

Astonished - Galatians 1

Introduction:

Getting into the weeds anytime you preach through an N.T. letter is tempting, but it's better to save that for a classroom setting (at least for me). My goal is to encourage while offering insight for those unfamiliar with Paul's letter to the Galatian churches. Having said that, I'll offer a simple but helpful background and summary.

By the time Paul wrote this letter, Jews were identified as God's chosen people for 1,500 years. Their history goes back almost 2,000 years, beginning with Abraham. Circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Israel (Genesis 17:9-14). It set them apart from the Pagan Gentile world. When Jesus, the seed of Abraham, died for the world and was resurrected, He told His disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel. They understood the gospel was to go out to Jews everywhere. Not Gentiles. It took somewhere around 10 years after the gospel was first preached for Peter to learn the lesson. Even then, God had to do so by a dramatic vision, which led him to Cornelius' home. Peter played an essential role in the first Gentile conversion. But just like Peter, many Jews had a hard time accepting that all may be saved without the Law.

Then enters Saul (later Paul, his Roman name). A zealous Pharisee who persecuted the church of God. While traveling to Damascus to persecute the church, Jesus appeared to Him and forever changed his life. Paul would enter Damascus but not take life. He would be given eternal life by the Lord Jesus Christ. From that day on until his life was taken, Paul poured his out as a sacrificial offering to the Lord. During his first preaching journey, he shared the gospel in south Galatia district. Churches such as Antioch of Pisidia, Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe were established. I believe it is to these churches Paul wrote. They were all troubled by "false brothers" who attempted to bind the O.L. on Gentile converts. While the majority of Jews rejected Jesus, still, many continued to struggle with their new way of life under the O.L. They believed circumcised was a must and one must continue to follow the Law. They clearly undermined Paul's apostleship and laid a burden on brethren that no one could ever carry, save Jesus. Paul would have none of this, as we'll see. Paul was astonished at what occurred.

Vs. 1-5 An Apostle of God

- Paul established his role from the very beginning.
- Paul established Jesus' role from the very beginning.
 - Law-keeping will not save the brethren.

Vs. 6-9 I'm Astonished

- Usually, at this point in Paul's letters, he would reference a prayer of thanksgiving. Not this time.
- We'll learn about the "trouble" shortly. But take note of Paul's warning.
- Another reason to be in the word and hold to it tenaciously. When God delivers a truth through His vessels, we must hold true to it. Paul is speaking hypothetically, but we understand the point. Remember, even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor.11:14). We cannot ignore a false teacher because they're old friends, family, or your preacher of 20 years.

Vs. 10-14 Paul's Past

- Paul begins to defend his apostleship and message. If Paul wanted to win a popularity contest, he would have entered Damascus, executing his original plan.
- His knowledge came by revelation, not man.
- Ephesians 3:3-5; 1 Corinthians 2:7-13
- He reminded them of his past life when he persecuted the church of God while thriving as a zealous Pharisee (Acts 26:5).

Vs.15-24 Paul's Conversion & Indépendance

- Jesus interrupted his plans on the road to Damascus. Jesus knew how He would use Paul before he was born.
- However, Paul didn't consult with anyone after his conversion. He didn't go to Jerusalem to gain help and knowledge from the apostles. He went to Arabia and returned to Damascus. After three years (after his conversion), he went to Jerusalem to visit (not learn from) Cephas (Peter). He was only there for 15 days; the only other leader/apostle he saw was James, the Lord's brother. Paul wasn't lying. He then went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. The churches of Judea. They only heard about how their previous persecutor was preaching Christ, and they praised God.
- What's the point so far? Paul's message came from God and no one else. They need to think twice before they reject Paul's message.
- Let's turn to Acts 9 for the background to verses 15-24.