

“Evangelism is Following God Alone”
Galatians 1:11-17

There are many wise men and women of God,
but no one is wiser than God.

Make Known the Gospel
Trust God’s Word Above All

Make Known the Gospel

Galatians 1:11-14, NKJV

¹¹ But I make known to you, 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 it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

¹³ For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

Apostle Paul is addressing a serious problem that had developed in Galatia among those who followed Christ. The believers began giving more authority to how other people interpreted the Scriptures than what they could glean from reading and studying the Scriptures for themselves with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is still a problem within the church today, even among those who are faithful followers of Christ, as it was in the first century. Apostle Paul directed people to Christ rather than to himself or the other apostles.

¹ And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ² I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³ for you are still carnal. For where there is envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? ⁴ For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal?

⁵ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. (1 Corinthians 3:1-8, NKJV)

Paul and Apollos were faithful ministers of the Gospel message; yet these men were not the ones believers were to be following. The messenger is the one who is sent and not the one who is to be praised. Paul reveals that he is merely the one who is sharing the Good News which is from God and not from himself or anyone else. Therefore,

he consistently turned attention to Christ instead of himself regardless of whom he was speaking or writing to during his ministry.

The Galatians had fallen into the belief that those who confidently spoke about the Scriptures, even if it was contrary to what they had first believed, were more trustworthy. Paul was amazed at how quickly they turned from what they believed.

⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9, NKJV)

The Word of God through the revelation of the Holy Spirit is always more trustworthy than mankind's interpretation of Scripture. This includes anything that is heard from pastors, teachers, and evangelists. Everything must be measured according to the Word of God; nothing is to be taken as authoritative unless it agrees with God's Word. There can also be no interpretation trusted in Scripture unless it is supported by Scripture itself, for the Word of God cannot contradict itself.

If there is an interpretation that is gleaned in studying the Bible which cannot be confirmed by other texts in Scripture, even if there is only one that is apparently at odds, then something is wrong with the interpretation. The text needs to be reexamined and studied more in order to come to the proper understanding and application of the text.

There are several in the body of Christ today that love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength who disagree about passages in the Bible. Many who are enemies of God and rejecters of His Word use this as their reasoning to dismiss the Bible and Christianity. There are many denominations that have been formed over the centuries based on disagreement over the interpretation of God's Word. This is due to the sinfulness of mankind more than the confusion of God's Word.

The message of God's Word is consistent in its entirety. The psalmists proclaim, "⁸⁹ Forever; O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89, NKJV). Isaiah was inspired to write, "⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8, NKJV). Jesus said, "³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35, NKJV). The Word of God is eternal because it is truth that is perfect in every way, useful for the equipping of God's people to fulfill the will of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

There have been many who have dedicated their life to the study of God's Word. The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day were known as authorities on the Scriptures, the law, and how to carry out all the commandments of God. Yet, Jesus proclaimed, "²⁰ For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20, NKJV). The Pharisees and Scribes study the Scriptures diligently for understanding but missed the point of all that God had proclaimed. Jesus said about them, "³⁹ You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. ⁴⁰ But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:39-40, NKJV).

All that God has said is to proclaim redemption of mankind through Christ Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus revealed this to the disciples as they walked along the road to Emmaus after His resurrection from the dead.

25 Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:25-27, NKJV)

The Word of God proclaims the character and work of God through Jesus the Messiah, the Anointed One. Apostle Paul explains how he once viewed the Scriptures as a way to make himself great among his people, zealous to protect the traditions built up around the Scriptures. Paul's attitude was so focused on making the Word of God a means of personal gain as many others had done before him. There are many who are doing the same thing in the twenty-first century among those who deeply in love with Christ, but misusing His Word for their personal profit and to make a name for themselves. John warned of these types of people.

18 Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. (1 John 2:18-19, NKJV)

Jesus also warned about these kinds of people and how to identify them,

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Matthew 7:15-20, NKJV)

Apostle Paul gave instruction about being aware of those who will use Scripture for their own gain as well.

28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. (Acts 20:28-31, NKJV)

The amount of warnings we have been given by Christ and the apostles ought to cause all those who are believers in Christ to trust the Holy Spirit's guidance through the written Word of God more than the understanding of mankind and the commentary of people about what the Word of God is actually saying. The Holy Spirit within each child of God is capable of teaching and tutoring God's people through His Word. God does use people to speak through, teach, and guide; however, those individuals must never be lifted to the point of being unquestioned. Apostle Paul warned that even if he changed over the years or the course of his ministry to contradict what he had originally proclaimed he should be rejected by the people (Galatians 1:8-9).

Paul actually praised those who investigated the Scriptures after hearing him preach to check to see whether his words aligned with the Word of God.

