

THE MINISTER'S LIFE WAS COMPLETELY CHANGED GALATIANS 01:10–16

Introduction

Critics of Paul and false teachers had arisen in the churches of Galatia. They were saying that Paul's call and the gospel he preached were false. He was not a true minister of God; he was a self-made minister who was only using the ministry for a livelihood and other greedy purposes.

Paul's answer was direct and forceful: his message and life were of God. His old life and old message had been radically changed.

- I. He sought to please God not men (v. 10).
- II. He proclaimed the gospel (vv. 11-12).
- III. He had a radical change of life (vv. 13-16).

I. Galatians 01:10 Paul, the Slave of Jesus Christ

The minister sought to please God not men. The critics of Paul were saying that he was inconsistent...

- seeking the favour and approval of men instead of God.
- striving to please men instead of God.
- living by the law when he was with the religionists (Jews) and living a looser life when he was with the heathen and non-religionists (Gentiles).
- saying one thing to one group of people and something else to another group of people.
- living a life of duplicity and deception in order to secure the support of the people.

Paul minced no words; he fired two questions at his critics: "Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God?...Or am I trying to please men?" As stated, Paul minced no words. He answered his own questions by making a startling statement: he agreed with his critics. "If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."

The point is clear: note the word "*still*." Paul was saying that there was a time when he was a man-pleaser, a time when he sought the favour and approval of men instead of God. But no more: he was not "still pleasing men." He was now seeking to please God and God alone. Pleasing men, courting their favour, and securing their acceptance, approval and recognition used to be part of his life. But now, honour, position and wealth did not matter to him anymore. He now wanted one thing and one thing alone: the favour and approval of God. For this reason, he was the slave (doulos) of Jesus Christ.

John 12:26 "Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me."

1 Cor 7:22 *For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.*

Eph 6:6-7 *Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.*

Col 3:24 *Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*

1 Th 2:4-5 *On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts. You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed — God is our witness.*

Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

II. ***Galatians 01:11–12 Paul, the Minister Proclaimed the Gospel***

The minister proclaimed the gospel. Some critics of Paul were saying that he was not a true apostle of the Lord Jesus because he had not been a follower of the Lord when the Lord was upon the earth. Therefore, what he was teaching was a man-made gospel taught by mistaken and misguided men.

Note that the word *know* (gnorizo) is a solemn word, a strong declaration that what follows is of crucial importance and needs to be heard.

1. The gospel Paul preached was not a man-made gospel. It was not a gospel created by man's...

- mind
- imaginations
- ideas
- science
- rationalizations
- energy
- hopes
- dreams
- religions

The gospel was not a human thing; it did not originate with man. The gospel was not the good news *of men*.

2. The gospel Paul preached was not received from man. It was *not a taught message*, not a message, which he had learned from any man. The gospel he preached was not a message...

- handed down to him like tradition
- learned by him from an educational institution
- taught to him by men

3. The gospel Paul preached was given to him by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Revelation means a truth that is shared by God to man, a truth that man never knew.

It is crucial to note this point, for Paul's call to the ministry and the gospel which he preached rested upon this single fact: did Jesus Christ really reveal Himself and the truth of His death and resurrection to Paul or not? If Paul was lying, then he was not a true minister of the gospel. He would be a fraud, a deceiver, a man who viewed the ministry only as a profession to provide a livelihood, to secure honour and to secure power over people.

However, as Paul plainly declared, he received the gospel by direct revelation from Jesus Christ. Time and again he declared the fact.

1 Cor 2:7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

Eph 1:9 And he made known to us the mystery [revelation] of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.

Eph 3:4-6 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery [revelation] of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Col 1:25-27 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness — the mystery [revelation] that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

1 Th 2:4 On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

1 Tim 1:11 That conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

Titus 1:3 And at his appointed season he brought his word to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Saviour.

III. *Galatians 01:13–16 The Radically Changed Minister*

The minister of God had a radical change of life. This was clearly seen by comparing his former life with his present life.

1. Paul's former life included two terrible things.
 - a. Paul had been the first arch-persecutor of the church. He had been an *inflamed* man who struck out more than anyone else against the early believers.

Acts 9:1, 3-4 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest. As he neared Damascus on his journey,

suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

Apparently Paul had launched the persecution of the church on the very day of Stephen's death. Saul had wanted to act and act quickly in wiping out the church. The believers were frightened and on the run; therefore, Paul felt that he had to strike immediately in order to catch them before they could escape.

