

PAUL EXPLAINS HIS BACKGROUND

Galatians 1:11-24. *Why I Should Be Believed*. Paul continues his apologia, not only for the message, but from its source and epistemology—

You need to know that the good news about the Christ is not something some knucklehead human made up—as for me, I did not receive the message from any human, but from Jesus the Christ Himself.

Of course you’ve heard of my reputation, especially about how I persecuted the church, based on my previous way of life in Judaism. I was succeeding in Judaism, beyond others of a similar age—I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors.²

From leaving my mother’s womb [κοιλίας μητρός] the Lord God called me by His gift—the revealing of His Son in me so that I might evangelize [εὐαγγελίζωμαι] among non-Jews. I didn’t check in with any man, nor did I seek approval from the apostles in Jerusalem, but I went immediately into Arabia [to study for three years] and returned later to Damascus.

After my studies and contemplation, I went north to visit and confer with Kephas (Peter) in Jerusalem for about ½ a month. I was unable to visit with any of the other apostles³—except James, the Lord’s [half-] brother. So? I assure you I am not lying. Of course, when I was working in Syria and Cilicia, I was unknown personally in the churches of Judea that are εν Christ. They’d only heard reports that I was the man who had persecuted them, and is now declaring [εὐαγγελίζεται] the belief [την πιστιν] he had been trying to destroy. They praised the Lord our God because of this turn of events.

- Q When was Paul appointed to declare the news about Jesus the Christ?
- Q Why did non-Jews (i.e., Gentiles aka “the nations”) need a designated apostle? See Jonah 4:1-10.
- Q Why was Paul persecuting the church? Were not his efforts supported by Scripture? 1 Kings 18:40?
- Q On what basis should we base our credibility for declaring the belief in the Christ? Or, what are the pitfalls of depending predominately upon what “others” have taught us about the Christ? [See Acts 17:11]

GALATIANS 1:11-24

I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. ¹²I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus [the] Christ.

¹³For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.

¹⁸Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter [Κηφον] and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother. ²⁰I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. ²¹Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. ²²I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” ²⁴And they praised God because of me.

²I once asked a Buddhist friend of mine about how long he had been a Buddhist. After pondering it for a several seconds, he responded, “About 330 years.” Buddhism was part of who he was, not just a set of beliefs.

³Note here the use of the word “apostle.” Sometimes it is not used to describe the “original” 11+1 (i.e., Matthias); it also used here to describe James, the head of the church at Jerusalem, or other messengers of the Christ—e.g., Barnabas (see Acts 4:36).

Galatians 2:1-10 *Big Wheels Approve*. Paul continues—fourteen years later I went again to Jerusalem to confer, except this time I took Barnabas & Titus. You see, I'd been given a revelation to evangelize among the nations; i.e., non-Jews. I told the leaders privately about this revelation for fear I was spinning my wheels. By the way, Titus an uncircumcised believer, was not compelled to be circumcised. We had spies among us who were attempting to defuse the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, to make us slaves... We didn't give in to them, not even once, so the truth of the message might thoroughly remain with you.

These knuckleheads concerned with outward appearance were of no concern for me—God doesn't judge by appearances. They added nothing to my message to you. They saw I had been entrusted with the task of evangelizing the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to pre-Christ believers, the circumcised.

You see, God was at work in Peter's ministry as a messenger to the circumcised; similarly, so was God at work in my work with the non-Jews. James, Kephas, and John—reputed to be pillars of the church—gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, when they noticed the gift given to me.⁴ They agreed we should proceed to go to the nations, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we continue to remember the poor—some for which I was eager to do.

- Q Who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem here? Difference in background/heritage?
- Q Why did he confer with the leaders of the Jerusalem church privately?
- Q Just what is this “freedom we have in Christ Jesus?”
- Q What was particularly difficult about sharing the message of the Christ to pre-Christ believers? To pagan believers?

GALATIANS 2:1-10

Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ²I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. ³Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

⁶As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. ⁷On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, [*uncircumcised*] just as Peter [Πέτρος] had been to the Jews [*circumcised*]. ⁸For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter [Πέτρος] as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹James, Peter [Κηφᾶς] and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles [*the nations, ἔθνη*], and they to the Jews. ¹⁰All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

⁴Note the absence of mention of the Greek Titus, an uncircumcised believer. Intentional?

Galatians 2:11-21 *A Principal Principle*. Paul continues—When Kephias came to Antioch, however, I had to oppose him for his hypocrisy; he was clearly wrong about segregation from the pagans (nations, Gentiles). When around James he would socialize with Gentiles, but when around Judaizers, he would separate himself. Worse yet, other Christ believers with a Jewish heritage would join his hypocrisy—even Barnabas was led toward this nonsense.

So, when I saw they were not acting on the truth of the message about Christ, I told Kephias to his face in front of God and everyone—

You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile, and not like a Jew. So then, why is it that you force Gentiles to Judaize [ἰουδαῖζειν; to live as a Jew; i.e., be “ob-servant”]?

We who are Jews by birth [e.g., Paul, Peter, Barnabas, but not Titus] and not “Gentile sinners” know people are not made righteous [justified] by observing the Law, but by trust in Jesus the Christ. So? We too have put our trust in Christ Jesus so that we may be credited as righteous [Genesis 15:6] ἐν Christ—not by observing the Law because by observing the Law, NO ONE will be accredited as righteous.

Furthermore, if we seek to be credited as righteous ἐν the Christ, it becomes clear, to ourselves, that we fall short of the Lord God’s standards. If this seeking causes us to recognize our shortcomings, does that mean the Christ promotes shortcomings? Balderdash!

If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove I break the Law. It was through the Law that I died to the Law so I might live for God. I have been crucified with the Christ and I no longer live, but the Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, but I live by trust in the Son of God—who loved me, and gave Himself for me. So? I do not set aside the gift of God, for if righteousness could be gained through observing the Law, then the Christ died for nothing!

- Q To what extent was Kephias (Peter) being socially appropriate versus hypocritical?
- Q Why are people not justified (accredited as righteous) by obeying the Law?
- Q Why is trust in the Christ a solution to “the Law problem?”⁵
- Q Why don’t we want to give up achieving our righteousness through obedience of the Law?

⁵Problem? The Law is the reflection of God’s attributes, and therefore if one matches those attributes, one can approach God; i.e., be in His presence. But obeying the Law (matching His attributes), perfectly, is impossible. A principal principle of the news about the Christ is that trust ἰν Christ is the means by which justification is received, not its results.

GALATIANS 2:11-21

When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹²Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

¹⁵We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ ¹⁶know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus [the] Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not!

¹⁸If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. ¹⁹For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”