

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 257 – September 14th – Galatians 1:1-24

Preface

Paul's letters are not abstract theological treatises, they are letters written from the heart and addressed to churches for which Paul had an intimate concern. They formed a vital part of Paul's ministry, representing one element of the pastoral oversight of the apostle for churches founded through his ministry. They reflect much of the man and his passion for Christ while equally reflecting the situation and concerns of the congregations to which they were written. Of none is this more evident than the letter to the Galatians.

In introducing what may be the first of Paul's letters¹, we will trace the story of Paul, from his origins as the Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, through conversion and commencement of missionary activity, down to the time when he dashed off this letter to the churches of Galatia. I do not apologise for this lengthy introduction; it is my conviction that the letter to the Galatians cannot rightly be understood apart from the experiences which Paul personally had suffered and the controversies which surrounded the birth of the first Gentile churches. In the words of Longenecker:

"Whatever its place in the lists of antiquity, the letter to the Galatians takes programmatic primacy for (1) an understanding of Paul's teaching, (2) the establishing of a Pauline chronology, (3) the tracing out of the course of early apostolic history, and (4) the determination of many NT critical and canonical issues. It may even have been the first written of Paul's extant letters. Possibly as well, excluding the confessional portions incorporated throughout the NT, it antedates everything else written in the NT. It is necessary, therefore, to understand Galatians aright if we are to understand Paul and the rest of the NT aright."

No construction of Paul's story can avoid controversy concerning the order of various events, and this is particularly the case when seeking to relate the narrative of Acts to Paul's account in Galatians 1-2. I have put the story together in accordance with my assessment of the evidence, but take the trouble to assess the issues for yourself.

On the related issue concerning the identity of the Galatian churches, I hold to what is commonly known as the *South Galatian* theory, namely that the reference is to the Roman province of Galatia rather than the smaller territory of that name². Paul is writing therefore to the churches planted during his first missionary journey, namely those of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe.

Saul the Pharisee

Saul was born in Greek university city of Tarsus to Jewish parents who were also Roman citizens. He was later educated in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Paul would therefore have had a good understanding of Greek culture and philosophy (see, for instance, Acts 17:28), while also being proud of belonging to the party of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were a political group which exercised considerable influence in the last two centuries BC. Wright argues that with the loss of control over the Temple in the second century BC, the focus within this group began to shift from national purity with its focus on Temple ceremony to personal purity. The careful observance of the distinctives of detailed personal purity (such as the food laws) constituted a form of political action or protest. Concern for such purity led in turn to detailed study of and commentary upon the law and to the development of the Mishnah. The Pharisees were thus the precursors of the rabbis.

¹ In accordance with the view taken here of the churches to which the letter was written. Older commentators, such as Lightfoot, thought Galatians was written at much the same time as Paul's letter to the Romans due to similarities in the theme and argument of the two letters.

² A theory most ably argued by Ramsay.

With the arrival of Roman rule in 63 BC, the ability of the Pharisees to exert any political power was curtailed and the focus of their concern shifted even more towards personal piety – though they still embraced political action such as refusing to swear allegiance to new rulers. They viewed themselves as guardians of the traditions of Israel and saw their mission as that of summoning Israel to return to its ancestral traditions and her independent theocratic status. While there were occasions when Pharisees supported revolutionary action, their chief hope seems to have been that God himself would act to vindicate his people, sending the Messiah, gathering the dispersed Israelites, destroying Israel's enemies and restoring Jerusalem and the Temple. Such waiting for God to act could sometimes verge on fatalism (see Gamaliel's words recorded in Acts 5:33-39). On the whole, these expectations appear to have been for a distant rather than imminent act of God.

In contrast with the Sadducees, Pharisees believed that history had a goal or purpose, for it was the arena in which God is working out his purposes. They believed in a future life and in the resurrection of the body and in the reality of the spiritual realm, the reality of both angels and demons. Many of *these* elements of Pharisaic teaching are evident in the subsequent teaching of Paul, though now always having their focus in Christ and his cross and resurrection.

Hellenists and Hebrews

In Palestine, the period between the death of Herod the Great (4 BC) and the destruction of the Temple (70 AD) was one marked by Jewish nationalistic fervour. Frequent revolts against the Roman occupying powers were commonly answered with brutal repression. It was within such a context that the church in Jerusalem was born with conflicting implicit pressures to:

- Identify itself as a movement within Judaism rather than one foreign to Judaism with consequent arousal of nationalistic antagonism;
- Demonstrate that the Christian message offered no political threat to the governing power of Rome.

The latter of these concerns is clearly part of the sub-text of the book of Acts, but it is just as important to recognise the former, particularly as it forms part of the background to the delicate relationship between the church at Jerusalem and the developing Gentile mission and is also (I would suggest) a significant element in the background to the letter to the Galatians.

There appears to have been some tensions in the Jerusalem church between Jewish believers whose first language was Greek (Hellenists) and those whose first language was Hebrew, or more properly, Aramaic (Acts 6:1f.), this may have reflected broader divisions within the Jerusalem Jewish community generally³.

Stephen was a gifted preacher from among the Hellenists. His preaching of Christ represented a direct attack upon the Jewish traditions which venerated Jerusalem and the Temple. As such, they seem particularly to have angered certain Hellenistic Jews. Acts 6:9 states that, "Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) – Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia." There is some debate whether there is a single synagogue spoken of here or several. Bruce thinks that it was a single synagogue made up of Jewish freedmen from these various regions, and this is also reflected in the NIV translation cited above. This may well have been the synagogue attended by Paul since he was a freedman from Cilicia. Members of this synagogue had chosen to settle in Jerusalem presumably because they viewed Jerusalem and its Temple as holy places, central to their faith. Stephen's preaching so stirred up their anger that they stoned him to death while Paul stood by and watched, "giving approval to his death" (Acts 8:1).

³ The tensions led to the election of the 'Seven' of whom Bruce writes, "The Seven were originally the leaders of the Hellenists in the Jerusalem church, and after the death of Stephen the survivors probably took a leading part among the Hellenists of the dispersion."

From the earliest years of the Jerusalem church we see that Jews from those very areas where Paul was later to travel as a missionary were the most fervent defenders of Judaism and the keenest opponents of any teaching they deemed an attack upon the traditions of the fathers.

Stephen's death triggered a more general persecution of the church in Jerusalem causing many of the disciples to flee from the city. However, the apostles were able to stay in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). It is perhaps not entirely speculative to suggest that those who suffered persecution were Hellenistic believers while Hebrew Christians were able to remain in the city largely unmolested. The Hebrew Christians seem to have lived alongside their Jewish neighbours with little conflict.

Having witnessed the preaching and execution of Stephen, Paul was concerned to stamp out the growing Christian movement, particularly the spread of Christianity beyond Jerusalem through the agency of the scattered Christians. Paul saw the Christian message as a direct attack upon the traditions for which he was most zealous and a threat to the preservation of a pure remnant covenant community:

- Preserved by means of personal purity involving careful and detailed lawkeeping;
- Awaiting the coming of the Messiah which would be accompanied by the destruction of Roman rule, the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple and return of the theocracy.

Conversion

The circumstances of Paul's conversion are recorded in three separate passages in Acts (9:3-19; 22:6-16; 26:9-23).

Damascus had a sizeable Jewish community and many of the Christians who fled the persecution that followed Stephen's death may have settled there (though there seems already to have been a Christian presence in the city). With letters of authority from the High Priest, Paul travelled from Jerusalem towards Damascus, intent on seizing Christians and bringing them back to Jerusalem in chains.

