

A GALATIANS DOCTRINAL LIBRARY

BOOKLET TWO

# Not From Men

*The Source of Paul's Gospel*

Galatians 1:11–2:10

Pastor Dan Crespo

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## The Series

These nine booklets are one argument from Paul's letter to the Galatians. Each volume takes a stretch of the letter and stays with one doctrine so the later books can build instead of repeat. You can read this booklet by itself. The series is designed to be read in order.

The tone is help, not a contest with other teachers. Galatians was first a letter to people who had believed Christ and then been pulled toward a yoke that promised maturity while it stole peace. Many readers already know that wound. You were measured. You were managed. You watched a church keep Jesus in the vocabulary while defection from His sufficiency became the operating gospel.

Paul looks at that defection without cruelty toward the flock and without softness toward the message that entangled them. Severe where the Gospel is being changed. Patient where a believer is still learning. Always returning to one claim: Christ is enough.

These booklets are not a recruitment for a school. They are a reading of Galatians. The claim is not Reformed, Arminian, or dispensational. The claim is Paul's:

### **CHRIST IS ENOUGH.**

Most volumes are broken into six parts; Booklet Eight has five. Scripture is quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted. Where a booklet distinguishes the text of Galatians from an inference drawn from it, that distinction is intentional. Keep the text first.

## The Nine Booklets

This volume is the first of nine. Each booklet covers a section of Galatians and focuses on one central doctrine. The later books build on the truths established here rather than explaining them all over again. The series is designed to be read in order.

- **Booklet One — No Other Gospel (Galatians 1:1–10)**  
The Gospel, and what happens when something is added to Christ.
- **Booklet Two — Not from Men (Galatians 1:11–2:10)**  
The source of Paul's Gospel. No human being owns your access to God.
- **Booklet Three — The Truth of the Gospel (Galatians 2:7–19)**  
Justification by faith and death to Law.
- **Booklet Four — Christ Lives in Me (Galatians 2:20–21)**  
Union with Christ as the source of Christian Life.
- **Booklet Five — Why Then the Law? (Galatians 3:1–25)**  
The purpose and duration of the Law. The tutor and its end.
- **Booklet Six — No Longer a Slave (Galatians 3:26–4:7)**  
Sonship, adoption, Abba, and inheritance
- **Booklet Seven — Known by God (Galatians 4:8–31)**  
Knowing God, and the pull of religious bondage
- **Booklet Eight — Stand Fast (Galatians 5:1–13)**  
Liberty, circumcision, and the law obligation
- **Booklet Nine — Walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:14–6:18)**  
The Spirit, the fruit, and practical Christian life

## This Booklet

Booklet Two answers the question Booklet One could not leave open. If there is no other gospel, where did Paul get this one? The text is *Galatians 1:11–2:10*. The claim is that the gospel did not come from men, through men, or by the permission of a religious center.

This volume follows Paul's chronology: the life interrupted, the years in Arabia and Syria, the brief visit with Peter, the later journey to Jerusalem with Titus, and the sentence that still protects wounded believers—they added nothing to me. The full testimony belongs in Booklet One. What belongs here is the source of the message and the independence of access to God.

Read this booklet if a church taught you that truth must travel through a particular man, office, or covering before it can reach you. Read it if you have confused respect for teachers with dependence upon them for the presence of God.

When this volume ends, one question remains: can someone know the truth of the Gospel and still contradict it at the table? That is Booklet Three.

### Contents Of This Booklet

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# A Word to the Wounded

Booklet One named the first wound: a church can keep Jesus in the vocabulary and still defect from His sufficiency. This volume names the next wound. Many hurting Christians were never taught to ask where their operating gospel came from. They inherited it. A parent said it. A pastor required it. A denomination assumed it. A system made it feel like God Himself.

Paul knew that world. He had succeeded in it. Then Christ interrupted him. This booklet is written so that a believer who has been managed by religious authority can hear the same liberty: no human being owns your access to God. Recognition is not revelation. Tradition must bow to Christ.

**NOT FROM MEN.**

## How This Booklet Stands In The Series

Booklet One asked what the gospel is, and what happens when something is added to Christ? It ended with Paul's warning: even he himself could not change that gospel. The question that warning creates is the subject of this volume.

This booklet focuses on the source of Paul's gospel and the history by which he proves it. It does not rebuild the gospel definition. It does not settle justification at Antioch. It does not explain the purpose of the law, sonship, or walking in the Spirit. Those belong later. Here the question is only this: where did Paul get the message, he refused to let anyone alter?

