

GALATIANS 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

UBS ⁴	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	JB
Salutation 1:1-5	Greetings 1:1-5	The Salutation 1:1-5	Salutation 1:1-2 1:3 1:4-5	Address 1:1-5
There is No Other Gospel 1:6-9 1:10	Only One Gospel 1:6-10	The Galatian Apostasy 1:6-10	The One Gospel 1:6-9 1:10	A Warning 1:6-10
How Paul Became An Apostle 1:11-12 1:13-17	Call to Apostleship 1:11-17	Paul's Vindication of His Apostleship 1:11-12 1:13-17	How Paul Became an Apostle 1:11-12 1:13-14 1:15-19	God's Call 1:11-24
1:18-24	Contacts at Jerusalem 1:18-24	1:18-24	1:20 1:21-24	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key in understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized chapter one. Obviously vv. 1-5, 6-10, 11-17, and 18-24 are units of thought (paragraphs). Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

Notice that TEV structures vv. 1-5 into three topics or subjects while the others have only one. Also notice how in vv. 6-10, that UBS⁴ and TEV make v. 10 a separate thought. The summary statements vary as well: UBS⁴, NKJV, and TEV characterize it as referring to "the gospel," but NRSV and JB understand the paragraph as a "warning" and relate it to the heresy.

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when one understands the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Verses 1-5, basically the prologue to Galatians, form only one sentence in Greek.
- B. Paul's usual note of thanksgiving is absent (cf. Rom., I and II Cor., Eph., Phil., Col., I and II Thes.) This reflects the tension between Paul and this group of churches.
- C. Verses 6-10 establish the theological theme of the entire book. It could almost be said that these few verses contain all of the theological elements which are later developed.
- D. Galatians 1:11-2:21 forms an autobiographical section where Paul defends his Apostleship and, by that, his gospel. This is very similar to II Corinthians 10-13.
- E. Galatians 1:11-2:21 divides into the following areas:
 1. Paul was not dependent on the Apostles in Jerusalem, 1:11-24.
 2. Paul was recognized by the Church in Jerusalem, 2:1-10.
 3. An example of Paul's equality, 2:11-21.
- F. The main body of this letter is contained in 1:11-6:10. It can be divided as follows:
 1. Paul defends his Apostleship, 1:11-2:14.
 2. Paul defends the doctrinal truths of his gospel, 2:15-4:20.
 3. Paul defends the implication of his gospel, 5:1-6:10.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-5

¹Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia: ³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen.

1:1 "Paul" Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the "diaspora" had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul's parents gave him this name but why, then, does "Paul" suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly (1) others began to call him by this name or (2) he began to refer to himself by the term "little" or "least." The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name: (1) the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called *Paul and Thékla*; (2) passages where Paul calls himself the "the least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15). Some have seen this "leastness" as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this is somewhat unlikely (cf. II Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

▣ **"an apostle"** "Apostle" comes from one of the Greek words "to send" (*apostellō*) Jesus chose twelve of His disciples to be with Him in a special sense and called them "Apostles" (cf. Lk. 6:13). This term is often used of Jesus being sent from the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mk. 9:37; Lk. 9:48; Jn. 4:34; 5:24, 30, 36, 37, 38; 6:29, 38, 39, 40, 57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21). In Jewish sources, the term was used of someone sent as an official representative of another, similar to "ambassador."

Paul asserted his apostleship in all of his letters except for Phil., I and II Thes. and Philem. This introductory paragraph is one of the strongest affirmations of his apostleship found in any of his letters, due to the situations in the churches where false teachers tried to refute his gospel by attacking him personally.

▣

NASB "not sent from men, nor through the agency of man"

NKJV "not from men nor through man"

NRSV "sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities"

TEV "did not come from man or by means of man"

JB "who does not owe his authority to men or his appointment to any human being"

This underscores one of Paul's major emphases, that his apostleship originated from a divine, not human, source. The false teachers may have alleged that Paul received his gospel from: (1) the Twelve in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 9:19-22); or (2) the Mother Church, but had subtly changed this gospel that he had been given. Paul defended himself in this regard because the gospel itself, not his credentials or reputation, was at stake (cf. II Cor. 10-13).

