

Galatians 2:1-10 (and much more) Two Big Lessons from the Life of Paul.

When Christ comes into our lives and begins to change us, one of the desires He places within us is the desire to be used by God in the lives of others. This is a natural part of our growth. We get satisfaction when we see that the Lord has made us his instrument to meet someone else's need, to help them through a time of trouble or be a part of their spiritual growth.

So here is a question: What does it take to be used by God? How does he prepare us?

To be most useful to God, we need: 1) Time 2) Input from others

A Timeline of Paul's Early Life and Ministry:

1. Strict upbringing as a Pharisee in Jerusalem

***Acts 26:4-5 NKJV** ⁴"My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know. ⁵They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.*

2. High level theological education Speaking to a crowd in Jerusalem Paul said this:

***Acts 22:3-5 NKJV** ³"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today. ⁴I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, ⁵as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.*

3. Conversion on the road to Damascus

- a. **Acts 9:1-22**

4. Personal instruction regarding the gospel directly from Jesus Christ

***Galatians 1:11-12 NKJV** ¹¹But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹²For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

5. A return to Jerusalem from Damascus 3 years later Barnabas helps Paul to find acceptance with Peter and James

- a. **Galatians 1:15-23** and **Acts 9:26-30**

6. Church in Antioch – a number of years later – Barnabas takes charge and brings Saul in to help.

- a. **Acts 11:19-30**

7. This trip to Jerusalem and its results 14 years later

a. **Galatians 2:1-10**

- b. Don't misunderstand this. When Paul speaks of possibly running in vain in v.2, he doesn't mean he really doubted the correctness of his message. He was just keeping communication open – letting others check his work. It's simply good to let others have input into what we do.

Pr 27:17 NKJV As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Pr 27:17 ESV Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

- c. According to v.4, it seems that the Judaizers, the ultra-conservative element from within the church in Jerusalem was beginning to have an influence already. For that reason, Titus the Greek was able to serve as a test case for Paul.
- d. The end result is that the church in Jerusalem totally approved of the work that Paul and Barnabas were doing in Antioch. They thought it was fine for Titus to remain uncircumcised.

- This is important to the Galatians, because the Judaizers operating there were calling Paul's authority into question. They were likely coming from Jerusalem and Judea and could make themselves seem very authoritative to the Galatian church. Paul's point is that they, not Paul, are the ones with the unconventional beliefs. Paul is in perfect agreement with the big guys in Jerusalem. He is basically saying this:

"It's not that I need the backing of the guys in Jerusalem. I received my commission directly from Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, however, I have been in touch with them and we happen to agree. They even endorsed our ministry to other ethnic groups in Antioch and beyond. The men who are teaching you non-Jews in Galatia that you have to observe Jewish customs [the false brethren in v.4] are wrong."

8. First Missionary Journey with Barnabas, other leaders were now active in Antioch

a. **Acts 13:1-3**

9. It is only after that trip that Paul writes this Letter to the Galatians; many believe it to be the oldest of Paul's letters.

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- I. Time as a factor in Paul's process of growth.
 - A. Again we have to start with that rigid Jewish upbringing and education. God used that to give Paul the raw materials that God would work with later in writing so much of the NT.
 - B. 3 years after conversion in Damascus and Arabia before returning to Jerusalem.
 - C. 14 years in Syria and Cilicia, some of that in Antioch with Barnabas.
 - D. Now we can add just a year or two almost as a guess to allow for more ministry in Antioch, the first missionary journey with Barnabas and some time before writing this letter.
 - E. The total is a good 18 or 19 years from conversion to the first letter. And Paul was already a Bible scholar the day he came to Christ.

- II. Think of all the people that had input into Paul's life. None of this negates the fact that his conversion and calling and primary training were directly from Jesus.
 - A. Gamaliel, the most prominent rabbi of Paul's day gave him a complete theological education. Paul probably knew and understood Jewish Scripture and practice better than any of the other disciples.
 - B. Ananias, who God used in Paul's life at the time of his conversion.
 - C. Barnabas is the most important after Jesus and Gamaliel, his early teacher. He introduced him to the apostles and later brought him to Antioch to help with a unique and growing church – and who was his teammate on that first mission trip from Antioch.
 - D. Peter, James, John – the leadership in Jerusalem with which Paul remained in contact. This contact established and assured a deep unity within the early church. It meant that rogue teachers like those troubling the Galatians had a lot less credibility.

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Finally:

Paul began sharing the gospel from the moment of his conversion. We don't want to think a person needs all kinds of preparation before they can do anything at all for the Lord. We do need to understand that, just like Paul, the rest of us need time and input in order to grow.

Most of us were not Bible scholars before we were saved. Still fewer of us had a direct appearance of Jesus to change our lives and direct revelation from Him to get us moving in the right direction.

Still, we can imitate Paul's patience and accountability. And we can be sure that God will use any time of preparation and input we receive along the way to eventually use us in whatever way He sees fit.