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. (Acts 17:10-11, NKJV)

God's Word assists people in navigating culture and times; it is not shaped by or submission to culture geography. This is why the Bible is applicable in America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and throughout the world now and in all centuries past. Acknowledging that God's Word is forever settled in heaven as Psalm 119:89 proclaims, and then say certain passages need to be interpreted and applied differently in the various cultures around the world stands in direct contradiction of the claim of God's Word being settled in heaven. Scripture cannot mean today something that is contrary to what it meant to the people who received it at the time it was written.

All Scripture addresses every circumstance people in the world will ever encounter regardless of time, culture, or geographical location. The principles that are taught and illustrations employed by the writers of God's Word who were inspired by the Spirit of God were given eternal truth. Agricultural references and instructions to slaves and their masters teach principles that go far beyond those specific references without having to reinterpret God's Word to mean something different in the twenty-first century than it meant in the time it was written. What is evil and wrong in Scripture remains the same in spite of what society may accept as good or encourage.

Trust God's Word Above All

Galatians 1:15-17, NKJV

¹⁵ But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Paul went to Christ first in attempting to understand how he had gotten Scripture so wrong over the years. He did not sit down with the other apostles and train with them about how his life needed to change now that he had come to believe on the name of

Christ for the forgiveness of his sins rather than keep the law. In the search to understand why Saul of Tarsus, who would be later known as the Apostle Paul, would choose to refrain from going to the other apostles upon his conversion forces one to remember what happened immediately following his encounter with Jesus.

¹⁰ Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias."

And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

¹¹ So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying."

¹² And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

¹³ Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

¹⁷ And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

¹⁹ So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. (Acts 9:10-19, NKJV)

Apostle Paul had three days to think about what had happened to him on the road to Damascus before the Lord sent Ananias to him to receive his sight once again. The encounter on the road was Jesus' introduction and overview of what God was calling him to do from that point on in his life. Paul described what he heard that day from Jesus to Agrippa.

¹⁵ So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.' (Acts 26:15-18, NKJV)

The time spent with the disciples in Damascus after receiving his sight was to strengthen him due to the three days of fasting in total darkness. Christ made it clear to Paul that He would reveal things to him specifically. Paul had a vast wealth of knowledge when it came to the Word of God, but that knowledge was used for his glory and advancement rather than to transform him and glorify God.

Many people know lots of information about God's Word, but use it for their own ends. The Word of God is supposed to transform those who read and study it by the power of the Holy Spirit living and working within the child of God. Paul did not have the Holy Spirit upon him as he read and studied the Scriptures. It was only when he came to believe on Christ for the forgiveness of his sins that the Holy Spirit came upon him. It was then God could help Paul understand what Scripture was saying and meant apart from his sinful heart.

Those who read the Bible must be sure the Holy Spirit is the One they are depending upon for understanding. The depravity of the human heart will take the best of things and twist them in a self-seeking way to destroy all true benefit of what God intended as the result of His Word. Paul had spent years reading, memorizing, and studying the truth which benefited him in no way. It was all for nothing because his evil heart twisted what was true and good into something that brought glory to himself, developed pride in his heart, and used the truth of God as a way of abusing and oppressing others to lift himself up.

Paul would eventually go to Jerusalem and spend time with some of the apostles, but only after he was confident in his understanding of God's Word. Paul's meeting with Peter and James was not for them to commission Paul to go and preach Christ among the Gentiles; it was Paul informing them of what God had called him to do so they would know they were all working together for the same goal: to lift up the name of Christ Jesus, *"¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother"* Galatians 1:18-19, NKJV).

God's Word must be the ultimate authority in the life of the Church. Authority does not rest in the interpretation of people, but in the leading of the Holy Spirit. Yes, there is many different ways people who love the Lord and have salvation in Christ through the forgiveness of sins have differed on the interpretation of Scripture. This is an indication of the sinful hearts of mankind and not a fault with God's Word. The difference in interpretation is due to people reading the Word of God as Paul did before coming to believe on Christ as Savior and Lord of his life. Scripture must be read, memorized, and studied for personal transformation to become more like Christ; people submit to the authority of Scripture rather than Scripture being used to conform to the will of people.

It is the Holy Spirit who guides people into all truth to bring glory to God (John 16:13-14). There are great benefits to listening to godly brothers and sisters divide the Word of God rightly, but they must never rise to the place they are not held accountable or the Scriptures are not searched through personally by those who are listening. All people are fallible and in need of correction from time to time. Therefore, God's Word must be the final authority and trusted above the opinions and interpretations of other people.

Godly men and women will often have disagreements over passages of Scripture from time to time. These things are resolved only when all parties come to the Word of God in submission to it in search of truth and to conform to the character of God. God's Word is misused whenever people use Scripture to prove a position as right, convince someone else to accept a stance on a specific issue, or justify their words and actions.

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and yielded by the Spirit to bring transformation to the lives of God's children to conform to the image of Christ by the transformation of their thinking. Let us submit, therefore, to the living and written Word

of God by the power of the Holy Spirit's presence within us for the glory of God the Father each day the Lord grants us upon this earth.