

Galatians, Chapter One, Lesson Three

THE CALL OF GOD Galatians 1:11-17

STIMULATE

** Last time, the apostle Paul taught us that the main threat to those new in Christ is the danger of false doctrine. You will remember that Satan's desire is merely to "distort" the truth so he can direct people away from God. To avoid his subtle lies, who's favor or approval should we be seeking?

Only the approval of our Father in heaven.
cf. 2Timothy 2:15

** How have you done this past week in standing up for Jesus in a world of compromise and relativism? Did any of you have an opportunity to share "The Truth of God?"

We all have opportunities, everyday. The question is, are we prepared mentally to recognize them and then to go into action when the Lord provides them?

MOTIVATE

** Even though we rejoice in the grace of God's plan for our redemption, are there times when your past tries to haunt you? Do the events or details of your pre-Christian life tend to make you disqualify yourself from speaking up for Christ? Today we are going to learn how "The Call of God" impacts our sinful past. For the joyous results, please open your Bibles to Galatians 1:11-17.

Read passage (V.11-12) (V.13-14) (V.15-17)

Opening Prayer

The Call of God

INVESTIGATE

V.11 ** As Paul opens our passage for today, what does he want his readers to know?

"...that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man..."

** Contextually speaking, why is that important?

The so-called "different gospel" of the Judaizers was according to the traditions of men! Jesus made that very clear in Mark's gospel, chapter 7:6-9.

** What is in this verse to remind us that the Galatians were saved, although presently disturbed or confused?

The apostle refers to them as his "brethren".

** What does that say about Paul's feelings for the Galatians?

He truly loves them! The term [adelphos] is most tender and literally means "from the same womb". Applied spiritually it speaks of believers as children of the same heavenly Father. In spite of the Galatians' desertion (V.6), they are still brothers. cf. Matthew 28:10

V.12 ** Paul says he did not receive his gospel message from men as a contrast to the Judaizers, that we have already seen. But what does he add to that?

"...nor was I taught it..." To be taught something is to receive it through instruction, sometimes over and over!

** How do Christians today learn about the word of God and develop a strong theological mindset?

We are taught by other godly men. cf. 2Timothy 2:2

** How was Paul different?

He "...received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ". Let's look at Paul's conversion together. All see - Acts 9:1-6, 13-16 (esp. V.16 - "...for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake".)

V.13 ** Back in Galatians 1:13, was Paul embarrassed about His past, or afraid that someone might find out what he was like before Jesus saved him from his sin?

Absolutely not! He wanted people to know that when Jesus Christ saved him, He saved a sinner! As you read over verses 13 and 14, listen to how it compares with 1Timothy 1:12-15.

** Is it right to tell people about your sinful past?

Of course it is! It is even necessary. That is how they will know you needed a Savior!

** Paul says he "used to persecute the church of God". Do you suppose that was a half-hearted effort?

No, it was intense. From before his conversion, listen to how Luke described it in Acts 8:1-3.

** What was the ultimate goal of Paul's abuse?

He wanted to "destroy" the church of Christ!

V.14 ** How do you think that abusive attitude affected his position among his fellow Jews?

His abuse of Christians made him advance in Judaism "beyond many of [his] contemporaries".

** What motive was driving Paul and gave him the advantage over his countrymen?

He was "...more extremely zealous...", he was in fact an ultra fanatic. cf. Acts 22:1-5, 26:9-11

** What did Paul direct his zeal towards?

Ancestral traditions. These were the traditional interpretations and additions added to the Mosaic Law, they were Rabbinical teachings embodied in the Mishna.

V.15 ** Paul's life before Christ was vile, consisting of murdering Christians while trying to earn his way to heaven by keeping the Law. He was hateful, violent and self-righteous, all at the same time. How does he now introduce the contrast between his former life and his new one in Christ?

By using the word "but". He is indicating a strong contrast, not unlike that in 2Corinthians 5:17.

** We know that Paul's salvation was determined from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). But viewing it from Paul's earthly experience, at what point did God set the boundaries of Paul's life?

