

Title: "What's The Point?" *The Apostle Paul's Thesis*

Passage: Galatians 1:11-12

Theme: Paul's gospel came directly from Christ who is the Gospel

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{{Read Passage}}

2 wks ago that we covered 1:10 (hinge or transition v. – connects vv. 6-9 to vv. 11 ff.)

When I say v. 11 ff. – t/ff. may run all t/way to t/end of chapter 2.

IOW – there's an extended thought unit here that begins in 1:11 and terminates at 2:14 or beyond to 2:21.

[i] Verses 11-12 set the stage for the rest of chapter 1 and pretty much the entirety of chapter 2 – CAVEAT

Plz hear this little disclaimer: not everything we see here is directly applicable to our lives so be patient.

There is a danger that most preachers fall prey to: sermonizing. Taking a passage like this and trying to make it somehow directly speak to t/lives of t/audience – often using 'cute' / imag. ways. Result: men preach what's not there. They do violence to t/passages. In t/end they render it meaningless.

OR – they skip over passages like this entirely because “it's just not good preachin’”. (better to skip over it than mistreat it)

Challenge for me is to clearly / accur. explain it & try to keep it relevant. Not easy.

Keep in mind – this is t/way t/Bible's structured. There's Balance.

The historical; doctrinal; parts are t/foundation for those that are more directly applicable.

In that sense, doctrine precedes duty. That is, t/foundation of truth must be laid b4 you can rightly go about using it in your life.

Maybe an oversimplification, but we often find books of t/Bible laid out upon that principle.

Ephesians: 1-3 doctrinal; 4-6 practice

Romans: First 11 ch. doctrinal; ==>

Romans 12:1–2 **1 I URGE you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

Sim. here in Galatians. Most of t/1st 4 chpts are focused on historical & doctrinal truth; chapters 5-6 are more directly applicational.

Doctrine b4 duty.

Explanation before Exhortation

“Let me first explain this to you and then I'm going to tell you what to do with it all.”

We have a hard time with that principle. We eschew learning & training. We're big on doing.

As it relates to t/American Pulpit: Too many want comf. amusement or warm and fuzzy platitudes, or a quick fix high energy drink of experiential excitement week after week as if each sermon is to be some sort of warm bubble bath, stand up comedy routine, motivational speech, or carnival ride. Put in your dollar – 15 minutes – it's over.

Be patient as we work through all this.

Explanation before Exhortation

By t/HS's design that this first part of Gal. is largely explanation.

With all that in mind ==>

[i] Verses 11-12 set the stage for the rest of chapters 1 and 2

In that regard, 1:11 – 2:11 make up Paul's autobiography.

[ii] Specifically – Verses 11-12 of chapter 1 give us his central thesis statement for this entire passage

“Thesis” = proposition; main point, or central statement upon which he builds his his argument.

2 main points in vv. 11 &12 ==>

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

II. Paul's Thesis Illuminated (12)

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

Where he gives his main statement

II. Paul's Thesis Illuminated (12)

Where he gives a further elaboration or explanation of that main statement (what he said in v. 11).

Paul's gospel came directly from Christ who is the Gospel!

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

For I would have you to know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

Main point of verse 11 ==>

A. Paul's Message Was Not "According to Man" (three questions)

We're going to ask 3 questions in that regard.

1. How Does This Fit the Context? ("for")

(something we've teased out already) ==>

For . . .

cf. v. 10 ("for" - building upon an argument).

a. Words like "for" "but" "therefore" point to context

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

For I would have you to know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

b. What follows is Paul's defense of his thesis:

Verse 13 – Paul's life as an unregenerate Jew

Verse 14 – His accomp. as a Pharisee

Verses 15-16 – His dramatic conversion to X and his calling to preach t/Gospel to the Gentiles

All of that by direct revelation from JC (starting w/Damascus Rd.).

Paul is establ. his apostolic credentials.

16b I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

Paul's defends his thesis (13-17) by first est. that his conversion was dramatic and miraculous. It was independent of t/Jerusalem Apostles; it came by direct revelation from JC (Acts 9).

After he was converted, he didn't rush to Jerusalem to consult w/the Apostles there.

He has a degree of independence from them. Not isolation. He's not competing w/the likes of Peter and James; he's addressing t/Judaizers' contention that he was 2d rate to those in Jerusalem or was under their authority. (Jud. = those who insisted on Xn conformity to Jew. laws).

