

The Gospel in Galatians Lesson 2 4Q 2011

Paul's Authority and Gospel

What is "authority"?

Definition of AUTHORITY

1

a (1) : a citation (as from a book or file) used in defense or support (2) : the source from which the citation is drawn
b (1) : a conclusive statement or set of statements (as an official decision of a court) (2) : a decision taken as a precedent (3) : [TESTIMONY](#)
c : an individual cited or appealed to as an expert

2

a : power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior

b : freedom granted by one in authority : [RIGHT](#)

3

a : persons in command; *specifically* : [GOVERNMENT](#)
b : a governmental agency or corporation to administer a revenue-producing public enterprise <the transit *authority*>

4

a : [GROUNDS](#), [WARRANT](#) <had excellent *authority* for believing the claim>
b : convincing force <lent *authority* to the performance>

Do any of these definitions fit Paul's "authority"?

From where does "authority" on a topic originate? Is the authority of Paul's gospel based on governmental empowerment? In other words, did God appoint Paul to an office, and by virtue of holding the office of Apostle Paul now has authority?

If authority comes from holding office – then did Peter have authority? Then when Peter began avoiding socializing with

Gentiles and Paul confronted him publicly, who was more authoritative? Was Peter still an authority on that point? Why not? Was He still an Apostle? Yet, on this point he lost authority, why?

The four servants [Paul, Barnabas, Judas, Silas] of God were sent to Antioch with the epistle and message that was to put an end to all controversy; for it was the voice of the highest authority upon the earth. {AA 195.3}

Does authority come by force? Power? Previous decisions?

So, from where does ultimate authority arise? Would it not be the truth?

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. Romans 1:16

What about this type of authority?

Notwithstanding the fact that Paul was personally taught by God, he had no strained ideas of individual responsibility. While looking to God for direct guidance, he was ever ready **to recognize the authority vested in the body of believers united in church fellowship**. He felt the need of counsel, and when matters of importance arose, he was glad to lay these before the church and to unite with his brethren in seeking God for wisdom to make right decisions. Even "the spirits of the prophets," he declared, "are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." 1 Corinthians 14:32, 33. With Peter, he taught that all united in church capacity should be "subject one to another." 1 Peter 5:5. {AA 200.2}

Do we have that mindset today? If Paul came to one of our churches would we recognize he was subject to the authority

of the body of believers? Or would we reverse it and allow one individual to be the mind for the body? What about with the writings of EGW? Do we let her be the mind for the entire church?

Does that mean, then if the church meets and the board votes an action we should submit to it?

In the presence of the monarch and the leading men of Sweden, Olaf Petri with great ability defended the doctrines of the reformed faith against the Romish champions. He declared that the teachings of the Fathers are to be received only when in accordance with the Scriptures; that the essential doctrines of the faith are presented in the Bible in a clear and simple manner, so that all men may understand them. Christ said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (John 7:16); and Paul declared that should he preach any other gospel than that which he had received, he would be accursed (Galatians 1:8). "How, then," said the Reformer, "shall others presume to enact dogmas at their pleasure, and impose them as things necessary to salvation?"-- Wylie, b. 10, ch. 4. **He showed that the decrees of the church are of no authority when in opposition to the commands of God, and maintained the great Protestant principle that "the Bible and the Bible only" is the rule of faith and practice.** {GC 243.2}

Should we submit blindly to the teachings a true Apostle? A prophet? Or a church board? Or must each one of us think for ourselves, study for ourselves, and decide for ourselves?

Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
Romans 14:5

SABBATH

Read first two paragraphs "Students at a university..." thoughts?

Was this “Paul’s” plan, or was it God’s plan that Gentiles could join based on faith?

Why did the Judiazers come to think that circumcision was necessary?

Do we struggle with any of these things today?

I received a piece of literature recently handed to me after SS by someone. As I perused the literature its entire emphasis was on making the case that Jewish feast days and holidays were still binding and that we must observe these holidays in order to prepare for the second coming. Thoughts?

Is this any different than what Paul was dealing with in regard to circumcision? Why or why not?

Is there a difference in someone freely choosing to observe the Jewish feast days, because they want to experience the event, find some personal meaning, experience an enhanced closeness with God, and making the observances a requirement for salvation, or preparation for Christ’s return?

If we begin telling people that in order to be prepared to meet Jesus we must observe the feast days what have we done? Have we not erected a barrier, a work, an obstacle to our relationship with Christ? Further, we have moved backward away from the reality the system was designed to teach, which was transformation of character and preparation of heart/mind to meet Jesus to a ritualistic set of observances, which have already proven to devolve into legalism.

