

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 3
Galatians 1: 11 - 24

You Can know that you know the truth

If there is truth how can anyone know it? This is a question a cynic might ask. We need to ask this: "What is true about religion within groups who call themselves Christians?" Answers come from many different sources -- religious editors, the council of churches, small and large groups giving voice to their opinions. One religious editor said, "...the truth we wears many faces." This writer implied there is no basis for knowing; all are right. Of course everyone cannot be right. We have descended into a pit of confusion and darkness.

There is only one source of truth in all the world which claims to be from God and which bears evidence that it is from God. One truth has stood the test of time. That truth is the Bible. It is not a church doctrine or any pastor's personal interpretation. It is the Word of God to people! That is the ultimate truth. Because most people do not understand that, they equate truth with religion, philosophy, teaching, or system and there can be no acceptance of it as being universally true.

Of course the Bible can be mishandled, manipulated or twisted to say almost anything. When we speak of a cult or sect, we mean a group that has twisted the Bible to its own ends. Such a group may have extraordinary growth, often because it appeals to wrong things inside of people -- anger, unhealthy motives and separatism. Every one of these groups will die within a generation or two; history verifies this. It also shows us how every so often these same sects or cults come back under different names. They appear in scripture at various times in history and have names we are unfamiliar with, but they are the same offshoot of Satan's work.

The truth of God is pure. It is holy. It is totally self-consistent. It makes its appeal to our minds and hearts in such a way that whenever we give ourselves to God in His Word, we are deeply convinced and yet remain remarkably open-minded. A searching, humble heart always finds truth in the Word of God. The Bible yields truth about God, His Son Jesus Christ, and Their relationship to all who receive Them. The truth the Bible yields has remained unchanged for 20 centuries, through all cultures on the earth. The reason is that the Bible is itself the revelation of God's person and plan to all mankind.

Galatians 1:11 - 24 is a very important passage of scripture because in it Paul defends his apostolic ministry. He tells how he received the gospel and that the gospel he preaches was not from man, but was given to him by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul could understand why the people did not want to receive him and his message at first because he had persecuted the Christians and raised havoc within the Church. Paul had credentials any Jew would be proud of. He was a Pharisee, he had been educated under the famous Gamaliel and he was also a Roman citizen. Paul had righteous indignation toward the Christians and they suffered greatly at his hand before his conversion. But God had special plans for Paul and when the appointed time came he met Jesus Christ face to face. Paul had the outstanding privilege of being called into service by a personal encounter with the risen Lord. This happened as Paul neared Damascus where he had been sent by the heads of the Jewish Church to rout out the Christians and throw them into prison. Paul was thoroughly convinced that if he wiped out the hated Christians he could stop the movement that was trying to destroy Jewish religion. Paul's encounter with Christ is first recorded in Acts 9. It was the first time it was recorded. Later the account is given by Paul to many people. He used it as a defense before both the Christians and the Roman government. Paul was willing to tell of his conversion wherever he went. On a day when journeying toward Damascus a sudden flashing light blinded him. He fell to the ground. He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" Paul said, "Who are you, Lord?" The Lord replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

When Paul said, “Who are you, Lord?” he knew instantly that the Lord Jesus Christ, Whom he was now hearing was alive just as the Christians said He was. Paul knew he was not to continue persecuting them. Instead, he was to worship Jesus as the Christians did, At that moment a change took place within Paul. Everything about his understanding of the Bible suddenly changed because he knew for the first time that this Living Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and that he, Paul, had actually communicated with Him. Paul knew all this was true, he knew it was a revelation from God. The Holy Spirit of God took Paul out into the Arabian Desert and taught him the great truths that Paul wrote to the Churches he founded in Galatia, Ephesus, Corinth, Philippi and elsewhere. It was this personal encounter with Christ that qualified Paul to be an apostle.

There are two experiences Paul shared with us here. The first is the truth of God; the gospel had come to him by Jesus Christ Himself. Verses 11 and 12 give us this. It is truth that Jesus Christ died to bear the penalty of our sins so that we might trust Him and be saved. Then the other truths that follow flow from that. All came from a revelation of Jesus Christ, not from some apostle’s teachings. The second thing he says is very important. It is in verses 15 and 16; “He, Who set me apart, even from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son to me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles....”. This is really something that is a part of the first, but is different. A revelation OF JESUS CHRIST is something that came to Paul from the outside. Revealing CHRIST IN PAUL took place inwardly. It is something Paul experienced in his heart. Both experiences show how this man received truth from God. By understanding these revelations, we can know and believe for ourselves Who God is and how we can find Him.