On the road he was confronted by the risen Christ. He saw 'a light from heaven, brighter than the sun' and heard Christ demanding, 'Why do you persecute me?' He was blinded and broken and had to be led by the hand into Damascus. He was so overwhelmed by the experience that he could neither eat nor drink for three days. All he could do was pray.

In Damascus, Ananias was directed by Christ to visit Paul. Ananias, greeting him as 'Brother Paul', delivered a message from Christ and restored Paul's sight. Paul was then baptised.

It is hard to underestimate the impact of this experience on Paul. His whole life and understanding was turned upside down. This conversion experience was a formative influence in Paul's theology:

- Paul understood from this encounter that Jesus was the Christ, a crucified and risen Messiah and 'Lord of glory';
- He knew now that all the prophecies of Scripture find their focus and fulfilment in Jesus Christ;
- He understood that the divine Messiah had come not as a warrior to defeat the Romans but as the Suffering Servant, that his kingdom was not of this world;
- He understood that Christ and his people form one body – to persecute Christians is to persecute Christ;
- He understood that Christians, however different their backgrounds, are brothers in Christ – it is they, not the Jews zealous for the traditions of the fathers, who are the covenant community of the Messiah;

- He knew that he had received a commission to preach the Gospel directly from the risen Saviour;
- He believed that his own conversion experience was, in one sense, normative for believers (see 2 Cor. 4:3-6).

Damascus and Return to Jerusalem

Paul stayed at Damascus for two to three years, except for a short trip into 'Arabia' (Gal 1:17), probably the Nabatean kingdom near Damascus. Paul's preaching in Damascus stirred up opposition from the Jews in the city who, with the support of Aretas, the Nabatean king, sought to destroy Paul (Acts 9:23-25; 2 Cor. 11:32f.). Paul made his escape by being let down from the city wall in a basket and returning to Jerusalem.

This visit to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30) is that also described in Galatians 1:18-24 (so F.F. Bruce, John Drane). Barnabas introduced Paul to the apostles and he spent time with Peter and also met James the Lord's brother.

In Jerusalem, Paul began preaching particularly to the Hellenists (Acts 9:29), a group with which he was familiar. Just as Stephen's preaching to this group had stirred up violent opposition so also did the preaching of Paul – the themes of Paul's preaching may well have been very similar to those of Stephen. With the encouragement of the Jerusalem Christians, and through instruction from Christ in a vision (Acts 9:29f.; 22:17-21), Paul left for Tarsus via Caesarea. He spent the next eleven years in Cilicia (of which Tarsus was the capital) and Syria, probably still unknown to many Christians. We have no clear information on the period of Paul's life between Acts 9:30 and 11:25. "Probably during this period he 'suffered the loss of all things' (Phil 3:8) and endured some of the trials encountered in 2 Cor. 11:23ff." (Bruce)

With the departure of Paul, the church at Jerusalem (indeed, in the whole of Judea, Galilee and Samaria) enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity (Acts 9:31). The life of the Palestinian church depended upon good relationships with the larger world of Judaism.

Ministry at Antioch

The first church containing a substantial portion of Gentiles sprang up at Antioch through the witness of Greek speaking Jewish Christians, scattered after the persecution that followed Stephen's death (Acts 11:19-21). First century Antioch was a city which prided itself on toleration, with even its Jewish population more open to Gentiles than anywhere else in the Jewish diaspora. Many Gentiles were associated with the Jewish synagogues in the city. "So when the Christian gospel came to Antioch, it was received not only by Jews but also by Gentiles who had been mentally and spiritually prepared by Judaism. A great number of people at Antioch, Acts tells us, accepted the gospel message and committed themselves to Jesus. Since, however, this group was made up of both Jews and Gentiles, the city's population had to find a name for them that would distinguish them from Jews and from all the devotees of the various pagan religions of the city. So they nicknamed them 'Christians'." (Longenecker)

When the church at Jerusalem heard news of Antioch they sent Barnabas to discover what was going on⁴. He immediately recognised that these infant Christians needed encouragement and teaching and so went to Tarsus in search of Paul. For a year Paul, once a proud Pharisee, laboured with Barnabas in the instruction of young Christians, both Jew and Gentile, showing them that all of Scripture finds its focus and fulfilment in Jesus the Christ, the Saviour of the world. We should not underestimate the formative nature of this period in developing Paul's understanding of the missionary purposes of God and the character of the Gospel and of its demands upon the Gentiles.

⁴ Is it reading too much into these verses to suggest that there may have been some at Jerusalem who were troubled, or at least concerned, when they heard that in Antioch Gentiles were professing faith in Jesus the Christ?

At some point during this year, Agabus, a prophet from Jerusalem, came to Antioch predicting famine. In response, the church at Antioch decided to collect and send money to the church at Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas took the gift to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30). This visit appears to be the one of which Paul speaks in Galatians 2:1ff. (in which he speaks of taking Titus as well as Barnabas⁵). Paul speaks of having gone up to Jerusalem 'in response to a revelation', i.e. the prophecy of Agabus.

Barnabas had originally been sent to Antioch from Jerusalem and it would seem likely that he took advantage of the return visit to speak of the progress of the work. It would seem that there was a significant group within the church at Jerusalem who were unhappy with what was going on in Antioch and were suspicious of the ministry of Paul (perhaps particularly because of the presence of Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile)⁶. This group would seem to have been of the view that for a Gentile to become a Christian, a follower of the Messiah, they must be circumcised and obey the Mosaic law (Galatians 2:2,4). Paul therefore sought a private meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church, among whom James, Peter and John are mentioned by name (Galatians 2:9). Paul outlined the gospel he was preaching among the Gentiles and received the commendation of the apostles, "They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews." (Galatians 2:9). The only request made of Paul and Barnabas was that they should continue to remember the poor (Gal. 2:10). The 'collection' remained an important element in Paul's missionary activity.

It is important to understand the significance of this meeting: it did not provide apostolic authority (from Peter, John and perhaps James), for Paul's ministry – Paul is insistent that he received his commission and authority directly from God (Galatians 1:1,11-12). At this meeting the Jerusalem apostles recognised that Paul had been commissioned by Christ for the work just as they had been. Furthermore, their commendation of Paul acknowledged the legitimacy of Gentile mission and recognised that the gospel imperative was for obedience to Christ (Romans 1:5) rather than to Moses.

First Missionary Journey

Paul's pattern of missionary work and church planting seems to have developed during his early ministry at Antioch⁷. The teaching ministry of Paul and Barnabas seems from the first to have been designed to create a mature fellowship of believers among whom there would be several who would be able to take on the work of teaching and of pastoral oversight. At the beginning of Acts 13 we read that the church possessed a number of gifted prophets and teachers. It may not be reading too much into the Acts account to suggest also that the church at Antioch was already the centre of missionary outreach into the surrounding region since the letter from the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 was addressed to "the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia." This, I suggest, is the background against which the church at Antioch heard the call of God for Paul and Barnabas to be set apart for more extensive missionary work (Acts 13:2).

Paul and Barnabas set out accompanied by John Mark, a cousin of Barnabas who had accompanied them on their return from Jerusalem (Acts 12:25). They travelled first to

⁵ This view of other commentators that the Jerusalem visit of Galatians 2 was the visit associated with the convening of the Jerusalem Council is rejected primarily because it would seem unlikely that Peter's would have behaved as described in Gal 2:11 after that council. To suppose that his lapse was later than the Council is to make him guilty, in Ramsay's words, of "meaningless tergiversation." Longenecker says, "The situation at Syrian Antioch, it seems, could only have arisen where there were no clear guidelines to govern table fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians."