Here's how 1 commentator summarizes how the Judaizers may have attempted to defend their 'message' in their own words. He does so by way of a fictional letter that t/Judaizers may have penned to t/Gal. Xns “Dear brothers of Galatia, we greet you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ! We have heard how through the ministry of Brother Paul you have been converted from the worship of dumb idols to serve the true and living God of Israel. We are glad you have made such a good beginning, but we are afraid that there are some very important things about the gospel Paul has omitted to tell you. We ourselves come from the church at Jerusalem which is directed by the very apostles Jesus called and ordained. Paul though is an upstart. Why, he never even knew Jesus while he was on earth and was certainly never commissioned by him as an apostle. True, Paul did visit Jerusalem just after he stopped persecuting us, and there he learned the ABCs of the Christian faith from the true apostles. But the message he now

preaches bears no resemblance to theirs. I don't imagine he even told you about circumcision! Why, this is the very way God has made it possible for you Gentiles to become a part of the New Israel. Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. Circumcision is just as important as baptism—nay, more important, for it will introduce you to a higher plane of Christian living. If you will observe this holy ordinance of the law, God will be pleased with you. We are just now forming a new association of law-observant churches, and we would love for Galatia to be represented! We are the true Christians. Jesus, our great example, pleased the Father by fulfilling the law and so can you!" [George, 95–96]

Review (context) . . .

Vv. 11-12 – Paul's Thesis

Vv. 13-17 – First Defense of His Thesis

(the Jerusalem church didn't commission Paul)

Vv. 18-24 – Second Defense (“then”).

Point: “I did go to Jerusalem 3 years later, but it was only to become acquaint. w/Peter, not to get instruction from him or any of t/other As.”

“I had so little exposure in Jer. that I was personally unknown to most Xns there.”

2:1 (“then”) - marks Paul's 3d defense.

Galatians 2:1 **THEN after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.**

This section continues through v. 10.

Theme of this part of Paul's defense is in v. 6:

2:6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.

2:11 “but” - here begins Paul's 4th defense ==>

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

Peter was being hypocritical (very thing t/Judaizers were accusing Paul of). But it's Paul that stands true to t/Gospel in t/face of Peter. Paul who demonstrates Apostolic authority in t/face of Peter who many considered t/Apostle of t/Apostles.

This section ends either at v. 14 or it continues to t/end of t/chapt.

Some have likened this to a courtroom drama where Paul takes on t/role of defense attorney. He gives his statement in vv. 11-12 and then systematically unfolds a 4-part defense of that statement.

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

Main point of verse 11 ==>

A. Paul's Message Was Not “According to Man” (three questions)

1. How Does This Fit the Context? (“for”)

2. Why Is This Important? (“I would have you to know”)

For I would have you to know, brethren . . .

a. These words “for I would have you know” are distinctly Pauline

IOW – Paul likes to use this expression. Not only that – neg. counterpart, “I do not want you to be unaware.”

1 Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to know, that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:1 NOW, brethren, I make known to you (“I want you to know”), the gospel which I preached to you . . .

See t/neg. counterpart in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 ==>

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope.

Saying

. . . **I would have you to know . . .**

was almost idiomatic.

b. Paul is emphasizing the fact that he wants to be understood

“Let me be perfectly clear.”

As one who is middle-aged those words bring to mind President Richard Nixon (t/first Amer. Pres. that I have personal memory of).

For many, it also brings to mind our current president who has a penchant for using that expression. (Won't comment on its veracity or effectiveness.)

c. Look at what he adds ==>

For I would have you to know, brethren . . .

If you've been with us t/o this course of this series that ought to strike you, right? Why?

Go back to our message from June 22 covering vv. 1-5: *No Time for Kudos* {explain}

In this letter's opening Paul is getting their attention. Verse 6 ==>
I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel.

At this point in t/letter Paul is demonstrating his pastoral love. Goes on from here to refer to his readers as “brethren” no less than 7x.

Also reinforces the assurance of hope he expresses in 5:10 ==>
I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view

For I would have you to know, brethren . . .

(1) ἀδελφοί - word with rich significance

Word that marks out family or brotherly love (cf. Philadelphia). Jews used it. They would call each other brother. But their use, at least during t/time of X, lack significance / depth.

Paul may have used it as a Jew. But t/meaning took on a diff. dimension for him after he came to know X.

“For whoever does the will of God, he is My brother and sister and mother.” – Mark 3:35.

1979 Pop Group Sister Sledge was nom. for a Grammy Award for their hit song, “We Are Family” – which went on to be t/theme for Pittsburgh Pirates in their quest to win t/79 W.S. More recently t/song was featured during the 2004 Democratic National Convention.

The sense that “we are family” is used for 4 musicians, 40 baseball players, or thousands of political delegates cannot compare to how it's used of us. We are truly family. Of course, it's a shame that we all-to-often emulate t/more negative parts of family life than t/positive.

Yes, Paul speaks as an Apostle, but also as a shepherd, as a bro. in X.

And he does so with a sense of urgency ==>

... **Brethren, I would have you to know** ...

