

Galatians, pt. 1 (read 1:1-5)

If anyone can remember, before approaching Passover I had begun a series of sermons entitled "Paul's View of the Law."

We looked at walking by the spirit vs. fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

We looked at the curse for not doing everything that is written in the law.

And we looked at the observance of days, times, months, and years.

After Passover and Unleavened Bread, I wanted to pick that series back up, but I wasn't quite sure where to do it. I wanted to remain in Galatians, but I kept going back and forth on which text to teach next.

Every time I would decide to teach on a text in Galatians, I'd think, "But in order to understand this, we need to first understand that." By "that" I mean something written *previously* in the book of Galatians.

Sometimes we forget that bible verses were not written independently of each other. What I mean is that Paul wrote Galatians 6:18 (the last verse) and Galatians 1:1 (the first verse), and they *were* and *still are* part of the same letter. It's important to read the entire letter, and to study the entire letter, AS an entire letter, by Paul, to a particular group of people.

I tried, in the 3 sermons on "Paul's view of the law," to lay out a context. I tried very hard, but no matter how hard I try I will always fall short if I do not preach each passage in the confines and context of the letter as a whole.

Expository Preaching

This is why expository: book-by-book, chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse teaching is so important for your health as a Saint, and for the health of this congregation. "Expository preaching is a form of preaching that details the meaning of a particular text of scripture. It explains what the Bible means by what it says. Exegesis is technical and grammatical exposition, a careful drawing out of the exact meaning of a passage in its original context."

Just about anyone can step behind a pulpit and speak on a verse or a sentence. Anyone can make almost any verse in the Bible be about something in your life. But putting a few bible verses in your sermon is not the same as preaching the bible.

When someone asks a preacher what he preached on last week, his first answer needs to be a text, not a title.

Anyone can read a verse and then talk about life for 30 minutes, and weave that verse into what you may be going through right now.

And I'm not saying *all* of that is bad. I believe in preaching application (how a verse or verses apply to your life is needed), but certainly not to the neglect of what the passage meant in its original context, and who the passage was meant for in its original context.

I like to remind people that the Bible was written FOR you but not TO you. The Bible was written to people that lived in ancient times, in the historical context of ancient times.

You will always fall short in what it means FOR you if you do not understand what it meant the very day the text was written down.

Beginning the Study Galatians

So... in saying all this, I would like to just begin a teaching on the book of Galatians as a whole, because I can't really explain to you in *a sermon here* and *a sermon there* what the book is about or what Paul was attempting to get across to his audience.

Galatians and the Law

I've had so many people ask me, "Brother Matthew, do you have a series on Galatians?" I think they ask me that (for the most part) because I believe in obedience to the commandments and Galatians is usually the "go-to-book" for teaching that the law has been nailed to the cross and done away with.

Galatians is generally the epistle that many Christians use to say that someone is denying the Messiah by obeying the law that Yahweh gave in the Old Testament.

I've had people quote a passage to me out of the book of Galatians, and then look at me like I don't believe the passage.

They'll say something like: "You know Matthew, If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died in vain." ... (concerned look)

And I'll respond with something like: "Yes, I love that verse. That's Galatians 2:21." (Then they look at me like I'm not supposed to know where that verse is located, because surely Matthew Janzen doesn't read the book of Galatians.)

So from the beginning here, I want to make it clear that I *love* the letter to the Galatians, and I *do* believe that if righteousness comes by the law then Christ died in vain.

I love and believe every verse in Galatians, it's just that I do NOT love and believe *every understanding* people may have about the verses in Galatians.

Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding."

Understanding what You Read in the Bible

You can read a verse in the Bible, say you believe that verse, but lack in understanding.

For example, you can read the constitution of the United States. You can read the part that says you have the right to "bear arms," and then walk away thinking and proclaiming that you have the right to wear a short sleeve shirt.

That's what it says, no? The right to bear arms. But... is that what it *means*? Is that what that sentence in the constitution originally meant? Well we all know the answer... hopefully.

I'm interested in first what a biblical text *says*, and then second (connected to the first) what a biblical text *means*.

Quick example here at the start from Galatians 2:21. Christians quote that verse "for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ died in vain" and act like *that means* it is okay to disobey the law of Yahweh. In other words, if righteousness DOES NOT come by the law, then we are free to disobey it (they seem to think).

So they see you obeying a law: like remembering the Sabbath to keep it holy, or wearing tassels, or writing Deuteronomy 6:4 on the doorpost of your home... and then they quote Galatians 2:21 to you.

Okay... my usual response to that mindset is, "So does that mean it is okay for me to commit adultery? What about pick your pocket? Is it all-right if I'm pro-choice instead of pro-life? May I curse my parents? Am I allowed to do all these things? Because after all, 'if righteousness comes by the law then Christ died in vain.'"

See, people proclaim they believe what the verse says, and I think often times they want to believe it. I think many Christians want to believe Galatians 2:21, but they fall short of a completed understanding, a completed knowledge by stopping at what it says and not going further into what it *means* IN ITS ORIGINAL CONTEXT.

It's okay to quote a single verse, but you should never quote a verse to imply a meaning that does not exist.

We need to be so careful here, because I'm not just picking on people outside these four walls, I'm picking on all of us. We must constantly remind ourselves to let go of pre-conceived notions and get back to the original text and context of scripture, else we will arrive at all sorts of unbiblical beliefs.

Illustration of Exegesis

Sometimes people I mention exegesis to, get scared that they can't do it, but let me give you a simple example of exegesis with an old song. Everybody knows the song "Sweet Home Alabama," ... or at least that part of the song. :) But songs *say* things, and *MEAN* things.

Who wrote it? Why was it written? When was it written? What's its historical context? What do certain words or phrases in the song mean, in context?

The first line in the second verse of that song is, "Well I heard Mister Young sing about her."

Who is her? And who is Mister Young?

Now I know this is just a song, but if you're really interested in learning the *meaning* of the song, what the lyrics *originally meant*, then you gotta' do some research. You gotta' take the time to transport yourself into the writer's mind and the era in which the song was written.

I'm not gonna' go into much detail here, but "her" in that line is a literary device called *personification*, and it stands for the South or the Southland, specifically the southeastern United States. The state of Alabama isn't literally a "her" (a woman), but *personification* is where a thing or idea is given the attributes of a person. Like when someone calls their old truck "Betsy" as in "C'mon old Betsy, you can make it up this hill."

Mister Young is a reference to a man named Neil Young. The most obvious way to know this is that his full name is mentioned later in that verse of the song. The lines are "Well I heard of' Neal put her down," and "Well I hope Neil Young will remember." (Neil Young was part of a folk rock group called "Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young" back in the 70's.)

Neil Young is a Canadian that had written two songs about the South, and Sweet Home Alabama was a response to those songs and their anti-southern perspectives. I could go on, but I *think* you get my point. You'd never know that unless you took the time to look into the original meaning of the song. Songs means things, and letters and books mean things.

Most importantly, scriptures mean things, and you are robbing yourself and dishonoring Yahweh when you do not take the time to study the meaning of His holy Word, in context. It dishonors Yahweh to say that a text means something it does not mean.

Listen to this quote: "It shall greatly help you to understand Scripture, if you mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and to whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what interest, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows." - John Wycliffe (1330–1384 / theologian, bible translator, seminary professor [You can thank this man for your bible; he was one of the spearheads in getting the then only Latin bible translated into the English language of the time.])

Using these Methods on Galatians

Now I am here to do the best I can to help you understand the meaning of this book, especially as it relates to the law of Yahweh, because that's why people want me to talk about it.

I'm not here to think for you, and I'm not here to pressure you into believing what I believe, but I am here to guide you, as a good pastor should.

Don't be afraid of having learned, studious, trusted men lead and guide you into the proper understanding. Paul told Timothy to establish elders in the congregations that were "apt or able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2). Paul also spoke highly about the elders who "labored in word and doctrine" (1 Timothy 5:17) Teachers are a good thing.

There's this great text in Acts 8 that speaks of Philip (an early disciple of Yeshua) running up to a chariot and hearing an Ethiopian eunuch reading a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Philip says, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And the eunuch responds, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And then he invited Philip to come up and sit with him" And Philip began to explain the *meaning* of that place in the Isaiah scroll.

I'm here to help you like the Philip helped the eunuch. If you are part of this congregation that means you trust me - *to some degree* <grin> - to do this. I wouldn't sit up under the leadership of a man I didn't trust and have confidence in. If you consider me to be your pastor, I ask you to listen carefully to these sermons, read the text, study the text, and arrive at an educated understanding of the meaning of the text through proper bible study methods.

Galatians, pt. 2 (read 1:1-2)

Review

Last week was an introductory lesson on the need for proper Bible study. I talked about (1) expository preaching, and (2) the book of Galatians as it relates to the law of Yahweh. This is why people want me to teach on Galatians. Galatians is the epistle most often used to teach that the law has been abolished and replaced by grace.

I discussed how that a surface level reading of Galatians might lead to this view, but we need to go deeper than the surface. If you're going to explore the ocean's depths, you don't sit in the boat and just keep looking at the waves on the top. You get yourself some scuba gear and go exploring. The same is true for a book of the Bible. You'll glean so much more if you take the time and effort to put on your spiritual scuba gear and go diving for treasure.

With everything you get, you must get understanding. I talked about how you first should be concerned with what a passage says, and then what it means. In order to understand what it means, you need to know who wrote it and who it was written to. What words were used, what time was it written, where was it written, to what interest, with what circumstances, considering what goes before and what follows.

So today we are going to focus on the who, to whom, and where, and to help us we are going to begin with what we read earlier in verses 1-2. Let's read them again:

GAL 1:1-2 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Yeshua the Messiah, and Yahweh the Father, who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, to the churches of Galatia.

Paul and His Brethren

So Paul wrote this epistle, and he includes all the brethren who are with him as CO-authors. It's not that the brethren with Paul all held the pen and wrote the letter. Paul is saying that the letter he is writing has *the brethren's approval*.

I want you to notice something right from the get-go. **Paul was not a lone ranger**. Paul was not bringing a message apart from the other brethren. It is true, as verse 1 says, that he wasn't sent from men nor through the agency of man, but it is also true that other MEN (the brethren who were with him at this time) agreed with Paul's letter.

I bring this up because of what I've seen over the last 15 years or so - an attempt to deny Paul as an apostle. Yes, there are some in the Messianic, Torah-observant communities who instead of receiving Paul's apostleship, have rejected it. They've labeled him a false apostle, and have removed all of his writings from what they consider to be inspired by the Holy Spirit.

But, if you are serious about rejecting Paul, then you have to be equally serious about rejecting all the brethren who were WITH him. Look at Acts 13:1-3:

AC 13:1-3 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. **2** While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." **3** Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Here we have some of the men from the assembly at Antioch. Antioch in Syria was far north of Jerusalem, and was a primary location of the early 1st century congregation of believers in Yeshua. According to Acts 11:22-26, Saul and Barnabus met with this congregation in Antioch for an entire year, and the disciples of Yeshua were first called Christians in Antioch.

In Antioch you had Barnabus, Simeon, Lucius (who some believe to be the same as Luke the physician who wrote Luke/Acts), and Manaen. These were all brethren of Saul who is also called Paul. These are some of the brethren Paul says are WITH him in Galatians 1:1-2.

Saul and Barnabus (Saul's Buddy)

The Holy Spirit spoke to these men while they were ministering and fasting, and said to set apart Barnabus and Saul for the work which He called them to do. The men fasted, prayed, laid their hands on them, and sent them away.

Barnabus was a Levite and an early disciple of Yeshua. According to Acts 4:26 his name was actually Yosef (Joseph), but the Apostles surnamed him bar-Naba (meaning son of encouragement, consolation, or prophecy).

Barnabus was one of the earliest men to receive Saul into the fold after his conversion. You have to realize (and we will get to this more as we go through Galatians chapter 1) that Saul was formerly a non-believer; a non-believer that persecuted the believers in Yeshua. Acts 9:1 says he was breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Master.

You can imagine that after Saul's conversion, some of the believers would have a difficult time receiving him into the fold, worried that it might be a trick to infiltrate the congregation and then turn on them to imprison them.

Acts 9:27 tells us that Barnabus took hold of Saul, after his conversion, brought him to the apostles, described to them how he had seen the Master on the road to Damascus, that he had actually talked to Yeshua from heaven, and then had spoken boldly to others about Yeshua being the Son of Yahweh.

So I'm guessing that Saul was praising the Almighty for Barnabus! Barnabus took Saul under his wing early, and he's certainly one of the brethren who was **with Saul** according to Galatians 1:1-2.

Saul and Barnabus' Journey

So... one of the places that Barnabus and Saul were sent to was another Antioch, called **Pisidian** Antioch, and it is located in the area then known as Galatia.

