

Trinity Lutheran Church

Norman, Oklahoma – www.tlcnorman.org

The Book of Galatians

Theme: “The True Gospel You Have Received”

Date: 4-24-22

Lesson: 8 - Chapter 1:18-24



TEXT AND STUDY

(18) Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. (19) But I saw none of the other apostles except James **the Lord's** brother. (20)

(In what I am writing to you, before **God**, I do not lie!) (21) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (22) And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are **in Christ**. (23) They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." (24) And they **glorified God** because of me.

(Mt 9:8; 13:55; 16:18; Mk 6:3; Lk 2:2; 8:19; Jn 1:42;

Ac 6:7-9; 8:3; 11:30; 12:17; 15:13; 21:18,19;

Rom 1:9; 9:1; 16:3; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Th 2:14)

Luther's Commentary - Vol. 26

18. *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and remained with him fifteen days.*

19. *But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

Paul does not deny that he was with the apostles. Indeed, he concedes that he was with them, but not with all of them. He declares that he went to them in Jerusalem, not under orders but of his own accord, not to learn anything from the apostles but to see Peter. Luke writes the same thing in the ninth chapter of Acts (9:26 ff): Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles and told them that Paul had seen **the Lord on the road**, that He had spoken to him, and that Paul had preached boldly in Damascus in **the name of Jesus**; Barnabas testifies to this about him. All of Paul's words are put in such a way as to prove that his Gospel was not from men. He concedes that he had seen Peter and James, the brother of **our Lord**, but none of the others except for these two; and from them he did not learn anything.

Thus Paul concedes that he had been at Jerusalem with the apostles, and to this extent the report of the false apostles is correct. He concedes also that he had lived in accordance with the Jewish manner of living, but he had done so only among the Jews. For Paul observed this rule: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." This is what he says in 1 Cor. 9:19–22: "Though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, etc. I have become all things to all men, that I might save all." Therefore he concedes to the argument of the false apostles that he was at Jerusalem with the apostles; but he denies that he learned **his Gospel** from the apostles, or that he was obliged to teach the Gospel as the apostles had wished. Thus the whole point lies in the word "see." "I went," he says, "to *see* Peter, not to learn from him. Therefore Peter is not my master; nor is James." And so far as the other apostles are concerned, he denies completely that he saw any of them.

But why does Paul repeat so often, almost too often, that he did not learn **his Gospel** from men or even from the apostles themselves? It is his purpose to persuade the churches of Galatia, which had been led astray by the false apostles, and to convince them beyond any doubt that **his Gospel was the true Word of God**. That is why he repeats it so vigorously. And if he had not made this point, he could never have refuted the false apostles; for they would have raised this objection: "We are just as good as Paul. We are pupils of the apostles as much as he is. Besides, he is only one person, and we are many. Therefore we surpass him both in authority and in number."

Here Paul was forced to boast, affirm, and swear that he had not learned **his Gospel** from anyone or received it from the apostles themselves. Such boasting was extremely necessary and was not empty bragging, as Porphyry and Julian falsely assert; they did not understand Paul's point, and neither did Jerome. For his ministry was in great jeopardy here; so were all the churches that had had him as their teacher. Thus the necessity of Paul's ministry and of all the churches demanded that with a necessary and holy pride he should

boast of his vocation and of the knowledge of **the Gospel revealed to him by Christ**. Then their consciences would be completely persuaded that Paul's doctrine was the Word of God. Here Paul was dealing with a great and serious issue, namely, that all the churches might be preserved in sound doctrine. In short, the issue in the controversy was a matter of eternal life and death. For once the pure and certain Word is taken away, there remains no consolation, no salvation, no life.

Thus the reason Paul recites all this is to keep the churches in true and sound doctrine. He is not battling to defend his own glory, as Porphyry insults him. By this history he seeks to show that he did not receive **his Gospel** from any man, and that for quite some years—namely, for three or four years—both in Damascus and in Arabia—he had preached **by divine revelation the very same Gospel** that the apostles had preached, and that before he had seen any of the apostles.

... the mystery of the fifteen days... For Paul says in plain words that he came to Jerusalem to see Peter, and that he stayed with him fifteen days. If it had been his purpose to learn **the Gospel from Peter**, he would have had to stay there several years! In the course of fifteen days he could not have become such a great apostle and teacher of the Gentiles—not to say that in these fifteen days, as Luke testifies in Acts 9:28 ff., he spoke with boldness in **the name of the Lord Jesus** and disputed with the Greeks, etc.

20. *(In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)*

Why does Paul add an oath? Because he is narrating a history. He is obliged to swear, in order that the churches may believe him. Otherwise the false apostles might say: "Who knows whether what Paul is saying is true?" Here you see that such a **great apostle of Christ** was held in such great contempt among his own Galatians, to whom he had preached **Christ**, that it was necessary for him to swear that he was telling the truth.

If this happened to the apostles then—that they had despisers, in fact, big men who dared accuse them of lying—it is no wonder that a similar thing happens to us, who are not worthy of comparison with the apostles in any way. He is swearing to what seems to be a trivial matter, namely, that he is telling the truth when he says that he stayed with Peter to see him, not to learn from him. But if you consider the matter more carefully, it is very weighty and grave, as is clear from what has been said earlier. We follow the example of Paul and swear: "**God** knows that we are not lying!"

21. *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*

Syria and Cilicia are provinces situated close together. Throughout Paul is trying to convince them that before and after he had seen the apostles, he was always a **preacher of the Gospel**, which he had received by the **revelation of Christ**, and that he had never been a pupil of any of the apostles.

22. *And I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea;*

23. *they only heard it said: He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.*

24. *And they glorified God because of me.*

Paul adds this to fill in and complete the story, that after seeing Peter he went into Syria and Cilicia and preached there, indeed preached in such a way that he won the testimony of all the churches in Judea. It is as though he were saying: "I appeal to the testimony of all the churches, also of those that are in Judea. For the churches testify—not only those in Damascus, Arabia, Syria, and Cilicia but those in Judea as well—that I preached the same faith I once persecuted and opposed. And they glorified **God** because of me, not because I taught that circumcision and the Law of Moses were to be observed, but because I preached faith and built up the churches by **my ministry of the Gospel**. Therefore you have the testimony not only of the people of Damascus and Arabia but also of the whole catholic church in Judea"

LIFE APPLICATION

How do we glorify God because of others?