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## Part One — Where Did Paul Get This Gospel?

### The Question Booklet One Could Not Leave Unanswered

Paul had placed the gospel above the messenger—even above himself. He did not say, compare my gospel with whatever the majority of Christian leaders are teaching. He did not say, Ask Jerusalem whether my gospel is acceptable. He did not say, find the oldest religious tradition and follow it. Then an obvious question arises.

#### WHERE DID PAUL GET THIS GOSPEL?

*But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

*Galatians 1:11–12, NKJV*

Paul could hardly say it more clearly. Not according to man. Not received from man. Not taught by man. It came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That claim changes the way we must read everything that follows. Paul is not presenting himself as one student among several competing schools of Christian thought. He is not claiming that Jerusalem trained him and he later developed their theology. He is not saying Peter taught him the gospel, or that James authorized his message. Paul says Jesus Christ revealed it to him.

That claim is so important that Paul spends much of the next chapter and a half establishing it historically. He tells us where he went and where he did not go; whom he saw and whom he did not see; how long he waited; what happened when he eventually went to Jerusalem; what happened when Titus was pressured to be circumcised; and what the recognized leaders ultimately added to his gospel. Paul is building a case. The conclusion is unmistakable: the gospel Paul preached did not come from Jerusalem. It came from Jesus Christ.

### Why This Matters

For many Christians this question can sound like ancient history. Paul received the gospel from Jesus. Fine. Why spend an entire booklet on it? Because religious authority is one of the most powerful forces in human life. People believe things because their parents believed them, their church teaches them, their denomination requires them, their pastor said them, their seminary taught them, a respected theologian wrote them.

Christians can inherit a theological system so early and so thoroughly that they stop distinguishing between what Scripture says and what they have always been told Scripture says. Paul knew that world. He had lived inside it. He had possessed extraordinary religious credentials. He had been advancing within Judaism. He had traditions, teachers, recognition, zeal, and authority. Then Jesus Christ interrupted his entire religious world. Paul did not merely add Jesus to the system he already possessed.

The revelation of Christ forced him to reconsider the system itself. That is what makes his testimony so important.

## The Gospel Which Was Preached by Me

Notice the expression: “*the gospel which was preached by me.*” Paul recognizes a distinct message entrusted to him. He does not apologize for that. He does not pretend that every religious message mentioning Jesus is therefore identical. He has already told the Galatians that another gospel is being preached. Now he tells them why his gospel possesses authority.

Not because Paul is impressive, educated, or an apostle. Its authority rests ultimately in its source. “*Not according to man,*” means the Gospel is not the product of human religious development. Paul did not assemble it by comparing theological traditions. He did not take Judaism, add Jesus, make several adjustments, and create Christianity. The message came from outside the human religious system. It came from God.

That matters because human beings naturally build religion around performance, merit, visible achievement, rules, hierarchy, and control. Human religion asks, “What must I do to make myself acceptable?” The Gospel announces, what God has done in Christ. Those are fundamentally different directions.

## Neither Received nor Taught

Paul becomes even more specific: “*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it.*” Those are two different denials. He is closing the door on the idea that his gospel was secondhand.

This becomes crucial when we reach Jerusalem. If Peter had taught Paul his gospel, Paul’s authority could be traced through Peter. If James had instructed Paul, Paul’s message could be treated as an extension of James. If the apostles in Jerusalem had commissioned Paul with their theology, Jerusalem could claim to be the source. Paul says no.

Then comes the positive statement: “*but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*” Paul is not primarily defending his originality. He is defending Christ’s authority. He did not invent a gospel different from everyone else’s. He says the risen Christ revealed the gospel to him. Therefore, the question is not, who agrees with Paul? The question becomes, who revealed the message Paul preached? Paul’s answer: Jesus.

## Callback — The Gospel This Source Produced

Booklet One established the short form we will use throughout this series: the Cross resolved the sin issue; the resurrection made restored Life possible; the Spirit brings the Life of Christ to those who believe. We do not rebuild that argument here. Booklet One already settled it. What matters in this volume is that Paul’s understanding of Christ eventually brought him into direct conflict with the religious framework in which he had once excelled. And Paul tells us exactly what that former life looked like.