▣ **"but through Jesus Christ and God the Father"** Note Paul's bold assertion that he received his revelation and the content of the gospel from Jesus Himself (cf. 1:17). Although Paul did not fit the criteria of apostleship found in Acts 1:21-22, he believed he was called by the Lord to perform this specific task.

"Jesus" means *YHWH* saves (cf. Matt. 1:21). When this term is used alone in the NT, it emphasizes the humanity of Jesus (cf. Eph. 4:21). "Christ" is equivalent to the Hebrew term, *Messiah* or Anointed One, which emphasizes the OT promise of the uniquely called, divinely inspired, coming One to bring in the New Age of righteousness.

"Jesus Christ" and "God the Father" are linked by one PREPOSITION which was the NT author's way of asserting the full deity of Christ; this occurs both in v. 1 and v. 3 (cf. I Thes. 1:1; 3:11; II Thes. 1:2,12; 2:16).

God is Father, not in the sense of sexual generation or chronological precedence, but interpersonal relationship and leadership, as in a Jewish home.

▣ **"who raised Him from the dead"** Paul emphasized that God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, is the one who gave him the gospel. Paul may have been saying he was called by the Risen Lord while the Twelve in Jerusalem were called by the still-human Lord, although this may be reading too much into the phrase. In most passages, it is God the Father who raised Jesus from the dead and thereby gives Him the divine stamp of approval on His ministry (cf. II Cor. 4:14; Acts 2:24; 3:15; 10:40; Rom. 6:4; I Pet. 1:21). In Rom. 8:17 it is the Spirit who raises Jesus from the dead. However, in Jn. 10:17-18, Jesus asserted that He laid down His own life, and took it up again. This shows the fluidity between the work of the persons of the Trinity.

1:2 "and all the brethren who are with me" It is unfortunate for modern Bible students that Paul did not name his companions, which would have confirmed one of the two theories concerning the recipients of the letter. The Northern Theory focuses on ethnic Galatia while the Southern Theory focuses on the Roman administrative province of Galatia. Paul did not mention whether it was Barnabas (first journey) or Timothy and Silas (second journey). The name "Barnabas" occurs three times in Galatians implying the first journey.

Paul used "brethren" often in this letter (cf. 3:15; 4:12; 5:11; 6:18), possibly because his message to these churches was so pointed, stern, or even combative. Also, Paul often introduced new subjects by beginning with "brothers" which implies the first journey (referring to Timothy and Silas, not just one brother, Barnabas).

▣ **"to the churches of Galatia"** Again, the exact location of these churches remains undetermined. Some assert that it is Northern Galatia (cf. I Pet. 1:1), and make the date of this epistle in the middle 50's AD. Acts 26:6 and 18:23 are interpreted as evidence that Paul preached in this area. Others interpret Galatia as the Roman province of Galatia, which encompassed a much larger area referred to in Acts 13 and 14 and would thereby refer to the first missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas. This would make the date in the late 40's AD, just before, but not identical with, the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

1:3 "Grace to you and peace" The normal Greek epistolary greeting was the word *charein*. Paul characteristically changed this to the similar sounding Christian term *charis*, or grace. Many have suggested Paul combined the Greek greeting of "grace" with the Hebrew greeting "peace" [*shalom*]. Although this is an attractive theory, it may be reading too much into this typically Pauline introductory phrase. Theologically it is interesting to notice that grace precedes peace.

▣ **"the Lord"** The Greek term *kurios* is similar in meaning to the Hebrew term *adon*. Both were used in the sense of "sir," "master," "owner," "husband," or "lord" (cf. Gen. 24:9; Ex. 21:4; II Sam. 2:7; and Matt. 6:24; Jn. 4:11; 9:36). However, it also came to refer to Jesus as God's Sent One, the Messiah (cf. Jn. 9:38).

The OT usage of this term comes from the reluctance of the Jews to pronounce the covenant name for God, *YHWH*, which is the CAUSATIVE FORM of the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Ex. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking one of the Ten Commandments which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain." Therefore, they thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew *adonai* [Lord] which has a similar meaning to the Greek *kurios* [Lord]. The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase "Jesus is Lord" was the public confession of faith and baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-14).