⁶ See comment in fn2, also cf. Acts 11:2-3.

⁷ It may have begun even before that with his undocumented years of ministry around Tarsus, in Cilicia and Syria (Galatians 1:21, cf. Acts 9:30; 11:25). Indeed, it is evident that on the occasion of Paul's visit to Jerusalem recorded in Gal 2:9 – which we have argued to be the visit of Acts 11:30 – Paul was already recognised as having a ministry to the Gentiles.

Cyprus, the native island of Barnabas (Acts 4:36) and the place from which Christians had first come to preach to the Gentiles at Antioch (Acts 11:20). In each town the missionaries visited they first sought out the Jewish community and made use of the opportunity afforded by the synagogue to preach Christ. It is at this stage that Paul became the clear leader of the missionary band and references to 'Barnabas and Paul' now become 'Paul and Barnabas'.

Having traversed Cyprus from east to west, Paul and his companions sailed north to Perga where Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas continued to travel north, now overland, crossing the Taurus range of mountains and, after 100 miles, arriving at Pisidian Antioch. Paul's preaching in the synagogue aroused considerable interest, initially both among Jews and Gentiles. However, such was the interest among the Gentiles⁸ that the Jews were moved with jealousy and spoke out strongly against Paul's preaching. Eventually, as the message of the gospel began to effect the surrounding region (Acts 13:49), the Jews stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from that area.

From Pisidian Antioch Paul and Barnabas travelled east to Iconium where they again preached in the synagogue and many Jews and Gentiles became believers. Though there were Jews who opposed Paul's preaching and stirred up opposition, Paul and Barnabas were able to stay some while in Iconium ministering the word and performing acts of healing. Eventually, however, the opposition became so heated that they had to leave the city for Lystra.

Paul and Barnabas seem to have ministered quietly in Lystra for some time and to have won over a number of disciples. However, Paul's healing of a man crippled from birth aroused considerable popular excitement, even to the point of the people wishing to recognise them as gods. Jews who opposed Paul's ministry travelled from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium to Lystra⁹ and took advantage of the public excitement to turn the crowd against Paul. Paul was stoned, dragged outside the city and left for dead, where many of the disciples gathered around him. Paul revived and, getting up, went back into the city. The following day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.

Many years later, Paul still had vivid memories of the persecutions and suffering he endured at Antioch, Iconium and Lystra (2 Timothy 3:11). The stoning at Lystra may have occasioned the 'marks' (στίγματα) Paul refers to in Galatians 6:17.

Having seen many converted in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. This was certainly not the most direct route home. From Derbe they could have continued southeast to Paul's home town of Tarsus and then on overland to Syrian Antioch. Their route was dictated by their determination to revisit the churches they had planted, strengthen the disciples and encourage them to remain true to the faith in the face of opposition and persecution (Acts 14:22). In each of the churches they appointed elders who would watch over and care for the young believers.

When Paul and Barnabas returned to Syrian Antioch they shared with the church all that God had done through them and particularly the remarkable response of the Gentiles to the gospel (Acts 14:27). Paul and Barnabas then remained for some time ministering in Antioch.

Antioch and Jerusalem

The following reconstruction of events is of necessity tentative. Nevertheless, after careful consideration of the New Testament evidence and the various arguments of scholars and commentators, I would suggest that it was after Paul's first missionary journey and during this

⁸ Luke, perhaps with a touch of exaggeration, says that "on the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord."

⁹ The strength of opposition may be judged from the fact that Pisidian Antioch was 100 miles from Lystra.

extended period of ministry at Antioch that the events occurred which prompted Paul's letter to the Galatian churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe¹⁰.

The New Testament evidence does not allow us to be dogmatic concerning every nuance of the relationship between the churches at Jerusalem and Syrian Antioch. Nevertheless, a number of points may be made:

- The church at Jerusalem viewed itself/was viewed as the centre of the Christian movement. It was the church of the apostles, 'mother church' to other churches and viewed itself as having some responsibility towards other congregations. This much is seen in the sending of Barnabas to Antioch, the visit of Peter (which we shall consider below), and the subsequent Council of Jerusalem. From the perspective of Jerusalem, church government was, quite naturally, modelled on Judaism.
- The church at Antioch was developing in a manner independent of and distinct from the church at Jerusalem. It was a single church of both Jews and Gentiles and had become the centre for outreach into the Gentile world.
- There were some among the church in Jerusalem who were suspicious of and unhappy with the developments at Antioch and of the growing Gentile churches. Gentile converts in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium and Lystra had resulted in a Jewish backlash with the consequent persecution of Christian believers. Maybe they feared a similar backlash in Jerusalem. Their chief concern seems to have been to persuade Gentile Christians to fully identify with Judaism (Gal 2:3-4,12).

In Galatians 2:11-21 we read of a visit by Peter to Antioch. At first he was content to eat with the Gentile believers, conforming, one would assume, with the general practice of the church at Antioch where believers, Jew and Gentile, enjoyed full fellowship with one another. No doubt Peter recalled the lesson he had been taught through his vision on the housetop in Joppa and his visit to the house of Cornelius, Acts 10:1-11:18¹¹. However, when "certain men came from James" Peter withdrew and would no longer eat with the Gentiles.

Little more is told us of these visitors but it is perhaps not entirely fanciful to suggest that here the issue was both cultural and pragmatic. The church at Jerusalem under the leadership of James, identified strongly with its Jewish roots, carefully keeping the law both as a matter of practice and as a basis for mission to its own community. The Jerusalem church would not have been in the habit of eating with Gentiles. The visitors from James were acting in accordance with their culture and practice when they scrupled at eating with Gentiles. They may also have been concerned that close fellowship with Gentiles might provoke zealot minded Jews in Jerusalem to fresh persecution of Jewish Christians (see note on 2:12 *ad loc*). Peter, placed in the difficult position of having to side with those from Jerusalem or with those at Antioch decided to eat with the those who had come from James, leading other Jews at Antioch, including even Barnabas, to follow his example.

¹⁰ Longenecker makes much of the fact that no mention is made of Timothy in this letter whereas Barnabas is mentioned three times. He writes, "Now if the recipients of the Galatian letter were residents of northern Galatia, it must be assumed that Timothy was as involved in their evangelization as he was in the founding of the churches in the provinces of Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia. Yet Paul does not mention him in Galatians. And that failure to mention Timothy (also, of course, Silas, though without as strong circumstantial support), along with his repeated references to Barnabas, argues strongly against a North Galatian hypothesis. Not only so, but it also speaks against the classical form of the South Galatian hypothesis (which places the writing of Galatians after Acts 16:6), for it is virtually unthinkable that Paul would have addressed a letter to Christians in an area that included Lystra without sending news or making any mention of their native son. Thus the absence of Timothy in Galatians is strong circumstantial evidence in favour of the view that Paul wrote before Timothy joined the missionary party and that the addressees of the letter lived in the southern portion of the province – necessitating that ... the letter was sent before Paul made his return trip to the region as recounted in Acts 16:1-5."

¹¹ The extensive reporting of this incident in the book of Acts underlines its central importance to the development of the mission of the risen Christ.

Paul publicly and roundly condemned Peter for his actions. For Paul the issue lay at the heart of the gospel and amounted simply to this: on what basis were Gentiles to be accepted as part of the covenant community of the people of God? Was it on the basis of entry into Judaism with its lawkeeping or simply on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ? We are not told of the outcome of this rebuke. Did Peter and the visitors from James subsequently eat with the Gentile believers? Longenecker suggests that the issue was still not resolved when Paul wrote to the Galatians (see Gal 2:11-14 *ad loc*).

