

What is in view

As Paul continues his “defense” of his message and mission, he explains more about his connections with the apostles in Jerusalem. What we come to see is that although Paul roots his message in his own experience with the risen Christ, he is not about to be a “lone ranger” saint. He sees the value of finding affirmation from others who seek to proclaim the same message.

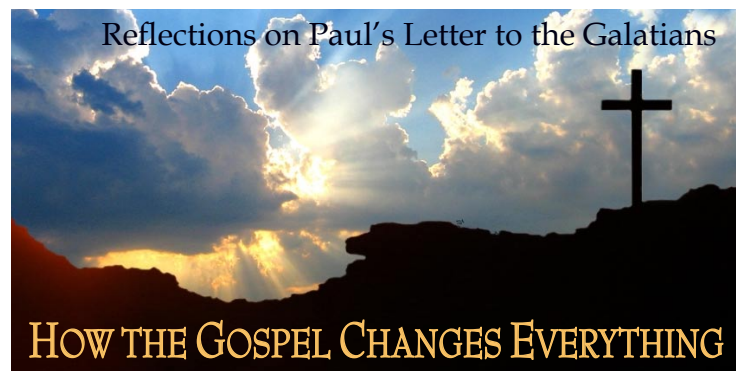
What is helpful to note

As we have noted, Paul roots his message and his mission in “revelation” (Gal. 1:11-12, 15-16). The word “revelation” means *something God makes known that could not be known otherwise*. Christianity is a *what God has revealed to be the true* approach to life.

When Paul spoke about his Gospel coming this way, we rightly think in terms of *divine inspiration*. That is, Paul’s message was God’s truth for all people. It was an “inspired” message (one that was revealed by God and which came with the authority of God). As he went up to Jerusalem, it wasn’t to find out whether his message was “from God” or not; he was sure of that.

But notice that in this passage Paul seems to use “revelation” (and the same word is used) with a slightly different sense. In 2:2 he says that he went to Jerusalem “because of a revelation.” Clearly, this kind of revelation is not to be equated with the “inspired” message of the Gospel; this was not an authoritative, revealed word for all people. But, nevertheless, it was revelation. What are we to make of this?

In one sense, there is only one way to come to know the truth of the Gospel—it will have to be “through revelation.” The Gospel is a “revealed” message; a message from God and not a man-made plan. And the awareness of the truth of the Gospel comes with “revelation impact” in the life of the one who comes to believe.



As you reflect on this section of Galatians (1:11-2:10) it is clear that Paul is certain about his message. And it is clear that he has been “hearing” from God. How does his hearing connect with his certainty? It seems that there are three “anchors” for his certainty.

First, Paul does anchor to the historical Jesus. That is, in the first part of the Gospel he speaks of the Jesus who died (as everyone knew) and the church that sprung from Jesus’ ministry (which Paul opposed) and the truths that were known about that Jesus. Paul rooted his understanding of and certainty about the Gospel in the “revelation” that came through the life and person and ministry of Jesus.

But then Paul also affirms that his insight into the “truthfulness of this truth” came “through revelation.” As we have noted, Paul had an encounter with God, orchestrated by the Father, where the Jesus, the Son, “was revealed” to him. Paul rooted his certainty about and understanding of the Gospel in this personal experience of “revelation” that came to him in a grace moment.

Lastly, Paul speaks about his encounters with the apostles in Jerusalem; those who were also entrusted with the message of the Gospel (as reflected in 2:8). Here Paul seems to be anchoring in the “witness” that others offered with regard to the message and mission that were his. Paul rooted his certainty about and understanding of the Gospel in the “camaraderie” he tasted in relationship with others who had also received “revelation.”

All three anchor points aid Paul in both affirming his own grasp of the Gospel and in supporting him in the mission he undertakes under the Spirit’s lead. All three anchor points can be (or, perhaps better, should be) part of lives as well. We need to root our grasp of the Gospel in the revealed truth found in the life and ministry of Jesus (as recorded in the Scriptures; see John 5:39-40; Luke 24:27); we need to root our grasp of the Gospel in the revelation that has come home to our own hearts (as each of us experiences, first hand, God’s revelatory work; see Eph. 1:15-17; Phil. 3:15-16); we need to root our grasp of the Gospel in the revelation that comes to us through the words and testimony of others who have met and know Jesus (through Spirit-prompted teaching and instruction; see Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Peter 1:16-21).

“The illuminating work of the Holy Spirit is seen in the fact that he enables us to understand: ‘We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might understand the gifts bestowed on us by God’ (1 Cor. 2:12).” Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology

*Questions for Reflection and for Group Discussion**Thinking . . .*

You're about to make the down payment on your first home. Who do you look to in order to affirm that you are making a good choice? How do you assess that you are "on the right track"?

Reflecting . . .

As we have seen, Paul is defending the message he is preaching. He is sure he's on the right track. But, his certainty has some "anchor points." Read through Galatians 1:11-2:10.

Where do you see Paul appealing to an "objective" anchor point in the person and work of the Jesus of history?

Where do you see Paul appealing to a "subjective" anchor point in his personal experience with God?

Where do you see Paul appealing to an "objective" anchor point by finding confirmation through the lives and insights of others?

How do these three anchor points seem to work together for Paul? What is the value in anchoring in all three?

Responding . . .

What kind of anchor points do you have for your faith in Christ and the message that you have believed? How do you assess that you are "on the right track" when it comes to the essentials of the Gospel?

In one sense, there is only one way to come to know the truth of the Gospel—it will have to be "through revelation." The Gospel is a "revealed" message; a message from God and not a man-made plan. And the awareness of the truth of the Gospel comes with "revelation impact" in the life of the one who comes to believe.

Reflections on Paul's Letter to the Galatians

