



This Sunday we continued our series in Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, looking at 1v11-2v10. With this long auto-biographical section on the first 20 or so years of Paul's apostleship, we are still in the introductory part of this letter.

The heart of this section is the assertion in 1v11-12 that Paul received the gospel he believed and preached not from humans but from God. It seems that he was being accused within Galatia either of having been spoon-fed his message by those who had been apostles before him, or of making up a new message.

Paul begins with a brief reminder of how he came to faith: by the Father's amazing revelation of his Son to him (v15), before focusing on the main argument he wants to address here: that he got his gospel from God not the other apostles.

1 – Paul's gospel *did not come from the apostles'* message (1v16-24)

Paul did not talk to anyone – in the sense of consulting or seeking advice – upon his conversion, he tells us (v16). Instead, he went straight out into Arabia (v17), then 3 years later stayed briefly with Peter in Jerusalem (v18-20), then spent a number of years preaching in Syria and Cilicia (v21-24).

Paul makes his clear his lack of contact and connection with the other apostles (v22-24). He received and taught the gospel independently of them. This is because he had received it directly from God; he did not need human approval.

2 – Paul's gospel *was the same as the apostles'* message (2v1-10)

Eventually, 14 years later (v1), Paul did go to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles. But this was because God sent him, rather than because they summoned him

(v2). He straightforwardly presented to them the gospel he was preaching, and they straightforwardly accepted it (v6). They agreed that Paul had received and was preaching the same gospel as them, and they acknowledged his calling to take it to the Gentiles, accepting him as an apostle on the same terms as Peter (v7)! A case in point of their fellowship was the Jerusalem apostles' agreement that Gentile convert Titus should not be compelled to be circumcised (v3-5).

While we may wonder whether such a long, autobiographical section is needed for us today, at the heart of this passage lies Paul's assertion that, despite what they were being told, the Galatian Christians were right to and absolutely could and should continue to base their lives upon this controversial message that asks so much of them, because it comes not from men and women, but from Christ. Though we have not met the risen Christ in the way that the apostles had, we, too, can trust this gospel, knowing that, though its authenticity has been attacked so very many times through the history of the church and in secular western culture today, it comes to us from Christ. Hallelujah!

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. Why did it matter so much to the Galatian Christians that this gospel they had received was true? Why does it matter to us? What sacrifices have you made/are you making to follow Christ and his message?
2. Why did it matter so much to Paul that they understood and accepted that the gospel was true?
3. What attacks can we infer, from Paul's defence, were being made on him and his gospel? Have you come across similar attacks made on the gospel today?
4. On what grounds does Paul assure these Christians that they can indeed trust the gospel message? Where are the direct parallels for us? Where might it be a little different?
5. How can we acknowledge the people and the blessings that have been so very important to us in our journeys of faith, while keeping Christ and his word as the foundation of our assurance?