At much the same time it would seem that there were 'Judaisers' who were creating problems for the Gentile Christians of the new churches in Galatia. They were seeking to persuade them to observe the Jewish law, arguing particularly that they should be circumcised. The teaching of these Judaisers seems to have included the following elements:

- The Jewish persecution being experienced by these Galatian Christians could be averted if only they would identify themselves with the Jewish community by being circumcised (Gal 6:12-13)¹²;
- They suggested that Paul lacked apostolic authority, or at least that his authority was secondary to and derived from that of the Jerusalem apostles¹³;
- They insisted that to be part of Abrahamic covenant community a person must be circumcised and must keep the law;
- They suggested that the adoption of the whole gamut of Jewish legal code was the only way to avoid the sinful lifestyle common among the Gentiles, the only way to curb the flesh.

¹² Longenecker concludes that Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who were motivated by a concern for the welfare of Palestinian Christians amidst the rising pressures of Jewish nationalism. "We conclude, therefore, that Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians – or, more accurately, Christian Jews – who came from the Jerusalem church to Paul's churches in Galatia with a message stressing the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the rudiments of the cultic calendar, both for full acceptance by God and as a proper Christian lifestyle. Undoubtedly they presented their message as being theologically based and claimed to be only interested in Gentiles being fully integrated into the chosen people of Israel, and so full recipients of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Probably, as well, they claimed not to be opposing Paul but to be completing his message, and so bringing the Galatian Christians to perfection. Perhaps they also claimed to be representing James' pastoral concerns regarding Jewish-Gentile relations in Christian communities outside Palestine. Paul, however, accuses them of being primarily motivated by a desire to avoid persecution, and so to boast about Gentiles being circumcised (6:12-13)... For, as Jewett points out, in the rising tide of Jewish nationalism in Palestine, with the antagonism of the Zealots being directed against all who had Gentile sympathisers: 'If they could succeed in circumcising the Gentile Christians, this might effectively thwart any Zealot purification campaign against the Judean church!'"

¹³ Bruce suggests that the argument of the Judaisers went something along these lines, "The Jerusalem leaders are the only persons with authority to say what the true gospel is, and this authority they received direct from Christ. Paul has no comparable authority: any commission he exercises is derived by him from the Jerusalem leaders, and if he differs from them on the content or implications of the gospel, he is acting and teaching quite arbitrarily. In fact, they may have added, Paul went up to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion and spent some time with the apostles there. They instructed him in the first principles of the gospel, seeing that he was a man of uncommon intellect, magnanimously wiped out from their minds his record as a persecutor and authorised him to preach to others the gospel which he had learned from them. But when he left Jerusalem for Syria and Cilicia he began to adapt the gospel to make it palatable to Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders practised circumcision and obeyed the law and the customs, but Paul struck out on a line of his own, omitting circumcision and other ancient observances from the message he preached, and thus he betrayed his ancestral heritage. This law-free gospel has no authority but his own; he certainly did not receive it from the apostles, who disapproved of his course of action. Their disapproval was publicly shown on one occasion at Antioch, when there was a direct confrontation between Peter and him on the necessity of maintaining the Jewish food-laws."

It would seem that when Paul heard news of this propaganda among the Galatian churches the believers had not yet been won over by it (the appeal to "stand firm" in 5:1 suggests that they had not yet been circumcised), but clearly they were being swayed. It may even have been that Paul heard of the problem because they sent to Antioch asking his advice.

At much the same time we read in Acts 15:1 that "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: 'Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.'" It is tempting to speculate concerning the relationship between the three groups mentioned above, the 'certain men' who came from James, those who were troubling the Galatian churches and these 'men [who] came down from Judea to Antioch'. Is there one party who travelled from Jerusalem through Antioch and on into Galatia before returning to Antioch, or are there two or three groups? We can at least suppose that all were part of a common movement which was fomenting a crisis for the churches, even if we conclude that the various groups occupied differing positions within that movement.

The crisis provoked a twofold response:

- Paul dashed off his Letter to Galatians seeking to call them back to the simplicity of the gospel he had preached to them¹⁴;
- Paul and Barnabas, along with other believers from the church at Antioch, were sent off to Jerusalem to meet with the church there and to resolve the issues once and for all.

On their way to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas travelled through Phoenicia and Samaria telling the various churches of the conversion of the Gentiles – almost as if they drummed up support for their cause as they travelled to the Council

The Council of Jerusalem

For an excellent summary of the Jerusalem Council, its background, decisions and consequences, see the note from FF Bruce included in the notes for Acts 15 (Day 174 – June 23rd). Here I intend only to summarise the council as follows:

- The council stated that those who had gone out from Jerusalem and had caused disturbance among the churches had done so without the any authorisation from the apostles at Jerusalem;
- They affirmed that Gentile converts need not be circumcised nor need they seek to comply with the Jewish law;
- They exhorted Gentile believers to "abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." The intent of these requirements, with the exception perhaps of the last, would seem to have been to encourage Gentile converts to accommodate to the sensitivities of their Jewish brothers and sisters.

The decision was formulated in terms of a letter that was sent "To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia." (Acts 15:23)¹⁵.

The letter from the Council was sent back to the church at Antioch with Paul and Barnabas who were also accompanied by Judas and Silas, two leaders from Jerusalem. When the message was conveyed to the church it was the cause of much rejoicing. Judas and Silas also encouraged the church through their ministry.

¹⁴ Longenecker says, "It seems best... to conclude that Paul wrote Galatians on the eve of the Jerusalem Council, before the issues arising from the Antioch episode had been fully resolved."

¹⁵ These seem to have been the areas of Paul's ministry prior to his first missionary journey (cf. Galatians 2:21).

The Council put an end to the formal question of whether Gentile converts should be circumcised. It also endorsed the legitimacy of different patterns of church life such as the Jewish church at Jerusalem and the predominantly Gentile churches of the Diaspora. It emphasised the mutual obligation of Christians one to another and also of separate churches one to another.

Postscript: The Start of Paul's Second Missionary Journey

Some time later Paul determined to revisit the churches planted in his first missionary journey (Acts 15:36). After an argument over Mark, Paul and Barnabas parted company – there is no suggestion that the disagreement was connected with Barnabas' conduct in withdrawing from table fellowship with the Gentile Christians. Silas, one of the delegates from Jerusalem who had conveyed the decision of the council, now accompanied Paul, underlining the support of the church at Jerusalem for the missionary work of Paul.

Paul and Silas visited the churches of Galatia, beginning with Derbe and then travelling on to Lystra and beyond. They informed the churches of the decisions reached by the council at Jerusalem which must greatly have encouraged them. We read that the churches "were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers." (Acts 16:5).

One incident requires particular attention. At Lystra, a young believer called Timothy was commended to Paul by the leaders of the churches at Lystra and Iconium. Timothy's mother was a Jew who had brought him up in the faith but his father was a Greek. Paul wished Timothy to accompany him in his journey and assist in his work but before doing so he had him circumcised 'because of the Jews who lived in that area' (Acts 16:3). Paul was ready to regularise Timothy's status as a Jew by having him circumcised, so avoiding unnecessary offence concerning Timothy's ministry. Bruce says, "That he did so is striking, in view of such passages as Gal 2:3; 5:3 etc., but Timothy's was an exceptional case. Paul's readiness to conciliate Jewish opinion is seen elsewhere in Ac., e.g., 21:26; cf. 1 Cor 9:19-22 for his justification of such action." The situation was very different from that addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians: there *Gentiles* were being told that circumcision was essential to their salvation and that without it they could not be part of the covenant community of the people of God. The circumcision of Timothy does not require a later dating of the letter to the Galatians¹⁶. Indeed, had Paul circumcised Timothy before the Galatian crisis arose, this would surely have formed an important element in the argument of Paul's opponents and would have required explicit treatment by Paul in his letter to the Galatians (cf. Longenecker's comments cited in footnote 10).

