

Fact Sheet for **“Paul’s Preparation”**
Galatians 1:11-2:10

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In Acts 2 Peter spoke to those gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate the Jewish Feast of Pentecost. The 3,000 who were added to the church that day would have been almost entirely Jewish. The Gentiles wouldn’t start coming *en masse* to salvation until years later in Acts 10 with Cornelius. This presented a cultural problem for the early church. Should these Gentiles be required to become Jewish and follow the Law of Moses? The Jerusalem council in Acts 15 would speak clearly to this. The answer would be a resounding “No!” It is possible that Paul wrote Galatians just before this council.

But the perceptions of many early Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, would not find this theology easy to swallow. There were those on both sides of the aisle who were slipping back into teaching Law observance as a necessary component of salvation. And this is where the Galatian church found itself.

This Gospel is from God (1:10-12)

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. ¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

If Paul were to teach a Law based justification this would please his detractors, but not God. Paul’s training in the gospel was through direct revelation from Jesus Christ. He first heard from Jesus on the road to Damascus in Acts 9. But this wasn’t the last time he heard from Jesus. Do you remember his words in 1 Corinthians 11:23-24?

Initially (1:13-17)

¹³ For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

God set Paul apart for his apostolic ministry *before* he was born! Then God dramatically intervened in Paul’s life and brought him to salvation! While in Damascus Paul began proclaiming Jesus in the synagogues (Acts 9:20). Then the Jews plotted to kill him, but the disciples let him down through the city wall in a basket and he escaped (Acts 9:23-25).

After Three Years (1:18-24)

¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!)

But many of the believers were still suspicious of Paul (Acts 9:26). Barnabas began to introduce him to the leaders of the church at this time. It was at this time that Paul spent two weeks with Peter, and met James. But Paul’s visit to Jerusalem was not for theological education. Paul used this time to preach boldly. Then the Grecian Jews sought therefore to kill him, and so the brothers sent him off to Tarsus (Acts 9:28-30).

²¹ Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God because of me.

After Fourteen Years (2:1-10)

ESV 2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

This revelation may have been the one mentioned in Acts 11:27-30.

³ But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁴ Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in-- who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery-- ⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-- those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

The leaders of the early church approved of and endorsed Paul's message of justification by faith alone!

How did these men come to understand the gospel? Out of the eight or nine men who authored the 27 books of the New Testament, you have here four who authored 21 of those books... James (1), Peter (2), John (5), and Paul (13). All of them received direct revelation from God. First, the resurrected Christ had appeared to all of them (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). Three times Peter had a vision of the sheet with unclean animals coming down from heaven just before two men arrived to take him to Cornelius (Acts 10). The whole book of Revelation was a vision John had while on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). Here's my point. The New Testament was still being written in the first century A.D. Those who set the theology for the early church were the apostles. This is why Paul mentioned the foundation in Ephesians 2:19-21. What the apostles taught became the theology book for the whole early church. Now the office of "apostle" has passed. What we have today is the written Word of God. This is the *only* authoritative source for what we believe.

The good application of this passage flows from a question, "Why did Paul write this?" Did he write these words to defend his apostleship? Not really. Then why? Look at Paul's own words in Galatians 1:11-12. This gospel of justification by faith came directly from Christ. This is Jesus Christ's gospel, and the Galatians were wrong by adding Law to it.

Paul would be a huge proponent of justification by faith throughout his ministry (Romans 3:28; Philippians 3:8-9). But for both Paul and James this justification by faith was not a license for sin (Romans 6:15; James 2:24).

Here's the upshot for today. Salvation continues to be based firmly on faith and faith alone. If anyone ever tells you that you must keep some part of the Mosaic Law in order to be saved (or stay saved) reject this out of hand! The true gospel is that we are justified by faith alone!

Then again, if someone has said the words of the "sinner's prayer" but shows no evidence of salvation, then it is right to question their faith. Was their expression of faith mere words, or did it truly come from the heart.