

Galatians #7

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Date: 05 December 2014

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[0 : 00] All right, if you will take your scripture sheet, and we welcome you, by the way, to our first class for the month of March. And we are continuing our examination of Paul's letter to the Galatians, commonly referred to as the Charter of Christian Liberty.

And I make no bones about setting forth the Apostle Paul and his ministry as being of monumental importance. In fact, I do not think that it is a stretch at all to say that the Apostle Paul and the ministry to which God commissioned him is probably the second most important man conducting these events in all of human history.

And the reason that Paul is so critical and so important is because he elaborates on the first most important person in a way that nobody else does in the New Testament.

No one spells out the nature and character and work of Jesus Christ like the Apostle Paul. And God raised him up for this very purpose.

We saw back in chapter 9 of Acts that he is called to bear witness for God to kings and Gentiles, royalty, Jews, everyone.

[1 : 26] He is raised up for that specific purpose. And he is thus designated as the Apostle to the Gentiles, the sent one, the emissary to the Gentiles.

They never had an emissary. The Jews had 12. But the Gentiles never had an official Apostle at all until Paul was raised up of God on that Damascus road.

And, fellas, this is of absolutely monumental importance. I just cannot tell you how important it is. Some people may think that I make too much of the Apostle Paul, but I'll tell you.

The reason I do is because nobody makes so much of Christ as does Paul in the way that he defines him. And he had repeated occasions where he had to contend for his apostleship.

Because there were many who would not accept his credentials as a bona fide apostle. He was not one of the 12. And that's true. He wasn't. He was one who was chosen out of due time, he says.

[2 : 29] And when he talks about his office, he says, I magnify my office. And one of the epistles that he wrote to the church, I don't recall which one it is now.

But Paul never magnified himself. He said he was a chief of sinners. And he also said, To me is this grace given.

I who am less than the least of all the apostles. To me was this grace given. That I should make known among the Gentiles the mystery of Christ. So when he says he magnifies his office, that means he makes much of the calling and responsibility that he has.

And he had good reason to do so, too. Because he was directly commissioned by the risen Christ. And the distinction there is the 12 were called while Christ was still here on earth during his three or three and a half year of earthly ministry.

And they were called to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Their ministry was to the Jew. And the emphasis was upon the coming kingdom. So these 12 proclaimed that gospel.

[3 : 42] And it is important to note, this very important distinction, their ministry for the most part was centered on before the cross.

Whereas the apostle Paul's ministry is centered on after the cross. And it was the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that changed everything.

That was so dynamic and so critical. So Paul was raised up of God after death, burial, and resurrection. After the ascension, Paul received an abundance.

We don't know how many of that is. But an abundance or many revelations from the risen Christ. And get this. That the 12 knew nothing about.

That is important, guys. What we're talking about is a dramatic update that the risen Christ gave to the apostle Paul that the 12 knew nothing about.

[4 : 45] And it doesn't mean that they were willfully ignorant or that they were supposed to know about it, but they didn't know. They weren't even supposed to know about it. That's why it's called a mystery.

And when Paul received this information from the risen Christ and what God had called him to, in many ways it was radically different from the information Christ gave to the 12 when he was here on earth.

So what we're talking about is an update. An upgrade. And what it is going to include is, no longer is the emphasis on Jew and the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Now the emphasis is upon everyone. Everyone. Jew and Gentile alike. And the message is not, you've got to keep the Sabbath.

You've got to have a kosher meal. You've got to offer sacrifice. You've got to be circumcised. Paul never preached any of that. Although he himself was a recipient of all of that as a Jew.

[5 : 57] But what he preached was an unadulterated gospel of the grace of God, whereby man is justified on the basis of faith, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, plus nothing.

This was revolutionary stuff. And Galatians is explaining how this difference is played out. And we are continuing in the last few verses of chapter 1 of Galatians, wherein Paul makes it clear that the information that he was given after his conversion was not provided by the twelve.

It would be several years before he would even be exposed to what the twelve knew, and he is going to bring them up to date with what Christ revealed to him, and they have a time of comparing notes, and that's coming up here in chapter 2, and it is significantly revelational.

I mean, it is just amazing. So let's look at this, just the last few verses here, in chapter 1, and I'm going to reserve comment because we've studied it before, but I'm just going to read the verses, and I'll limit myself to reading in the King James, which is the bold print that we see there, starting with verse...

Let's start with verse 17. I've got to jump in somewhere. Paul said, Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me, but I went into Arabia and returned again unto Damascus.

[7 : 41] Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter and abode with him fifteen days. We have no knowledge that he even knew Peter before this time.

