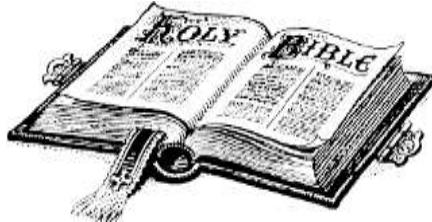


The Letter to the Churches of Galatia



THE TRUMPET CALL OF THE GOSPEL

Trumpet meaning: God has a Message for Us.

(Galatians 1:1-5), “I, Paul, an apostle--and my apostleship was given to me from no human source and through no man's hand, because it came to me direct from Jesus Christ and from God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead--with all the brothers who are here, write this letter to the Churches of Galatia. May grace and peace be on you from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who, because our God and Father willed it so, gave his life for our sins, to rescue us from this present world with all its evil. Glory be to him forever and ever. Amen.”

To the people of Galatia there had come people (Judaizers) saying that Paul:

- Was not one of the twelve, and therefore, not one of the apostles, and his teachings were not of binding authority.
- They suggested that he had not learned his doctrine from the apostles who were pillars of the church; that he was “narcissist.”
- Had been the most savage of all persecutors of the Church;
- Held, as it were, no official appointment from the leaders of the Church.

Paul's answer was not an argument; it was a statement.

“I owe my apostleship to no man but to a day on the Damascus Road when I met Jesus Christ face to face. My office and my task has been given me direct from God.”

Paul was certain that God had spoken to him.

There is a story that tells of a boy who decided to become a minister. He was asked when he had come to that decision and he replied that it was after hearing a certain sermon in his school chapel. He was asked the name of the preacher who had wrought such an effect upon him. His answer was, "I do not know the preacher's name; but I know that God spoke to me that day."

The supreme authority that gives a minister proper and spiritual authority is not one minister making another minister a servant of God. Only God himself can do that.

The real test of a Christian is not whether or not he has gone through certain ceremonies and taken certain vows; it is...Has he seen Christ face to face?

Ebed-Tob, an old Jewish priest, said of the office which he held, "It was not my father or my mother who installed me in this place, but the arm of the Mighty King gave it to me."

The real reason for Paul's ability to toil and to suffer was that he was certain his task had been given him by God. He regarded every effort demanded from him as a God-given task.

It is not only people like Paul who have been given a task from God; to every person God gives a task...the ability or talent to do the work in which he/she has been called.

That task might not make a dent in the history book, or even have been known by those closest to him/her, but God will know ...and who do we really want to know more than the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Paul's God-given task was to evangelize a world; to most of us it will simply be to make one or two folk happy in the little circle of those most dear. But...that task is important, too.

What did it mean, "...And all the brethren which are with me,"?

Various Bible scholars differ as to what Paul was saying. Some say it was typical for Paul to let the churches know the brothers and sisters who were helping him in his ministry as he wrote to them (especially if the church members knew who the brothers and sisters are).

However, I believe Paul's reason to mention "the brethren which are with me" was to let them know that what Paul was saying and confirming, the other brothers concurred with what was being said in this personal and very direct letter. It wasn't just what was said...but was confirmed in writing. Though Paul claimed to be inspired (and I certainly believe he was), it would do much to have validity of his criticism of the churches if others also concurred with what he said.

Right at the beginning of his letter Paul sums up his wishes and prayers for his friends in the established churches throughout the Galatian territory. He sums it up in two (2) tremendous words or thoughts:

1. **GRACE:** There are two main ideas in this word.

- ✓ **Sheer beauty.** The Greek word “charis” means grace in the theological sense, but it always means beauty and charm; if the Christian life has grace in it, it must be a lovely thing.
- ✓ **Goodness:** Goodness can exist without charm and charm without goodness.
When goodness and charm unite, however, the work of grace is seen.

Grace is the undeserved generosity of a gift: *A gift in which a person never deserves and can never earn, given to him in the generous love of God.*

When Paul prays for grace on his friends, it is as if he were saying, "May the beauty of the undeserved love of God be on you, so that it will make your life lovely, too."

2. **PEACE:** Paul was a Jew, and the Jewish word “shalom” must have been in his mind.

“Shalom” means far more than the mere absence of trouble.

It means:

- ✓ *Everything which is to a man's highest good,*
- ✓ *Everything which will make his mind at its purest,*
- ✓ *His will resolute, and*
- ✓ *His heart glad.*

It is that sense of the love and care of God, which, even if his body is tortured, can keep a man's heart and emotions serene.

The final statement in the Greeting of this letter to the churches in Galatia:

Paul sums up in one sentence of infinite meaning the heart and the work of Jesus Christ. "He gave himself... to rescue us."

- ✓ *The love of Christ is a love which gave and suffered.*
- ✓ *The love of Christ is a love which conquered and achieved.*

In this life (which is full of evil events and tragic results at times), God's love is sometimes thought of as being very frustrating (evil seems to be growing and Christianity losing its control of the world).

*However, the love of Christ is backed by an infinite power which nothing can frustrate and which can **RESCUE** its loved ones from the bondage of sin.*

A rescue is something that somebody else does for you. If you're trapped in a fire, or you have a heart attack, you call 9-1-1 because you need someone else to do for you what you cannot do for yourself.

Calling 9-1-1 doesn't save you. It is the fireman or paramedic who saves you. Calling 9-1-1 puts you in touch with somebody who has the ability to save you. The one who answers your call is the one who saves you. That's important. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). "Saved" is another way of saying rescued.

Some people have the idea that believing is something we do to save ourselves. But if you are able to save yourself then, by definition, you do not need to be rescued. Believing is calling 9-1-1 (God's on the line). It is the way that you call on the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is Christ who saves you.

We know who wins in the end.

This keeps the Christian running in the race of life. It keeps the Christian heading for the finish line helping everyone in the path to the goal (heaven) of understanding that the game is not over until "The One and Only God of Heaven says so!"

Even so, Come Lord Jesus! Maranatha!