Jump to Thursday’s Lesson – read second paragraph, “Why did Paul...” thoughts?

Do we struggle with this today? Do we struggle with people who want to erect barriers to people coming to Christ? I received this email two weeks ago:

i have recently had a very trying and troubling time in my church. i was asked to serve on the nominating committee ... and heard some very disturbing things about our church family... a man's name was mentioned as someone we should find a place for him to serve in the church. this same man is asking for re-baptism but is being denied this because he smokes. now, it seems contradictory to me that the pastor won't baptize him because of his smoking but yet wants us to find him a place to serve in the church. i personally feel that he should be baptized and let the Lord deal with him on his health habits or lack there of. i don't recall that Jesus or John the baptist had any such requirements before they would baptize people.

next, there is another member who, according to one of the nominating committee members, flagrantly flaunts his "addiction" to caffeine by drinking pepsi at potlucks and therefore he should not be asked to be an elder in the church. i am not sure why people feel such a need to judge on these superficial things. it is just so disturbing to me as it often will keep the very souls who need Jesus the most out and make us a very unwelcoming people. Satan is doing such a good work distracting and dividing us, isn't he. where is Christ's love to be found? it is so painful to see people treat each other like this, it makes my heart hurt and my senses recoil. i am embarrassed to be connected to such a group of people even. i don't want to leave the church by any means but still cannot support this line of thinking and have told them as much. they may ask me to leave?? (LOL) thanks for you time and i continue to feel blessed by your teachings and your groups lesson studies.

Thoughts? Was requiring circumcision a barrier that obstructed people coming to Christ to which Paul fought against? Yet, circumcision was instituted by God. Is requiring people to give up their sins, habits, and defects of character

before being baptized in harmony with the Bible? Or does it put in place obstacles that keep people away from Christ?

Who is the only one that can free us from our defects? Must we experience victory over sin in our lives before we are good enough to be baptized?

Why do we do it? Are we baptizing into Christ or into an institution? Christ doesn't require we change before we come to Him, but organizations have certain "standards" and in order to be a member of the organization then one has to achieve a certain level of performance before one can join.

Where did such thinking originate? Thankfully, not all pastors think this way. I know one, my former pastor, who would baptize people that still struggled with smoking, because he understood it was the power of God that could free them from their addiction.

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, "When Paul wrote..." thoughts? Was Paul writing to believers in Collegedale in 2011? Is the message of Galatians written to you and me? How do we then understand and apply what we read in Scripture?

Is it important to understand the original audience? Is it important to understand their circumstances and struggles?

Who were the Galatians?

Galatia is the area of central and western Turkey and gets its name from the Gauls who colonized the area. The Gauls were Celtic people of the Gallic tribes which occupied most of Europe and were eventually defeated in Europe by Julius Caesar in 52 BC.

The people in the Galatians churches, in western Turkey were descendants of these Gallic tribes.

Many wars were fought in this region of Turkey. Alexander the Great conquered it, after his death it became part of the Seleucus portion, and later in 63 BC Pompeii defeated Antiochus to gain Roman dominance over this region.

It is unclear which churches Paul was addressing in this Epistle, there is speculation on northern or southern churches. But what were some of the churches in Galatia?

- Antioch
- Iconium
- Lystra
- Derbe

Antioch at one time was the third largest city in the world having a population of over 500,000 second only to Rome and Alexandria. By the time Paul was writing the population of Antioch had decreased to 200,000-300,000 – roughly the size of Chattanooga.

Antioch was chosen as the capital of the Seleucus empire by ritual – an eagle, which was the bird of Zeus – and Zeus was the Greek form of Baal, was given a piece of sacrificial meat and where the bird carried the meat was where Antioch was founded.

They worshipped a pantheon of Roman and Greek gods. Slavery was an accepted practice, women had few rights, Roman Imperialism was the governmental model. Jewish legalism was pervasive.

Earthquakes were common in this area and a major earthquake hit Antioch in 37 AD causing Emperor Caligula to send two senators to investigate the damage. Another major earthquake hit the area sometime during the reign of Claudius 41-54 AD.

Galatians was written between 55-60 AD.

Was Paul writing this book of the Bible to us? How do we understand it?

MONDAY

Apostle means messenger – the lesson points out in the strictest application it would be a messenger who was personally instructed by Christ.

Some attacked Paul's ministry by attacking his right to preach, his qualifications, credentials to give a message. Read last paragraph, "Yet, they did not..." thoughts?

Why do people attack the credentials or qualifications of another person? Why do people go behind the back of others to try and undermine their ministry? Is it not because they have no argument against the truth, and therefore must try and stop the messenger who is bringing the truth?