## Part Two — The Religious Man Jesus Interrupted

### Zeal Is Not the Same as Truth

*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

*Galatians 1:13–14, NKJV*

Before Paul became the great apostle of grace, he was a deeply religious man. Not casually religious. Not culturally Jewish while privately indifferent. Paul was serious, committed, disciplined, zealous—and wrong. That combination should make every sincere believer humble.

Paul was advancing. Others could see it. He possessed a religious future: standing, recognition, knowledge, zeal. He was not failing within his system. He was succeeding. Yet his success did not mean his understanding was correct. We often assume that visible religious success validates the system producing it—large ministry, influence, education, recognition, discipline, sacrifice. Paul had many of those things. Yet his zeal actually drove him to persecute the church of God. Religious sincerity is not self-authenticating. Zeal cannot make error true.

### The Traditions of My Fathers

Tradition is powerful because it rarely feels like tradition to the person raised inside it. It feels like truth. We inherit vocabulary, interpretations, assumptions, practices, and definitions. We may hear the same explanation of a verse for thirty years and eventually become unable to see the verse apart from the explanation.

That does not make tradition automatically wrong. Some traditions preserve truth faithfully. The problem begins when tradition becomes functionally unquestionable—when, “this is what I was taught,” quietly becomes, “this is what God said.” Those are not necessarily the same thing. Paul knew Scripture, yet he also had traditions through which he understood Scripture. Then Jesus appeared and revelation forced Paul to reconsider what tradition had taught him to see.

### Do Not Add Jesus to the Old System

Paul could have responded to Christ by simply adding Jesus to everything he already believed: Judaism plus Jesus, Moses plus Jesus, religious achievement plus Jesus, tradition plus Jesus. That would have been far less disruptive. He could have kept his former religious structure and placed Christ somewhere inside it.

But Paul’s gospel would eventually take him much farther. Jesus was not another religious component. Christ changed the entire basis of Paul’s relationship with God. That is why the Gospel cannot be reduced to: keep your religious system—and add Jesus. Sometimes Jesus dismantles the very assumptions through which we thought we understood God.

## When Religious Success Becomes an Obstacle

Failure can make a person open to grace. Success can make grace difficult to receive. If I know I have failed, I may be ready to hear that I cannot save myself. But what if I have spent my life succeeding religiously? What if I have sacrificed more, studied more, prayed more, served more, given more? What if people respect me because of those things? Then grace can feel almost offensive. Because grace places the accomplished religious person beside the obvious failure and says both need Christ.

Paul had much to lose: his old identity, his advancement, his reputation, his standing among those who once admired his zeal. The gospel did not merely give Paul something new. It forced him to release confidence in what had once defined him.

Every believer should be willing to ask: What do I believe only because someone taught it to me? That does not mean we become suspicious of everything. It means our confidence finally rests in the Word of God rather than our familiarity with a particular interpretation. Tradition is most dangerous when we no longer know it is tradition. Paul's story gives us permission to bring even our most deeply inherited religious assumptions back beneath the text.

## Before I Was Born

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...*

*Galatians 1:15–16, NKJV*

Paul had been describing what he did. He persecuted. He advanced. He was zealous. Then the subject changes. God acted. God separated. God called. God revealed His Son. Grace interrupts human achievement.

God separated him, “from my mother's womb”—before religious achievements, advancement, reputation, or persecution of the church. Paul's calling was not God's reward for religious success. Paul did not impress God into apostleship. Grace does not mean God finally recognized Paul's potential. God's purpose preceded Paul's résumé.

He had persecuted the church of God. Yet God called him through grace. The persecutor becomes the preacher. The destroyer becomes the servant. The man advancing through religious achievement becomes the man proclaiming grace. God did not wait until Paul had repaired his record. Christ met him.

Christianity begins with Jesus Christ—not merely principles, a moral system, improved religion, or institutional belonging. God revealed His Son. And Paul's mission flowed from that revelation: “*that I might preach Him among the Gentiles.*” Notice what Paul says he would preach. Him. His ministry would not be centered on creating better religious performers. It would be centered on proclaiming Christ.

## Part Three — The Chronology of Independence

### I Did Not Go to Jerusalem

*I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*

*Galatians 1:16–17, NKJV*

If Paul were attempting to prove that Jerusalem had taught him his gospel, this would be a strange way to do it. His point is the opposite. After Christ revealed Himself to Paul, Paul did not go to Jerusalem.