“Listen-up” - “Let me be clear about something.”

“This is important” ==>

2. *Why Is This Important?*

Because it sets t/stage for Paul's defense of t/Gospel. And that's not just important. It's essential. Which leads us to our next and last?

3. What is the Central Focus? (“the gospel preached”)

For I would have you to know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

a. Remember ==>

I. *This is the Introduction to Paul's Thesis (II)*

Main point of which ==>

A. *Paul's Message Was Not “According to Man”*

(1) This also goes back to verse 1

PAUL, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)

It's about t/integrity of Paul's Apostleship & connected to that t/integrity of his preaching. 2 cannot be separated. It's about t/Gospel.

(2) Three elements here

1the gospel which was 2preached by me is 3not according to man.

1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

1:8 But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

1:9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

Paul is not dealing with a matter of secondary importance. As 1 writer well states ==>

“He was defending the very heart of the Christian faith against a sinister and subversive attack upon it. On this issue—the nature of the gospel—there is not room for equivocation or doubt. Nothing less than the reality of the salvation secured by Jesus Christ is at stake in this unyielding assertion.” [Timothy George,108]

One paraphrase of the verse ==>

“My gospel (and my preaching of the gospel) do not belong to the purely human level of existence: the gospel message did not come to me through human channels—it was not mediated to me through any man; and my preaching of the gospel has not been guided by human motives and ambitions.” [J. Bligh, cited in Timothy George, 108]

c. Again – What is the Gospel (εὐαγγέλιον)?

It is good news. Good news that answers t/? ==>

"How can one who is sinful & destined for God's wrath be forgiven & restored to peace w/God so that he may worship&enjoy Him forever?"

(1) ABC's - Person; Work; Application

1. Person – JC t/2d person of t/Trinity; Took upon Himself humanity.
1 mediator between God and man had to be both. Truly and fully God
// Man.

2. Work – Lived a perfectly righteous life, tempted w/o sin. Lamb of God who took upon Himself t/sin of t/world, dying in t/place of all who would believe in Him for eternal life. He paid t/penalty of my sin so that I could have His righteousness credited to my account. Resurrected from t/dead and ascended to heaven and will return again.

3. Application. How? By grace through faith (instrument – t/hand)....

IOTB restored to peace w/God so that we may worship & enjoy Him forever & avoid t/alternative (eternal punishment in hell) is through t/cross of JC. Believing in Him as t/one who suffered God's wrath in my place, repentance from dead works 2 faith in a living, satisfying G.

I. Paul's Thesis Introduced (11)

Main point of verse 11 ==>

A. Paul's Message Was Not "According to Man" (three questions)

1. How Does This Fit the Context?

2. Why Is This Important?

3. What is the Central Focus?

II. Paul's Thesis Illuminated (12)

By "Illum." I mean expanded upon, further explained.

See that in the 1st word of v. 12 ==>

For . . .

We're going to sum up v. 12 this way ==>

A. Paul's Message Was the "Revelation of Jesus Christ"

Parallel to our 3 questions of v. 11 we have 3 statements in v. 12.
2 Negative statements and a positive one.

Help to look at these 2 together ==>

1. Negative Assertion #1:

For I neither received it [i.e. the gospel] **from man,**

2. Negative Assertion #2:

nor was I taught it,

a. What's the difference? Is there a difference? I think there is.

For I neither received it from man,

(1) παραλαμβανω

Tech. term referring to the transmission of a tradition.

But Paul would have in mind here specifically his initial act of faith in believing in JC as t/Son of God. Gospel. That wasn't received by means of a human mediator or preacher.

b. Second statement

nor was I taught it,

Would refer to the fact that he wasn't indoctrinated by another teacher, as a Jew would be catechized by his rabbi.

c. Contradiction?

Some have mistakenly perceived a contra. between what Paul says here & what he writes in other places, like 1 Cor. 15:3 (good example because t/same word παραλαμβανειν – infinitive – is used there) ==>

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

On t/one hand other ?

(1) Gnostics (2d c. cult) twisted Paul's words

False teachers always do – Peter reminds us of that 2 Peter 3:16 (“untaught/unstable”). Scripture twisters.

Gnostics taught their followers that Paul's gospel changed. He had once preached t/same message as t/other apostles (1 Cor 15:3). But to t/Galatians he reveals t/TRUE Gospel (Gnostic one) – a secret revelation.

Gnostics often cited Paul as their spiritual father which, of course, he wasn't while rejecting the other apostles & NT writings as being polluted by Judaism.

(2) No Contradiction – Context

Paul's not saying his Gospel was different from t/other apostles (those in Jerusalem), but that he received it independ. of them. Point.

In 1 Cor. he affirms that he shares in t/faith of t/CH (true faith once for all delivered to all the saints).