1:4 This series of phrases illuminates three major aspects of Paul's gospel message. Paul expanded the introduction to show the centrality of the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. The three aspects are: (1) His substitutionary death on our behalf (cf. Rom. 4:25; 5:6,8; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:14,21); (2) His introduction of the New Messianic Age—this is an AORIST MIDDLE VERBAL FORM which means "He, Himself, once and for all, plucked us out" of this present evil age. "Wicked" is placed in an EMPHATIC POSITION which conveys the idea that "this is an evil, godless age" (cf. Jn. 12:31; II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2-7). The concept of the two Jewish ages—a current evil age and the age to come which will be brought in by God's Messiah—can be seen in Matt. 12:32; 13:39; 28:20 and other passages in the NT. Although Jesus has ushered in the New Age, it has not yet been fully consummated; and (3) His mission was in obedience to the plan of God. He came to die (cf. Gen. 3:15; Isa. 53:4,10; Mk. 10:45; Jn. 3:16; Acts 2:22-23; 4:27-28; II Tim. 1:9; I Pet. 1:20 and Rev. 13:8).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TWO AGES

The OT views the future by an extension of the present. The future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. But with the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature. These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this "progressive revelation." Both Jesus and Paul affirm this new cosmic reality of two ages:

JESUS

Matthew 12:32
13:22 & 39
Mark 10:30
Luke 16:8
18:30
20:34-35

PAUL

Romans 12:2
I Corinthians 11:20; 2:6,8; 3:18
II Corinthians 4:4
Galatians 1:4
Ephesians 1:21; 2:2,7; 6:12
I Timothy 6:17
II Timothy 4:10
Titus 2:12

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the two comings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus at Bethlehem fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age. However, the OT saw His coming as one of Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53), humble and meek (cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Rev. 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not consummated). This is the NT tension of the already but not yet!

1:5 "to whom be the glory forevermore. Amen" Typically Pauline, this doxology breaks into the context because of the majesty of the gospel. Often the pronouns in Paul's writings have ambiguous antecedents. Most of the time, in these occurrences, the MASCULINE SINGULAR PRONOUNS refer to God the Father.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-10

⁶I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; ⁷which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! ⁹As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you have

received, he is to be accursed! ¹⁰For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

1:6 "I am amazed" Instead of a thanksgiving—so common in Pauline writings—Paul observed with astonishment that the Galatians had been too easily wooed away from the pure, simple, majestic gospel of justification by faith by the false teachers.

▣ **"so quickly"** Two senses are possible: (1) so soon after they accepted the gospel that Paul preached, or (2) so soon after the false teachers came.

▣ **"deserting Him"** This verb is PRESENT TENSE, indicating the Galatians were in the process of turning away. "Turn away" is a military term for revolt. Note the emphasis is on the personal element of turning away from God Himself by rejecting Paul's gospel. "Turn away" can be a PRESENT PASSIVE VERBAL FORM but the larger context (cf. 3:1ff. and 5:7) implies a PRESENT MIDDLE FORM. This emphasizes that although the false teachers instigated the turning, the Galatians willingly participated in it.

▣ **"who called you by the grace of Christ"** The phrase "called you" usually refers to God the Father (cf. Rom. 8:30; 9:24; I Cor. 1:9). This is significant because of the textual problem with the addition of the phrase "of Christ." It is not found in the papyrus P⁴⁶, but it is found in the papyrus P⁵¹, and manuscripts **ℵ**, A, B, K and P. This may be an early addition to clarify that it is the Father who calls us through Christ. It must be stated again: God always takes the initiative in human salvation (cf. Jn. 6:44,65).

▣ **"for a different gospel"** "Different" [*heteros*] is sometimes used in the sense of "another of a different kind," (cf. II Cor. 11:4). In verse 7 *allos* is also used; it can be translated "another of the same kind in a series." However, in Koine Greek these terms were becoming synonymous and a distinction should not be insisted upon too strongly. But, in this context, Paul obviously used both for contrast.