He obviously knew about Peter, but there's no indication that they had ever met. And yet he knew that Peter was the chief spokesman of the twelve, and God had him deliberately isolated from Peter and the twelve during this critical time when this new information was going to be launched.

And to be very honest with you, I don't know how else to put this, but had Paul gone to Peter right after his conversion? The confusion would have really maximized.

Because, and I don't mean this in an unkind way, Peter would have almost surely contaminated the apostle Paul. What do I mean?

Peter was still living and functioning under the Mosaic law. But that's not what Paul was going to have anything to do with. And this period of separation of three years, I am sure, was very, very critical.

[8 : 57] Because Paul was becoming solidified and entrenched in this gospel of the grace of God, which is really different from what Peter had been preaching in the twelve.

Now, understand this. The focus of the message was the same for both. The person of Jesus Christ was the core issue of both what Peter and the twelve apostles were preaching, and what the apostle Paul was preaching.

Jesus Christ was the center of it all. But there were many differences that followed. So let's continue on here. After three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter.

Abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, except for James, the Lord's brother.

This will be the half-brother of our Lord. He will be the one who will preside over the council at Jerusalem in Acts 15, and he is the one who wrote the epistle of James in the back of the New Testament.

[10 : 03] And in verse 20, he says, Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not. Afterwards, I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ.

In other words, if Paul were there and walked in among them, they would be probably saying, Who is this guy? They don't know him. They didn't know him. They couldn't recognize him. But they had

heard of him, because his reputation preceded him.

And his persecution of the Christians and everything was well known to everyone. I was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they had heard only that he which persecuted us, that of course is Saul of Tarsus, He who persecuted us, us believers, in times past, now preaches the faith which once he destroyed.

This has got to go down in history, and I'm sure it does, as the most radical turnabout of any human being. And sometimes when people were referring to a very dramatic kind of conversion or set of circumstances whereby they come to Christ, they may liken it to, it was like a Damascus Road experience, because that seems to be the one that stands out in the minds of most people, and understanding.

And verse 24, And they glorified God in me. Now let's get into chapter 2. Then 14 years later, I went up again to Jerusalem.

[11 : 45] Now keep in mind, we've already got one incident in Jerusalem, in chapter 1 and verse 18. This is 14 years later. After I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

And I went up by revelation. In other words, it wasn't my idea to go up. But God communicated to Paul that this is what he was to do.

So I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.

Now, why would he do that? I think the answer is obvious. It's because what he was communicating to the Gentiles was different from what they had been communicating to their fellow Jews.

It's different. And major differences consist of, he is not telling these Gentiles, it's good that you put your faith in Christ, but you also have to be circumcised.

[13 : 01] And you also have to keep the Sabbath. And you also have to do this and do that. No, no. That's not what Paul is telling them. Paul is telling these non-Jews, these Gentiles, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

Justification by faith, plus nothing. You don't need circumcision. You don't need any of those things. All you need is Christ. And if your faith is in Him, then you have His righteousness imputed to Him. But the reason that Paul is squaring this with the Twelve is because, who is it that is already entrenched as the authorities?

It's not Paul. It's the Twelve. Who did everyone recognize among Jew and Gentiles as being the authoritative spokesman on the behalf of Christ?

It's the Twelve. They were well established. The Apostle Paul came along later, and people are saying, Who's this guy? Where did he come from anyway? What is this? He's supposed to be an Apostle?

[14 : 07] Well, what about the Twelve? And how do these things differ? It's going to create a real situation. And we'll see as we get into it. He says, Now, why didn't he just say, I communicated unto them that I've been preaching the very same thing that they did?

Because he couldn't say that. It wasn't the same thing. I communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. You know what else he's going to call this?

In about four other places in the New Testament, he's going to refer to it as, My Gospel. Well, what is that all about? How is it Paul's gospel?

It was Paul's gospel because Christ committed that gospel unto him. It did not originate with Paul, but it is going to come through Paul.

It originates, of course, with Christ. But the one who is going to communicate this gospel that he's calling my gospel is the Apostle Paul. So let's read on.

[15 : 18] I communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles. Now, let me ask you this.

Would he preach to the Jews the same thing he preached to the Gentiles? Theoretically, yes.

Practically, no. Because what would he be doing? He would be going into a Jewish synagogue and he would be saying, Hey, fellas, a new covenant has been established.

The old is gone. The law of Moses is fulfilled in the person of Christ. Guess what? You don't have to keep the Sabbath anymore. You don't have to offer sacrifices anymore.

You don't have to be circumcised anymore. Unless you choose to be. But you don't have to be.

What do you think would happen if Paul went into a Jewish synagogue and preached that? Oh,

good grief.