If you'll look at the map on the screen and follow the blue arrow, this is Saul's first missionary journey. He sails from Antioch in Syria down to Cyprus, and then up to Pamphylia, and then further up into Galatia (to Pisidian Antioch in Galatia). This is where Paul and Barnabus are in Acts 13:14.

AC 13:14-16 But going on from Perga, they arrived at **Pisidian Antioch**, and on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. **15** After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it." **16** Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "**Men of Israel, and you who fear the Almighty**, listen:

So they are in a synagogue in Galatia, a synagogue of people who are believers in the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a synagogue of people who are reading the law and the prophets, but yet a synagogue of people who do not believe in Yeshua of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, Son of Yahweh.

This is why Paul's sermon centers around Yahweh bringing to Israel a Savior, Yeshua, from the lineage of King David. You'll see this in verses 22-23.

Groups in the Synagogues

What I would like you to look at in this lesson though, is **TO WHOM** Paul speaks. In verse 16 he begins by saying, "Men of Israel, **AND** you who fear the Almighty."

Paul is not saying that only some of the men of Israel there feared the Almighty. All the men of Israel there were considered Covenant members, for they were in the synagogue keeping the Sabbath. The men of Israel AND those who feared the Almighty, were two different groups.

Paul makes the distinction again, later down in his exhortation in Acts 13:26.

AC 13:26 Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, AND those among you who fear the Almighty, to us the word of this salvation is sent out.

Notice again you have the brethren (this is Paul's Judahite/Israelite kinsman), and then you have those among them who feared the Almighty.

Paul's Brethren

The men of Israel or brethren would certainly be believers in the Almighty that were physical descendants of the house of Judah. Paul himself was from the house of Judah, from the southern tribe of Benjamin, and it was from these tribes that Isra-El was comprised of in the first century.

The northern house of Israel had already been divorced by Yahweh years back. They were scattered amongst the heathen nations, and lost their identity and their name Isra-El. They were not considered to be Israelites anymore in the strict sense of the word. They were instead part of the nations or gentiles.

So when Paul mentions the men of Israel (his brethren), he is specifically speaking about devout Judahites that were still in an Israelite, Covenant relationship with the Almighty.

Devout Proselytes

Now... sons of Abraham's family *could be* another name for these brethren in verse 26, or it *could refer* to devout proselytes who had become sons of Abraham and part of the Judahite/Israelite faith through circumcision, mikvah (proselyte baptism), and the offering of a sacrifice (if and when possible).

Proselytes are mentioned as being there on the day of Pentecost back in Acts 2. Remember that Acts 2:5 mentions Judahites dwelling in Jerusalem, devout men, from every nation under heaven. Then in Acts 2:10 it mentions both Judahites AND proselytes. Proselytes were converts to the Judahite/Israelite faith. They weren't raised in the faith from childhood, but adopted the faith as an adult, primarily through circumcision.

These type of people existed in first century synagogues. For example, look at Acts 13:42-43:

AC 13:42-43 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. **43** Now when *the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Judahites and of the God-*

fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

When an uncircumcised adult male proselytized to the Judahite faith, they were then considered part of the faith of Israel.

Fearers of the Almighty

But... in this synagogue there also existed **those among them who feared the Almighty**. These were people from the nations or gentiles, specifically men who had **NOT** proselytized through circumcision, yet they loved the Mighty One of Israel and they served him to what capacity they were allowed.

These people were allowed in the synagogue, but were not considered to be part of the Judahite faith because they had not proselytized. These are the people mentioned in Acts 13:16 and verse 26 as "those among you who fear the Almighty." I believe they are also mentioned later in Acts 13:44 when it says, "And the next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Almighty."

Cornelius, the Elohim-fearer

An excellent example of such an Elohim-fearer (God-fearer) is Cornelius in Acts 10. Cornelius was from Caesarea, and was an Italian centurion. He is called a devout man, a fearer of the Almighty, who prayed to the Almighty always, and gave alms to the people. Yet, Cornelius was **NOT** a proselyte. He was **uncircumcised**. We know this because later in Acts 10 when the Holy Spirit fell upon Cornelius and his household, the circumcised believers in Yeshua were amazed that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles.

Cornelius was not considered to be a member of the Judahite faith by the Judahite-Israelite community, and it was because he had not proselytized through ritual circumcision, mikvah, and ceremonial sacrifice.

Yet his prayers and alms-giving had come up as a memorial before the Almighty (Acts 10:4). The Almighty was watching Cornelius' good deeds and listening to his prayers!

The Recipients of Paul's Letter

Now, this message isn't about a detail on Cornelius, I just bring him up as a good example of an uncircumcised Elohim-fearer who would have been allowed in a Judahite synagogue, but not considered to have equal status with the native born Judahites or the adult proselytes.

What we are going to see, continuing on in next week's lesson, is that the book of Galatians was written, yes to the churches of Galatia, but specifically to these fearers of the Almighty, those from among the nations who were uncircumcised yet loved the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Conclusion and Prayer

Paul and Barnabus did much missionary work in Galatia, and later Paul wrote this epistle to the churches in Galatia, encouraging these uncircumcised fearers of the Almighty not to be pressured to proselytize in order to receive salvation or right-standing with Yahweh.

Galatians - Pt. 3 (Read 1:1-2)

Review

In our last lesson, I discussed *to whom* (and *by whom* and *where*) this epistle was written. Yes, it was written to the churches of Galatia (1:2), but we went deeper than that. We saw where it was written to the uncircumcised from among the Gentiles or Nations that had placed their faith in Messiah.

Galatians was not specifically written to the Judahite brothers in Messiah inside the Messianic congregations of Galatia. These brothers had grown up in the faith of the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These brothers in Messiah had been circumcised at 8 days old, because they were born into families that served the Almighty.

In contrast to this, we have the heathens from among the nations. These had not been born into families who served Yahweh in any way. They were born to families who worshiped false mighty ones. At a later time in their adult life they came to faith in the Messiah (from hearing the gospel preached), but they were uncircumcised. They learned of the Father and the Son while in their heathen faith and ways. They were not of the Yehudim (Judah), **and no uncircumcised Gentile, or heathen of the Nations, was considered to be part of covenant Israel.**

It was to these heathen adult converts to the Messiah that Galatians was written. To summarize, these uncircumcised Gentiles (that had placed their faith in Messiah) were being pressured by some of the Judahite brothers to proselytize over to the Yehudim, in order to receive salvation or right-standing with the Almighty.

In other words, *to them*, faith in Messiah was not enough. You had to become a Yehudim. You had to become a Judahite to really "count" as part of the family of Elohim, and the primary way you did that was to be circumcised *according to their standards*.

Review in Acts 13

We ended the last lesson in Acts 13, in Pisidian Antioch, a city in the region of Galatia. If you'll recall, Paul and Barnabus arrived at the Judahite synagogue there on the Sabbath day, and after the Law and Prophets were read they were asked if they had any words of exhortation to speak.

Paul stood up and addressed the (1) men of Israel [the circumcised Yehudim], and (2) those among them who were fearers of the Almighty [uncircumcised from among the nations; *remember - like Cornelius in Acts 10.*].

Please don't forget, **this is NOT a Messianic Synagogue**. This is simply a synagogue of Judahites and fearers of the Almighty. The people in attendance claimed belief in the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Torah, but NOT in Yeshua as Messiah (Son of Yahweh).

So Paul preaches Yeshua to them, and nobody gets upset. No one makes that a big deal about Paul's message. You must realize that this is back in the first century. There is no separation of synagogue and church like there is today.

It's not like Paul was modern day Christian preacher, with a 3 piece suit on, preaching to them holding a KJV bible in his hand, saying "*this is my Bible.*" There were no churches *then* like you see on every corner *now*. Paul himself was a Yehudim, a Judahite, from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul himself observed the Torah. Paul had been circumcised on the 8th day. Paul was a top notch Pharisee. Paul was dressed in a robe and wore tassels like the rest of the Yehudim in the synagogue that day. Paul posed no serious threat to these *diaspora* Judahites in Galatia. The message of Yeshua being the Messiah was listened to by those in attendance. They weren't fighting the message at this point.

Continuing in Acts 13

Acts 13 - 42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept begging that these things might be spoken to them the next Sabbath. *[Notice they wanted to continue hearing Paul's message about Yeshua.]* **43** Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken up, many of the Judahites and of the Almighty-fearing proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of the Almighty. *[Notice that the Yehudim and the proselytes enjoyed the message so much that they followed Paul and Barnabas out of the synagogue. They wanted more.]*

It was not until almost **the entire town** of Pisidian Antioch showed up the next Sabbath that things began to get out of hand.

Acts 13 - 44 The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Master. **45** But when the Judahites saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

When the Judahites **saw the crowds** they began to be filled with jealousy. They did not like the fact that **the message they believed should only go to them** (in **their** synagogue) was being preached to everyone in the town equally. They did not like that any heathen in the town was getting the same message as the circumcised Yehudim had gotten the week before.

So they **THEN** began to contradict Paul. They didn't try to contradict Paul the Sabbath before this. They welcomed him, and even followed him out of the synagogue wanting to hear more. *[Remember, **this is happening in Galatia**, and that's why this is so important to understand in our study through Galatians.]*

Look at what Paul and Barnabus say to these Judahites:

Acts 13 - 46 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of (the) Almighty be spoken to you first [*Why to them first? Because they were the people of the covenant. They were circumcised Judah. They were already attached to the Almighty in some fashion.*]; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. [*Paul took no time to mince words. He basically said, "Okay, you don't want the gospel, we'll teach it to the whole city." Then Paul quotes a verse from the book of Isaiah.*] **47 For so the Lord has commanded us,** [*Paul sees the Isaiah text as a commandment from the Lord to he and Barnabus. This is known in Hebrew as a midrash, a commentary and interpretation based upon a text of scripture.*]
 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES,
 THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'"

Paul's Point from the Isaiah Prophecy

So Paul and Barnabus fulfilled preaching the word of the Almighty to the Judahites first. That's what they did the week before in the synagogue and everything seemed to go fairly well. But, when nearly the whole city showed up, heathens and all, the Judahites didn't like it. They were basically saying, "Hey! This is our message! What are you doing preaching it to straight up heathens!" Well, in Acts 13:47 Paul does a *midrash* from the prophet Isaiah 49:6. Reading from Isaiah it says:

Isaiah 49 - 5 And now says YHWH, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, To bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel might be gathered to Him (For I am honored in the sight of YHWH, And My Almighty is My strength),
6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations, so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Now I'm not going to take the time to detail Isaiah 49:1-5, but rest assured - it is about Yeshua the Messiah (ref. Luke 2:25-32 [*Shimeon lifts the baby Yeshua*]). So in verse 5 where the speaker says, "YHWH, who formed ME from the womb to be His Servant," that's a prophecy about Yeshua. Yeshua is the ME whom YHWH formed in order to bring Jacob/Israel back to Himself.

And that's what verse 5-6a says: Yeshua is the Servant of Yahweh that raises up the tribes of Jacob and restores the preserved ones of Israel.

But then in 6b the verse continues that he is also a light to the nations, so that Yahweh's salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

That's the point Paul is making in Acts 13. Paul preached Yeshua to the Judahites (and even the devout proselytes), but the Judahites got jealous when the whole city - i.e. the

heathens or nations or gentiles - came to listen to the same message, and Paul and Barnabus just kept on preaching to the uncircumcised heathens in the same manner. Paul quotes Isaiah 49:6 to show that YHWH's salvation is not just for the Yehudim. It's not just for those who grew up in a family that believed in and served the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's not just for Israelites that had been circumcised at 8 days old and joined the covenant from birth. Yeshua is also a light to the nations, and Yahweh's salvation reaches to the ends of the earth.

Who are the Nations?

Now, let me deal with my view of this here, because I know some of you are probably wondering how I believe on this.

Are these nations, heathens, or Gentiles scattered, divorced Israelites? Is that the only nations Paul is talking about?

I believe that there were certainly divorced and scattered Israelites in Galatia (Gallic or Celtic). I would never argue against that. I also believe that the word Gentiles - or *ethnos* in Greek - can refer to physical Israelites who lost their identity/name, and became sifted into the heathen nations.

I agree that it is incorrect to assume that the word Gentile always means someone who is not a physical Israelite. But... I also believe it is just as incorrect to assume that the word Gentile always means a divorced and scattered Israelite.

The word Gentile (Latin), just means nation or member of a nation. It has no linguistic ties to only Israelites or only non-Israelites.

When the rebellious house of Israel were divorced by Yahweh and scattered or sifted among the heathens, they became known as heathens right along with the people they were sifted into.