How did Satan work in heaven? Did he work openly or behind the scenes? Did he go directly to Christ and talk with Christ about his complaints? Did he undermine Christ's authority and position?

What would have been the healthiest response from the angels? Would it have been to call Christ into the conversation and have Christ and Lucifer discuss it openly?

What about today? If someone comes to you and suggests "so and so teaches this, or doesn't believe that, or has no authority from the church to teach this..." what is the best approach? Should we invite the parties to discuss it together?

What would happen today if someone stood up and claimed to have spent three years in the desert being instructed by Christ and has a message for the church?

Would such a person be taken seriously? How should we respond to such a person? Do you think Paul's recounting of his experience made it easier for people to accept what He said?

How should we respond if someone stands up today claiming the gift of prophecy?

- Examine the message, does it present the truth about God as revealed by Jesus?
- Is it in harmony with God's testable laws?
- Does it enlighten, ennoble, promote autonomy and freedom of individuals, or does the message darken minds, reduce thinking, undermine freedoms?

WEDNESDAY

No Other Gospel – today, is there more than one gospel that is being presented in the world? Within Christianity? Within Adventism?

What other gospels are being preached?

- Eastern Mysticism – become one with the universe through emptying oneself in meditation
- Mankind is slowly evolving to ever more advanced stages
- Mankind can save itself by legislation and a unified government
- The earth is our mother and we must care for the earth and thereby save ourselves
- God is angry at the nations and will punish those who don't accept the blood payment of His Son
- Israel has a special genetic advantage over the rest of humanity and God gives them a different path to salvation than the rest of humanity

What does Paul say about those who present another gospel?

Read last paragraph, "How were the Galatians..." thoughts?

Was Paul desiring that anyone who taught another gospel be cursed?

What is Paul saying?

Here is my paraphrase:

Gal 1:6 I am shocked and amazed that you are so quick to reject the truth about God and turn away from his gracious character and methods of love as revealed by Christ and instead are turning to a different message of “good news” – 7 which really isn’t good news at all, but a grand deception which will only destroy. Evidently there are some people who are twisting and perverting the good news about God that Christ has brought and thus throwing you into all kinds of confusion. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should come and present a message of “good news” different than what we have already presented – a message that, in effect, misrepresents God and changes the meaning of what Christ accomplished – then he will be eternally lost, because he will be presenting a message without truth and with no power to heal and restore. 9 As we have said once, so that no one will misunderstand I now say it again: If anyone, from anywhere, regardless of accompanying signs or miracles, presents a so called message of “good news” different than what you already accepted, he will be eternally lost, because he will be presenting a false message with no power to heal or restore!

What do you think? Is Paul saying what he wants to happen, that he wants people to be cursed, and that if they present a false gospel God uses His power to curse and condemn, or is he describing the reality what will happen if one abandons the truth for a lie?

What happens if one is dying of a terminal condition and trades the genuine remedy for a false remedy? Does the doctor have to curse you or punish the foolish patient? Will the foolish patient be lost if that happens? This is what Paul is describing!

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, “One of the unique...” thoughts?

Read second paragraph, “Although...” thoughts? What is the gospel?

- How would you describe the “good news”?
- How can you know if the gospel you believe is the genuine remedy to sin or a false gospel with no power to heal and restore?

What does it mean that God sends the message of grace and peace? How is that message communicated in Christ? What is the good news that Christ has revealed?

What did Christ accomplish for us that we couldn’t accomplish for ourselves?

Read bottom pink section, “In about...” did anyone do this and want to share? Here is my paraphrase:

Galatians 1:1 Paul, an ambassador of the celestial government of God – not appointed or sent by men, but called by Jesus Christ and confirmed by God the Father, who raised Christ from the dead—2 and all the brothers with me,

To those who have partaken of God’s healing remedy in Galatia:

Gal 1:3 God our Father sends his graciousness and peace to you, as does the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who

voluntarily sacrificed himself to restore trust and heal us from the infection of fear and selfishness and thus deliver us out of this present self-indulgent, self-destructive evil age, according to the eternal purpose of our God and Father, 5 to whom be all honor and praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen

Thoughts?

THURSDAY

Read bottom pink section

Thoughts? Has God called you? What has He called you to? What is your purpose in His plan? How can you know?

Does God call each of us to a specific vocation? Or does God call each of us to His kingdom of love and regardless of vocation we are to reveal His character, to be salt in the earth, light in the darkness revealing the truth of God's kingdom of love and methods of truth, love and freedom!

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-4