

## **BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS (1:11-24)**

Why was there a need for the apostle Paul to include his life story in his defence of the gospel?

The simple answer would be that his life story must have a role in his overall argument to dissuade the Galatians Christians from being circumcised.

Paul was an ex-insider (a Pharisee). He was an excellent scholar and zealous practitioner of the Torah and the traditions. However, his experience of the Law and the traditions, and his former actions proved that the purpose of the Law was to condemn, not save (read Paul's argument in Gal 3:16 and Rom 3:19-20). If the Galatians succumb to circumcision (or any other practice), they would forgo their life in Jesus Christ and revert to a way of life that would enslave them.

Paul's encounter with the living God changed him. Christ forgave Paul and freed Paul from the powerful cultural forces of his days. (Not all culture is bad but if the cultural principles run counter to the principles of God, we must exercise wisdom in knowing what to leave out).

Much was at stake then, the imposition of circumcision and other adherence could have derailed the spread of the gospel.

Here lies the principle.

To believe wrongly and to act wrongly is at variance with God's purposes. Not just for Paul's life but for ours as well.

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### WARMING UP

1. Which aspect of your culture do you think is admirable? And which aspect of your culture do you think is deplorable?
2. What is your response to people who think and behave differently from you?

### INTO THE PASSAGES

#### **Read Galatians 1:11-24- Divine revelation to Paul, divine revelation to us**

3. From whom did Paul receive the gospel message from? What are the implications for us that the gospel is divinely inspired?
4. Why did Paul include his testimony in his defence of the gospel? What was the outcome of Paul's testimony (verse 24)?

#### **Read Galatians 2:1-10, Acts 15 - The realities of the gospel**

5. What was Titus' ethnicity and what was the significance of mentioning Titus twice (verse 1 and verse 3)?
6. Why did Paul explain the issue before the leaders in Jerusalem?
7. What was the outcome of the apostolic meeting (verse 7 - 10)?

### MOVING FORWARD

The gospel suffered danger in that cultural forces were attempting to subvert the freedom the Galatians Christians had.

Thanks be to God that the gospel prevailed. Faith in Christ alone is sufficient for justification.

Pray for wisdom and spiritual eyes to see whatever that seeks to hinder the spread of the gospel and replace Christ as the preeminent one in our lives.

### LIFE TOGETHER

There is culture within the family, within the small group, within the church, within the city and within the nation.

Pray for God to move powerfully in all the spheres mentioned.

## BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON THE LETTER TO THE GALATIANS (1:11-24)

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

### INTO THE PASSAGES

#### Read Galatians 1:11-24- Divine revelation to Paul, divine revelation to us

3. From whom did Paul receive the gospel message from? What are the implications for us that the gospel is divinely inspired?

**Paul received the gospel from Jesus Christ Himself whom he met on the road to Damascus. Although God may have used humans to bring to us the gospel, the gospel itself is divine. We cannot add or subtract from the gospel. In the case of Galatians, it was the former. So, we must be careful in preaching Jesus and He alone is sufficient for our justification.**

4. Why did Paul include his testimony in his defence of the gospel? What was the outcome of Paul's testimony (verse 24)?

**Paul was an excellent example in that he straddled the world of law and grace. His testimony was one where reliance and trust in the Law and traditions (his former was of life) cannot bring life. However, his preaching of the grace of God in Jesus brought freedom to many. His life story glorified God, which should be the case for all of us.**

#### Read Galatians 2:1-10, Acts 15 - The realities of the gospel

5. What was Titus' ethnicity and what was the significance of mentioning Titus twice (verse 1 and verse 3)?

**Titus was a Greek. Paul's team consisted of Barnabas (a Jew) and Titus (a Greek). The team composition was a reflection of the realities of the gospel where in Christ; God has reconciled both the Jews and Gentiles. That Titus was not circumcised and travelling with two Jews, who thought nothing of fellowshiping with the uncircumcised. Their unity was one in the spirit, not one of external adherence.**

6. Why did Paul explain the issue before the leaders in Jerusalem?

**The early Christians (and apostles) were Jews. Even some of the Pharisees were converted. Paul outlined his conviction that faith in Jesus Christ was sufficient (read also Acts 15). There was no need for circumcision among the Gentiles, which was the eventual decision reached by the apostolic conference. As a cultural practice, the Jewish Christians would have been circumcised when they were little. Therefore, among the Jewish Christians, circumcision was not an issue at all. However, the grace of God extends to all, not just the Jewish. So, the Jewish who were the early messengers of the gospel were 'forced' to contend what was fundamental and what was cultural in Christ. Paul, in his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles, felt the need the most.**

7. What was the outcome of the apostolic meeting (verse 7 - 10)?

**It was decided that circumcision for Gentiles Christians was not necessary.**