The fact is that **any person in Galatia who was in a heathen home, raised in uncircumcision, worshiping false mighty ones, was NOT considered part of Israel, even if they had Israelite ancestry in their background.** That didn't matter. Anyone who had been divorced by Yahweh and scattered among the heathen, was known as a heathen **right along with the non-Israelite heathens.**

So when the nearly the whole city of Pisidian Antioch came to listen to Paul and Barnabus, they didn't start weeding people out based upon genealogical papers. They didn't start telling people they couldn't listen because they looked or didn't look a certain way. They just preached to the nations or heathens.

According to Isaiah 49:6 and Acts 13:47, Yeshua is the servant of Yahweh that restores Jacob Israel, and Yahweh ALSO gives him as a light to the nations.

And this is what upset the Yehudim that day. They did not want the message to go to any outsiders. Catch this: **They didn't care if the outsider had any physical Israelite blood running through his veins. That didn't matter to them because the man (or even woman) would still be an uncircumcised outsider, divorced from the covenant**, and in their minds, even if that man accepted Yeshua as THE Messiah, he still needed to proselytize through circumcision, in order to really have salvation, be made right with the Almighty, and be part of the family.

Finishing up Acts 13

Acts 13 - 48 When the Gentiles heard this [*Paul's turning to them and quoting Isaiah 49:6*], they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Master; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. (*Just preach; the Holy Spirit will do His work.*) **49** And the word of the Master was being spread through the whole region. **50** But the Judahites [*The Yehudim; the covenant keeping circumcised synagogue goers*] incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. [*Why? At this point, it wasn't so much because of their preaching Yeshua, but because they were preaching Yeshua to the uncircumcised Gentiles.*] **51** But they shook off the dust of their feet *in protest* against them and went to Iconium. [*Paul and Barnabus took it like water of a duck's back. Here's your dust back. We're moving on.*]

Important Backdrop

Brother and sisters, this is the backdrop for Paul's epistle to the Galatians. If you begin to grasp what happened **in Galatia** here in Acts 13, you will be able to better understand Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia later on after this (and other) missionary journeys.

Many of the Yehudim, even the ones who came to believe in Yeshua, did NOT believe that someone from among the nations was *really* saved, until they first proselytized to the faith of the Yehudim. Believing in Yeshua was not enough in their minds. They preached the "gospel" as "become one of us through circumcision," and this was a **huge** error to the apostle Paul.

Conclusion

So, I know that some people may not agree with some of the things I've said in this sermon, and I still love you even if we keep on disagreeing, but I ask you to take a fresh look at what I've said, and more importantly what the scriptures say.

Far too often we read scripture with colored glasses on. If you have green lenses on your glasses, everything you see will have a green tint to it. But if you take them off you begin seeing colors you didn't know were there.

We all have baggage. We all have backgrounds. We all have things we think have to be true, so we all often read scripture with a slant thinking it can't be saying something that maybe it DOES say.

I ask that you, **and I**, do our very best to read and study THE BIBLE, and let it interpret itself. May Yahweh help us all in this endeavor. I'll pick this back up next moon when it's my turn to preach again.

Galatians, Pt. 4 (Read 1:1-5)

Introduction and Review

Today we will begin to actually study Paul's letter to the Galatians. I had to hold back the horses to keep me from getting into the text before covering the background. It wasn't easy, but I'm so glad we've taken some time to study the author, recipients, area, and historical context first.

If you haven't listened to the first 3 lessons leading up to today, they are available on my website, or if you have an iPhone, I can show you how to download an app onto your phone to keep you up to date with all the sermons, and you can catch up.

So... now that we've done the preliminary work, we will get into the text of Scripture, covering the first 5 verses in the sermon today. We'll begin with verse 1 (I'll be using the NASB mostly as we go through this epistle):

1:1 Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Yeshua Messiah, and Yahweh the Father, who raised Him from the dead)

Not from Men or through Men

Paul begins by identifying himself as an apostle. He does this because there were some people back in his day who did not receive his apostleship. They did not believe he had acquired that office, seeing that he was not one of the original followers of Yeshua.

Paul was not even on the Messianic scene yet, when the apostles chose one man to replace Judas (a former member of the original (12 disciples/apostles) who had betrayed Yeshua and was now dead). They chose a man who had known Yeshua from the beginning and was an eyewitness of the resurrection. In Acts 1:21-22, Apostle Peter says (and I'd encourage you to read the whole chapter later):

Acts 1:21 Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Master Yeshua went in and out among us **22** beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us -- one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.

So from Acts 1 (and the people in Paul's day would have *known* what took place when Matthias was chosen to replace Judas), we see that the criteria given, about being in Yeshua's *inner circle* from the beginning, did not fit Paul.

This is why Paul begins his epistle with the his apostleship being genuine. He wants to ward off any naysayers right away, and the way he does this is by writing that (1) he is indeed an apostle, and (2) he is not sent from men nor through the agency of man.

I want you to see these two variations of how Paul was NOT sent. First he was not sent FROM men. I believe that *means* he did not come on man's authority. He did not just *feel* like he got a calling, and a group of men did not just *feel* like Paul got a calling.

Anyone that knew Paul, knew that his former way of life had been one that hated Yeshua and the Master's followers. As a matter of fact, when *Shaul* the Pharisee was first chosen on the road to Damascus (Acts 9), Yeshua asked him from heaven, "Why do you persecute Me?" Saul made it his life's program to persecute Yeshua by persecuting his followers.

Saul was not a lover of Yeshua of Nazareth, so Paul's apostleship could not have been based on man's accord. He didn't just up and decide to be an apostle one day because it sounded like a good idea. This was a man, who in his former life was doing the opposite of what he was now chosen to do.

So he says "not sent from men (meaning human authority or human feeling)."

Then he says "nor through the **agency** of man." This second clause is similar to the first, but slightly different. I think Paul is saying here, "I was also not sent by a go-between in the middle of me and the Master." And Paul was right. None of the then living apostles sent Saul of Tarsus. They stayed away from Saul of Tarsus because of his hatred towards them.

So Paul is saying, "Look guys, I am an apostle. I have a heavenly calling, because Yeshua - **directly from heaven** - knocked me down, and showed me a vision of himself while I was traveling on the road to Damascus to persecute Him (the believers). I didn't come based on a human *want to* or based upon another follower of Yeshua persuading me into this thing. I'm an apostle through Yeshua the Messiah and Yahweh the Father. Yeshua commissioned me, and Yahweh is One who commissioned Yeshua."

Paul writes this so that they will pay attention to what he is writing. He is telling the saints in Galatia that he comes with heavenly authority. He was an apostle "born out of due season," yes. He wasn't with Yeshua since the beginning of his ministry, but Yeshua is still the One who sent him. Yeshua chose that Saul of Tarsus would be an Apostle, untimely born. He was selected by Yeshua, just like the original 12 Apostles.

Meaning of Apostle

And this is a good time to discuss what the word apostle means and how it is important here. Apostle means "sent one." It is someone who carries the message of a superior *and* the authority of that superior. It is a high office or calling in the spiritual sense, but let's think about it first in a natural sense to get a better understanding.

There's been many times where brother Arnold has sent me out on a septic job to perform a particular task (he actually did this just this past week): "Matthew, I want you to do **this**." He may tell me to uncover the septic tank, check the water meter for leaks, check for any clogs, and call him while I'm there for an update. I'm his *sent one* in that regard.

I do not go to the jobsite on my own authority, but on his authority, and in his name. I told brother Randy this past week, while on a job brother Arnold sent us to: "I have come here, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me." :)

Transfer this understanding to the spiritual, because it is the same. The apostle does not bring his own message, but rather the message of the one who sent him. The apostle speaks that which he has been told to speak. The apostle does that which he has been told to do.

This is important, because right at the beginning of this letter, we see that Paul is an apostle directly from Yeshua, so what message does he bring? **Right, Yeshua's message.** Paul doesn't come preaching his own thing. Paul doesn't even come because he wanted to come. Saul of Tarsus was not even searching to believe in Yeshua when he was chosen.

Now Yeshua's message was certainly pro-Torah and pro-grace, so this means that if Paul is an apostle of Yeshua, then his message is equally pro-Torah and pro-grace. Don't miss that simple yet profound point.

The Resurrected Yeshua

So Paul tells the Galatians, "I'm an apostle directly from the Son, who in turn was commissioned by the Father, **who raised him from the dead.**" Notice in verse 1 Paul mentions the resurrection of Yeshua. Why? Because Paul was sent by *the resurrected* Messiah (from heaven). Paul's authority comes from the One who died, but was raised from the dead, and then went into heaven to take his seat at the right hand of Yahweh.

Beginning a letter like this is a way of saying, "Everyone needs to listen up, because what I'm saying is not from me, it's *through* me. I'm the vehicle or the messenger."

The Balance of the Brethren

Then Paul beautifully balances what he's just wrote with mentions verse 2:

1:2 and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

In an earlier sermon, we covered some of the brethren who are WITH Paul. Men like Barnabus, Simeon, Lucius, and Manaen (Acts 13:1-3). Men from the congregation in Antioch of Syria. The word "with" doesn't necessarily carry with it the idea that these brothers are literally with Paul (*although Barnabus was*), but more importantly that they are **WITH his ministry**. They backed him, were on his side, and gave him their approval.

I believe Paul brings up these brothers because **he's balancing what he's just said in verse 1**. He just proclaimed he wasn't sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but now he's saying that the letter is from him and his brothers WITH him.

Paul is telling these Messianic synagogues in Galatia (remember there were no "churches" as we think of them today); Paul is saying he's not a lone ranger in this message. He's been approved by the brethren. He's received the thumbs up from devout believers in Yeshua. These brothers have already received him as an apostle of Messiah.

When a man is chosen of the Master to preach the Word, the older, seasoned brethren will not have to wonder if the calling is genuine. They will know it and testify to it. A man could believe in himself that he has been called, but if you have trusted elders in a congregation who say otherwise, the man is just running on his own accord.

So these brothers who were WITH Paul, testified that Paul was indeed an apostle of Yeshua. Had Paul tried to run and preach, and all of these brothers - some of whom had personally known Yeshua since the beginning of his ministry - had they **NOT** backed him, he would have gotten much less steam and possibly nowhere, because there must be an authority structure in place.

Anyone can claim to be called to preach. Anyone can claim to be an apostle. It's like you see it every time you turn around nowadays. Apostle Smith or Bishop Jones, etc. But claiming the office does not equal the office.

If you ever believe the Master has called you to do a work, never just run on your own accord. Go to trusted saints, older saints, and ask for their council. Ask them if they see such a calling on your life.

Verses 3-5

We'll end today with verses 3-5, which is the end of Paul's greeting, and what a beautiful ending it is:

1:3 Grace to you and peace from Yahweh our Father and the Master Yeshua Messiah, **4** who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our Almighty and Father, **5** to whom *be* the glory forevermore. Amen.

Grace and Peace

Paul pronounces grace and peace upon the saints. Grace and peace are friends; they go together. If grace has been shown to you, then so has peace. You have peace because of grace. Grace is when Yahweh gives you something good you do not deserve. Peace is what you have, a strong security, when grace has been shown to you.

And this grace and peace comes from Yahweh our Father and the Master Yeshua Messiah. Paul always acknowledges the Father and the Son. Paul now sees, since his conversion on the road to Damascus, that the Father has a unique Son, and that he cannot

receive the Father apart from receiving the Son. He realizes that you can't have one without the other. You can't really believe in the Father if you reject the One the Father sent. In other words, Yeshua is Yahweh's Apostle (**Hebrews 3:1**).

The Way Our Sins are Forgiven

Then Paul says that Yeshua gave himself for our sins that he might rescue us from this present evil age. Now there is a statement that Paul makes that has application across the board.

Yes, Paul is writing to the Messianic believers in old Galatia, but Paul's statement here in verse 4 is one that would apply to any Messianic believer anywhere then and now! Paul's statement that Yeshua gave himself for our sins applies to this congregation! And what a beautiful truth that is!

The reason our sins are forgiven and forgotten. The reason we have peace with the Almighty. The reason we don't have to live in fear. Is because Yeshua gave himself for our sins, in order to rescue us, to DELIVER US, from this present evil age.

This Evil Age and Our Deliverance

Now, we are still in this present evil age today. It means the state of the world and the earth.

Unregenerate men are still as wicked as ever. Sin is still rampant as ever. Unrighteousness abounds in people's hearts, and we are still under the curse of the fall of Adam, and the result of that curse, the first death - BUT... if you are a believer in the Father and the Son, you're sins have been forgiven and you have the hope of being rescued from all of this mess!

And you know what? In one sense, you've already been rescued! He has taken you out of the swamp of sin. He has lifted you up from the miry clay and set your feet upon a rock. Because of the work of Yeshua you have been set free from your past, set free from sin, and you have a new way of life and a new way of thinking.

Yes, you still live in this present, evil age, but you aren't a part of it. You are *in* the world but you are not *of* the world. You have already been delivered in one sense of the word. That is why you are sitting here.