The point to see is that Paul had been bent on violence; he had sought to utterly stamp out the church; to wipe believers off the face of the earth. The word "destroy" (eporthoun) means to make havoc; to utterly rack or lay waste; to devastate, ruin or wipe out.

The church was severely persecuted — both men and women were persecuted by Saul. Saul began to destroy (elumaineto) the church; that is, he tried to devastate it, obliterate it, ruin it, wipe it out.

- => It is the picture of a wild beast ravaging and tearing to bits some carcass.
- => The verb is continued action. He began and kept on ravaging and destroying. He was, as he later confessed, gripped with an "obsession against them" (Acts 26:11).
- 1). He stormed the homes of believers, breaking open the doors, fiercely seeking every believer "from house to house" (Acts 8:3).
 - 2). He arrested all he could find, dragged them (suron): using whatever force was necessary to arrest and subdue them. The picture is that of forcibly dragging them from their homes through the city streets (Acts 8:3).
 - 3). He arrested women as well as men. Women were considered unimportant and insignificant in Saul's day. Yet the fierceness and savagery of Paul was so set on destroying the church that he went after the women as well. His crime against women was to be an offense Paul could never forget (see Acts 9:2; 22:4).
 - 4). He imprisoned as many as he could find, and he found many...
 - putting them in prison (Acts 8:3).
 - "arresting both men and women throwing them into prison" (Acts 22:4).
 - 5). He stormed "one synagogue to another" and punished the believers who were present. He tried to force them to blaspheme the name of Christ (Acts 26:11).
 - 6). He hunted them down, hotly pursuing them even into foreign cities, persecuting all he could track down (Acts 22:5; 26:11).
 - 7). He brought many to their death and gave his voice to the death penalty of many others (Acts 22:4; 26:10).

Acts 8:3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Acts 9:1-2 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Acts 22:4-5 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

Acts 26:9-11 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them."

Gal 1:13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it.

Phil 3:6 As for zeal, persecuting the church.

1 Cor 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Tim 1:12-13 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

- b. Paul had been the supreme example of self-righteousness. Paul declared that he had been "advancing in Judaism" above and beyond what others had done. The idea is that he had blazed a path and given well beyond what they had achieved. He had been much more zealous than they.

But note where his commitment had laid: in religion and in the traditions of the religious leaders. His focus and fanaticism had been placed upon religion and its traditions, rituals and ceremonies and not upon God.

Mat 15:3 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Mark 7:8 "You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Col 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

1 Pet 1:18-19 *For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

2. Paul's radical change included four significant points.
 - a. God had set Paul apart and called him by His grace. Paul clearly said...
 - that it was God's grace that had saved him from a life of self-righteousness and destruction.
 - that God's grace had separated him to serve Christ "apart from birth." The idea is that God had Paul in his mind even before Paul's birth. Paul's call and ministry were not due to Paul, but to God and His grace. God had His eye on Paul throughout all eternity.

Thought 1. The believer's call and ministry is of God not of himself.

1 Cor 1:26-27 *Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

Eph 1:18 *I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.*

Eph 4:1 *As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.*

Phil 3:13-14 *Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

1 Th 2:12 *Encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*

2 Th 2:14 *He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Tim 1:9 *Who has saved us and called us to a holy life - not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.*

Heb 3:1 *Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess.*

1 Pet 5:10 *And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

1 Pet 5:10 *Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.*

- b. God called Paul as a vessel to reveal Christ. Note the words “in me.” God’s primary call to Paul was the same as it is for every believer: to reveal His Son Jesus Christ both *to him and through him*. God wants the believer both to know Christ and to make Christ known. We are chosen to fellowship and commune with the Lord more and more and to let Him be seen in us more and more. The believer is a mere vessel in and through whom Jesus Christ lives.

1 Cor 2:9-10 *However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” — but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.*

1 Cor 6:19-20 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.*

Col 1:27 *To them [believers] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

- c. God called Paul to preach Christ. Believers are not only called to know Christ, but also to make Christ known. We must preach and bear witness to Christ.

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Acts 9:20 *At once he [Paul] began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.*

2 Cor 4:5 *For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

- d. God called Paul to seek his gospel from God alone. Paul was not to seek his gospel from men but from God. God and God alone is the source of the gospel; therefore, God alone must be sought for the message of the gospel.

Thought 1. This does not mean, of course, that ministers are not to learn from others; it means that ministers are not to proclaim the gospel of men. God has given us the gospel to study and preach. It is His message, not man's message, that the world needs.

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 6:68 *Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”*

John 8:24 *“I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am*

the one claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.”

Acts 4:12 “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”

1 Cor 2:2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1 Cor 3:11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ■