

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS - PART 2

Paul wrote to the Galatian Christians with an urgent passion. They faced just one problem, but it threatened to destroy them. Paul's teaching of the gospel of grace was being undermined by religion. Claiming that they were developing his foundation, false teachers were invalidating the message of salvation by faith alone, by saying that the next step as a new Christian was to learn the rules to be obeyed. Paul was horrified. First he reminded them that his ministry and theirs began with a call and commission from God alone, just as Jesus had been sent, cared for and empowered by His Father.(1:1,2) Next he summarised the gospel in two words, grace, which describes the source, and peace, the outcome of the gospel. God's will is to solve the problem of past sin at the cross and the problem of present sin by His risen life in us. Both parts will be entirely God's doing.(1:3-5)

Why with two such brilliant solutions springing from grace would you opt for an alternative? There is no alternative! Any offered alternative is cursed and its preachers bankrupt.(1:6-9) Whom are we trying to impress, God or man? Religion only impresses man. Be sure that we, like Paul, only preach a message God shows us.(1:10-12) Paul illustrates from his own experience. He had practised the ultimate in religion, which had set him against Christians! Then God stepped in, as He always planned to do, with His message of grace. This process started with Him revealing Jesus first to him, then in him as Christ lived within him, and finally through him as he preached him throughout the world of his day. So confident was Paul in his new relationship with God that after a short time in ministry,(Acts 9:20,21) he went away by himself to Arabia to relearn the meaning of the scriptures on which he had been brought up. Still without feeling the need to check his message out with the experts, he returned to Damascus to continue preaching.(1:13-17)

How did Paul know his message was correct without input from others? Such was his confidence from his relationship with God that he knew that what he was teaching was true. Only three years later did he finally go to meet Peter, (Cephas) and James. From them he would have learned much more of the life of Jesus as it came to be written in the gospels. The main purpose of his visit was to overcome any doubts among the Christians in Jerusalem that he was really one of them,(Acts 9:26) preaching the same message. From Jerusalem he was sent home to Tarsus,(Acts 9:30) to continue learning, serving and preparing among his own people. Still it would be the Lord revealing Himself to Him.(1:18-24)

But is it not dangerous to let everyone draw his own conclusions about what the gospel is? Will we not have even more division that way? Chapter two begins to answer this by two more illustrations from Paul's experience of how he stood up for the gospel which had been revealed by God Himself.

Review your titles for the sections of chapter one to see whether you can improve on them. Now divide and title chapter two, looking for an overall theme that runs right through the whole chapter. My suggestions which you do not need to follow are:- verses 1-2; 3-6; 7-10; 11-13; 14-16; 17-21.

### Section 1 – (2:1-2)

Q.1 Chapter 2:1-10 describes the visit Paul and Barnabas made to Jerusalem in Acts 15. What were the circumstances at that time which made this visit desirable? How in the debate which followed did Paul successfully make his point? Was he simply saying 'I am an apostle and therefore I must be right.'? How could we today do the kind of thing Paul did? How is doing this a safeguard against preaching a message based on our fantasies?

## Section 2 – (2:3-6)

Q.2 What was the significance of Titus not being circumcised? Why was this not inconsistent with Acts 16:3?

Q.3 False gospels are preached by false brethren. What do we discover here about their objectives and methods? How are the same things happening for the same reasons today? What was the secret then and now of not being enslaved by false teaching? How do you suppose Paul went about making sure this did not happen to him?

Q.4 What is the main reason why even quite mature Christians sometimes become enslaved by false gospels? Does verse 6 mean we should take no notice of highly regarded leaders? What did Paul discover when he compared the gospel he had worked out from his Old Testament by the Holy Spirit in Arabia with the gospel of the group of apostles in Jerusalem? Supposing that they had been different, what should Paul have done then?

## Section 3 – (2:7-10)

Q.5 What was the practical outcome of the meeting in Jerusalem? Was there division between Paul and the others? What special contribution did Peter, James and John make to Paul's ministry? Why do we find it so hard to achieve the balance between individual liberty and team work which they obviously maintained?

## Section 4 – (2:11-13)

Q.6 In his second illustration the tables are turned. Peter visited Paul. He was a Jewish Christian in a mainly Gentile church. Being in an unfamiliar culture is one of the toughest tests of the reality of our faith. How did Peter respond at first? What changed his behaviour? What sort of gospel had he now heard? Why was his behaviour hypocritical? How does hypocrisy affect those around us? Give modern illustrations of similar hypocrisy, the gospels that produce it, and the effects on others.

Q.7 Was Paul right to speak to Peter in the way he did? Wasn't he judging him? Surely if Peter was the leading apostle, Paul should have respected his position. If Paul was to say something he should have done it in private, shouldn't he?(Matt.18:15) Is it ever appropriate for us to do what Paul did?

## Section 5 – (2:14-16)

Q.8 Paul first asked Peter a question. Put the question into your own words. What would be a similar question for us to ask ourselves and others?

Q.9 What is the difference between the way Jews and Gentiles become right with God? What did the Jews think was the difference between them and the Gentiles? How does that difference illustrate the contrast between the true gospel and a false one?

## Section 6 – (2:17-21)

Q.10 The gospel is not only about how to be just before God but also about how to live the Christian life. What is the true gospel of how to live the Christian life and what is the false gospel?

Q.11 If we preach the first part of the gospel that we can only be just before God by faith in Christ's death on the cross, but then go on to teach that living the Christian life is by keeping the rules, what problems do we cause people? How does Paul describe such inconsistency in 2:11,14,18,21?