Do you realize that if you are sitting in this holy convocation today it is because Yahweh placed you here? You are here listening to this message instead of somewhere else, dabbling in lawlessness. Even if there are people here today who are unregenerate, you are blessed to be here to listen to the message of the good news that you can have peace with the heavenly Father, because Yeshua gave himself for our sins!

All According to the Father's Will

And lest we forget the end of verse 4 and then 5, this was done **according to the will of our Almighty and Father**, to whom be the glory forevermore!

Everything that Yeshua accomplished was because Yahweh the Father willed it to be accomplished. It is **the Father** who works all things after the council of **HIS** will. It is **the Father** who predestines and calls us to be conformed to the image of His Son. It is **the Father** who is ultimately in control of all things. When Yeshua said in the garden of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not my will, but YOURS be done," the YOUR is Father Yahweh's will. His will is paramount.

As I mentioned in my last sermon, Yeshua is the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the earth (Revelation 13:8). That doesn't mean he was hanging on the tree beside the Father in eternity past. It means that according to the **WILL** of our Almighty and Father (as Paul says here in verse 4), Yeshua was already predestined to be slain for our sins. When Yahweh wills something, you can't stop him. He's a Mighty One of complete control. If He wants something to happen, it is going to happen.

So give him the glory today! Raise your hands as an evening sacrifice to our Almighty and Father, because Yeshua came, and lived perfectly, and died sacrificially, and was resurrected victoriously because the Father planned it and willed it!

It was the Father's doing. It was the Father's plan.

The Almighty loved the world in this way. The death of Yeshua was a demonstration of **the Father's** love. For **the Almighty** so loved the world, that **He** gave His only begotten Son. It was our loving Father that made all of this possible.

Oh what a beautiful way to begin this letter! Paul starts with a statement about forgiveness from sin. He begins with what Yeshua Messiah did for us, and how it was willed by Yahweh our Father.

Brothers and sisters, that makes me rejoice! I don't ever want to forget what my Master has done for me. I don't ever want to downplay, or make secondary what the Father willed to happen on my behalf. I'm here today as a forgiven man, not because I'm such a good man. I'm not a good man, and neither are you. There is none good, no not one. I'm here because I have a good Father, that predestined for his spotless Lamb to come and do it for me.

I'm alive, I'm rescued, I'm forgiven, I'm at grace and peace, because of the will of my loving Father, through His precious Son. HalleluYah, Amein.

Galatians, Pt. 5 (1:6-10)

Introduction and Review

Yesterday we covered Paul's greeting in his letter to the Messianic synagogues in Galatia, and central to that greeting was that Paul affirmed his apostleship, not by men, nor through the agency of man, but by Yeshua the Messiah and Yahweh the Father who raised him from the dead.

At the same time Paul had the backing of the brothers in Messiah. He received the right hand of fellowship from men like Barnabus and Simeon, Lucius and Manaen; teachers and prophets in the congregation of Antioch in Syria.

Why did Paul stress his apostleship in verse 1? I believe it was to combat the influencers who were stirring up trouble in the midst of Galatia. Influencers who were coming in and trying to teach a different gospel than the one Paul had brought them.

Remember, Paul wrote this letter specifically to Gentile fearers of the Almighty, not to the Yehudim/Judahites who came to believe in the Messiah. The Gentile Yah-fearers did not grow up in the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but came to fear the Almighty later on in life, and then even later came to believe that Yeshua was the Anointed One, Son of Yahweh. And these Gentiles, or believers from the nations outside the land of Israel, were uncircumcised.

What is happening then is this: some of the Judahite brothers in the Messiah were going behind Paul and preaching that faith in the Messiah wasn't sufficient to be justified and considered part of the family of Yahweh. They were teaching the Gentile believers, that in order to be considered real family members, they had to convert to being a Judahite. They had to proselytize. The primary way to do this was through circumcision.

This is adding to the gospel. The gospel was never "believe in Yeshua + be circumcised, and then be saved." The gospel was never "believe in Yeshua, + become a Yehudim through proselyte conversion, and then be saved." The gospel was to "believe upon Yeshua's finished work, and be saved."

THE Gospel

So Paul says in verse 6 - "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Messiah, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Messiah."

I have pointed out in many sermons that the word gospel means "good news." It's the good news that we can have peace with Father Yahweh, through what His Son has accomplished for us. I talked about this in yesterday's lesson, and it's basically what we went through in verses 3-5. Yeshua fulfilled the law, and then gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present, evil age. We are delivered, not because of *anything* we have done, but because of what Yeshua has done for us.

The reason that is such good news is because we have messed up so badly. We have broken so many commandments, and even on our best days we still do not measure up to the perfection in the law of Yahweh.

So the bad news is that we are transgressors of Yahweh's law, but the good news is that Yahweh sent us a way of escape. Yeshua is the door. Yeshua is the way to Father

Yahweh. Because of what Yeshua has done for us, us believers are at peace with the Father.

ANOTHER Gospel

In verse 6 Paul writes that these Galatians had been called by **the grace** of Messiah, but they were being talked into a different gospel. This different or distorted gospel is one that says you're at peace with the Father through something you do. You're at peace with the Father because you converted to be a Yehudim through circumcision.

But Paul says in verse 7 that this other gospel, "is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Messiah."

So the influencers in Galatia were attempting to preach another gospel, but it really wasn't another gospel, because there is only one gospel. There's only one good message, and it's not "become a Yehudim through proselyte conversion and be saved," it's "Yeshua died for your sins, believe upon him so you can have peace with the Almighty."

Now let me throw something in here to make sure you are understanding my approach to this epistle. Paul is not teaching the Galatians that it's okay to live a sinful lifestyle. Paul is not teaching an anti-commandment message. Paul is not teaching the Gentiles in Galatia not to be concerned with Torah. What Paul is saying is that THE GOSPEL has nothing to do with anything about you. The gospel is about Yeshua, the One Yahweh sent.

I've grown up in church my entire life, and I've been in many different churches as a child, a teenager, and even as an adult, and I've heard so many messages about what we are supposed to do, or what the devil is doing, or what the church program is doing, or what the pastor is doing, and very little about what Yeshua has already done.

A genuine congregation of the Almighty will place it's focus upon the Son of Yahweh, because without him we would not stand a chance. He is our deliverance, and he is the good news.

Anytime we try to add something to the work of Yeshua, as though his work is not enough, we are distorting the gospel. I'm not talking about preaching obedience. I'm not talking about preaching good works as a branch off of faith. Those are well and good. I'm talking about preaching something in conjunction with what Yeshua has done as though that something is equal to the work of Yeshua and is a must for our salvation.

It would be like me teaching a non-believer that walked in here, "Believe in the Messiah and stop eating pork, and you'll be saved." Or, "believe in the Messiah and put on this pair of tassels, and you'll be saved." If I were to teach that, and cause a new-comer to be led to believe that message, he or she would be placing the emphasis of salvation not just upon Yeshua, but equally upon their diet or a set of tassels.

That is a distortion of the gospel, because it causes a person to trust *partly* in Yeshua and then *partly* in their-self. And in reality, it causes a person ultimately to think that they are saving their self rather than being saved by Yahweh the Father, through Yeshua the Sent One.

A Curse for Getting the Gospel Wrong

Paul is so disgusted with this distortion that he says in verses 8 and 9 - "But even though we or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed."

You don't get any worse than having a curse be upon you, and that's what Paul pronounces upon ANYONE who comes preaching a gospel different than the grace of Messiah (vs. 6).

And notice the emphasis that Paul places on this curse. He says it twice in verses 8 and 9, and he also says that even if an angel from heaven comes and tries to tell you something different, don't listen to him. That's pretty powerful.

Somebody could get visited in a dream by a *being* they believe to be a good angel. Remember, Satan's ministers come to you as angels of light. This supposedly good angel could tell you a distortion of the gospel of grace in Messiah, and it would be pretty persuasive to get such an angelic message. But, Paul says not to listen to an angel from heaven bringing a different message. If he brings a different message than the one I preached to you, let that angel be accursed.

We should be seeing just how important the gospel is, and how important it is that we do not add to or take away from the it, else we fall under a curse.

Remember the Gospel

We have to remember that the good news consists of what Yeshua did for us, and not of anything we do for him. Yes, we have a response to the gospel, actions of faith and baptism, but even those acts that we perform are gifts of grace bestowed upon us. Faith is a gift. Baptism too is a gift. They are not works of law we do, but are gifts given to us. Receptions of the gospel message.

It is so hard for us humans, in our carnal nature, to receive something entirely by grace. We are embarrassed from having to get something without earning it. When it comes to things outside the gospel, like our job, or hard work and effort, this is a good trait. But when it comes to the gospel, we don't do anything. The Messiah did it all for us.

A heart and mind that has been shown grace will be willing to receive such a message. A person who has been *born from above* will see clearly how that they do not add to the gospel. There is nothing they could do to stack on top of what Yeshua has already done,

because he did it all perfectly. He was the unblemished lamb. There are no flaws in his finished work.

A Man Pleaser?

We end today with verse 10 where Paul writes, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of the Almighty? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of the Messiah."

I believe what Paul is speaking of here is his former status as a Pharisee, and a persecutor of the believers in Yeshua.

Prior to his conversion he had many people in the Yehudim community looking up to him. He had the approval of even the high priest of the day according to Acts 9:1-2. Paul elsewhere says that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews (Philippians 3:5), meaning he was of note among the Hebrews. He had a smooth life among his peers.

But since coming to believe in Yeshua of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, all of that changed. Instead of being on the side of persecutor, he became the persecuted. After his conversion in Acts 9, some of the Judahites in Damascus plotted against him to kill him, but some disciples took him by night and lowered him through an opening in the wall in a basket (Acts 9:23-25).

As I was pondering upon this point this morning, I began thinking how Christianity in America would look a lot different if being a believer in Yeshua meant that you faced the strong possibility of being a martyr every day when you walked out of your home. Faith in Messiah would then come with paying the price of your life, and not a pie in the sky teaching that we hear on so called Christian television today.

Just the other day, I had a police officer mock the way I was dressed, and it upset me to some degree. Since then I've thought about how petty that is to what the early Messianic believers went through. They were thrown in prison for their beliefs. They were stoned for their beliefs. They were beheaded for their beliefs. Yet Saul of Tarsus became one of them.

And that is Paul's point in verse 10. If he were striving to please men then why in the world did he give up the position he once had? He isn't seeking to please men, but rather Yahweh, and proof of that is: **he is now willing to receive persecution for his belief. He is now willing to be ridiculed, hunted, and stoned for believing in Yeshua as the Messiah.** He is a bond-servant to the Messiah, not to any man.

Conclusion

Saints, it is of great importance, chief importance, that we keep in mind the error of those in Galatia. Not just the error that the false teachers were committing, but the error that many Galatian Gentiles were believing. They were attempting to add to the work of Yeshua, and Paul said (in verse 6) that they were "quickly deserting Him who called

them by the grace of Messiah." Paul saw their acceptance of the influencer's message to be a rejection of the Father and the Son.

The Galatians were forgiven in Messiah alone. They were not required to become Judahites. They were not forgiven based upon changing their ethnic status and proselytizing to be full family Judahites (in the eyes of many). That had nothing to do with them being covenant members. They were complete in the Messiah. He was their peace, and he is our peace, with the Father.

Trying to add to Him is a grave error, one which if not repented of will lead to eternal destruction. I admonish all of us to place our focus on the One whom Yahweh sent to save us from our sins, recognizing that nothing we may do later on gives us peace with the Almighty. We are already as justified, solely in Messiah, as we will ever be. Believe in this grace. Remain in this grace.

Galatians Pt. 6 (1:11-13)

Review and Intro

In the last lesson we covered verses 6-10, verses which emphasize the error of distorting the gospel. The gospel is about Yahweh's calling by the grace of Messiah (vs. 6). The gospel is not about anything we do. The gospel is not about any commandments we keep. The gospel isn't even about our responses of faith, repentance, and baptism when we hear the gospel preached. The gospel means literally "the good news." The good message that Yahweh has provided a way for mankind to be at peace with Him, through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son Yeshua the Messiah.

Anything we add to the gospel, distorts the gospel. Case in point, there were some of the Yehudim, the Judahite brothers in Messiah, who were telling the Gentiles (the uncircumcised Yah-fearers who lived outside the land of Israel) that the gospel included first becoming a proselyte before they could receive salvation.

In other words, it wasn't "believe in the work of Yeshua, and receive forgiveness and peace with the Almighty," it was "believe in Yeshua, AND convert to becoming a Yehudim, through this particular ritual, and then you receive your forgiveness and peace with the Almighty."

Paul pronounced a curse upon that teaching.