He could have gone. The apostles were there. Peter was there. James would become a central leader there. Jerusalem was the birthplace of the church. Pentecost had occurred there. If Paul's gospel needed authorization from the original apostles, Jerusalem would seem the obvious destination. Paul specifically tells us he did not go.

### THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY

Paul does not tell us everything that happened in Arabia. We should not invent details the text does not provide. What he does tell us is sufficient for his argument. He was not sitting in Jerusalem being instructed in the gospel by the apostles.

### Three Years, Fifteen Days

*Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.*

*Galatians 1:18–19, NKJV*

Only then does Paul go to Jerusalem. And when he goes, his stay with Peter lasts fifteen days. Paul includes these details for a reason. He is establishing historical independence. His gospel cannot reasonably be explained as the result of years spent being trained by Peter. Paul had already been preaching. He had already been called. He had already received revelation. Then, after three years, he spent fifteen days with Peter.

He saw James. That matters, because James will become increasingly significant as the story develops. We should not say Paul had no contact with Jerusalem leadership. The text says he did. But the contact was limited. Paul's argument is not; I never met them. It is, they were not the source of my gospel.

*Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.*

*Galatians 1:20, NKJV*

## Unknown By Face

*Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, “He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy.” And they glorified God in me.*

*Galatians 1:21–24, NKJV*

Again, Paul emphasizes distance from Judea. He was unknown by face. That would be a remarkable statement if Judea had been the center from which Paul received his gospel and ministry training. The churches knew about him. They did not personally know him.

The persecutor now preaches. The enemy becomes the servant. And they glorified God in him—not Paul’s credentials, not Paul’s intelligence, not Jerusalem. Religion had made Paul zealous. Grace made the persecutor a preacher of Christ. His old system could produce Saul the zealot. Only Christ could produce Paul the apostle of grace. Human religious systems can educate, train, credential, recognize, and organize. They cannot produce spiritual Life. Only God can do that.

## Fourteen Years Later

*Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.*

*Galatians 2:1, NKJV*

## TEXT AND INFERENCE

Scholars discuss precisely how Paul’s chronological references relate to events recorded in Acts. We do not need to settle every chronology question to see Paul’s central argument. The essential point is unmistakable: Paul’s gospel and ministry did not develop under continual Jerusalem supervision. A substantial period had passed. Paul had been ministering. Gentiles had been believing. Churches had been established. Then Paul went to Jerusalem again. And this time Titus came with him.

*And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles...*

*Galatians 2:2, NKJV*

Paul does not describe himself as being summoned because Jerusalem had discovered doctrinal problems in his gospel. He went up by revelation. And he already possesses, “*that gospel which I preach*.” He does not go to Jerusalem to discover what his gospel should be. He brings to Jerusalem the gospel he is already preaching.

## Part Four — Titus and the Pressure in Jerusalem

### Why The Meeting Was Private

*And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.*

*Galatians 2:2, NKJV*

Paul does not immediately present his gospel in a large public confrontation. He communicates it privately to those who were of reputation, “lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.” We need to handle that carefully.

Paul has just spent the previous chapter insisting that his gospel did not come from man, that no man taught it to him, that Jesus Christ revealed it, that he did not immediately go to Jerusalem, that he was called by God, and that he had already been preaching. He went to Jerusalem now by revelation. Therefore, it would make little sense to read *Galatians 2:2* as though Paul suddenly wondered whether Jerusalem would tell him if his gospel was true. That would undermine the argument he has just made. His concern about running in vain must be understood in light of the practical conflict surrounding his ministry.

What could happen if influential Jerusalem leaders opposed Paul’s gospel among Gentiles? Paul could preach freedom to Gentiles in one city, and teachers connected with Jewish Christianity could arrive afterward and tell those same believers they must be circumcised, must keep the law of Moses, and must add religious requirements to Christ. We already know from *Acts 15* that such teaching occurred. Paul could spend years planting churches only to watch those churches pulled back beneath the very religious system from which his gospel declared freedom. His labor could be practically undermined. His churches could be divided. Gentile believers could be placed under bondage. That gives, “run...in vain,” a very concrete meaning.

### THE TEXT EXPLICITLY SAYS

Paul went to Jerusalem by revelation. He communicated the gospel he already preached among the Gentiles. He did so privately to those of reputation. He was concerned about running or having run in vain.

### THE TEXT DOES NOT SAY

“I met privately because James was preaching another gospel.” Paul does not write that sentence. We should not pretend he did.

