

ALONE WITH GOD

“...I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia...” —GALATIANS 1:16-17

Soon after the Apostle Paul’s conversion in Damascus, before he revisited Jerusalem and long before his first missionary journey, he went for a period of time to Arabia, possibly for as long as three years. The book of Acts does not record his time in Arabia. We know it only from Paul’s personal account he gave to the Galatians. He left for Arabia seemingly to come to terms with the radical transformation his life had taken on the Damascus Road, to have uninterrupted times of solitude in the Arabian wilderness, and above all, to meet with the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

We live in a totally different world from Paul, yet God’s moulding of him into a man of such remarkable influence holds lessons for us now. We do not know the details of Paul’s time in Arabia, but we do know that at its core lies an appointment with the risen Christ. Paul’s visit to Arabia is directly related to his claim to the Galatians that his Gospel is not second hand, for “I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:12). Paul’s encounter with Jesus remains unique to him, but the principle of time alone with God is absolutely paramount for anyone who means business with God.

It is true we have no fresh revelation to receive from God and no original message to give, but there must be fresh personal encounters with God. Our message can be passed from one person to another, but

our personal experience of God can never be received from someone; it always has to be firsthand.

Paul had an overriding ambition that influenced every part of his life. “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10). Where did he obtain that? Not sitting in a pew and certainly not at the feet of his renowned teacher, Gamaliel. There is no substitute for the teaching of Jesus Himself and this knowledge is discovered only in personal encounters with Him.

There are certain things we can encourage the pursuit of, but can never teach. We learn very little at the stage when it's only notations on paper or propositional statements we have heard. This is necessary and should inspire people to want to meet with God, but it cannot replace individual encounter and personal relationship that is central to the Christian life. Time alone with God is absolutely essential if we are going to experience all that He will do in our lives and through our lives.

PRAYER: Dear God, I pray for more personal experience of You, and that our relationship deepen and strengthen in time I spend alone with You. Thank You, Lord.

TO REFLECT UPON: Am I spending enough time alone with God?