So here we have it. First the understanding of truth about Jesus Christ, Who bore the penalty of our sins so that we might trust Him and be saved. God gives us experiences through reading His Word or hearing it, through the teaching and revelation of the Holy Spirit witnessing to our spirit within us. We become a living demonstration of this truth. Christ lives in us! It is demonstrated by forgiving people around us and loving the unlovely we deal with daily. It is the supernatural power to overcome sin because the truth of the knowledge of the Holy Spirit’s presence produces power. This is the assurance of God’s life working out His presence in our lives. It isn’t something outside of us. It is inside and it is from God. We are renewed in the spirit of our minds and that is because God enables us to think His thoughts when we surrender to Him. When God speaks, we hear His voice and there is no question about what we hear. It is always the question of obedience and surrender to the Lord. Remember that the Spirit witnesses to you, the written Word witnesses to you, and your experiences will witness to you. God is then able to fulfill His desired plan in and through you. God is glorified by you!

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SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“It has been said if a man cannot find truth it is not because it is lost, but because he is lost!

MEMORIZE Romans 8:16 this week. Watch for instances in your life when you know that God’s Spirit is witnessing within you! It may come by making a godly choice which you hitherto have been unable to make. God’s voice spoke and you obeyed. Or, it may happen when you find yourself confronted by someone you have always disliked. All at once you don’t feel a dislike for the other person. It’s as if you’ve been injected with kindness and understanding. A new Spirit is witnessing to your spirit in your heart and it brings you peace.

PRAY for the Holy Spirit to witness to your spirit as you study the questions. God will open new truths to you and the Holy Spirit will make them come alive and meaningful to you. You will feel a oneness with your Savior, and your heart will overflow with gratitude.

THINK about being changed into the likeness of God’s dear Son Jesus Christ, moment by moment. This happens as His Spirit bears witness to you in your heart and mind and as you yield your spirit completely to Him.

QUESTIONS:

1. Tell how prayer and Bible study help you find new insights.
2.
 - a. Look up the “gospel” in your dictionary and give the definition.
 - b. What does Romans 1:1 say about the gospel?
 - c. Read Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:18 - 20. Tell what these verses say about the authority of the gospel.
 - d. In Romans 1:16 Paul gives us the key to how the gospel works. Tell what it is.
3.
 - a. Read Phil. 3:4 - 6. How do these verses help explain what Paul wrote in vv.13, 14 of Galatians 1?
 - b. Read Phil. 3:9,10. Give Paul’s explanation of his motive in telling the people what he did in vv.4 - 6.
4. Gal. 1:1 states Paul’s credentials as an apostle. How does v.12 confirm this?
5.
 - a. When does Paul say God chose Him to be His servant?
 - b. Read Jeremiah 1:5 and give what God said personally to Jeremiah.
 - c. Read John 15:16 and tell what it means to you. Do you have this verse underlined and dated in your Bible? Tell why you do, or why you don’t.

6.
 - a. What does Paul mean by “by His grace” in v.15?
 - b. Why do you suppose Paul said he was chosen this way?
7.
 - a. From v.16 tell what the first purpose was of God’s call to Paul.
 - b. What was the second purpose of God’s call?
8.
 - a. Where did Paul go after he received his call?
 - b. What do you think Paul was doing during his 3 years in “exile”?
 - c. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt you were in “exile”, but as you look back you can see it was your most blessed and productive time in your lif for the Lord. Please, share on this.
9. If you have a Bible Map of Paul’s journeys look up Cilicia and Syria. Where were they located in relation to the Arabian Desert?
10. Give several things you think Paul and Peter talked about during their 15 days together in Jerusalem.
11.
 - a. In v.20, Paul makes a strong statement. What is it?
 - b. Why did he say this?
 - c. How interested are you in sharing the message of salvation with friends or relatives you know do not know Christ? How prepared are you to help them receive Him? Study your answer and pray about it.
12.
 - a. Was Paul known by the churches in Judea?_____ Why was this?
 - b. What had the churches heard about Paul?
 - c. Read Acts 9:20 - 25. What do vv.23 - 25 show you about Paul’s conversion and commission?
13.
 - a. What does Gal. 1:24 say?
 - b, Read Acts 11:18 and tell how God was glorified in the Gentiles.
14. What two things does Acts 11:15 say that should confirm what this lesson has taught us about Paul and ourselves.
15. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a holy desire to let Him make v. 24 a reality in your life. Share on this