

READ GALATIANS 1:1-12

Scenario: *Paul had been preaching a message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus alone (Jesus plus nothing). Some Jewish Christians had been following behind him telling the Church that they also needed to follow Jewish laws and rituals if they wanted to be saved (Jesus plus works). In doing so they were casting doubt on Paul's teaching and upon him being God's messenger. Paul wrote Galatians to rebuke the false teachers and their teaching, to try and steer the church back on the right path and to persuade them that he was a true messenger from God.*

1. Jesus had 12 disciples whom he also designated "apostles" (Luke 6:13). Paul also refers to himself as being an "apostle"? (v1).

- i. What do you understand to be the role of an Apostle?
- ii. In Ephesians 4:11-13, Apostles are listed along with Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers as being given to the Church by Jesus to equip the Church for works of service. Do you think all 5 of these ministries should still be seen at work in the Church today?
- iii. Paul confidently begins most of his letters referring to himself as "*Paul an apostle of Christ Jesus*". If you put your name in that phrase instead of '*Paul*', what would you put instead of "*apostle*" that reflects what you think Jesus has called you to be for him?

2. Paul was astonished that the church had embraced the false teaching of the Judaizers that to be saved you had to keep the rituals of the Jewish law as well as believing in Jesus. He saw the Church as now deserting God (v6) and believing a message that perverts the Gospel (v7). He was so enraged that he called for the cursing /destruction of the false teachers (v9).

- i. Why was it so wrong to require people to also have to follow Jewish rituals in order to be saved?
- ii. Why does this situation so enrage Paul?

3. How can we recognise false teaching today? Are there any common elements that we can look out for? What should we do if we discover that some false teaching is going on in our church or in another church?

READ GALATIANS 1:13-24

4. Paul illustrates the message of grace by telling his own testimony of God's grace at work in his own life. He first describes what he did before he was a believer in Jesus (v13-14).

- i. Why did Paul's actions in verse 14 lead him to carry out the actions of verse 13?
- ii. Where else do we see today religious zeal producing negative actions?

5. When Paul encountered the risen Jesus, he discovered that he was not saved by anything good that he had done or excluded from salvation because of anything bad he had done but that Jesus had called Paul "*by his grace*" and had set him apart from birth (v15). Cast your mind back to when you first became a Christian. Can you remember anything that you became aware of for the first time when you met Jesus?

6. Some commentators suggest that just as the disciples spent 3 years learning, talking and walking with Jesus so this is what Paul did in Arabia (v17). He simply met with Jesus without any distractions to listen to Jesus' voice and to learn what Jesus wanted to teach him. Where is your 'Arabia'? Where do you go to spend quality one-to-one time with Jesus?

Extra Question if there is time

7. In today's church some place importance on Ministers/Vicars/Priests being 'ordained' by a college or denomination and trained to preach in line with that denomination's theology. Paul, however, seems to be going out of his way to say that he was not ordained/ commissioned/ sent by 'man' but by Jesus (v1) and that the words he preached were not of human origin but directly from Jesus.(v10). He also points out that after becoming a Christian he didn't "*consult*" with any of the other apostles but just went off to Arabia (v16-17).

- i. Why might Paul have felt the need to make this point?
- ii. In light of Paul's response how should we view the need for our church leaders to be ordained/ commissioned/ sent by 'man'? What are the risks of having church leaders who are not?