By the time Paul commenced his second missionary journey, the crisis which formed the focus of the letter to the Galatians, had passed¹⁷.

The Structure of Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Paul's letters reflect something of the common epistolary forms of his day, though Paul is not a slave to any rigid form. Speaking particularly of his letter to the Galatians, Longenecker says that it is made up of a "combination of Hellenistic epistolary structures, Greco-Roman

¹⁶ A second chronological problem relates to fitting in the three and fourteen year timespans of Gal 1:18 and 2:1. Longenecker says, "At least two of the following three assumptions must be made: i) That the three years and fourteen years are concurrent, not consecutive – that is, that both are to be measured from Paul's conversion, and not that the fourteen years of Gal 2:1 are to be counted from Paul's first visit; ii) That Paul in Gal 1:18 and 2:1 is using a method of computation wherein parts of years are counted as full years; and iii) That Jesus' crucifixion took place in AD 30, with Paul's conversion two or three years afterwards."

¹⁷ Although Judaisers remained a problem among the churches associated with Paul (cf. Phil 3:2f.), and suspicion of Paul continued among a sizable group in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 21:20-21).

rhetorical forms, Jewish exegetical procedures, and Christian soteriological confessions – together, of course, with Paul's own revelatory experiences and pastoral concerns." His letters are usually structured after the following pattern:

- *Opening* (sender, addressee or addressees, greeting);
- *Thanksgiving* or *Blessing* (often with intercession);
- *Body* (formal opening, connective and transitional formulae, eschatological climax, and sometimes a travelogue);
- *Paranesis* (with vocatives prevalent);
- *Closing* (greetings, doxology, benediction, with a reference to the writing process sometimes includes).

Longenecker suggests that the letter to the Galatians falls into the following sections:

- 1:1-5 Salutation;
- 1:6-4:11 Rebuke Section, with the inclusion of autobiographical details and theological arguments;
- 4:12-6:10 Request Section, with the inclusion of personal, scriptural, and ethical appeals;
- 6:11-18 Subscription.

Barrett suggests a rather simpler division:

- Chs 1-2 *History* – Paul defends his own history in order to gain a hearing;
- Chs 3-4 *Theology* of Freedom;
- Chs 5-6 *Ethics* of obligation.

Here then is the letter to the Galatians: a letter written in about 48 AD in the heat of a crisis which threatened Gentile mission and indeed challenged the very character of the Gospel. It is a passionate letter, written in defence of the Gospel of Grace and written to save the Galatian Christians from a return to slavery.

Longenecker sums up its significance when he writes, "Historically, Galatians has been foundational for many forms of Christian doctrine, proclamation and practice. And it remains true today to say that how one understands the issues and teaching of Galatians determines in large measure what kind of theology is espoused, what kind of message is proclaimed, and what kind of lifestyle is practised."

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Verses 1-3

The letter begins with the conventional form of salutation, "A to B, greetings".

Verse 1

Παῦλος ἀπόστολος, οὐκ ἀπ' ἀνθρώπων οὐδὲ δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀλλὰ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ ἐγείραντος αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν,

"In the NT the noun ἀπόστολος connotes personal, delegated authority; it speaks of being commissioned to represent another." Longenecker

"He means that the Lord Jesus has given to him, as to the original twelve, a very special authority to speak, in Christ's name, for the guidance of the church." Machen

οὐδὲ neither, nor

Paul's opponents would seem to have claimed that any authority Paul possessed was delegated from the true apostles in Jerusalem.

πατὴρ Noun, gen s πατηρ, πατρος m
father

Longenecker argues that the sense is 'through Jesus Christ and [from] God the Father.' He continues, "Probably Paul had in mind his Damascus Road experience when referring to Jesus Christ as the agent in his apostleship, for it was the risen and exalted Jesus who commissioned him to be God's missionary to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:16-18)."

ἐγείραντος Verb, aor act ptc, m gen s ἐγείρω
raise

νεκρός, α, ον dead

Verse 2

καὶ οἱ σὺν ἐμοὶ πάντες ἀδελφοί, ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Γαλατίας·

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας, πασα, παν
gen παντος, πασης, παντος each, every
(pl = all)

ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church

Note the plural here: Galatians was written to a group of churches – each congregation being referred to as a church.

Verse 3

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

εἰρήνη, ης f peace

πατὴρ Noun, gen s πατηρ, πατρος m
father

"Such a joining of Christ with God is a reflection of the exalted place that the risen Christ had in Paul's thought. And while this almost unconscious association of Christ with God is here principally functional in nature, it very soon begins to assume a more elevated and Christocentric focus in Paul's other letters (cf. esp. the bipartite reference of 1 Thess 1:12 and the tripartite reference of 2 Cor 13:14) – which, of course, furnished important data for the Church's later trinitarian creeds."

Longenecker

Verse 4

τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν ὅπως ἐξέλθῃται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστώτος πονηροῦ κατὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἡμῶν,

Longenecker suggests that this verse, and perhaps also the next, reflect "one of the early confessions of the Christian church."

δόντος Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s δίδωμι
give

Cf. Mk 10:45.

ἑαυτός, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον reflexive pronoun,
himself, herself, itself

ἀμαρτία, ας f sin

ὅπως (or ὅπως ἄν) that, in order that
ἐξέλθῃται Verb, aor midd subj, 3s ἐξαιρέω
pull out, midd rescue, deliver, save

A Pauline *hapax legomenon*, but cf. Acts 7:10,34; 12:11; 23:27; 26:17.

αἰῶνος Noun, gen s αἰών, αἰῶνος m age,
world order, eternity

ἐνεστώτος Verb, perf act ptc, m & n gen s
ἐνιστημι be present

πονηρός, α, ον evil, bad, wicked

"The Pharisees looked on 'this age' as coming to a climax in a period of awful 'messianic travail', which would usher in the 'age to come' and/or 'the Messianic Age.' ... [cf Rom 12:2]... Paul's use here of this confessional portion (if, indeed, this is what it is), with its stress on Christ's having rescued us from this present *evil* world, is, in fact, particularly relevant to his argument in Galatians, for later he makes the point that the law to which his converts are being urged to submit belongs to this present age and so can be characterised as one of 'the weak and miserable elementary principles of the world' (4:3,9)." Longenecker

θελημα, ατος n will, wish, desire

"The phrase ... underscores the fact that Christ's redemptive work and mankind's salvation are to be understood in the context of God's will and fatherly concern." Longenecker

Verse 5

ὃ ἢ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

δόξα, ας f glory

εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων 'for ever and ever', the plural indicates endlessness.

Postscript

Note that, in this salutation, Paul speaks of God and of Christ in functional rather than ontological terms.

Verse 6

Θαυμάζω ὅτι οὕτως ταχέως μετατίθεσθε ἀπὸ τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἐν χάριτι Χριστοῦ εἰς ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον,

Paul's letters usually include a thanksgiving section after the salutation but none appears in this letter.