Paul had already been through Galatia preaching the good news about Yeshua to both the Judahites and the Gentiles. According to Acts 13 through 14, there were some among both groups who believed the message. But then after Paul left, some of the Judahite **brothers** (professing believers in Messiah) went behind Paul and started stirring up discord. They began contradicting Paul's message, and promoting their message of becoming a ritual proselyte (for *true* salvation).

They contradicted the Apostle, by claiming that Paul came on his own authority. This is why Paul wrote in verse 1 that he was an apostle (remember, "sent one"), not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but from Yeshua the Messiah and Yahweh the Father who raised him from the dead.

How Paul Received This Gospel

Paul now echoes that statement in the verses we began with today, verses 11-12.

1:11 For I would have you know brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me **is not according to man.** **12** **For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it,** but I received it through a revelation of Yeshua the Messiah.

In verses 11-12 Paul echoes verse 1, but builds upon it.

When Paul says that the gospel he preaches is not according to man, he isn't contrasting the true from the false. He dealt with the false in verses 6-10. Paul is now contrasting how *he* received the message of the gospel with how most others receive it. Verse 11 says it's "not according to man," and he clarifies this in verse 12, "I didn't receive it from man, **nor was I taught it.**"

Paul is saying that no one initially witnessed to him in order to cause him to accept the message. He didn't run into Peter or James and become converted by those brothers visiting and giving a word of exhortation in his synagogue.

The common way a person believes the gospel is because they hear it taught by a man. There is nothing wrong with that. Yeshua the Messiah sends preachers into our lives to teach us. He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers (Ephesians 4:11). This four-fold ministry is designed to, *first and foremost*, spread the good message about Yeshua.

If you are a believer in the good news today, it's likely that you first believed because you heard the message preached by a man. You were taught the message, and then you believed unto eternal life.

Saul's Gospel Encounter

But that's not how it happened with Saul. Shaul the Pharisee wasn't taught the gospel. He didn't receive it from man. He received it through a direct revelation of Yeshua Messiah.

We first learn about Saul's conversion in Acts 9. He wasn't looking for Yeshua. He'd heard about Yeshua. He'd heard about Yeshua's followers. But he hated them all. He wanted to bind them in chains and put them in prison. Some he wanted to stone to death. He did all of this, thinking he was doing the Almighty a service. He thought that persecuting the followers of Yeshua was pleasing to the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But on his way to do some persecuting, there were other, Divine plans. How many know the plans of man are many, but Yahweh's plans always take precedent? You can't stop Yahweh. Ultimately, if He wants to do something, it will get done.

And that's what happened that day while Shaul the Pharisee was on the road to Damascus. His plans got interrupted by the One at the Father's right hand. Yeshua from heaven called down to Shaul on earth. "Shaul! Shaul! Why are you persecuting Me?" The Master knocked him down, blinded him, gave him his apostleship, and *then* led him to a follower of Yeshua named Chananiah (whose name means "Yah has favored").

In other words, he didn't initially receive the gospel from a man. He wasn't taught it by Peter or James. He got it directly from Yeshua, and he builds on this in verse 13.

1:13 For [notice the link to the previous thought] you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church [ekklesia] of the Almighty beyond measure, and tried to destroy it.

Saul's Former Manner of Life

Paul uses his former manner of life as evidence that he didn't receive the gospel the way most people receive it. Why? Because he was in the business of persecuting the messengers of the gospel. He didn't want to hear what they had to say. He wanted to shut them up. That's proof that he didn't get the gospel from any of them.

Shaul's former manner of life was in Judaism. Now, we must be careful here, because a lot of people want to read a whole bunch of stuff into the word *Judaism* that doesn't exist. I've had to correct myself after studying this verse, and I love when I am corrected by the Word.

The word Judaism doesn't mean "false Jews." The word Judaism does not refer to non-Israelite imposters. The best place to begin proving that is with Saul himself. Saul speaks of his former manner of life in Judaism, and he was a thoroughbred Israelite, from the tribe of Benjamin.

Judaism is a word that describes a particular *religious* "umbrella" (so to speak), and it is not in itself a bad word. People today read "Judaism" and automatically contrast it with today's Christianity, as though 21st century Christianity existed back in the 1st century. People believe Paul left Judaism to join the local Lutheran church.

No. Paul is not contrasting Judaism with today's Christianity. Judaism (here) is the Greek word "**ee-oo-dah / iz-mos**." Do you hear that? **Ee-oo-dah**... Judah - izmos. The word is tied to the tribe or house of Judah, or more properly Yehudah. Members of this tribe, house, or land region were known as Yehudim or Judahites or Judeans.

Paul is not so much speaking against Judaism (Judah-iz-mos), as he is his particular former MANNER OF LIFE inside of Judah-ismos (*look at verse 13a, again*). In other words, inside the large umbrella of Judah-ism, you had various sects or manners of life.

Shaul's was Pharisee-ism (he calls himself a Pharisee in Philippians 3:5), from the Hebrew word *perushim* meaning "separatist." They called themselves separatists because they believed themselves to be the strictest sect inside of Judah-ism, and everyone else was second-class in their view. In other words, they trusted in their own righteousness, and looked down upon everyone else. Saul's particular brand of Pharisee-ism believed in persecuting the followers of Yeshua.

Persecuting the "Church"

So Paul tells the Galatians here (1:13) that they had heard of his former manner of life inside of Judah-ism, and that manner of life was how he persecuted the "church of God" (I'm quoting the NASB here) beyond measure, trying to destroy it.

Again, let's gear our minds accordingly. Persecuting the "church of God" doesn't mean Saul persecuted churches like the one down the street on Hwy 138; the Conyers Church of God. No, those did not exist in the first century.

"Church of God" in the Greek NT is "*ekklesia theos*," a phrase used in the Septuagint (Greek OT) to refer to the congregation of Elohim (Yahweh) [Stephen, Acts 7:37-38].

Now catch this. The congregation of Elohim (Galatians 1:13) was a sect inside of Judah-ism as well. The original followers of Yeshua were all Yehudim, or proselytes to the faith of the Yehudim.

In studying for this week's message, I've had to learn not to throw off on the term Judaism, like I have done in the past. I had done so because I did not slow down long enough to understand the meaning and context of the term in its first century usage.

Under the umbrella of Judah-ism you had groups like the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, the Zealots, and yes the followers of Yeshua (Nazarenes; Acts 24:5). There were faithful, righteous men and women inside all of these groups, but that did not mean everyone inside each group was faithful.

So it wasn't like Shaul left Judah-ism and converted to Christianity. No, Shaul left one of the sects inside Judah-ism, recognizing that it was not the correct or genuine form of Judah-ism (*but that doesn't mean he changed everything*). He came to realize that his former brand of Judah-ism was a distorted brand. Had he been studying properly, he would have seen that Yeshua was the promised Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures, and he should not have been persecuting the believers in Yeshua.

Paul's Testimony

So, Paul uses this as proof that his message didn't come from man. What proof? That he was persecuting the *true* congregation of Elohim beyond measure, and trying to destroy it. **Make a note** of these three texts, as I read them.

In Acts 22:19-20, Paul says, "...in one synagogue after another I use to imprison and beat those who believed in Yeshua. And when the blood of Stephen was

being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the cloaks of those who were slaying him."

In Acts 26:10-11, Paul says, "...I locked up many of the saints in prisons, and when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme, and being enraged at them, I kept pursuing them."

And in 1 Timothy 1:13 Paul says, "I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief."

Shaul the Pharisee didn't get the gospel he now preached from a man. No one taught it to him. He knew about it, but he hated it. He wanted to snuff it out completely. This is why Yeshua had to beat him over the head on his way to Damascus. Yeshua knocked Shaul down and blinded him for three days. That got his attention. Yeshua revealed himself to Shaul the Pharisee, and commissioned him. Shaul got his gospel directly from the resurrected Master in heaven.

Conclusion and Exhortation

As I close today, I want to say that I am amazed that some people still reject Paul's apostleship.

It makes no human sense for a man to give up a life of educated esteem among peers, prestige in his community, and probably a future top seat on the Sanhedrin court of the day, to live a life of poverty and persecution. And yet that's what Shaul did. He left that prestigious status, to become an outcast. Brothers and sisters... you don't persuade people into a life of mockings, beatings, imprisonments, stonings, and death. People aren't standing in line to join that group.

If I told you to join this special group of people, and then told you that you would have your toenails pulled out by joining, it's NOT likely you would join. We generally join things that are enjoyable, not things that harm us.

Yet Shaul left his former manner of life to become a man of ridicule. That lets me know his conversion was genuine. It really happened. There was a spiritual heart surgery that took place inside of him, because that's the only way he would trade his "Hebrew among Hebrews" status for a non-status of being hated a treated like trash by many of his fellow countrymen, for the rest of his life.

I can't help but wonder how many Christians today would jump ship if we didn't live in America. How many would give up their "faith" if they were faced with beatings and imprisonments for believing in Yeshua.

Confessing Yeshua as Master means so much more when a civil or religious authority has you in chains with a sword to your gut or throat.

May Yahweh help us all, and may He help us to respect Shaul the Apostle of Yeshua more than we ever have.

Galatians, pt. 7 (read 1:11-14)

Encouragement and Exhortation

We've made it up to verse 14 in Galatians, and I hope you are learning some things. I know I sure am. I absolutely love it, when through studying, and re-studying, and studying some more, the picture you are looking at gets clearer. I want you to always remember that your understanding of scripture can become clearer, but it takes time and effort. It takes dedication and commitment to wanting to know what the text means. Yahweh will reward those who diligently seek Him.

Review

In our last lesson I talked about how Paul received the gospel. It wasn't the normal way people receive the gospel. Paul didn't hear a preacher. Paul wasn't witnessed to by an existing Apostle. Paul was not taught the gospel by a man, he received it by a direct revelation from Yeshua in heaven.

One of the ways people could be assured of this was Paul's former life. He was Shaul the Pharisee. His manner of life inside of Judaism was one that had a zeal for what he believed was right. Saul thought he was pleasing the Mighty One of Abraham by locking up followers of Yeshua in prison, beating some, and stoning others.

This lets us know that there's no way he got his gospel from any of them. He hated them, and wanted to completely destroy their sect from the face of the earth.

Looking Intently at Verse 14

But we didn't make it through verse 14 last week, where Paul continues to explain what he was doing prior to his revelation of Yeshua on the road to Damascus.

1:14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Advancing

To begin with, this verse speaks to what I ended with last week. Saul's former life was one of esteem among his peers. He was not persecuted prior to his conversion.

His contemporaries (in this verse) is a reference to people of his maturity or age. It would be like us mentioning a man's *colleagues*.

Paul was going beyond the men of his age among his countrymen or kinsman. I believe this is what Paul speaks of in Philippians 3 as well, where he doesn't just call himself a Hebrew, but a "Hebrew *of* Hebrews." He was at the top of his class.

Now, what was Paul advancing in? He tells us here in verse 14: Judaism, and I want to delve into that word a bit deeper than we did last week.

Understanding the Term Judaism

Remember that I mentioned how the word *Judaism in it's first century usage* was not a bad word. I had to correct my own mis-understanding of this word, because I've learned that it was a word used as an umbrella for the faith of the Yehudim in the first century. There were many sects that fell under the term Judah-ism, including the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5). Yes, Yeshua's followers, the Apostles themselves, practiced Judaism.

What is interesting here is that in the entire NT, the word Judaism is used only twice, and both of those times are here in Galatians 1. So this means we have nothing else in the NT to compare it with.

The Meaning of a Word

When you study the NT, one of the things you study is word usage and meaning. The way you do that is, let's say you find a particular word used by Paul in Galatians. In order to see what he means by that word, you first look at every place Paul uses that word *in Galatians*. After that you might branch out to see how *Paul* uses it in Corinthians, Ephesians, or Thessalonians. After that you might see how *other authors of that time in the NT* use the word, and then you may go into how the word is used *outside of the NT*.

With the word "ee-oo-dah-iz-mos" (Judah-ism), we have nothing else in the NT to compare it with. All we have is a reference by Paul how that prior to his encounter with Yeshua, he was advancing in this particular religion over those in his same class. I can see how someone can read the word Judaism and think negatively of the word. I can see how a Christian today might think that Judaism is the opposite of Christianity. But remember, take your mind back to the first century. There was no Christianity - as we know it today - at that point. Even the believers in Yeshua were part of Judah-ism. Believers were originally Torah observant Yehudim or proselytes to the Yehudim faith.

Judaism in the Second Temple Period

Now, to further show that Judaism is not a bad word, I want to take you to a book outside the NT, and a book inside of something known as the Apocrypha or the Deutero-canon.

Apocrypha is a word that means "to hide away" or "hidden," and there is a set of books known by this word because a large portion of Christianity (Protestants) have rejected this set of books as sacred scripture.

