

Paul's letter to the Galatians



Paul's Early Years of Ministry

Galatians 1:13-24

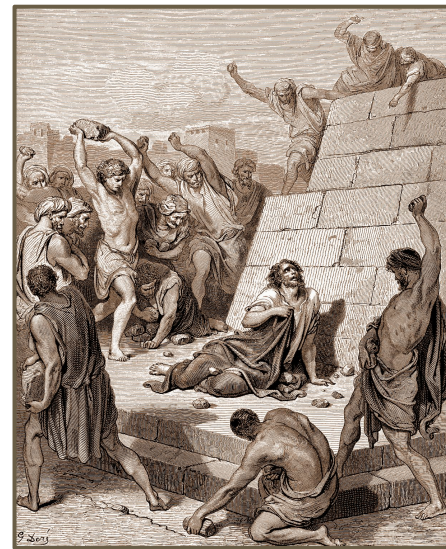


Steve Lewis

www.SpiritAndTruth.org

The chronology of Paul's apostleship

- Paul began with his personal history before his conversion (1:13-14). The Judaizers may have shared about Paul's early devotion to Judaism in order to prove that even he would agree with their emphasis on obedience to the Mosaic Law.
- But Paul's zeal for Judaism led him to persecute anyone who deviated from their traditions. Nothing in Paul's early training would have taught him the true gospel. On the contrary, Paul vehemently opposed the gospel.



Martyrdom of Stephen

Paul's conversion and commission (1:15-16)

- **"God was pleased"** (*eudokeō*) ~ God thought it good; He chose, determined, decided, or willed this as part of His eternal plan.
- God's sovereign **"grace"** ~ the unmerited favor of God to those who cannot earn and do not deserve His favor.
- **"to reveal His Son in me"** (*apokaluptō*) ~ "to uncover, disclose, or declare" the true gospel of His grace, **"so that"** Paul would **"preach"** (literally, "gospelize") among the Gentiles.
- **"I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood"** ~ Paul did not seek validation from any human authority to carry out the ministry Jesus had given him.

Paul's ministry in Damascus and Arabia (1:17)

- Paul had heard directly from Jesus, so he saw no need to seek the endorsement of the Jerusalem apostles.
- **“immediately he began to proclaim Jesus”** (Acts 9:19-22)
- Paul **“went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus”** ~ Acts 9 does not mention Paul's visit to Arabia, but he spent an extended time in and around that region.
- He may have retreated into the nearby desert for prayer and meditation on God's Word, and he also may have spread the gospel to non-Jews in that area.

Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (1:18-20)

- Paul ministered in the area around Damascus for three years before finally making the journey to Jerusalem.
- **Paul's purpose** ~ **"to become acquainted with Cephas."** There were facts about Jesus' life and resurrection appearances that only Peter could give him.
- For fifteen days Paul waited and then **"stayed"** (*epimenō*) with Peter, which emphasized how brief a time they spent together.
- During that short visit Paul's focus was on private conversation, rather than on conducting a public ministry in the city of Jerusalem.

Paul's first visit to Jerusalem (1:18-20)

- Paul's visit was not for seeking the approval or sanction of the Jerusalem leaders for his ministry. He spoke privately with Peter and James to hear their own personal testimony.
- He saw **"James, the Lord's brother"** rather than James the son of Zebedee, who was one of the original twelve apostles.
- **"I am not lying"** ~ Paul was responding to charges made against him by the Judaizing teachers, so he insists he is telling the truth.
- At the Temple God told Paul to "get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me" (Acts 22:18). He was immediately taken to Caesarea and sent to Tarsus.

Paul's ministry in Syria and Cilicia (1:21-24)

- Paul's ministry would take place far from the influence of the Jerusalem apostles and be completely separate from theirs. He would eventually establish many churches there (cf. Acts 15:41).
- He was unknown “**by face**” (*prosōpon*) to the churches of Judea, so they were not the source of his gospel or his apostleship either.
- They knew two things about Paul: 1) he “**once**” persecuted believers in order to destroy the faith, and 2) he “**now**” was preaching the faith ~ sharing the gospel and making disciples.
- Even the more “Jewish” churches in Judea were praising God for Paul, rather than criticizing him like the Judaizers were doing.

Summary

- By sharing the chronology of his early years in ministry, the apostle Paul showed that he received neither the true gospel nor his apostleship from those who came before him.
- After a successful three year ministry in the area of Damascus, Paul visited privately with Peter and James in Jerusalem, but he was not seeking the official sanction of the leadership there.
- Even the more “Jewish” churches glorified God because of him.
- These historical facts proved that his gospel was true and that his authority to share it came directly from the Lord Jesus Christ.