

Sunday, November 1, 2009—Grace Life School of Theology—Understanding Galatians and the Law—Galatians 1:13-14

Galatians 1:13

- Before we deal with verse 13 specifically we need to remember the context in which the verse appears. Paul is in the process of certifying that mankind had nothing whatsoever to do with the origin of his gospel or apostleship.
- *“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews religion”*
- Paul had no doubt told the Galatians about his past life and status in the Jewish religion.
- Acts 22:2-4—Paul had been trained at a Jewish seminary to be a Pharisee.
- I Timothy 1:13—this is what Paul called himself looking back on his life prior to his salvation.
- Acts 7:28-60—Saul was a member of the Sanhedrin. As such he was part of the judicial system of the nation of Israel. He was present at Stephen’s trial.
- Philippians 3:4-6—according to Jewish religious customs there was no more devoted follower than Paul. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews and blameless concerning the law.
- *“how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it”*
- First we need to remember what we have already studied about the word church. It comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which simply means a called out group. We have already studied how *ekklesia* is not a technical word; the context will define the specific group that is being referred to.
- Acts 2:47—most people think that Paul is referring to the body of Christ in Galatians 1:13 when he uses the word church. According to this line of thinking Paul was persecuting the church the body of Christ, which had stated in Acts 2.
- Romans 11:31-32—the body of Christ could not have been formed in Acts 2 since Israel had not yet been rendered and included in unbelief with the gentiles. See Galatians 3:28.
- The church Saul was persecuting was the Jewish Kingdom church that was awaiting the second coming of the Messiah to establish the prophesied kingdom. Remember that Saul was a Pharisee. Did the Pharisee’s believe that Jesus was the Christ, or Messiah of prophecy? No. Therefore, they hated the message that the 12 and Stephen had been preaching. Consequently, Saul began persecuting this particular church or called out group.
- Paul was doing exactly what Galatians 1:13 reports, persecuting the Jewish kingdom church.
 - Acts 8:1-3, 26:11, 9:1-2

- Acts 9:13-14—Ananias had heard of Saul and was afraid to go and talk with him.
- Acts 9:26—when Paul finally did make it to Jerusalem they were afraid of him and did not trust him.
- Considering the context why does Paul mention his past? It proves that he could not have received his message or apostleship from the 12 or any other human source because all the believers at the time were afraid of Paul and distrusted him because of his past actions.

Galatians 1:14

- *“And profited in the Jews religion above many my equal in my own nation”*
- When Paul says that he “profited in the Jews religion,” it means that he advanced. He made progress faster than any of his Jewish peers. Paul had found something he was good at. He was comfortable, respected, and a leader in his community. He possessed a position that commanded respect.
- In essence, Paul is saying, “Why would I leave my place of honor and prominence to follow the rejected Christ?” The explanation is that Christ himself, the one whom he was persecuted had given him something to say.
- Acts 19:23-27—through his preaching, Paul was hurting the business of those who were selling shrines of the goddess Diana. The spirit that prompted Demetrius to call a meeting of his guild still prevails amongst religious people. When people have a vested interest, especially financially, they won’t easily change their minds.
- Paul was the same way; he possessed a profitable career as a Pharisee. No man could have persuaded Paul to leave such a prestigious and lucrative position. The fact that he forsook such a profitable career proves that his apostleship was the result of God’s work in his life.
- *“Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers”*
- For Paul it had been more than a matter of temporal gain. He was persecuting the Jewish Kingdom Church because he was convinced that he was right.
- Notice what Saul was zealous of, not the scriptures but tradition.
- Mark 7:9, 13—Saul had been part of this group of people who were holding to the traditions of men. Paul had no reason to listen to anything the 12 had to say.
- This end Paul’s three proofs of his apostleship:
 - He persecuted the church—Galatians 1:13
 - He profited in the Jew’s religion—Galatians 1:14
 - He was more exceedingly zealous—Galatians 1:14

- The only way Paul would have preached what he did is if verse 12 is true, that Christ revealed it to him. Humanely speaking there was too much to lose, he had too much at stake. This why many people don't believe the word of God rightly divided. There is simply too much to lose such as friends, family, money, influence, prestige, and their congregations.
- Verse 14 illustrates why verse 10 is so important. If Paul wanted to please men he would have remained a Pharisee.

Galatians 1:15

- The Calvinist is quick to jump all over this verse to prove sovereign election to salvation in eternity past.
- *“But when it pleased God who”*
- In other words, when the time was right. God had a plan for what he was going to accomplish with the Body of Christ before the world began. It was that plan and program that was predestinated not each person's individual salvation.
- I Corinthians 15:8—Paul was born when the time was right. When it pleased God.
- I Timothy 2:6—Paul testified about the Gospel of the Grace of God when the appropriate time came.
- *“who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,”*
- The real issue the Calvinist has is what is meant by the term “separated.”
 - Separated-- to mark off from others by boundaries, to limit, to separate
 - a) in a bad sense: to exclude as disreputable
 - b) in a good sense: to appoint, set apart for some purpose
- Not once in either Testament does the word refer to an eternal act or decree, or does the text say that Paul was separated **before** he was born.
- Paul was separated **when he was born**; he was not elected until he accepted Christ.
- Ephesians 1:4
- Paul is the perfect person to be made the Apostle of the Gentiles. He was both a Roman Citizen and a member of the nation of Israel. Therefore in Paul himself you have a type of the Body of Christ, Jews and Gentiles being reconciled to God in one body by the cross.
- This is not a salvation verse it is part of Paul's defense of his apostleship which began in verse 11. In the context, Paul's point is simply to say he did not choose this for himself. The risen Christ appeared to Saul interrupted his wild career, saved him, and gave him

both an apostleship and message to preach the entire Christ rejecting world of which Israel was now a part.