For no one does anything in secret while he himself seeks to be known openly. If You do these things, show Yourself to

- the world.” For even His brothers did not believe in Him.”
- c. Luke tells us Mary, the mother of Jesus and his brothers were in the upper room praying for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:14
 - * “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.”
 - d. The Scriptures give a clear witness by the Holy Spirit that Mary had a normal family life after the birth of Jesus, which involved sexual intercourse with Joseph and the birth of children.
 - * The Scriptural evidence refutes the doctrine of the Roman Catholic church that Mary was a perpetual virgin. They are not cousins as the Catholic Church deceptively teaches!
- C. Third by the Hellenist who attempted to kill Paul. Acts 9:29
- 1. Because he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus.
 - 2. Because he disputed against the Hellenist which means to question, reason and examine together.
 - 3. Their conclusion due to their disputing was that they would kill him.

4. The entire record of all Paul declared, is qualified as being said before God and true, “(Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) vs. 20
 - a. This epistle was the revelation of God given to Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Ineaerrant and Infalible.
 - b. Paul says this throughout his letters. Rom. 9:1; 2Cor. 1:23; 11:31; 1Thes. 2:5

The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Jerusalem for fifteen days!

III. The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Judea. vs. 21-24

* The time is approximate, commentators vary between seven to ten years.

- A. The time was from when Paul left Jerusalem, “Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.” vs. 21
 1. Syria and Cilicia constituted a Roman province, Syria having the greater importance in the gospel work. Acts 11:25-26; 15:41
 2. Paul’s visit was terminated by the plot of the Jews to kill him. Acts 9:29
 3. The brethren in Jerusalem brought Paul down to Caesarea and out to Tarsus. Acts 9:30

- a. Tarsus was Paul’s home city. Acts 23:3.
- b. Barnabas went to seek Paul at Tarsus to begin the work at Antioch about nine years after he left Jerusalem. Acts 11:25
4. Paul told the Hebrew crowd from the steps of the Antonio fortress of his vision of Jesus in the temple and how Jesus sent him away to the Gentiles because the Jews would not receive his testimony. Acts 22:17-21
- B. The reports were from the churches in Judea that they were hearing constantly. vs. 22-23
 1. Paul had no personal encounter with the churches in Judea, “And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ.” vs. 22
 - a. They did not even know what he looked like, some believe Paul spent up to 9 years in Tarus, I think it was about 5 years!
 - b. Saul had been converted on the Damascus Road in 35 A.D. , he went to Jerusalem in 38 A.D., was sought out at Tarsus in 43 A.D., that is 5 years, then they spent one year at Antioch 44 A.D.
 2. Paul kept being the topic of their hearing, “But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.” vs. 23
 - a. What they were hearing constant and consistent.

- b. What they were hearing was that he who formerly persecuted the Christians now preached the faith which once he tried to destroy.
- * A genuine heart and life transformation that proved to be genuine by the test of time!

C. The evidence from that the churches of Judea was that they were giving God the glory for the work through Paul, “And they glorified God in me.” vs. 24

* Acts 9:31; 26:19-20

1. That quality of work through men by God which man neither claims credit, isn't given to Him nor receives it.
2. Let your light so shine...glorify your... Matt. 5:16

The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in Judea for seven to nine years!

IV. The indispensable lessons from Paul for application.

- A. As Paul's apostleship was acknowledged for three years in Damascus, his new birth before the world, so each of us are to have our Christianity acknowledged as genuine before our world.

1. Do we proclaim Jesus when God opens doors?
2. Does my life bear witness to the hostility against the gospel?
3. Do I get easily discouraged when I am opposed?
 - * Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Matt. 5:13-16

- B. As Paul's apostleship was acknowledged for fifteen days in Jerusalem, both his genuineness and his spiritual maturity by Peter and James, could you be acknowledged by one or two godly persons as genuine and mature spiritually, if you spend fifteen days with them?
1. By our conversation, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Col. 4:6

2. By our Christ-like attitude, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Phil. 2:3-4
3. By our zealousness for Christ, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Tit. 3:8
4. By our passion for the lost, “And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” Jude 22-23

C. As Paul’s apostleship was acknowledged for seven to ten years by the Judea region, can the Christian community that knows me acknowledge my Christianity as having stood the test of time?

1. To be faithful in the day of small things, regardless if I am seen or not, faithfulness. 1Cor. 4:2
* Paul says, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.”
2. To be constantly witness that others hear God using me to share the faith. Acts 1:8

- * Jesus said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.””
- 3. To be a witness to glorify God and not the vessel. 1Cor. 1:26-31
* Paul declared, “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.””

Illustration

A lady once asked John Wesley that suppose he were to know that he would die at 12:00 midnight tomorrow, how would he spend the intervening time. His reply: “Why madam, just as I intend to spend it

now. I would preach this evening at Gloucester and again at five tomorrow morning; after that I would ride to Tewkesbury, preach in the afternoon, and meet the societies in the evening. I would then go to Martin's house, who expects to entertain me, talk and pray with the family as usual, return to my room at 10 o'clock, commend myself to my heavenly father, lie down to rest, and wake up to glory." #1500

The indispensable lessons from Paul for us are, the acid test of time!

Conclusion

The independent apostleship of Paul was acknowledged in three regions.

- I. In Damascus for three years!
- II. In Jerusalem for fifteen days!
- III. In Judea for seven to ten years!