### A SERIOUS INFERENCE FROM THE TEXT

Paul believed the response of influential Jerusalem leaders could materially affect his Gentile ministry. Why else would their response threaten whether his labor had been in vain? The circumcision controversy provides the immediate historical setting for understanding that threat. That is inference.

## Titus Walked into Jerusalem Uncircumcised

Titus was not merely a traveling companion. He became the test case. He was a Gentile believer—a living human being standing in the middle of the theological controversy. The question was no longer abstract. Titus was standing there.

*Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*

*Galatians 2:3, NKJV*

Titus was Greek. He was uncircumcised. And he was not compelled to change that status. If the Acts 15 message were correct—*“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved”*—Titus had a serious problem. He possessed Christ but supposedly lacked something necessary. Paul refused that conclusion. Titus did not need Christ plus circumcision.

Theological arguments can become abstract: circumcision, law, grace, Gentiles, tradition. But Titus was a person. If Paul surrendered the issue, someone was going to take Titus and physically mark his body as evidence that Christ was not enough. Paul was not fighting merely for theological vocabulary. He was protecting a person’s freedom in Christ. Booklet Eight will take up circumcision as a governing obligation and the whole-law consequence. This booklet needs only the historical fact: the recognized meeting did not compel Titus.

## False Brethren Brought In

*And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage).*

*Galatians 2:4, NKJV*

Paul’s language is severe: false brethren, spy out our liberty, bring us into bondage. This was not a disagreement over worship style. Paul saw liberty in Christ at stake.

Liberty frightens religious systems because it removes the mechanisms by which religion often manages people. If Christ is sufficient, what happens to the additional requirements? If believers have direct access to God through Jesus, what happens to the human mediator? Liberty can feel dangerous to people who believe external regulation is necessary to produce holiness. Paul does not share that confidence. He will eventually show that Christian life comes through the Spirit. That argument belongs to Booklet Nine. For now, notice what the opponents wanted: bondage. And what Paul defended: liberty.

Christian liberty does not mean I belong to myself; I do whatever I want, nobody can correct me, sin does not matter. Paul’s freedom is, *“liberty which we have in Christ Jesus.”* Freedom from religious bondage is not freedom from Jesus. It is freedom for Jesus. Religious systems often defend control by presenting only two choices: external religious control or chaos; law or sin; human mediation or spiritual isolation. Paul will show another way. Christ—and the Spirit of Christ.

## We Did Not Yield for One Hour

*to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

*Galatians 2:5, NKJV*

There are moments when compromise is wisdom. There are matters where Christians can graciously disagree, traditions that do not require division, personal preferences that should never become tests of fellowship. But Paul recognized that this was different. Circumcision was being made a gospel requirement. Therefore, he would not yield. Not even for an hour.

Not because Paul loved conflict. Not because he needed to win. Not because the physical mark itself was the center of Christianity. If Paul surrendered Titus, the concession would communicate theology. It would say Christ is not enough; Gentiles need something else; grace begins the relationship—Moses completes it. A seemingly practical compromise could alter the message itself. So, he refused.

The size of the addition is not the central issue. Its function is. Suppose a church says, Of course Jesus forgives—but after you sin you must perform this religious act before God will restore forgiveness. Suppose someone says, Of course Jesus is the Mediator—but you need this minister to restore your access when you fail. Suppose continued acceptance depends upon maintaining the required religious standard. Paul's question would be the same in every case: What does the act say about Christ? Circumcision involved a small portion of the human body. The theological implication was enormous.

## Part Five — They Added Nothing

### Those Who Seemed to Be Something

*But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.*

*Galatians 2:6, NKJV*

Paul is speaking about highly respected leaders: people with history, reputation, and authority; men who had known Jesus during His earthly ministry. And he says that whatever they were makes no difference to him. That can sound almost disrespectful until we understand his point. Paul is not denying that these men had genuine ministries. He is denying that their reputation can determine truth.

God is not impressed by titles, positions, degrees, platforms, denominational offices, years in ministry, size of congregation, number of followers, or historical prestige. None of those things make a false statement true. Paul refuses to surrender a gospel received from Christ merely because respected men are in the room.