Here he affirms that he didn't receive t/Gospel through t/Jerusalem Apostles. They didn't convert him and they didn't disciple him.

Judaizers were saying, “Don't listen to Paul – he didn't get his gospel from an authorized dealer” (Apostles in Jerusalem).

Not that Paul's gospel differed from theirs – t/Judaizers in their Jewish nationalism interpreted it that way.

Paul says ==>

“I wasn't converted under them; I didn't receive t/gospel from them.”

“How did you receive it, Paul?”

3. The Positive Assertion:

but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

a. No doubt Paul knew t/basic message of the Gospel even as a Christ-rejecter

No one spends so much time/energy trying to stamp out a movement he knows nothing about.

Little doubt that t/Xns he persecuted shared X w/him. (Cf. Stephen).

Not the point here.

When Paul says

but [I received it] through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

He's not talking as much about t/message as he is the Person.

Paul's gospel came directly from Christ who is the Gospel!

b. Phrase “revelation of Jesus Christ” can be understood in 2 ways

(1) In the Greek text it's in the Genitive Case

Genitives can be understood objectively or subjectively.

If this were a subjective Gen. we would understand this to be saying
“I received the gospel when Jesus Christ revealed it to me” IOW – X
is the one who taught it to him.

In English we naturally think this way.

I think it's better to understand this as an objective genitive.
X isn't the source of t/revelation (cf. vv. 15-16).

God the Father was the revealer; it was Jesus Christ who was revealed,
and in that revelation Paul received his gospel

“I received the Gospel when JC was revealed to me in all his Glory.”
IOW – X is the object, the substance.

Ultimately t/Gospel cannot be reduced to 4 laws on a tract or
methodology. Message is essential, but behind t/message is an object,
a person: JC.

That message / person cannot be gained by human means.

That's ==>

III. Life Application: Christ is the Gospel

Never lose sight of this

Mentioned this a few weeks ago. How I was looking at some written
testimonies of adults (no one here). In explaining why they thought they
were Xns, I was reading things like, “My mom said that at age 6 I
prayed the prayer.” I'm not saying that this isn't a starting point for a 6
year old, but we're talking adults here.

The Gospel is Propositional. Words. But if there is no Person behind t/words there is no Gospel.

Listen to what Dr. John Piper has to say in that regard ==>

There is nothing in itself that makes "forgiveness of sins" good news. Whether being forgiven is good news depends on what it leads to. You could walk out of a courtroom innocent of a crime and get killed on the street. Forgiveness may or may not lead to joy. Even escaping hell is not in itself the good news we long for - not if we find heaven to be massively boring.

Nor is justification in itself good news. Where does it lead? That is the question. Whether justification will be good news, depends on the award we receive because of our imputed righteousness. What do we receive because we are counted righteous in Christ? The answer is fellowship with Jesus.

Forgiveness of sins and justification are good news because they remove obstacles to the only lasting, all-satisfying source of joy: Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is not merely the means of our rescue from damnation; he is the goal of our salvation. If he is not satisfying to be with, there is no salvation. He is not merely the rope that pulls us from the threatening waves; he is the solid beach under our feet, and the air in our lungs, and the beat of our heart, and the warm sun on our skin, and the song in our ears, and the arms of our beloved.

This is why the New Testament often defines the gospel as, simply, Christ. . . . Or, more specifically, the gospel is "the gospel of the glory of Christ". . . . And even more wonderfully, perhaps, Paul says that the preaching of the gospel is the preaching of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8).

Therefore to believe the gospel is not only to accept the awesome truths that 1) God is holy, 2) we are hopeless sinners, 3) Christ died and rose again for sinners, and 4) this great salvation is enjoyed by faith in Christ-but believing the gospel is also to treasure Jesus Christ as your unsearchable riches. What makes the gospel Gospel is that it brings a person into the everlasting and ever-increasing joy of Jesus Christ.

The words Jesus will speak when we come to heaven are: "Enter into the joy of your Master" (Matthew 25:21). The prayer he prayed for us ended on this note: "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory" (John 17:24). The glory he wants us to see is the "unsearchable riches of Christ." It is "the immeasurable riches of [God's] grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7).

The superlatives "unsearchable" and "immeasurable" mean that there will be no end to our discovery and enjoyment. There will be no boredom. Every day will bring forth new and stunning things about Christ which will cause yesterday's wonder to be seen in new light, so that not only will there be new sights of glory everyday, but the accumulated glory will become more glorious with every new revelation.

The gospel is the good news that the everlasting and ever-increasing joy of the never-boring, ever-satisfying Christ is ours freely and eternally by faith in the sin-forgiving death and hope-giving resurrection of Jesus Christ. [www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-is-the-christian-gospel]