1:7

NASB	"which is <i>really</i> not another"
NKJV	"which is not another"
NRSV	"not that there is another gospel"
TEV	"there is no 'other gospel'"
JB	"Not that there can be more than one Good News"

There are not two gospels, though the one true gospel is often perverted. The KJV translation of 2:7 has been often interpreted as referring to two gospels, one for the pagans and one for the Jews. This is an unfortunate and untrue inference, although it may have been a statement of the false teachers.

▣	
NASB	"only there are some who are disturbing you"
NKJV	"but there are some who trouble you"
NRSV	"but there are some who are confusing you"
TEV	"there are some people who are upsetting you"
JB	"it is merely that some troublemakers among you"

"Disturbing" refers to a purposeful action like a military revolt. "False teachers" is PLURAL in 5:12, but possibly only the leader of the false teachers is actually meant in 5:7 and twice in 5:10 because of the use of the SINGULAR. They are called "agitators" in 5:12. Many assume the Judaizers of Galatians are synonymous with the converted Pharisees or priests of Acts 15:1,5,24. They emphasized the necessity of becoming a Jew before one could become a Christian. The Judaizers' emphasis on the Jewish Law can be seen in: (1) the necessity of circumcision (cf. 2:3-4; 5:1; 6:12-15); (2) their keeping of special days (cf. 4:10); and (3) a possible inclusion of keeping the food laws which is implied in Paul's confrontation with Peter (cf. 2:11-14). This was probably the same group of false teachers mentioned in II Cor. 11:26 and II Thes. 2:14-16. Their problem was not that they denied the central place of Christ in salvation, but that they required the Mosaic Law.

▣	
NASB	"and want to distort the gospel of Christ"
NKJV, NRSV	"and want to pervert the gospel of Christ"
TEV	"and trying to change the gospel of Christ"
JB	"want to change the Good News of Christ"

"To distort" is an AORIST INFINITIVE meaning "to reverse," possibly another military term. Although morality is a significant element of the gospel, it always follows salvation. It does not precede it as the Judaizers asserted (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 & 10).

Paul's gospel was Christ, then Christlikeness; their gospel was works righteousness (Mosaic Law) and then God's righteousness in Christ.

1:8 "but even if" This THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE with an AORIST MIDDLE SUBJUNCTIVE which shows a hypothetical situation (cf. II Cor. 11:3-4). Paul asserted that if he, or an angel from heaven, should preach a different gospel, they should be sent to Hell.



NASB "he is to be accursed!"
NKJV "let him be accursed"
NRSV "let that one be accursed"
TEV "may he be condemned to hell"
JB "he is to be condemned"

"Curse" (*anathema*, cf. Matt. 18:7; Rom. 9:3; I Cor. 12:3; 16:22) may reflect the Hebrew word *herem* which was employed in the sense of dedicating something to God. *Herem* developed a negative connotation from its use in the case of Jericho being dedicated to God for destruction (cf. Joshua 6-7). God's curse is a natural result of His people breaking a covenant (cf. Deut. 27:11-26). However, Paul specifically used this term to show the seriousness of the false teachers' gospel by consigning them to Hell.

Syntactically, verses 8 and 9 are a doublet. However, the THIRD CLASS CONDITION of verse 8 shows probable action while the FIRST CLASS CONDITION of verse 9 shows current, assumed action.

1:9 "a gospel contrary to that which you have received" The VERB "received" is a technical term in rabbinical writings for "the Oral Tradition," indicating Paul was passing on a tradition (cf. I Cor. 15:3), but the context is emphatic that he did not receive this tradition from men.

It must be clarified that the central elements of Paul's gospel came from Jesus directly. He contemplated and developed them for several years before he went to visit the Mother Church and its leaders in Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 1:18; 2:1). But Paul also learned much about the words and actions of Jesus from those who knew Him in the flesh: (1) those he persecuted witnessed to him; (2) he saw and heard the defense of Stephen (cf. Acts 7:58); (3) Ananias witnessed to him (cf. Acts 9:10-19); (4) he visited with Peter for 15 days (cf. 1:18). Additionally, Paul also quotes many creeds or hymns of the early Church in his writings (cf. 1:4-5; I Cor. 15:3-4; Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20; I Tim. 3:16); and mentions Christian traditions several times (cf. I Cor. 11:2; II Thes. 3:6). Paul was speaking in very specific terms and in a guarded sense because of the accusations of the false teachers.