[16:21] They'd ride him out of town on the rail. They would say, this man is a blasphemer. They wouldn't listen to that at all. Gentiles. That's a whole different thing. So we're talking about different strokes for different folks.

And here, the apostle Paul is delivering to these twelve apostles, however many there were there, what he is preaching to the Gentiles.

Now let's see. Read on and see why he does this. Which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately. He didn't divulge this in some kind of a public message or address.

He asked for an audience with the twelve, or however many there were, and he must have said something like this. Say, I would really like to get together with you guys so I can bring you up to speed, because I want you to know what it is that I have been communicating to the Gentiles.

Can we get together sometime so I can brief you on this? And I'm sure they said, well yeah, of course. We'll be glad to hear what you have to say. So, he is doing it privately to them which were of reputation.

[17:33] What's that mean? It just means these are the shakers and movers in Judaism. These probably constitute the twelve, or the majority of the twelve. And then he says, lest by any means I should run or had run in vain.

Now what does that mean? What does he mean by running? He's talking about functioning, operating, using the commission that God gave him, and fulfilling it in a certain way.

This is the running. He is running this race. He's communicating this gospel of grace. And he is saying that he has put forth a lot of effort.

And he has. We know his journeys, his travels, his beatings, and imprisonments, and stoning, and everything else. And he's saying, I've done all of this, and man, I sure don't want to have done it for nothing.

This is the meaning here when he says, lest I should have run in vain. Look at how some of these others translate it. Is that like he's trying to get their acceptance?

[18:44] Absolutely. He's trying to get their blessing. And they're going to give it. He's not asking them for their permission. He's already got his marching orders from the risen Christ.

But he is asking them for their blessing, for their agreement, for their understanding. And this is really critical. By the way, this is one of the things that adds to the confusion in the book of Acts. Because we've got two different programs here. And it is really, really confusing. Look at what he says. Look at some of the other readings. I put before them the gospel which I proclaim among the Gentiles.

I did this in private to the leaders of the church for fear that I was running or should have run in vain. Now, what do you think would have happened to the Apostle Paul and his ministry, humanly speaking, if the Twelve were to disown Paul and his gospel and say, This guy's a heretic. He's not preaching what we're preaching. Nobody should believe this stuff. We're not going to authenticate him. We're not going to support him. We're not going to encourage him. He's going to lead people astray.

[19:58] But that's not what they're going to say. And we'll have to reserve that for later. That will be our next session. And it is really very, very critical. Question or comment before we close?

Roger and then Joe. One of the questions in Arabia was Paul just receiving revelation for Jesus? I'm sorry? Three years in Arabia.

Was that when Paul was just receiving revelation? Yeah. I don't think it was three years in Arabia. But it was... He spent time in Arabia.

But I don't think he spent three years there in Arabia. Yet that is most likely when he received this abundance of revelations. And we suspect that he received revelation from the risen Christ probably on more occasions than one.

Yeah. Were there any Gentiles in Jerusalem that Paul would immediately witness to after they agreed it was okay? Gentiles...

[20:57] Repeat that. What? There were Gentiles in Jerusalem at that time, right? A minor number, yeah, compared to the Jews. But Paul then allowed to probably preach to them after they...

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. But here we've got two different audiences. Jew and Gentile. And what the dynamic of the church is going to be is that the Jew, the believing Jew, and the believing Gentile are going to be molded into one body.

That will be the body of Christ. And what we are talking about here in Galatians is the very beginning of this. And it is going to create a societal and a cultural and a religious upheaval. Because many of the Jews are not going to buy this idea of justification by faith because they thought the law of Moses was eternal. That it would never be rescinded. And the Gentiles, of course, they never had an apostle.

And this is all going to be something very new to them. And, fellas, trust me, this is going to be eye-popping material. When we get further into chapter 2, you will be able to gain an appreciation and understanding that I think will help your grasp of the whole New Testament altogether.

[22 : 18] And it has been dramatically revelational to me. I trust it will be to you too. Joe. I think I've got an analogy to what Paul was doing with the disciples.

The apostles. Okay. In relation between you and your wife. If I go out and make a decision on my own and do something, you know, I think it's like buy a car or I'm going to repair the house or fix the house up.

And I don't converse with her and tell her about it. And I go ahead and then do it. You'll never get her to agree what you did was right and good. That's true. You better do it at the first.

Get her on your side. If you don't, she will never agree with you that you got the right colors or did the right thing. So that's what Paul was doing. He never got those apostles on his to understand where he was coming from if he hadn't gone to them first in private.

This is a wise husband that's speaking. Can any of you identify? I suspect. Okay. Okay. Okay.