He was "set apart" [aphorizo] from before the time of his birth! cf. Romans 1:1 (for the gospel)

** Can you think of someone else that the Bible specifically says was under God's control while yet unborn?

John the Baptist - see Luke 1:13-16, 39-41

** Well, what about us? Is God in control of our lives from before we are born?

Most definitely yes! cf. Ps. 119:73, Ps. 139:13-14

** Does it comfort your heart to know that God made you and chose you from before you were born, and even though we rebelled against Him, He sent His Son to redeem you?

This reassuring love of God for us keeps us secure in our relationship with Him and obedient out of a loving and grateful heart for all that our gracious God has done.

** Which of God's wonderful attributes do we see on display in the calling of Paul?

He was called "through His [God's] grace". Remember what we saw in 1Timothy 1:15, Paul was foremost of all sinners and yet was saved by the grace of God!

V.16 ** How does our heavenly Father feel about revealing His Son?

He is very pleased! cf. Matthew 17:5

** What is unusual about the way Paul describes where or how Christ had been revealed?

The Father had not revealed Jesus Christ "to" Paul, but rather "in" him. This was the moment of his salvation, of which Paul would later write, "God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

** What was Paul to do with his salvation? For what purpose had he been set apart?

He was to "...preach Him among the Gentiles..." Paul was to preach among the [ethnos], lit. races or nations, of the world!

** Paul was "called" to be saved and "called" to serve! How about us?

Each one of us, as the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, have the exact same calling!
cf. Ephesians 4:12, 1Thessalonians 1:9, 1Peter 4:10

** What does Paul offer that would silence any criticism by the Judaizers who would charge that Paul had been taught this gospel by men?

V.16 - "...I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood..."

V.17 - "...nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me..."

** What might have been some good reasons for someone in Paul's position to go "to those who were apostles before" him?

- 1) To share their walk with the Lord
- 2) To share their conversion to Christ
- 3) To fellowship with others of like precious faith

V.17 ** So, what did Paul do?

"...I went away to Arabia..." If you check your maps in the back of your Bible, you can see the area Paul is describing, just east of Damascus.

** Why did he do that? What happened during this time of Paul's life?

The apostle went to spend three years with Jesus Christ, just as the other apostles had during the earthly ministry of Jesus. This is when our Lord fulfilled His promise of Acts 9:16, namely, "I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

** After spending time with the Lord in Arabia, where did the apostle Paul go?

He went back to Damascus, the place of his calling. You can see his return recorded in the middle of verse 19, of Acts, chapter 9. Let's look back at that passage again together. The three years with the Lord is in the middle of that verse.

** Upon his return to Damascus, do you suppose that Paul was shy or fearful about sharing the gospel?

Absolutely not! According to verse 20 of Acts, chapter 9, He "immediately began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God'". Paul was so effective that Luke says he was "proving that this Jesus is the Christ" (V.22).

EXTRICATE

** How would you describe the person of Paul before he met Jesus Christ?

He was:

- 1) Hateful
- 2) Violent
- 3) Self-righteous
- 4) A murderer
- 5) Fooled by the traditions of men

DELINEATE

** How much of that dreadful past was effective in disqualifying Paul from serving the Lord?

None of it! When he placed his faith in Jesus Christ, he became a new creature.
(2Corinthians 5:17)

** What became Paul's new passion? How did he spend all of his time as a Christian?

Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations! So should we!

EVALUATE

** Are you holding back on the reins of your potential involvement in serving Jesus Christ, because of some sin in your past? Or, do you think that you are not good enough to serve Him because of what you did before you were saved?

Remember what we have learned today about "The Call of God". He called you while you were yet unborn and knowing that you would rebel against Him, He sent His Son to pay for your sin. You, like King David can rejoice in this wonderful truth. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us". (Psalm 103:12)

ACTIVATE

** Thank you Lord for my salvation and calling to serve You. Help me to maintain my commitment to serve you throughout my entire life. Use me for Your name's sake, in the area of ministry that will bring You the greatest glory.

Closing prayer