Many Christians do not know why they believe what they believe. They know who told them: my pastor, my denomination, my church, my favorite teacher, my family, etc. That is borrowed conviction. Teachers are gifts. Pastors are gifts. We should respect faithful servants. But the goal of Christian teaching is not to create people who know what pastor believes. The goal is to help believers know Jesus and understand His Word. Paul refuses to allow reputation to replace revelation.

### Added Nothing

Paul went to Jerusalem. He presented the gospel he had already been preaching. He stood before respected leaders. Titus was there. The circumcision question was real. Pressure existed. And Paul's conclusion is: *“they added nothing to me.”*

### THEY ADDED NOTHING TO MY GOSPEL.

That sentence should end the idea that Paul went to Jerusalem as a theological student waiting for Jerusalem to straighten out his gospel. He did not go there to receive his message. He already had it. Jesus had revealed it. He already preached it. And after meeting with the recognized leaders, nothing was added.

What could Jerusalem have added? Circumcision? No. Titus remained uncircumcised. Mosaic obligation as a requirement for Paul's Gentiles? No. Paul refused to yield to those who wanted to bring them into bondage. A correction to Paul's Gospel? Paul says nothing. That does not mean Paul knew everything about everything, or that he had no fellowship with other apostles, or that Christians cannot teach one another. It means precisely what the argument requires: Paul's gospel did not need Jerusalem to complete it. Because Jerusalem was not its source.

## The Gospel of the Uncircumcised

*But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles) ...*

*Galatians 2:7–8, NKJV*

Paul identifies different spheres of ministry. He had been entrusted with ministry toward the uncircumcised. Peter had a ministry toward the circumcised. God was at work in both. That matters. This book is not trying to turn Peter into an enemy of Christ, nor James, nor the Jerusalem church. These were real people living through an extraordinary transition in redemptive history. They were learning. They were being confronted with implications of Christ's work that challenged a lifetime of religious understanding. We should honor that reality without pretending the tensions recorded in Scripture did not exist.

### THE TEXT SAYS

Some translations render the phrases as different spheres of gospel ministry, and verse 8 certainly emphasizes differing apostolic assignments. That much is explicit.

### THE CONTEXT WILL NOT LET US FLATTEN THE REST

The relationship between Jewish believers, Gentile believers, circumcision, and Mosaic obligation was not merely geographical. There was real theological pressure. Titus had just become the test case. False brethren wanted to circumcise him. Paul refused because the truth of the gospel was at stake. So, we should not flatten the passage into: Peter preached to Jews and Paul preached to Gentiles, and there was no substantive tension between their messages or implications. The text has already shown us more complexity than that.

### WHAT VERSE 7 ALONE DOES NOT PROVE

We should not make verse 7 prove more than it says. The investigation continues. Booklet Three will bring the tension into the open when Peter himself comes to Antioch.

## The Right Hand of Fellowship

*and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*

*Galatians 2:9, NKJV*

“They perceived the grace.” Paul did not receive grace from them. They recognized what God had already done. God called Paul. Christ revealed the gospel. Paul preached among the Gentiles. God worked through him. Jerusalem eventually recognized it. Recognition is not source.

Paul calls James, Cephas, and John pillars. He does not need to dishonor these men in order to defend his independence. He recognizes their importance, their history, their ministries, their standing. But even pillars do not create the gospel. Honor leaders. Learn from them. Recognize their gifts. Appreciate their ministry. Never give them a role that belongs only to Christ.

There was recognition of distinct spheres. Paul and Barnabas would continue among the Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders would continue primarily among the circumcised. That arrangement did not erase every theological tension. We know that because the very next event Paul records will involve Peter, a Gentile fellowship, circumcision pressure, fear, and men associated with James. That belongs to Booklet Three.

### **Remember The Poor**

*They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.*

*Galatians 2:10, NKJV*

After all the theological conflict, this is beautiful. The recognized leaders did make a request: remember the poor. And Paul was already eager to do it. Notice what was not added: circumcision, law as the basis of Gentile standing, religious merit, a Jerusalem-controlled gospel. What was affirmed was love—concern for people, practical compassion.

Grace does not produce indifference. Freedom from religious law does not produce selfishness. Knowing Christ produces a life increasingly available to others. Later Paul will write that the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (*Galatians 5:14*). Booklet Nine will take us there. For now, Paul’s willingness to remember the poor reminds us that defending grace is not about winning theological arguments. The gospel frees us to love.

## Conclusion — Not from Men

### The Case Paul Built

Paul did not merely assert that his gospel came from Jesus. He showed the history. Before Christ he was advancing in Judaism, exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers, persecuting the church. Then God interrupted his life. God called him through grace. God revealed His Son.