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches (on the other hand) refer to this set of books as the Deutero-canon, meaning literally "the second canon" of scripture. They believe that these books carry just as much weight as what we all consider to be the holy scripture.

The original 1611 KJV, the first one to ever be printed, contains these books in with our bible, and the Greek Septuagint also contains these books in with our bible.

Many Protestants today, who do not see these books as authoritative as, let's say Isaiah or Jeremiah, still see view these books as important, historical literature. Books we can glean from. Books that add clarity to certain parts of scripture.

These books were written in between the time period of the prophet Malachi and the prophet Yochanan (John) the baptizer (the second temple period), and one set of books within these books are the books of the Maccabees.

I bring up the books of the Maccabees because they contain four uses of the word Judaism, which means we have an earlier document than Galatians to see previous uses of the word.

The accounts in Maccabees took place before Yeshua was ever born in Bethlehem, and are named after a Judahite who was known as Judah Maccabee, meaning "Judah the Hammer." He was called "the hammer" because he had such zeal for his faith.

Maccabean Usage of Judaism

The first use of the word Judaism in Maccabees is found in **2 Maccabees 2:19-23** (using the NRSV). Let's read that, keeping in mind that this is the first known use of the word in any ancient literature we have available today.

19 The story of Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, and the purification of the great temple, and the dedication of the altar,
20 and further the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator,
21 and the appearances that came from heaven to those who fought bravely for Judaism, so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hordes,
22 and regained possession of the temple famous throughout the world, and liberated the city, and re-established the laws that were about to be abolished, while the Lord with great kindness became gracious to them—
23 all this, which has been set forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, we shall attempt to condense into a single book.

All of these things I just highlighted are associated with Juda-ism. Brothers and sisters, the purification of the great temple and re-establishment of the Torah that Antiochus was so against... these are great things in the sight of Yahweh. Fighting bravely for Judaism here equals fighting bravely for the Torah. So this Maccabean text places Juda-ism in what we would see as a positive light. Next text, **2 Maccabees 8:1-4**.

1 Meanwhile Judas, who was also called Maccabeus, and his companions secretly entered the villages and summoned their kindred and enlisted those who had continued in the Judaism, and so they gathered about six thousand.
2 They implored the Lord to look upon the people who were oppressed by all; and to have pity on the temple that had been profaned by the heathen;
3 to have mercy on the city that was being destroyed and about to be leveled to the ground; to hearken to the blood that cried out to him;

4 to remember also the lawless destruction of the innocent babies and the blasphemies committed against his name; and to show his hatred of evil.

Here again, Juda-ism is linked with Judah Maccabees and an upholding of righteousness as opposed to lawlessness. Next text, **2 Maccabees 14:37-39**.

37 A certain Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem, was denounced to Nicanor as a man who loved his compatriots and was very well thought of and for his goodwill was called father of the Jews.

38 In former times, when there was no mingling with the Gentiles, he had been accused of Judaism, and he had most zealously risked body and life for Judaism.

39 Nicanor, wishing to exhibit the enmity that he had for the Jews, sent more than five hundred soldiers to arrest him;

Again we have a use of Judaism that is against heathenism. This man name Razis was an elder in Jerusalem and loved his fellow countrymen. He was known as "father of the Yehudim" because the title "father" carried with it the meaning of prestige, honor, respect. Judaism is used here as a contrast to the heathens. One more text, in **4 Maccabees 4:23-26**.

After he had defeated them (Yehudim), he gave an order that anyone who was caught following the traditional Jewish law should be put to death. However, his orders had no effect on the people's commitment to keep the Law. He saw that they simply ignored his threats and punishments. Even women were thrown down from a cliff headfirst along with their infants because they continued to circumcise their sons, though they were fully aware that they would suffer the consequences. When Antiochus saw how his orders were despised, he himself tried to use torture to force each and every person in the nation to give up Judaism by eating foods that were unacceptable to Jews.

Here again, I believe it is clear that these references to Juda-ism are references that we all would consider quite noble. Here in 4 Maccabees, it's a reference to people who are of Judah, circumcise their children, and abstain from eating forbidden meats.

Juda-ism is best described as contrasted with heathen-ism in the books of the Maccabees. Heathen-ism, or the way of life for the heathens, was everything contrary to the laws of Yahweh, but Juda-ism, or the way of life for the Judahites, was everything in step with the laws of Yahweh.

Fresh Light on Verse 14

I bring all of this up to shine a *brighter* light on Galatians 1:14 where Paul says he was advancing in Judaism beyond the countrymen of his own age.

I think Christians read this verse and think, "Well that's what he *used* to do, but he gave all of that up and became a Christian." But that's not Paul's point at all. As we learned last

week, what Paul gave up was being a *persecutor*, and he became one who was *persecuted*. He gave up NOT believing in Yeshua for believing in Yeshua. But even after his conversion, he still practiced Judaism, just with a different focus upon Yeshua.

So Paul's description of himself in verse 14 isn't so much a negative description of what he was advancing in. Paul is rather writing about what was going on in his life at the time of his conversion. He was busy making progress in his faith. He wasn't thinking about Yeshua of Nazareth possibly being the Messiah. He was busy studying and practicing the faith of his ancestors, some of whom were the faithful Yehudim in the books of the Maccabees.

What we should be seeing **then** is this: Yeshua did not knock Shaul down on his way to Damascus to tell him to stop studying and practicing the Torah. Yeshua was not telling Shaul something like, "You need to quit keeping the Sabbath because you can rest every day in Me." That wasn't the message.

The message Yeshua gave Saul was one which said, "You have gotten involved with the wrong crowd in Judaism. The true people of Juda-ism are the ones who follow me as their leader, so why are you persecuting Me?"

After Shaul encountered Yeshua, he was then sent to Hananiah (Ananias):

Acts 22:10 And I said, 'What should I do Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus; and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.' 11 But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. 12 And a certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, 13 came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul receive your sight!' And at that very time I look up at him.'

Yeshua sent Shaul straight to a man who was devout according to the law of Yahweh. A man who was in good standing with the Yehudim in the area. A man who practiced Judaism and believed that Yeshua was the promised Messiah.

See, Yeshua was not asking Shaul to change his religion altogether. Yeshua was showing Shaul he was involved in an erroneous expression of Judaism. The true Juda-ism was found in following Yeshua.

Galatians, pt. 8 (read 1:11-16)

Intro and Review

In the last lesson we almost finished verse 14, centering in on what the term Judaism originally meant. I believe it was a noble term in both Maccabees and Galatians. My conclusion is that it originally meant "the way of life for the people of Judah."

Shaul the Pharisee was advancing in Judaism beyond those of his own class, and this was not a bad thing. Shaul did not write this to say that all of his studies were wrong. He did not leave behind Judaism to join Christianity (as we know it today). He didn't stop attending the synagogue to join the church down the street. What he left was his "former manner of life" in Judaism. His focus was in the wrong direction. His focus was on himself, and his goal was to destroy the true congregation of Elohim.

Before we move on into verses 15-16, let's close out verse 14 by reading it again.

1:14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Oral Tradition

I want to unpack the phrase "ancestral traditions" at the end of verse 14. There is no doubt that Shaul was Torah observant when he was advancing in Judaism, but the use of the word "traditions" here shows us that he was not only observant when it came to Torah, he was also observant when it came to something called the traditions of the fathers.

Traditions came about as the Yehudim in older times discussed how to observe Torah. A particular law would be studied, discussed, debated back and forth, and then men would determine how to best practice that law.

For example, we may read the law in Deuteronomy 22:8 (HCSB) that says, "If you build a new house, make a railing around your roof, so that you don't bring bloodguilt on your house if someone falls from it." Roofs back in the days of the Hebrews in the B.C. era, and even during the time of Yeshua, were often flat, and used for dinners and even banquets where guests were hosted.

So Hebrews would read this law and then begin to discuss. "Is a 6" railing proper? What about 1 foot high, or 18"? Maybe we need to make sure it's a good 4 feet tall, with pickets every 6" apart." Men would discuss and debate the particulars of the law, because the law doesn't give all the details.

We do see in this law, good intent. The reason for the railing is to prevent people from falling off of your roof. You don't want to be responsible for blood-shed, and neglecting to place a railing around your roof, where you're entertaining your guests, is carelessness. As the song we sang earlier says, "The law of Yah is good and wise."

So the intent is clear, but the specifics are not clear, so there was within Judaism a belief that along with the written Torah there existed a Torah that was not written down, and the Pharisees in particular held this view. They believed that the unwritten Torah - sacred tradition - was spoken by Yahweh to Moses, and then handed down by word of mouth from person to person, all the way into the first century in which they lived.

Pharisees In Particular

The Israelite historian Josephus speaks to this in his Antiquities of the Jews, book 13(297).

"The Pharisees have delivered to the people a great many observances by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the laws of Moses; and for that reason it is that the Sadducees reject them, and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers."

Notice how Josephus says these traditions are not **written down** in the law of Moses, but are rather something passed by mouth only, from one generation to the next.

Is All Tradition Bad?

Now, before we get completely bent out of shape concerning oral tradition, let's slow down for a second and think this through. **All unwritten tradition is not bad.**

Go back to the railing we built for the roof of our new first century, Hebrew home. What if your neighbor just put a 6" tall railing around his roof, and invited you, your wife, and your little 1 and 3 year old over for dinner. You're not going to feel safe at all, because that 6" tall railing is not going to do a bit of good at keeping your children from falling head first to the ground. So you have a talk with your neighbor about a *better* railing, and after discussing, you and he decide on a proper height and structure. Well, you've just created some tradition here, and it's not a bad tradition just because it's not written in the law. The tradition was created to help, not to hinder.

Whether you realize it or not, every one of us have our own traditions as we live out Torah in our daily lives. We have ways we understand certain laws, and manners in which we carry out those laws in our life. Sometimes we disagree on how a law should be observed. I believe that's okay, so long as we agree that the law should be observed.

Turning Tradition into Law

Here's a problem with tradition though. It's not that all tradition is bad, it's that oftentimes **we begin to hold up our tradition on equal footing with the written law**. We come along and stamp our tradition down as though Yahweh spoke it, when in reality, **we** spoke it. Any time we place our tradition on the same level with Yahweh's law, it is sin.

If I'm studying a law, and I decide that I'm going to carry out this law in a particular way that isn't specified in Torah, **because I'm trying to honor Yahweh**, I am not then at liberty to force my brother or sister to follow that law in the same manner as myself. I may *share* with him my view and my tradition, but he may not understand it the same way as me, and that's okay. There should be liberty between brothers in these areas.

Making the Law Void through Tradition

Here's another problem that arises at times with tradition. Sometimes traditions are formed to build fences around Yahweh's law, fences that are built to keep us from

violating the law, but the problem is that at times the fence gets built so high that it ends up causing us to break the law of Yahweh that was written down in the first place.

Not speaking the sacred name is a good example. One Jewish tradition says that a person should not utter the sacred name, lest he by chance take it in vain or use it in an unworthy manner. That's a fence which tries to guard us from blasphemy, but that fence is too high because there are commands in Torah to praise Yahweh, and call upon His name. So here we have a tradition that ends up violating the law.

We won't turn to these, but in Matthew 15 and Mark 7 we have another example of circumventing the law of Yahweh. The Pharisees had come up with a tradition of dedicating everything they owned to the temple. That sounds noble right? "All my earthly possessions I give to the Father. I count none my own." But there was a problem with this tradition. When a Pharisee's mother or father got elderly, and needed care and honor (materially), they said they couldn't give their parents anything, because all that they had was already dedicated to the temple.

Yeshua said that through their tradition they violated the commandment. Anytime a tradition causes you to violate a commandment, it's a bad tradition. Anytime a tradition is held up as written law across the board, you've taken that tradition too far.

Back to Galatians 1:14

I bring all of this up, not only to teach and exhort you on how to go about interpreting and practicing the laws of Yahweh, but to explain that this is part of what Paul was writing about in Galatians 1:14. He was zealous for his ancestral traditions. He was one of the Pharisees in the days of Yeshua.

When a Pharisee spoke of Torah, he automatically believed, in his mind, in both written law and unwritten tradition. The Pharisee did not separate the two. The written was good, but the oral tradition showed you in more detail how to obey the written law. To forsake the tradition - in the mind of the Pharisee - was to forsake Elohim.

It's important to catch this in Galatians 1:14 to help understand part of what is taking place here in this epistle. Sometimes you can read the word "law" in the NT, and unless you understand that it is a reference to the "law" **in the mind of a Pharisee**, you won't get the precise meaning of the text.

I believe that *some* of what Paul deals with in the book of Galatians is the law as it is perceived in the minds of Pharisaic Judaism. Now don't misunderstand me. I do not believe every use of the word law includes both written and oral. I'm just saying that Paul brings up his ancestral traditions here in Galatians 1:14, so this must be a backdrop upon which to understand certain uses of the word "law" in this epistle.

