

St. Paul¹ the Apostle

SUMMER SERIES ON THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

Acts 9:1-19 2 Corinthians 11:22-33 Galatians 1:1-5

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*The life of an Apostle was **NOT** glamorous!*

St. Paul and the other Apostles were chosen by Christ, and inspired by the Holy Spirit, but they were called to a life of suffering **not** a life of luxury! Today we heard St. Paul talk about his sufferings, which included floggings, imprisonment, beatings, stonings, hunger, thirst, bandits, and even shipwrecks! In addition to this, he felt the burden of responsibility for the churches that he planted, and the well-being of the people who have come to faith through his preaching and teaching. And in addition to this even, he was under constant attack from false teachers who claimed that he was an imposter and not an authentic, genuine Apostle.

It is surprising how much time Saint Paul spends defending his apostleship in the New Testament. Essentially the entire book of 2 Corinthians is St. Paul defending his Apostleship. In the book of Galatians, 1/3 of the book is Paul defending his Apostleship!

¹ SAUL OR PAUL? Along with being ethnically Jewish, Paul was born a Roman citizen Acts 22:28. "Paul" was part of his Roman name; his given Hebrew name was Saul, perhaps after the biblical King Saul, a fellow Benjaminite and the first king of Israel. When Jesus spoke to him prior to his conversion to Christianity on the Road to Damascus, Jesus called him "Saul". Shortly thereafter, in addressing a disciple named Ananias, Jesus referred to "a man from Tarsus named Saul." The earliest biblical reference to his being called "Paul" is recorded in Acts 13:9: "...Saul, who was also called Paul..." All subsequent New Testament verses refer to him as "Paul" or with the appended title "Apostle Paul." It is fitting for him to use his Gentile name since he was sent to serve the Gentiles. adapted: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle

But that's good news for us!

St. Paul remains as an authority in our lives even today. St. Paul is an **authentic, genuine Apostle** of the Lord Jesus Christ. He speaks with the full authority of the Son of God; like an ambassador would speak for a King. In the book of Galatians, Paul emphasizes that he is **a genuine Apostle** and preaches **the authentic Gospel** of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We heard his conversion story today from Acts 9. Jesus Himself appeared to St. Paul on the road to Damascus, knocked him off his horse, blinded him for three days, and sent Ananias to preach the gospel to him. St. Paul hears and believes the Gospel, and he is baptized.

The Lord Jesus personally chose St. Paul to be an Apostle!

Paul did not usurp this position, nor was it given to him by any man. He is certainly not an imposter! He is an Apostle because the Lord Jesus Christ chose him to be an Apostle².

Paul, an Apostle—sent **not** from men **nor** by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead Galatians 1:1

St. Paul is an authority in our lives even today; Christ chose Paul to be an **Apostle** - an **official representative** of Himself. The things that St. Paul wrote in the New Testament remain the authority in our lives. His 13 books in the New Testament are part of the inspired and inerrant Holy Scriptures. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul wrote:

**Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians,
Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians,
1&2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon.**

In addition, the Apostle Paul oversaw
the **Gospel of Luke** and
the **Book of Acts**.

² Note how St. Paul describes his conversion later in his life: "Last of all [the Risen Jesus] appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 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. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." 1 Corinthians 15:8-10

That's more than ½ of the New Testament! When you read St. Paul's books, you are reading the words of a called Apostle by the will of God; you are hearing the very Word of God as if Jesus were teaching you Himself. That makes St. Paul an authority in our lives. This is why we study the Bible, especially the New Testament.

Not only is St. Paul an authentic Apostle, but he also teaches the **genuine Gospel**. He has not added nor subtracted to what the Lord Jesus Christ told him to preach and teach.

I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the Gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12

The Gospel that St. Paul preaches is that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. You do not contribute to your salvation in any way, shape, or form. Salvation is not a work that you do, nor an achievement you accomplish. It is a gift of God's grace through His Son Jesus Christ.

[We] know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. Galatians 2:16

This is the “good news”! This is the Gospel that Jesus revealed to St. Paul and that he preaches and teaches throughout the New Testament! This is the gospel that you believe in and are saved! This Gospel so important, that St. Paul writes:

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse! Galatians 1:8-9

In the first chapter of Galatians, Paul summarized the Gospel like this:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father. Galatians 1:3-4

The Gospel is that *Jesus gave Himself for our sins!*

That means that He traded places with you under the wrath of God and took the condemnation and punishment you deserve. He gave Himself into death for you. He died on a cross so you would not have to. You are set free ... you are rescued from the *present evil age*. Your sins are forgiven because Jesus gave Himself for you and your salvation. **It's His work. It's His effort. It's His accomplishment.** *It is not anything you do, nor anything you accomplish.* It is pure grace, a gift that God gives to you. You receive it by faith, you believe that this Gospel is true and that you are included.

As Lutherans, this is what we mean when we say we are saved by grace alone through faith alone and in Christ alone.

**The word "alone" focuses us on Christ;
and off of ourselves.**

This is the **genuine Gospel** that the **authorized Apostle** is preaching; this is the pure Gospel that we believe! If anyone teaches other than this, *let him be under God's curse!*

The book of Galatians has the most explosive start of any Biblical book! St. Paul starts writing the book of Galatians with guns blazing and declaring that he is

a genuine Apostle
and that he preaches
the authentic Gospel
of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first two chapters of Galatians is all about St. Paul defending his Apostleship, and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ! And we thank God that He has given us the faith to recognize Paul as an Apostle, and His Gospel as coming straight from the Lord Jesus Himself!

Amen!

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for choosing St Paul to be an Apostle.

We thank you for his writings in the New Testament, and his clarity of thought as he teaches us the truths you have given him.

Open our ears and give us faith to believe his words, to recognize him as a genuine Apostle with the authentic Gospel.

Grant us a desire to learn more and more of your Holy Word, written by your holy Apostles, inspired by your Holy Spirit.

Amen!

No gospel reading this week

Acts 9:1-19

1 Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest 2 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. 3 As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4 He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" 5 "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. 6 "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." 7 The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. 8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. 9 For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. 10 In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. 11 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. 12 In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." 13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." 15 But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. 16 I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." 17 Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18 Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19 and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

2 Corinthians 11:22-33

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they Abraham's descendants? So am I. 23 Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. 27 I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. 28 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. . . . 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn? 30 If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. 31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is to be praised forever, knows that I am not lying. 32 In Damascus the governor under King Aretas had the city of the Damascenes guarded in order to arrest me. 33 But I was lowered in a basket from a window in the wall and slipped through his hands.

Galatians 1:1-5

Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.