Paul did not immediately go to Jerusalem. He went to Arabia, then Damascus. Three years passed. Only then did he visit Jerusalem. He stayed with Peter fifteen days. He saw James. Then he left. The churches of Judea did not even know him by face. Years passed. Paul preached. Gentiles believed. Churches were established. Then he went again to Jerusalem—by revelation—and he brought Titus.

### Titus Proved the Issue Was Real

Titus was Greek. Titus was uncircumcised. And Titus remained uncircumcised. The issue was not a medical procedure. It was the truth of the gospel. Some wanted to bring believers into bondage. Paul refused to yield, not even for an hour. The recognized leaders possessed enormous reputation. Paul respected their ministries. But reputation could not change revelation.

#### THEY ADDED NOTHING TO ME.

Paul did not return from Jerusalem with an improved gospel. He did not discover that Christ had forgotten to mention circumcision. He did not learn that grace needed Mosaic obligation to make it safe. He did not receive the missing piece from Peter, or James, or John. Because they were not the source.

### Recognition Is Not Revelation

Jerusalem eventually recognized the grace God had given Paul. That is important. Christian fellowship matters. Unity matters. Recognition matters. Accountability matters. But none of those things creates truth. A church can recognize a calling; it cannot manufacture one. A denomination can recognize a teacher; it cannot make his message true. A seminary can grant a degree; it cannot give revelation. A council can affirm the gospel; it cannot create the gospel.

#### JESUS CHRIST IS THE SOURCE.

### Where Did Your Gospel Come From?

Not where did you first hear the name Jesus. Not which church did you attend. Not who baptized you. Not which denomination shaped you. Ask something deeper. What do you believe God requires before He will accept you? What do you believe happens between you and God when you fail? What do you believe makes forgiveness effective? What do you believe gives you access to God? What do you believe makes you spiritually mature? What do you believe a pastor does for your relationship with God? What do you believe governs Christian life?

And then ask: Where did I get those beliefs? From Christ and His Word or from a religious system I have never seriously examined? That is not rebellion. Paul himself had to face that question.

### **Tradition Must Bow to Christ**

Tradition can be precious. It can preserve truth, connect generations, and teach wisdom. But tradition is a servant. Never the master. Paul had traditions. He was exceedingly zealous for them. Then Christ revealed Himself. When tradition and revelation collided, tradition had to move.

We do not reject something merely because it is old or accept something merely because it is new. We do not believe something because Catholics teach it, or Protestants, or Baptists, or Presbyterians, or Pentecostals, or any other human tradition. We ask what the Word says. And ultimately: Does this exalt the sufficiency of Christ—or add something to Him?

### **No Human Being Owns Your Access to God**

No pastor owns it. No priest owns it. No denomination owns it. No institution owns it. No theological system owns it. Christ opened the way. Christ is the Mediator. Christ gave Himself for sin. Christ rose from the dead. Christ gives Life. Teachers may help you understand Him. Pastors may shepherd you. Believers may encourage you. The church may walk beside you. But none of us replaces Jesus. The best teacher leaves you increasingly dependent upon Christ rather than increasingly dependent upon the teacher.

### **The Hero Is Still Jesus**

This booklet is not about proving how extraordinary Paul was. Paul's entire argument points away from Paul. Who called him? God. Who revealed the gospel? Jesus Christ. Who transformed the persecutor? God. Who worked effectively through his Gentile ministry? God. Whom did the Judean churches glorify? God. Paul is not the hero. Peter is not the hero. James is not the hero. Jerusalem is not the hero. The church is not the hero. Jesus is.

### **The Story Is Not Finished**

Paul has established where his gospel came from: not from men. He has established that Jerusalem did not give it to him. He has established that Titus did not need circumcision. He has established that he would not surrender gospel freedom. He has established that respected leaders added nothing to the message Christ had given him. He has even received their right hand of fellowship.

For a moment, the controversy appears settled. Then Peter comes to Antioch. He eats with Gentile believers. No separation. No Mosaic boundary at the table. No requirement that Gentiles become Jews. Peter knows they belong. Then certain men come from James. And Peter becomes afraid.

*Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.*

*Galatians 2:11, NKJV*

Why? Because something Peter did publicly contradicted the truth of the gospel. That is where Booklet Three begins.