1:10 "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God" This is a development and continuation of the theme which began in 1:1. Paul's strong words to the false teachers proved that he was not trying to please men which they had apparently alleged. Possibly Paul was being criticized for his statement that he became all things to all men similar to I Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 21:17-26. This was misinterpreted as: (1) compromising with pagan culture or (2) his preaching two gospels, one for Jews and another easier one for pagans.

▣ "If" Verse 10 is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which expresses a statement "contrary to fact." Amplified, the sentence would read: "If I were still trying to please men, which I am not, then I would not be a bond-servant of Christ, which I am."

▣ "I were still trying to please men" There has been much discussion about the word "still." Does this imply that he never appealed to men or that it was a confession that as a zealous Pharisee in his earlier days he did attempt to please men (i.e. Pharisee, cf. 1:14)?

▣ "I would not be a bond-servant of Christ" This is an allusion to Christ's teaching that one cannot serve two masters (cf. Matt. 6:24). "Bond-servant" may have been used by Paul to refer to (1) Jesus as LORD and Paul as slave; or (2) an honorific title from the OT used of Moses (cf. Deut. 34:5; Josh. 8:31,33), Joshua (cf. Josh. 24:29; Judg. 2:8), and to David (cf. II Sam. 7:5; title, Ps. 18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:11-17

¹¹For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹²For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did

not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

1:11-2:14 This is a literary unit in which Paul defends his apostleship, so as to defend his gospel.

1:11

NASB "For I would have you know, brethren"

NKJV "But I make known to you, brethren"

NRSV "For I want you to know, brothers and sisters"

TEV "Let me tell you, my brothers"

JB "The fact is, brothers, and I want you to realize this"

The KJV translates this as "I certify to you," a technical rendering of the phrase (cf. I Cor. 15:1).

1:11-12 "the gospel which was preached by me" This begins a phrase which repeats the twin disclaimers of 1:1. Paul claimed that his message does not have a human origin (cf. II Thes. 2:13; II Pet. 1:20-21). He further asserted that he did not receive it from any human, but that it was taught to him by a revelation from Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 3:2-3). He stated this three times in verses 11-12!

1:12 "of Jesus Christ" This may be either SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE CASE (emphasizing Jesus as the agent of the revelation) or OBJECTIVE GENITIVE CASE (emphasizing Jesus as the content of the revelation).

1:13 "you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism" It is not certain how these churches heard: (1) it was common knowledge; (2) Paul shared with them; or (3) the false teachers had alluded to his former conduct. "Judaism" seems to refer to Pharisaism (cf. Acts 26:4-5). After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by the Roman general Titus, the Pharisaic party moved to the city of Jamnia. The Sadducean element was completely eliminated and Pharisaism developed into modern rabbinical Judaism. Paul mentioned something of his life as a zealous Pharisee in Phil. 3:4-6.

▣

NASB "how I used to persecute"

NKJV "how I persecuted"

NRSV "I was violently persecuting"

TEV "how I persecuted without mercy"

JB "how much damage I did to it"

This IMPERFECT TENSE verb is used in Acts 9:4, referring to his repeated activity described in Acts 8:1-3; 22:20; and 26:10. These are the same general contexts in which Paul shared his personal testimony.

▣ **"the church of God"** *Ekklesia* is a compound Greek word from "out of" and "to call." This was used in Koine Greek to describe any kind of assembly, such as a town assembly (cf. Acts 19:32). The Church chose this term because it was used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, written as early as 250 B.C. for the library at Alexandria, Egypt. This term translated the Hebrew term *qahal* which was used in the phrase "the assembly of Israel" (cf. Num. 20:4). The NT writers asserted that they were the "divinely called out ones" who were the People of God of their day. They saw no radical break between the OT People of God and themselves, the NT People of God. We must assert that the Church of Jesus Christ is the true heir to the OT Scriptures, not modern rabbinical Judaism.