As we continue going through Galatians, I'll try to decipher any texts that I think this comes into play.

Galatians 1:15-16

So I think that is sufficient to cover verse 14. Let's move onto verses 15-16 a little bit.

1:15 But when He [Father Yahweh] who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased **16** to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood.

There's so much in these verses that it makes me just want to smile. We won't cover everything in detail today, but I do want to begin opening them up.

But When HE

Verse 15 begins with "But when He," and I could preach an entire sermon on those 3 words.

And that's Paul's point here. He was doing his own thing. He was studying Torah, advancing in Judaism, zealous for all the traditions, and in the midst of this he was persecuting believers in Yeshua. Shaul the Pharisee would be the last person on earth that you'd expect to believe in Yeshua. He would be someone a believer would think there was no hope for.

"But when HE." See, Yahweh can save anyone He wants to save. Yahweh can change anyone He wants to change. Yahweh can take the man or woman that no one would ever imagine would serve Him, and bring them out of the darkness into this marvelous light.

His Mother's Womb

That's the beauty of "but when He." And look at when this "but when He" goes back to. Paul says, "But when He who had set me apart, **even from my mother's womb.**" Paul was set apart for the work of the good news of Yeshua while he was in the womb of his mother. Yet, it did not take place... until he was a grown man.

Brothers and sisters, the very person you think would never become a believer, may indeed become a believer, because they have been set apart even from their mother's womb. Don't EVER think that Yahweh's grace isn't powerful enough to save someone from their sins. That's what grace is, and we're talking about grace here, because the next thing Paul writes in verse 15 is "and called me through His grace."

Salvation by Grace Alone

Grace is only for the undeserving. Grace is Yahweh reaching down and forgiving you, and changing you into something you could have never been in your own power. Anyone who has ever been delivered, was delivered by grace, and if we're not saved by grace then there's not a one of us getting saved, because not a one of us are good enough to stand in the presence of the Most High Almighty Yahweh.

No matter how good we try to make ourselves look. No matter how much of a show we may put on in public. No matter how holy we can sound, or how holy we look with our

tassels hanging off us or our tunic upon our back, Yahweh knows who we really are in our darkest and lowest moments.

Yahweh sees every act of ours in public and private. Yahweh knows every thought that goes through our minds, and there is no man or woman in here, or alive on planet earth today, that deserves the love of Yahweh. He's in your life because He has NOT dealt with you as you deserve. If He dealt with you, or me, as we deserve, we would die in our sin, and be punished forever. You are His child today only by His calling of grace, period.

It's not cooperation that saves you. You don't earn anything. You don't save yourself. You don't add to the finished work of Yeshua. It's not of any works you do whatsoever, so that none of us can boast and say we are better than the next person. It is totally, completely, utterly, and only by His calling of grace upon your life.

Paul says, "But when He who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace." Oh my YAH that is something to shout and sing about!

Concluding Thoughts

There is much more to get to in verses 15 and 16, and we will get into it, but as I close today please realize that you are who you are by the grace of Yahweh. Saul wasn't seeking for Yahweh's Son on the road to Damascus. Yahweh's Son was seeking for Saul. Yahweh had set Saul apart while he was still in the water sack inside of his Mother. But it was not until the appointed time that he became the vessel he was called to be.

Friends, when we meet people on a day to day basis. When we see someone who is caught up living in their sin, or even tangled up in their religion, instead of judging them to the lake of fire, why don't we look at them as an opportunity to show some love and kindness? Let's realize that those who are well don't need a physician, but those who are sick do. Let's see people as, "This one could have been set apart from his or her mother's womb, and their time might be just around the corner."

Don't throw people away. I'm sure there were some who would have thrown Saul of Tarsus away. "He's just too far gone. There's no hope for him. There's no way he would ever accept Yeshua." But that's not for you or me to decide.

We are to just share the gospel, and let Yahweh do his work. We are not called to give the increase. We are only called to plant and water, and do so with much love. The servant of the Master must not strive, but be gentle, correcting his opponents in gentleness. Perhaps Yahweh may grant them repentance.

Let this be our eyes today and all days. May our hearts be changed to view people not as things to be condemned, but as human beings to be cared for and witnessed to with love. Our goal is not their destruction, but that they would have everlasting life.

Always remember Yahweh's grace upon Saul's life, and your own life, when you start feeling like His grace isn't big enough for someone else's life.

Galatians, Pt. 9 (Read 1:13-17)

Intro and Review

In our last lesson we ended by beginning to look at verse 15. It's a beautiful verse. It's a verse where I see Paul laying his emotion out on the table for us. Paul wasn't looking for the Son when he got a visit from the Son.

Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the true congregation of Yahweh, beyond measure, and trying to destroy it. He did this believing he was doing Yahweh a service. During Yeshua's earthly ministry, he prophesied to his hand-picked disciples that such a time would come. In John 16:2-3 (HCSB) Yeshua says, "They will ban you from the synagogues. In fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering service to (the) Almighty. They will do these things because they haven't known the Father or Me."

In that prophecy by Yeshua, Saul was not yet a disciple. Here in Galatians 1, we see that Saul was fulfilling the bad role in the prophecy. He was one of the men who was murdering the disciples of Yeshua, believing that he was doing a service to the Almighty. He believed the heavenly Father was pleased with him seeking to destroy the followers of Yeshua.

Now if you asked Saul, "Do you believe in the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?" what would he answer? "Sure I believe in Him. I serve Him. I'm zealous for Him. I'm serving him by getting rid of this group of people that proclaim Yeshua of Nazareth to be the Anointed One."

But did Saul really believe in the Mighty One of Abraham? Well, not according to Yeshua in John 16:3. "They will do these things because they haven't known the Father or Me." According to Yeshua, to reject him is to reject the Father.

Father and Son Package

Think about it. If you have a Father who has a Son, who loves that Son, gives that Son authority, and then sends that Son to you - if you reject that Son, you are rejecting the Father who sent him.

I love all 3 of my sons. And if anyone does something to harm my sons, they are doing it unto me. Any good father feels that way about his sons or his daughters.

According to Yeshua himself, one cannot receive the Father while abandoning the Son at the same time. In John 8:42 Yeshua told some men, "If (the) Almighty were your Father, you would love Me, because I came from (the) Almighty and I am here. For I didn't come on My own, but He sent Me." And then in John 15:23, "The one who hates Me also hates my Father."

The Revelation of the Son

What we see here is that **Saul was deceived prior to his Damascus road experience**. He professed to believe in the Mighty One of Abraham, but at that point he had rejected the Son that came from the Father, so he really didn't even believe in the Father.

So he writes in Galatians 1:15-16a (NASB), "But when He, who had set me apart, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased to reveal His Son in me."

The **He** in verse 15 is Yahweh the Father, because verse 16 says that this **He** revealed *His Son* to Paul.

Paul did not have the revelation of the Son prior to the road to Damascus. He claimed to believe in the Mighty One of Abraham. He would have told you he followed the Almighty. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. But... he did not believe that Yeshua was the Son of Yahweh. He was one of those men that Yeshua said would murder the disciples, thinking he was doing the Almighty a service.

But Yahweh chose to reveal His Son in Saul. We see this revelation come forth in Luke's account of Saul's conversion in Acts 9 where he goes to visit Ananias. Ananias laid hands upon Saul, and told Saul that the Master Yeshua had sent him, "So that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:17)." That sounds to me like Saul did not have the Holy Spirit prior to the Damascus road either. If he has to be **filled** with the Holy Spirit, during his visit with Ananias, that means he is *not filled* with the Holy Spirit *prior* to this visit.

That makes sense, because if Saul's hatred of the Son meant that he actually hated the Father (but didn't realize it), then there is no way he could have been filled with the Holy Spirit of Yahweh. Saul was doing everything he was doing without the Holy Spirit.

Look with me a little further down in Acts 19:18-19. Here's what happened after Ananias told Saul that. "And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized; and he took food and was strengthened." (Remember, Saul had been blinded when he was knocked down by Yeshua, and he was 3 days without sight, food, or water.)

But after he could see, and ate and drank something, Acts 9:20 says, "and immediately he began to proclaim Yeshua in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of (the) Almighty.' (or the Son of Yahweh)." What revelation did Saul receive on the road to Damascus? That Yeshua was the Son of Yahweh. What did Paul begin to preach after he was filled with the Holy Spirit? That Yeshua was the Son of Yahweh.

This is why he writes in Galatians 1:16 that at the Father's proper time, he revealed His Son in him. Paul was set apart and called by grace even from his mother's womb. The timing of the revelation was in the Father's plan. This is why we must always remember

that just because a person does not believe in Yeshua now, doesn't mean that they won't believe in Yeshua later. It's all in the proper, divine timing.

Again, what was the revelation given to Saul on the road to Damascus? It was that Yeshua of Nazareth, the One Saul had been persecuting, was actually the Son of Almighty Yahweh. Hallelujah for that revelation!

Preaching the Son to the Gentiles

Now, I also want to talk about the end of verse 16. There was purpose of Yahweh revealing His Son to Saul. Verse 16 again says, "to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles."

This goes back to what I taught on in the introductory sermons to Galatians. Paul was revealed the Son in order to preach him among the Gentiles or Nations. Remember, the book of Galatians was not written to circumcised Judahites, but rather to Yah-fearers (similar to Cornelius in Acts 10) who were uncircumcised, yet loved the Mighty One of Israel, and desired to serve Him in whatever ways they could.

The Yah-fearers were not considered as full members of the covenant with Israel, because they were uncircumcised. They were allowed inside the synagogue, but they were looked down upon as second-class.

Paul's gospel to the Gentiles was that they could have right-standing with Yahweh, and be considered as full members of the New Covenant, by faith in Yeshua, apart from becoming a proselyte to Judaism through circumcision.

Yahweh had been showing Peter the same thing by causing the miraculous gift of languages to fall upon Cornelius in Acts 10. The uncircumcised Yah-fearer Cornelius received the same gift of the Holy Spirit that the apostles received back in Acts 2. Cornelius received it (1) before baptism, and (2) without anyone laying their hands upon him. Cornelius got it directly from heaven.

How in the world could Peter argue with that? This too was Paul's gospel that he received, not from man; not by hearing someone teach on it at a local seminar; not from any of the apostles; but directly from Yeshua of Nazareth in heaven. Paul was shown that the Gentiles, those considered outside the covenant, were full New Covenant members simply by faith in Messiah. They did not have to convert to Judaism through ritual circumcision in order to be members of the New Covenant and receive the forgiveness of sins.

That's what Paul preached after his revelation, and it caused quite a stir among some of the Judahites that believed in the Messiah. Some of these Judahites - who professed Yeshua - were going behind Paul's missionary efforts, attempting to distort the gospel of Messiah. They were teaching that the gospel included the Messiah, but you weren't *really* a full New Covenant member, you weren't really forgiven of your sins until you proselyted to Judah through ritual circumcision.

That places the emphasis then upon circumcision instead of upon Yeshua. When they would speak to the Gentiles about salvation, the conversation wouldn't be focused upon Yeshua, it would instead be focused upon getting circumcised.

In other words, it was Messiah + proselyte circumcision that equaled salvation. Paul stood firmly against that distortion. Paul taught that Messiah + nothing equaled salvation.

Galatians 1:16 teaches us that Yahweh revealed His Son in Paul *so that Paul would preach the Son among the Gentiles*. That doesn't mean Paul never preached to circumcised Judahites. Paul always offered the good news of Yeshua to circumcised Judah first. He even says in Acts 13:46, "It was necessary that the word of (the) Almighty should be spoken to you first; but since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we are turning to the Gentiles."

Judahite and Gentile Difference

The key difference here is that the Judahites had been raised in Torah, so they were all culturally Hebrews, and the males had been circumcised as babies. But not so with the Gentiles or Nations outside the land of Israel. They had not been raised in Torah, and thus had not been circumcised as babies.

Paul taught them all the same. "You must believe in Yeshua, the One whom Yahweh has sent to save you from all your sins, and declare you justified." He didn't teach Yeshua to the Judahites, and then turn to the Gentiles and teach Yeshua + proselyte circumcision. No, he just taught faith in Yeshua to all of them.

And let me point out one more thing here before I close. Paul did not teach any of them to stop practicing obedience to the commandments. That was not Paul's message. He did not tell the Judahites, "Stop circumcising your children. Stop keeping the Sabbath. Stop eating kosher. Stop wearing your tassels. Stop all of that." No, that wasn't Paul's message.

And Paul's message to Yah-fearing Gentiles like Cornelius was not "Stop giving alms to the poor. Stop spending so much time in prayer. Stop coming to the synagogue on Sabbath." No, that wasn't Paul's message. Paul was simply preaching the good news that both Judahites (circumcised) and Gentiles (uncircumcised) could be justified from all their sins by faith in Messiah, and faith in Messiah **alone**.

