

**Paul defends his own authority****• An unusual story****• The facts answer wrong ideas that were going around****1. The Gospel is no mere human invention****• The gospel is not a clever idea thought up by a clever person****• The gospel is so surprising to human thinking**

'Galatians' really gets moving at this point. Paul has three topics on his mind: his own authority, the nature of the gospel and the results of the gospel. From Galatians 1:11 to 2:14 he is defending his own authority as an inspired apostle.

Paul starts telling the story of how he came to be an apostle. Along the way he wants to tell them how much he did and did not consult with the apostles in Jerusalem. We can see why he is doing this. Paul was an unusual person with an unusual story. He was not one of the twelve apostles and yet he claimed to be as much an apostle as they were. Anyone who has an unusual story is likely to cause perplexity to other people. People spread all sorts of odd stories about Jesus. They spread all sorts of odd stories about the early Christians. They spread all sorts of odd stories about Paul. And if God uses you in a way that is different from the average Christian, people are likely to spread odd stories about you too! If you are a humble person you might not like talking about yourself very much. Paul was not the kind of person who spent all of his time talking about himself. But occasionally you have to tell people some basic facts about yourself in order to answer their perplexities, and that is what Paul is doing here. Clearly there were stories going around about Paul being a persecutor of Christians. Others were saying (it seems) that he was a junior missionary employed by Jerusalem, and that he was disobeying his superiors. Another story (if 1:10 is a clue) was that he was making the gospel easy for gentiles because he wanted to please them. Paul has denied that he is trying to specially please anyone. Now he insists that his apostleship came from God.

1. Paul begins by refusing the idea that the gospel is a merely human invention. He says, 'For I am telling you, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was preached by me is not a human gospel<sup>1</sup>. For I did not receive it from any human being, nor was I taught it. Rather it came to me through a revelation of Jesus Christ'<sup>2</sup>.

The gospel did not come by human meditation or invention. It was not that Paul was a very clever religious person and that he thought up this amazingly clever gospel. Not at all! Paul was a persecutor, violently opposed to the gospel. But in addition to that, the gospel is so amazingly different from what one expects it to be. Think of the Christian doctrine of the trinity ('God is one. The Father is God. The Son of God is divine. The Holy Spirit is divine. There are not three gods but one God'). No one would have invented it! It is impossible to explain! It is difficult to defend when someone wants to argue against it. What religious philosopher would have invented such teaching? What 'religion' believes that salvation is by faith in a crucified Saviour? It is a 'stumbling block' and always has been. The entire gospel is so surprising to the human way of thinking. What philosophy could say 'To the one who does nothing but believes the One who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness'? It is entirely incredible. The 'natural person' cannot receive it. But then what is foolish to human beings is the wisdom of God. 'The gospel ... is not a human gospel.' Incidentally we notice the implication here that the Lord Jesus Christ is not a mere man!

<sup>1</sup> 1:11<sup>2</sup> 1:12

• **The gospel did not come by human tradition or human education**

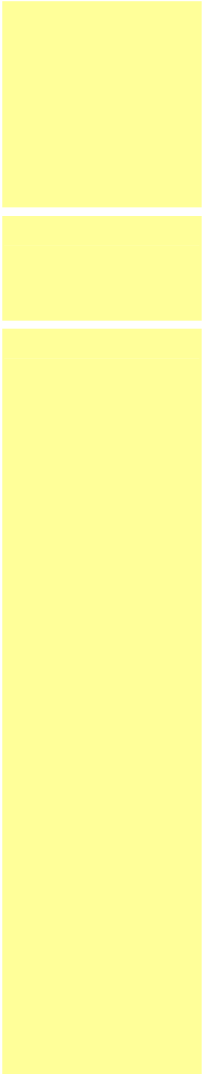
The gospel did not come by human tradition. 'I did not receive it from any human being', he says. It was not that the long tradition of the church had taught this to Paul – although of course the basics of Paul's teaching could be found in the Psalms or in Isaiah or in the teaching of Jesus. But Paul did not get his teaching by its being 'passed on' to him in this way.



The gospel did not come by human education. 'Nor was I taught it', says Paul. He had not been taught by the apostle Peter, or by some clever religious teacher.

**2. The Gospel came to Paul through a revelation of Jesus Christ**

• **Paul got much of his message when he first met Jesus on the Damascus road**

2. The gospel came to Paul through a revelation of Jesus Christ. What kind of inspired apostle was Paul? He was not an eye-witness of the life of Jesus in quite the same way as the earlier apostles were. He may, as a young man, have glimpsed Jesus in Jerusalem, but he never knew Him well in any earthly way. So where did he get his teaching from? Much of his message came from his meeting the glorified and risen Lord Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. When the shining, brilliant, radiating glory of God appeared in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul got the heart of His teaching in a few seconds! When he was told that persecuting the church was the same as persecuting Jesus, immediately he had his teaching of the church as the 'body of Christ'. When he was sent at that time to gentiles, he immediately knew that the gospel was not to be wrapped up in Jewish culture. When a couple of days after meeting Jesus the Holy Spirit was poured out upon him, he had his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. When he read the Old Testament he read it with new eyes – and had a new view of Scripture. The day Jesus Christ revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus was the day when Paul got the basic outline of his entire teaching. The gospel was revealed, not invented. It was revealed to eye-witnesses of the resurrection, among whom was Paul, the greatest expositor of 'the whole counsel of God' that there ever was.



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