Note that Paul mentioned the local churches in 1:2 and the universal Church in 1:13. "Church" is used in three different ways in the NT: (1) house churches (cf. Rom. 16:5); (2) local or area churches (cf. 1:2; I Cor. 1:2); and (3) the whole body of Christ (1:13; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22; 3:21; 5:23-32).

▣ **"and tried to destroy it"** This verb phrase is IMPERFECT TENSE, meaning repeated action in past time.

1:14 "I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries" This refers to Paul's fellow rabbinical students in Jerusalem. No one is more enthusiastic than a first-year theology student! The Jewish zeal for the Law was/is actually devotion and zeal without knowledge and truth (cf. Rom. 10:2ff.).

▣ **"being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions"** Here is the use of the term "traditions" which was a technical term for "the Oral Tradition." The Jews believed that the Oral Tradition, like the written Old Testament, was given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The Oral Tradition was meant to surround, protect, and interpret the written Old Testament. Later codified in the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds, it resulted in formalism and folklore instead of a vital faith relationship (cf. Isa. 29:13; Col. 2:16-23; II Tim. 3:1-5).

1:15

NASB "But when God"
NKJV "But when it pleased God"
NRSV "But when God"
TEV "But God"
JB "Then God"

Many reliable ancient manuscripts, instead of having the term "God," use the MASCULINE PRONOUN "he," (cf. manuscripts P⁴⁶ and B). *Theos* [God] does occur in manuscripts N, A, and D. "He" was likely original and scribes later added *theos* to clarify the ambiguous pronoun.

▣ **"who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace"** Paul is alluding to the call of some OT prophets, particularly Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1:4-5, or the Servant of YHWH, Isaiah 49:1,5). He felt a divine call to the ministry. This is another way of asserting that his authority and apostleship were not from men (cf. vv. 1, 11-12). The concept of being "called" by God is emphasized in Paul's personal testimony (cf. Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-16; and 26:9-18). Some of the strongest biblical passages on election can be found in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 9 and Eph. 1).

1:16

NASB, NKJV,
JB "to reveal His Son in me"
NRSV, TEV "to reveal his Son to me"

"Unveil" [*apocalypsis*], translated "revelation" in verse 12 typically means "a clear manifestation or unveiling." Apparently this occurred on the Damascus road.

The phrase "in me" has been much debated. Some believe it means that God revealed Jesus to Paul while others think it means that God revealed Jesus through Paul. Both are true. The *Revised English Bible* translation combines both possibilities ("to reveal His Son in and through me").

▣ **"that I might preach about Him among the Gentiles"** The phrase "in me" is paralleled by "in the Gentiles." God called Paul to call the heathen (cf. Acts 9:15; 22:15; 26:16-18; Gal. 2:9). We derive the English word "ethnic" from this Greek word for "Gentiles."

▣

NASB "I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood"
NKJV "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood"
NRSV "I did not confer with any human being"
TEV "I did not go to anyone for advice"
JB "I did not stop to discuss this with any human being"

This seems to refer to Paul's private study time in Arabia (cf. verse 17). We are not sure how long he studied or how long he remained in Arabia. It was probably the Nabatean kingdom, which was very close to the city of Damascus, just to the southeast (cf. II Cor. 11:32). From verse 18 it seems that he could have stayed for as long as three years (but not necessarily). Paul's basic purpose for mentioning this (it is omitted in the book of Acts) was to show that he did not receive his gospel from the Apostles in Jerusalem, nor was he officially sanctioned by the Church in Jerusalem, but from God and by God (cf. vv. 1,11-12).

1:17 **"to those who were apostles before me"** Paul certainly recognized the leadership of the original Twelve, but also asserted his equality to them.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:18-24

¹⁸Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.) ²¹Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ; ²³but only, they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they were glorifying God because of me.

1:18 **"Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem"** Paul freely admitted that he visited Jerusalem. The emphasis of this sentence is that Paul had no contact with Jerusalem or the Twelve until three years after his conversion. The book of Acts records five visits by Paul to Jerusalem, but Galatians only records two. It is very difficult to know which of the visits recorded in Acts are similarly recorded in the book of Galatians or if there were additional visits. Most people believe that this visit mentioned in verse 18 is equal to the visit recorded in Acts 9:26-30.