Salvation is by Grace through Faith

And I preach that same gospel message to you today. If you are a male today, and you are circumcised, your circumcision doesn't justify you. Your Sabbath keeping doesn't justify you. Your honoring your parents doesn't justify you. Your not taking Yahweh's name in vain doesn't justify you.

Those are all good commandments. Those are all righteous acts. Those are all fruits that grow off of a good tree, but those things do not justify me or you. Those things do not declare you innocent before Yahweh, because you have not done all of those things in your past, and neither do you perfectly do all of those things in your present.

What justifies you. What declares you innocent. What gives you right-standing with Father Yahweh. What makes you a member of the New Covenant. **Is faith in Yeshua, the Son of Yahweh.** If you believe that Yeshua of Nazareth is Yahweh's Son, sent by Yahweh to live a perfect life according to the Torah, die a substitute, sacrificial death for sinners, and be raised on the 3rd day, you are justified from all of your sins against the Holy Creator. Yeshua is the door. Making an attempt to come to Yahweh any other way, makes a person a thief and robber. The Father sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, so there is no other way a man can get to the Father than by going through His Son.

Yeshua's works are what justifies a person, and a person's faith in Yeshua's works is the vehicle through which that justification is obtained. Nothing less, and nothing more. And then yes, we are Yahweh's workmanship, created in the Messiah FOR good works; (I believe that too).

Closing and Exhortation

How many are thankful for Yahweh's Son? Can we just take a moment here and meditate upon the love of Yahweh? This is love. Not that we loved Yahweh, but that He loved us, and sent His Son so wrath could be removed from us. That's the big message. That's the deep doctrine brothers and sisters.

People will swim around in a pool with all types of doctrine today. People will spiritualize texts that are literal, and literalize texts that are spiritual. People will tell you verses mean things that aren't even written down, and then they will tell you that it's deep, and that if you can't see it, you ain't got the Holy Spirit.

I call hogwash saints. I call swine on all of that. All that stuff is shallow. You can take all of that stuff people concentrate on and throw it out with the bathwater. The deep doctrine is the knowledge of the Father and the Son. The deep doctrine is the Gospel. The deep doctrine is how we are given salvation and created new for good works.

If someone visits this assembly, and only comes one time, I want them to leave thinking: "They made MUCH of the Father and the Son. They really emphasized the gift of salvation, given by Yahweh through Yeshua."

I don't want them leaving here thinking about how we concentrated on whether the earth is flat or round, or how we are pro-second amendment, or even thinking MORE about a commandment than they think about Christ. I don't want anyone thinking that I believe I am saved because of any commandment I keep. I love the commandments, but the keeping of the commandments is a product *of* salvation, not a recipe *for* salvation.

I'm thankful for the Son today, and I'm thankful for the Father who sent him. Without the Father sending him we would have no Son. This is eternal life. May we share this eternal life with the people we meet, in hopes that they too will receive the forgiveness of their sins, through faith in the Messiah.

Galatians, pt. 10 (Read 1:15-24)

Intro and Reminder to Study

Today we will finish studying the first chapter in Paul's letter to the Galatians. I'm reminded again of how much a person will learn if he/she decides to study an entire book of the bible in its historical and literary context.

I see bible verses flung around all the time, and I'm not saying you should stop quoting bible verses individually, but a large majority of the time, what I see and hear are bible verses quoted out of context, in order to fit the motive or the view of the person quoting the verse. Sometime people do it without even realizing they are doing it.

If you desire to handle the scriptures accurately. If you want to be faithful to the original intent of the biblical authors, then you are going to have to take the time to let go of what you think you know, and dig into books of the bible as a whole.

Whenever I study books - like I've been doing (and we've been doing here) - I find out that some of things I thought I knew, I didn't really know. Some of the things I believed verses taught, weren't really teaching anything close to that. It's a humbling experience, and only Yahweh's Holy Spirit can move your heart and mind to stop desiring what you want and begin desiring what He wants.

Review

So... I could teach an entire message on diligent bible study, but we've got a chapter to finish studying here in Galatians, so let's get to it.

We ended last week talking about the purpose of Yahweh revealing His Son in Paul - it was so that Paul could preach the Son to the Nations. These nations were NOT considered part of Israel (*they were excluded from the citizenship of Israel*), because the people in these nations did not grow up serving the Mighty One of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These nations did not grow up in Hebrew culture, but mostly in the Greek culture of the known world at that time (in the countries outside of the land of Israel).

Paul was commissioned to preach the Son to the nations, proclaiming that they too (along with the Hebrew Judahites) could be forgiven of their sins, and justified before Yahweh through faith in Yeshua of Nazareth as the Messiah.

Did Paul Consult with Anyone?

Now, after Paul writes this in verse 16, he continues by saying that when he received this revelation he did not "immediately consult with flesh and blood."

This is a bit peculiar, because as we've been studying Saul's former life and his encounter with Yeshua on the road to Damascus, we know that the very first thing he did was encounter a man named Chananiah (who most know as Ananias). Ananias was flesh and blood. Yeshua even sent Ananias to Saul, and told Ananias some things to say to Saul, and instruct Saul in.

So why does he write here in Galatians that he didn't immediately consult with flesh and blood? I believe the answer is found in (1) the word "consult" in verse 16, and (2) his mention of the apostles in Jerusalem in verse 17. Look at 16-17 together:

16 ...I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood
17 nor 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.

Paul's point in bringing up no consulting with flesh and blood is a focus upon not having to go and see the apostles and leaders in Jerusalem in order to get the meaning of his vision on the road to Damascus.

His vision of Yeshua was clear and certain. Yahweh revealed His Son in Saul, and the Son (Yeshua) told Saul what to do and where to go. Saul did not immediately consult or inquire with anyone (specifically the apostles in Jerusalem) to see what the vision meant, instead Acts 9:20 tells us what he immediately did: "(he) immediately preached Yeshua in the synagogues (of Damascus), that he was the Son of Yahweh."

Paul in Arabia and Damascus

In Galatians 1:17 Paul writes that he went to Arabia and then returned to Damascus. Notice the contrast: **Nor did I go up** to Jerusalem <verses> **I went away** to Arabia and Damascus. This again shows that his focus in not consulting with anyone, is on consulting the established Jerusalem apostles. (SHOW MAP)

In Acts 9 we see that his time spent in Damascus was time spent preaching about Yeshua, but what about Arabia?

Well, the text does not tell us what he did in Arabia, but if you read the commentaries and the scholars, there are all sorts of ideas they come up with about Paul's time in Arabia.

Some people say that Paul spent three years in the desert doing nothing in Arabia but listening to Yeshua speak to him. But the text doesn't say that. The text does say (In Galatians 1:18) that AFTER three years he DID GO up to Jerusalem, but that three year time period was spent in both Arabia and Damascus (and probably mostly in Damascus, because Acts 9's historical account focuses on Paul's time in Damascus).

So, the text doesn't tell us what Paul was doing in Arabia, so I'm not going to add to the text. We only know that he spent some time there, as well as in Damascus.

The main point in verses 16-17 is that Paul wants the recipients of this letter to realize that he did no consulting with the apostles and leaders in Jerusalem. He did not confer with the men who knew Yeshua personally.

His purpose in bringing this up is to make sure that the Galatians realize he didn't get his message from them, he got it directly from Yeshua. Paul is not against the apostles in Jerusalem, he is only showing that he did not receive the gospel FROM them. Remember,

Galatians 1:12: "For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Yeshua Messiah."

Paul is proclaiming his authority here. That's how authority was established in those days. Who was your teacher? Who showed you these things?

Paul's answer was not James, or Peter, or John. Paul's answer was, "Yeshua knocked me down and showed me this directly. I had an encounter with the risen Lord, and my life has been changed completely. He knocked me down so that I would be sent to preach Him to the nations. That's why I came to Galatia initially, and that's why I'm so upset about those who have come behind me and made an attempt to distort and add to the gospel of the Messiah. They aren't fighting me, they are fighting Yeshua."

Saul Meets Peter and James

So, what happened after Paul's stay in Arabia and Damascus? Verses 18-19 tells us that 3 years later he "went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days, but I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother."

What's interesting here is that the translation (NASB) uses in verse 18 - "become acquainted with" - is great, because Paul uses a term here that doesn't mean he went to Cephas (which, btw, is Peter's Aramaic, original name - Kepha); he didn't go see Kepha to get any instruction about his vision. His purpose in visiting James (Ya'acov) wasn't to have him interpret the vision he received on the road to Damascus.

He went for the reason that the text here specifies: to become acquainted with two of the Messianic leaders in Jerusalem. Two of the original guys. Kepha was a direct disciple and apostle of Yeshua. Kepha was given the keys to the kingdom by Yeshua himself. And Ya'acov was Yeshua's brother, either from Joseph and another wife, or from a later cohabitation between Joseph and Miriam. These were two top-notch men. You don't get any closer to Yeshua than Kepha and Ya'acov.

So Paul is showing that he is NOT against these guys. As a matter of fact, we will see in chapter 2 that he eventually does consult these leaders in Jerusalem, to make sure he isn't preaching anything wrong, but he brings them up in passing here in chapter 1 for what reason? To show the Galatians that he didn't get his message from them. He didn't learn from them, and then mess something up in his interpretation.

He got his message, his gospel, straight from Yeshua. Yeshua is the one who sent him to preach to the nations that they could be forgiven of their sins through faith in Messiah, apart from becoming a Yehudim through ritual circumcision.

Paul's Oath in Verse 20

Then we have verse 20 where he states an oath. He says, "I assure you before the Almighty that I'm not lying." That's a solemn oath. He isn't only telling them he isn't lying, he is swearing before the Almighty that he isn't lying. Swearing oaths is a very

common Hebraic practice. The book of Deuteronomy even commands us to perform unto Yahweh our oaths and vows, and to do so by swearing in His name.

Finishing out Chapter 1

Then after Paul has a visit with Kepha and Ya'acov, he goes into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, but Paul wants his readers to know that at this point, he was still unknown BY SIGHT to the assemblies in Judea. He is continuing here to point out to the Galatians that he had yet to build a tight brotherly bond with anyone in Jerusalem.

The Judean assemblies in Messiah did not know Saul of Tarsus by face. Verse 23 says that they were only continuously hearing this: "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." Saul's testimony was getting around. The man no one thought would ever be stopped, STOPPED without anyone on earth persuading him. He got a visitation from Yeshua himself, in heaven. And that made him stop persecuting the Messianic believers.

And you know this made the assemblies of Messiah thankful. Verse 24 says that they were glorifying the Almighty because of Saul. And you know it had to of been the topic of conversation at the Sabbath assembly. When all the brothers and sisters in Messiah got together down in the region of Judea, they would talk about what happened.

"Did you hear about Shaul the Pharisee? He changed! He's one of us now!"

"No way... are you serious???"

"Absolutely. He's a believer in Yeshua now. He even visited a little bit with Kepha and Ya'acov."

It was the talk of the town, and what an exciting thing to talk about. Shaul had been saved from his life of persecuting, through faith in Yeshua, and he had been commissioned by Yeshua to preach this message, this good news, to the Nations.

Conclusion and Exhortation

So that's chapter 1, which means we are 1/6th of the way through this epistle. :)

I would like to leave you today with a word of application and exhortation. We've talked a lot about the gospel, because this chapter has talked a lot about the gospel. And we will continue to talk a lot about the gospel, because this whole book talks a lot about the gospel.

One thing I want you to keep in your mind, is that the gospel is where you find your identity. The gospel is where you find who you are.

What I mean by this is that people will judge you in all sorts of ways, just like the Judahites were judging those from the Nations because they weren't raised as Hebrews

and were uncircumcised. That's what this book is about. The Judahites were saying, "Because you aren't one of us, ethnically, you have no right to salvation."

People today will judge you by your social status, by who your family is or isn't, or by what problems and struggles you have. People look down on you because of all sorts of things that have happened in your past life, or possibly things that are going on in your present life.

But, if you are IN MESSIAH, that's enough. That's where your identity is found. You don't have to worry about what people say about you or think about you. You don't have to worry about what you've done in your past, or what struggles you have in your present. If you are repentant over your sins and profess faith in the Son of Yahweh, you are a joint-heir with Yeshua of Nazareth. Everything he inherits, you will inherit.

It is your faith in him that makes you belong to him. It's not based on blood, or the will of the flesh, or the will of man. It's based upon faith in Messiah. You rest in that. Yeshua loves you, and you don't need to fret about someone who says you aren't good enough, or you can't be part of the family. If you believe in Yeshua, you are part of the family.

I look forward to beginning chapter 2 soon, and I hope you do too.