θαυμάζω wonder, be amazed

"A conventional expression in Greek letters from the third century BC through the fourth century AD to signal astonishment, rebuke, disapproval, and disappointment – even at times irony and irritation." Longenecker

ταχέως adv. (formed from ταχύς) quickly, at once, soon

Cf. LXX of Ex 32:8; Judg 2:17.

μετατιθημι remove, take back; midd desert, turn away

"The present tense of the verb μετατίθεσθε indicates clearly that when the apostle wrote, the apostasy of the Galatians was as yet only in process. They were, so to speak, on the point, or more exactly, in the very act of turning." Burton

τοῦ καλέσαντος the reference is most likely to God, cf. 1:15; 5:8.

χάριτι Noun, dat s χάρις

Dative of means.

The inclusion of Χριστοῦ is supported by p⁵¹ & A B Byz vg syr^{pes} cop^{bo}; Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ by D 326 it^{de} syr^{hel}; Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ by it^z cop^{sa}. Apparently the Chester Beatty papyrus (p^{46vid}) omits χριστοῦ (and variants), as do also G H^{vid} it^{ar,g} Mcion Tert Cyp Ambst Ephr Pel. There is also some evidence for θεοῦ in the place of Χριστοῦ (327 Or^{lat}).

ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different
εὐαγγέλιον, ου n good news, gospel

Verse 7

ὁ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο· εἰ μὴ τινές εἰσιν οἱ ταρασσοντες ὑμᾶς καὶ θέλοντες μεταστρέψαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

ἄλλος, η, ον another, other

Longenecker, following Burton, suggests that here ἄλλος bears the sense of another *of the same kind* whereas ἕτερος means another *of a different kind*. Hence the meaning is that they have been drawn away to another gospel which is not at all the same as that which Paul preached and which they first believed.

"The idiomatic use of εἰ μὴ ('except that'; cf. πλην ὅτι of Acts 20:23) suggests that no one would ever think of calling the Judaizers' message a 'gospel' *except* with the intention of confusing the Christians of Galatia."

Longenecker

ταρασσω trouble, disturb, confuse

θελω wish, will

μεταστρέψαι Verb, aor act infin μεταστρεφω turn, alter, change

τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ "appears a number of times elsewhere in his letters as well (cf. Rom 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12; 4:4; 9:13; 10:14; Phil 1:27; 1 Thess 3:2; see also 2 Thess 1:8), being used synonymously with τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ ('the gospel of God'; Rom 1:1-3; 15:16; 1 Thess 2:2, 8-9; 1 Tim 1:11). The genitive τοῦ Χριστοῦ is undoubtedly both objective (referring to Christ as its content) and subjective (referring to Christ as its source)." Longenecker

Verse 8

ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐὰν ἡμεῖς ἢ ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ εὐαγγελίζηται ὑμῖν παρ' ὃ εὐηγγελισάμεθα ὑμῖν, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

"The καὶ, 'even,' is intensive, signalling the extreme nature of the supposition to follow." Longenecker

ἐὰν Conjunction ἐὰν if, even if, though

ἄγγελος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ carries a note of irony.

εὐαγγελίζηται Verb, pres midd subj

εὐαγγελίζω act. and midd proclaim the good news

παρὰ preposition with acc = beside, by, rather than, contrary to

"Paul saw the preacher's authority as derived from the gospel and not vice versa." Longenecker

ἀνάθεμα, τος n cursed, under the curse of God

"In the NT ἀνάθεμα is used in Luke 21:5 in the sense of something dedicated or consecrated to God. Paul, however, uses ἀνάθεμα here and in Rom 9:3; 1 Cor 12:3; 16:22 (cf. Acts 23:14; also the intensified καταθεμα of Rev 22:3) along the lines of the LXX emphasis on destruction. The basic idea in Paul's usage, as Johannes Behm points out, is 'delivering up to the judicial wrath of God'..." Longenecker

ἔστω Verb, pres act imperat, 3s εἶμι

Verse 9

ὡς προειρήκαμεν, καὶ ἄρτι πάλιν λέγω, εἴ τις ὑμᾶς εὐαγγελίζεται παρ' ὃ παρελάβετε, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.

προειρήκαμεν Verb, perf act ind, 1pl
προλεγώ say beforehand, warn in advance

It is unclear whether the reference is to the warnings given on a previous visit or whether it is a literary device introducing emphatic repetition of what was said in the previous verse.

ἄρτι again
πάλιν again, once more
παρελάβετε Verb, aor act ind, 2pl
παραλαμβάνω take, receive, accept

Verse 10

Ἄρτι γὰρ ἀνθρώπους πείθω ἢ τὸν θεόν; ἢ ζητῶ ἀνθρώποις ἀρέσκειν; εἰ ἔτι ἀνθρώποις ἤρεσκον, Χριστοῦ δοῦλος οὐκ ἂν ἦμην.

πειθώ persuade, convince, win over

Here, 'seek the favour of'. "Evidently the Judaisers were claiming that Paul only presented half a gospel in his evangelistic mission in Galatia, purposely trimming his message so as to gain a more favourable response." Longenecker

ζητεῶ seek, search for, look for, attempt, ask, investigate
ἀρέσκω please, seek to please

"The Judaisers, it seems, had told the Galatians that Paul really did believe in and preach the necessity of circumcision (5:11) – at least, he preached it elsewhere in his mission.

Undoubtedly, therefore, they were saying that his failure to do so to Gentiles in Galatia was because he did not want to offend them, but rather wanted to win their favour. Paul, of course, does not deny that he himself continued as a Christian to live a basically Jewish lifestyle (cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23), or that he saw it legitimate for Jewish believers in Jesus to continue to express their faith in the traditional forms of Judaism (cf. 1 Cor 7:17-20). But he made a distinction between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians with regard to the Mosaic law. And so, he insists, he was attempting no subterfuge by not bringing in the law in his Galatian mission, either as a means of acceptance before God or as the normative expression of the Christian life." Longenecker

ἐτι still, yet

ἤρεσκον Verb, imperf act ind, 1s & 3pl

ἀρέσκω

ἂν particle indicating contingency

Verses 6-10 Postscript

"Paul seems able to be magnanimous with regard to certain matters (the so-called *adiaphora*) only because he knows what the fundamental issues are. Where, however, foundational matters are at stake, he is prepared, without hesitation, to draw clear lines and to speak with fervour in defence of 'the truth of the gospel' (2:5,14). And this is what he does here, as well as elsewhere in his letters where the gospel itself is at stake (cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15; Col 2:8)." Longenecker

Verse 11

Γνωρίζω γὰρ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ εὐαγγελισθῆν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν κατὰ ἄνθρωπον.

γνωρίζω make known, disclose, know

Commonly used in contemporary Greek letters to introduce a disclosure.

The reading γὰρ after γνωρίζω appears in B D* G it cop^{sa}. Longenecker considers the better reading to be δε which is supported by p⁴⁶ κ* A Byz syr cop^{bo}

"In Galatians even amidst tones of sternness and severity Paul speaks of his wayward converts as 'brothers' (see also 3:15; 4:12,28,31; 5:11,13; 6:1,18) – in effect, therefore, reminding them of his and their fraternal relationship, even though they were beginning to forget it." Longenecker

κατα prep with acc = according to

I.e. it is not simply human.

Verse 12

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐγὼ παρὰ ἀνθρώπου παρέλαβον
αὐτό, οὔτε ἐδιδάχθην, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀποκαλύψεως
Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

οὐδὲ neither, nor

παρα with gen = from, of

Often used in NT in sense of ultimate source.

