

# Galatians 1:15-17

## Introduction

But when God, 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 so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 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 continues to invalidate the arguments of the Judaizers and points out that his authority roots back into the critically historical nature of God's sovereignty. Could the Judaizers claim the same for their authority? They could not simply resist Paul based on earthly arguments about the impossibility of a new message because Paul taught out of the Old Testament scripture to point out why a new message:

- 1) Was coming (Deuteronomy 18:15)
- 2) Was needed (Isaiah 53)
- 3) Was consistent with God's revelation (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, etc)

In contrast to Saul's having persecuted the church God did something new in Paul's life, but it was something new that was planned from before the days of Paul in his mother's womb.

## Exposition

### Set Apart From the Womb

What does it mean to be set apart? Aphorizo is the Greek word from which 'pharisee' is derived (aphorismenoi) - the pharisees would have viewed themselves as separated ones<sup>1</sup>. Paul wrote in Romans 1:1 about being set apart & called and Dr. Luke wrote about God's direction for Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:2.

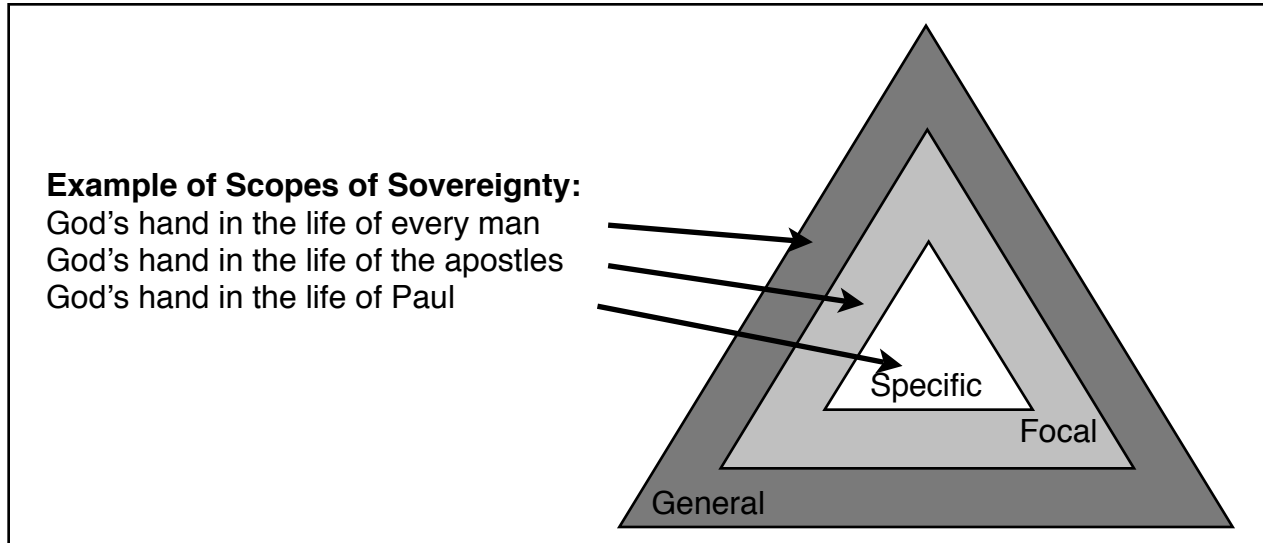
Set apart is not the same as the word sanctified's greek word *hagiazō* (ἁγιάζω) which was used to denote a separation from one thing (the profane) unto another (the holy). Paul was set apart even from the womb, which emphasizes the direction his life was going to take despite outside influences. We need to evaluate the depth of Paul's passionate hate for Christianity as a new sect and the blatant sin of his persecution and consider that God's setting apart for Himself does not mean that man's will is not removed, but instead that God can operate sovereignly to circumvent what looks like the impossible.

What are the most common misconceptions about sovereignty that you have found in your exposure to objections? What are the errors in Hyper-Calvinism? Arminianism?

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<sup>1</sup> The Complete Word Study Dictionary, S. Zodhiates, pg 302

Facets of God's Sovereignty: Prescriptive, Purposeful, Preventative, Peace giving [for those resting in His sovereignty], Perpetuates the persistence of God's character



At no point does God lose sovereignty despite our perception of too many variables. The creator creation distinction is critical in understanding sovereignty.

God acted upon Paul in three ways with this special calling:

- 1) He set Paul apart
- 2) He called through Grace
- 3) Revealed Christ to Paul<sup>2</sup>

The calling was apart from the other apostles, but this does not mean that the doctrine was not confirmed with the other apostles. Paul will continue his testimony of what God brought about and outline his interaction with the other Apostles. This separation with outside confirmation was important to validate the nature of the apostleship and the message.

What is the Biggest Problem with saying a person has a calling in comparison between the book of Acts and modern times?

### Through Grace

Through - διά (dia) "...that which intervenes between the act of the will and the effect, and through which the effect proceeds..."<sup>3</sup>

Romans 12:3 - Through Grace

<sup>2</sup> Chester McCalley Galatians, a commentary outline

<sup>3</sup> The Complete Word Study Dictionary, Spiros Zodhiates, pg. 416

**God Revealed His Son in Paul**

The Greek word here, ἀποκαλύπτω (apokalyptō) means to remove a veil, to expose or open a view that was previously hidden. Imagine the plans of a murderer, Saul, being changed to the point where the new plans are those of Christ and they're exposed through the murderer! There is nothing more humbling and amazing than to see grace poured out to reveal the very Son of God through a vessel that was once considered vile and incapable of containing such a pure and perfect message.

This message of redemption was so radical that it would have an impact on the Jews and Gentiles that would hear it. If you had been a Jew steeped in hatred for Christianity and Paul came to argue the validity, power and life of the gospel compared to the Law you would be compelled to at least hear why he had changed his position. As a Gentile you would have been shocked to see someone who had been set apart (as a Jew) reaching out and behaving unlike any other Jew before him (at least not a Law abiding Jew).

What does it mean for Paul to be called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles? Clearly Paul responded to Acts 9:15-16 with obedience, what is the human response to promised suffering and how could Paul respond differently?

**Paul's immediate training was independent of the other Apostles**

God did not give Paul the opportunity to learn the gospel from other men, just as he stated in earlier verses. The conversion had an instantaneous impact on Paul's message (Acts 9:20-25). Instead of going to Jerusalem the Lord lead him to the Arabian Peninsula for training from Himself (Acts 9:23). The southern part of Israel would be in the northern part of the Arabian peninsula, so the reference doesn't have to mean a great journey south.

Another key point against the Judaizers would have been that if Paul had gone up to Jerusalem he would have been questioning the revelation of God (even if that had not been Paul's intent). God's provision didn't allow for this argument, but no matter which angle the false teachers took God had foreseen that they should be refuted.