▣ **"to become acquainted with"** This is a Greek phrase from which we get our English word "history." Paul went for the specific purpose of learning from Peter the teachings of Jesus. Yet Paul did not stay with Peter the entire time (cf. Acts 9:28-30). He was preaching in the area and probably just spent the evenings and the Sabbath with him. This verse also emphasizes that he only stayed for fifteen days, which is much too short a stay for extended instruction. However, from Pauline theology so obvious in I and II Pet., Peter may have learned more from Paul than Paul did from Peter.

1:19 "But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother" This Greek sentence is very ambiguous. The context implies that James was an apostle, but this meaning is not certain. It could refer to Peter in verse 18. James seems to be an "apostle" in the same sense as Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4, 14); Andronicus and Junias (cf. Rom. 16:7); Apollos (cf. II Cor. 4:9); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); or Silvanus and Timothy (cf. I Thes. 2:6; Acts; 18:5). This James was identified as the Lord's half-brother (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mk. 6:3), in order to differentiate him from James the Apostle, part of the Inner Circle, who was killed very early (cf. Acts 12). For several generations the church in Jerusalem had a physical relative of Jesus as their leader. Several biblical passages (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; I Cor. 15:7; and Jas. 1:1) indicate that James was a very important leader in the Church in Jerusalem.

1:20 "I assure you before God that I am not lying" Paul knew the seriousness of oath-taking and still felt that it was important to assert his truthfulness by God (cf. Rom. 9:1; I Tim. 2:7). Paul also employed God as a witness to his truthfulness elsewhere (cf. Rom. 1:9; II Cor. 1:23; 11:31; I Thes. 2:5, 10). Paul was certain of the divine origin and content of his message.

1:21 "Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" Syria and Cilicia were Roman provinces but the smaller province of Cilicia was not totally independent (cf. Acts 15:41). This may be the reason it was mentioned second, even though in chronology it is first, Paul's work was in Cilicia first, for it was the area in which Tarsus, his hometown, was located. This seems to be recorded in Acts 9:30. Paul's time in Syria is recorded in conjunction with Antioch which was located in the Roman province of Syria. This period is recorded in Acts 11:25-26.

1:22 "but I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea" The word "unknown" in Greek is reflected in the English cognate "agnostic." "Knowledge" [*gnosis*] in this case has the ALPHA PRIVITIVE which negates it. This is somewhat surprising because Paul was a famous persecutor of the Church; however, not all of the churches knew who he was, and he did not seek recognition from the churches of Palestine for his ministry.

1:23-24 Although Paul did not seek affirmation from these early Jewish Christian churches, they gave it to him (cf. v. 24) when they heard about his ministry among the Gentiles. This is another point in his argument against the Jewish Christian false teachers who said that he did not have proper authority.

▣ **"the faith"** This term may have several distinct connotations: (1) its OT background means "faithfulness" or "trustworthiness;" therefore, it is used of our faithing the faithfulness of God or our trusting in the trustworthiness of God; (2) in our accepting or receiving God's free offer of forgiveness in Christ; (3) in the sense of faithful, godly living; or (4) in the collective sense of the Christian faith or truth about Jesus (cf. Acts 6:7 and Jude 3 & 20). In several passages, such as II Thes. 3:2, it is difficult to know which sense Paul had in mind.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is unique about Paul's opening remarks to the churches of Galatia?
2. List the three phrases which describe the person and work of Christ found in verse 4.
3. Why was Paul so appalled at the action of the Galatian churches?
4. Who were the false teachers and what was the basic content of their message?
5. What does the term "accursed" mean?
6. How does Paul prove that he is not a man-pleaser?
7. Why does Paul repeat the emphasis he made in 1:1 again in verses 11 and 12?
8. How were the false teachers using Paul's previous life against him?
9. Why did Paul go to Arabia?
10. Explain some of the possible charges that the false teachers were making against Paul and how he answered them in 1:10ff.