παρέλαβον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl

παραλαμβάνω take, receive, accept

οὔτε not, nor (οὔτε ... οὔτε neither ... nor)

ἐδιδάχθην Verb, aor pass ind, 3s διδάσκω

teach

ἀποκαλύπτει, εως f revelation

"Paul's thesis, therefore, in line with his affirmation of 1:1, is that he received authority for preaching Christ in law-free terms to Gentiles by means of a revelation of which Jesus Christ was the agent. In all probability he had his encounter with Christ on the Damascus road in mind, with that revelation including (at least embryonically) a mission to Gentiles... [though cf. 1 Cor 11:23-26; 15:3-11 for Paul's acknowledgement of his debt to an agreement with others.] ... Paul could not claim the usual apostolic qualifications as expressed in John 15:27 and Acts 1:21-22. He was dependent on those who were believers before him for much in the Christian tradition, as his letters frankly indicate. But he had been confronted by the exalted Lord, directly commissioned an apostle by Christ himself, and given the key to the pattern of redemptive history in the present age. The Jerusalem apostles had the key to many of the prophetic mysteries and were the living canons of the data in the gospel proclamation. He, however, had been entrusted with a further aspect of that message, which came to him 'by revelation through Jesus Christ' and so was uniquely his. Together, the apostolic kerygma and the mystery revealed to Paul regarding a law-free gospel for Gentiles combined to enhance the fullness of the Christian message." Longenecker

Verses 11-12 Postscript

J Christian Becker develops the suggestion of Jeremias that these two verses state the themes which are subsequently unfolded chiasmically in the rest of the letter:

"1. *The apostle*: Gal 1:13-2:21. Paul's gospel does not derive 'from a human source' (παρα ἀνθρώπου); to the contrary, it is directly from God, and this constitutes his apostleship.

2. *The gospel*: Gal 3:1-5:25. Paul's gospel is not 'according to human standards' (κατα ἀνθρώπου); to the contrary, it is according to Scripture (κατα γραφην, Gal 3:1-4:31) and verified by the Spirit (Gal 5:1-15)." Longenecker doubts that this analysis can be sustained.

Verse 13

Ἠκούσατε γὰρ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ, ὅτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐπόρθουν αὐτήν,

Ἠκούσατε Verb, aor act ind, 2pl ἀκούω

An epistolary disclosure formula.

ἐμος, η, ον 1st pers possessive adj my, mine
ἀναστροφή, ης f manner of life, conduct
ποτε enclitic particle once, formerly, at one time

Ἰουδαϊσμός, ον m Judaism (Jewish religion or way of life)

ὑπερβολή, ης f surpassing; καθ' ὑ. = beyond measure, to an extreme

"καθ' ὑπερβολὴν 'intensely' is a classical comparative that signals an excess of either quality or character (or both) over what might be expected. It appears in the NT only in Paul's letters (cf. Rom 7:13; 1 Cor 12:31; 2 Cor 1:8; 4:17)." Longenecker

δίωκω persecute, seek after, pursue, follow

ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church

Note that as well as using ἐκκλησία of particular congregations (1:2), Paul here uses the term to signify all such communities together making up the one church of God. In context, the 'church of God' is viewed as a single entity standing over against 'Judaism'.

ἐπόρθουν Verb, imperf act ind πορθεῶ
destroy, try to destroy, kill

Note the imperfects signifying past repeated action.

Longenecker says that, "the keeping of the Mosaic law was considered by Pharisaic Jews to be the vitally important prerequisite for the coming of the Messianic Age" and he views this as the impetus behind Paul's persecution of Christians. "Probably he reasoned that in the light of Israel's rising messianic hopes the nation must be unified and faithful in its obedience to the law and kept from schism or going astray. And in this task he doubtless expected to receive God's commendation."

Verse 14

καὶ προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου, περισσοτέρως ζηλωτῆς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων.

προκοπῶ advance, progress

ὑπὲρ prep. with acc = beyond, more than.

πολυς, πολλη, πολυ gen πολλου, ης, ου much, many

συνηλικιωτης, ου m contemporary, person of one's own age

γένει Noun, dat s γενος, ους n family, race, people, nation, offspring

περισσοτερωσ adv. (from περισσοτερος) all the more, especially, to a greater degree

ζηλωτης, ου m one who is zealous

ὑπαρχω be (equivalent to εἰμι)

πατρικος, η, ον coming from ones (fore)fathers

παραδοσις, εωσ f tradition

"The traditions of my fathers,' refers to

- i) the teachings and practices developed in the Pharisaic schools of Second Temple Judaism, which later became codified in the Mishnah, Palestinian and Babylonian Gemaras, Midrashim, and the various individual halakhic and haggadic collections of rabbinic lore, and
- ii) the interpretations of a more popular nature that arose within the synagogues of Paul's day, as represented in the extant Targumim.

What Paul is insisting on is that as far as his standing in Judaism is concerned, his credentials are impeccable (cf. Acts 22:3; Phil 3:5-6)." Longenecker

Verse 15

ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ

"But when the one who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace was pleased.' The crux of Paul's argument in vv. 15-17 comes near the end: 'I did not consult immediately thereafter with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before me' (vv. 16b-17a). He prepares for these assertions, however, by first setting out in positive fashion the bases for his ministry – i.e., God's good pleasure (εὐδοκησεν), ordination (ἀφορίσας), and call (καλέσας)." Longenecker

ὅτε conj when, at which time

εὐδοκεω be pleased, take delight/pleasure in

ὁ θεος, included by κ A D *et al*, would appear to be a scribal gloss making explicit the implied subject of εὐδοκησεν.

ἀφορίσας Verb, aor act ptc, m nom s

ἀφορίζω separate, take away, set apart, appoint

κοιλια, ας f stomach, womb

Cf. Jer 1:5; Rom 1:1. "suggests that he thought of his apostleship not just along the lines of a Jewish understanding of *saliah* (i.e. representative messenger of envoy...), but also in terms of Israelite prophethology."

Longenecker

Verse 16

ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, εὐθέως οὐ προσανεθέμην σαρκὶ καὶ αἵματι,

ἀποκαλυπτω reveal, disclose

Cf. 1 Cor 9:1; 15:8 and Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:12-18.

"What Paul received by revelation on his way to Damascus was

- i) a new understanding of Jesus Christ, which he shared with others who had come into contact with the resurrected Lord, and
- ii) a new understanding of God's strategy of redemption (or, God's 'redemptive logistics') for this final age, which included his law-free mission to the Gentiles, but which he found was not always appreciated by others.

These two features of that one revelation always went together in Paul's mind, though at times depending on context he emphasised one over the other." Longenecker

ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

ἔθνεσιν Noun, dat pl ἔθνος, ους n nation, people; τα ἔ. Gentiles

Cf. Rom 1:5. "The logic of 'the gospel according to Paul' was implicit in his Damascus-road experience. Paul grasped this in essence there and then, although the fuller implications of the experience became plain to him more gradually." Bruce

προσανεθέμην Verb, 2nd aor midd ind, 1s

προσανατιθεμαι go (to someone) for advice; add to

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, physical body, human nature

"The issue at Galatia had to do with where Paul got his message and how he received certification as an apostle, with his opponents claiming that he was dependent on and subordinate to the apostles at Jerusalem. So it is understandable that the thrust of his argument in these verses should be on the negative aspects of his thesis statement of 1:11-12 – as it is, in fact, throughout the remainder of his autobiographical *narratio*. In this context, then, εὐθεως makes eminent sense at the beginning of his negative assertions. It should probably be translated 'immediately thereafter,' so tying together Christ's revelatory encounter (vv 15-16a) and the crux of the polemic of this passage (vv 16b-17a)." Longenecker

Verse 17

οὐδὲ ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα πρὸς τοὺς πρὸ ἐμοῦ ἀποστόλους, ἀλλὰ ἀπήλθον εἰς Ἀραβίαν, καὶ πάλιν ὑπέστρεψα εἰς Δαμασκόν.

οὐδὲ neither, nor

ἀνήλθον Verb, 2nd aor act ind, 1s & 3pl
ἀνερχομαι go or come up

Arabia probably means here the Nabatean kingdom neighbouring Damascus. Longenecker states that we cannot "tell from Paul's brief statement why he went to Arabia. Many have supposed that it was for the purpose of missionary outreach. But it could just as well be argued that it was principally for solitude to rethink his life and learning from the perspective of Christ's revelatory encounter, away from Jewish jurisdiction and pressures."

πάλιν again, once more

ὑποστρεφω return, turn back

Verse 18

Ἐπειτα μετὰ ἔτη τρία ἀνήλθον εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα ἱστορῆσαι Κηφᾶν, καὶ ἐπέμεινα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἡμέρας δεκαπέντε·

ἐπειτα then, afterwards

ἔτη Noun, nom & acc pl ἔτος, οὗς n year
τρεις, τρια gen τριων dat τρισιν three

I.e. three years after Paul's Damascus road experience. "The exact interval of time between the revelatory experience and his first visit as a Christian to Jerusalem, however, cannot be determined – and so the precise length of time spent in either Arabia or Damascus cannot be calculated – for 'after three years' is probably to be understood in an inclusive manner 'in the third year' rather than 'after three full years' (cf. μετα τρεῖς ἡμέρας, 'after three days,' of Mark 8:31; 10:34 par.)." Longenecker

ἀνήλθον Verb, 2nd aor act ind, 1s & 3pl

ἀνερχομαι go or come up

ἱστορεω visit, get to know

Κηφᾶς, α m Cephas (Aramaic equivalent of Πέτρος, rock).

The Western MSS generally read Πέτρον rather than the less familiar Κηφᾶν – the latter being Paul's general usage.

ἐπιμεινω remain, stay, persist in

"They discussed, without doubt, matters pertaining to their common commitment to Christ. And it is not beyond the range of reasonable probability to believe that such discussions included Peter's accounts of Jesus' ministry, and that from such accounts Paul learned much. But to learn about the details of Jesus' earthly life from Peter and to be subordinate to or dependent on Peter for his apostleship and Gentile mission are clearly quite different matters. Paul is willing to acknowledge the former, but he is adamant in his rejection of the latter." Longenecker

Verse 19

ἕτερον δὲ τῶν ἀποστόλων οὐκ εἶδον, εἰ μὴ Ἰάκωβον τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου.

ἕτερος, α, ον other, another, different

εἶδον Verb, aor act ind, 1s & 3pl ὁραω see, observe, perceive

The natural sense of εἰ μὴ would suggest that Paul is numbering James among the apostles.

Longenecker provides the following cameo of James: "James, τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ κυρίου, 'the Lord's brother,' is in all probability the James named first among the four brothers of Jesus in Mark 6:3 (cf. Matt 13:55). He is not to be confused with Jesus' two disciples of the same name, James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphaeus (cf. Mark 3:17-18, par.; Acts 1:13; 12:2). During Jesus' ministry, James seems to have been sceptical of his brother's activities and so was not a follower of Jesus (cf. Mark 3:21, 31-35, par.; John 7:3-5). He was, however, converted by an appearance of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor 15:7), and along with others of Jesus' family became a member of the Jerusalem church (Acts 1:14). He rose to prominence quickly in the church (cf. Acts 15:13; 21:18-19; Gal 2:1-10), and after Peter's departure from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 12:17) became the leading figure within that church. It would be unfair to attribute his rank in the Jerusalem church simply to a veneration of one who was physically related to Jesus. Probably it is more accurate to say that his prominence came about as a result of the need for someone to lead the growing number of scrupulously minded Christians in the Jerusalem church, and that his physical relation to Jesus, his Davidic descent, and his personal qualities fitted him for the task... His death as a martyr took place in AD 62 when the High Priest Annas, during an interim between two Roman governors, persecuted Christians in Jerusalem... He was known for his deep, ascetic piety, and so bore the title ὁ δίκαιος... Later the Ebionites (Symmachians) thought of him as the twelfth apostle..., which opinion may have been held by some Jewish Christians earlier." Longenecker says "there appears to be no reason to regard James as anything other than Jesus' uterine brother."

Verse 20

ἃ δὲ γράφω ὑμῖν, ἰδοὺ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι οὐ ψεύδομαι.

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before, in the presence of, in front of
ψεύδομαι lie, speak untruth, deceive

Cf. 2 Cor 1:23; 11:31; 1 Thess 2:5.

"His use of an oath here in Galatians suggests that his judaising opponents were claiming in particular that it was during his first visit to Jerusalem that Paul both learned the gospel from the Jerusalem leaders and received his authority to be an apostle. Against such claims, Paul affirms in the strongest manner possible the surety of his two lines of defence and puts his readers on guard against any challenge to what he has said." Longenecker

Verse 21

ἔπειτα ἦλθον εἰς τὰ κλίματα τῆς Συρίας καὶ τῆς Κιλικίας.

ἔπειτα then, afterwards
κλίμα, τος n region, district

"By the district of Syria he probably means the area around Antioch and by the district of Cilicia the area around his hometown of Tarsus (cf. Acts 9:30; 11:25-26). What Paul did [during this period]... can be inferred from the verb εὐαγγελίζεται ('he is preaching') of v 23. So it may be concluded that this was a period of evangelisation, though probably not a full-blown Gentile mission as he later took up." Longenecker

Verse 22

ἤμην δὲ ἀγνοοῦμενος τῷ προσώπῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν Χριστῷ, ἀγνοοῦμενος Verb, pres pass ptc, m nom s ἀγνοεω not know

Imperfect periphrastic carries the sense 'I remained unknown'

ἐκκλησία, ας f congregation, church
Ἰουδαίος, α, ον a Jew, Jewish, Judean

Cf. 1 Thess 2:14 for a similar phrase.

Verse 23

μόνον δὲ ἀκούοντες ἦσαν ὅτι Ὁ διώκων ἡμᾶς ποτε νῦν εὐαγγελίζεται τὴν πίστιν ἣν ποτε ἐπόρθει,

μονος, η, ον i) adj only, alone; ii) adv μονον only, alone

"They kept hearing'.

διώκω persecute, seek after, pursue, follow

ποτε enclitic particle once, formerly, at one time

εὐαγγελίζω act. and midd proclaim the good news

πορθεω destroy, try to destroy, kill

"Paul is now preaching the very same gospel that the Judean Christians held, which earlier he had opposed." Longenecker

Verse 24

καὶ ἐδόξαζον ἐν ἐμοὶ τὸν θεόν.

δοξάζω praise, honour, glorify, exalt
ἐμοὶ Pronoun, dat s ἐγώ

"The use of ἐν (so 'because of') as the ground or basis of an action is paralleled in Rom 1:24; 9:7 (based on Gen 21:12; cf. Heb 11:18) and 1 Cor 7:14. The thought and language of this verse are similar to God's statement regarding his Servant Israel in Isa 49:3 LXX: ἐν σοι δοξασθησομαι, 'because of you I shall be praised.'" Longenecker