

# Galatians 1:18-20

Galatians 1:18-20: *Then three years later I 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. (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)*<sup>1</sup>

## Outline of Galatians

- I. Introduction (1:1-5)
- II. Defense of the true Gospel (1:6-10)
- III. **Defense of Paul's Apostleship (1:11-2:21)**
- IV. Defense of Justification (3:1-4:31)
- V. Defense of Christian Liberty (5:1-6:10)
- VI. Close of Letter (6:11-18)

## Introduction

Paul continues his letter to the Galatians further defending his apostleship. He's built his logical argument through the testimony of his life starting first with his time as a pharisee and then going back even further to God's sovereignty in his mother's womb. Paul then continues on by stating he did not pursue approval or validation of his ministry by immediately going to the other apostles in Jerusalem. It was not until three years later that he went to Jerusalem and we pick up in verse 18.

## Exposition

Paul's recounting of the events in the second half of Galatians one and first part of chapter two is a fast paced telling of his journey covering many years in a short few paragraphs. It would be good to review the sequence of events in comparison between Acts and Galatians just to have a broader scope and understand in more detail the events leading up to his first missionary journey, the journey that would lead him to Galatia. There is a very good chance that Paul's journey would have given him time to present his testimony and this recounting would have only been to remind them of the things that he already shared with them in person. His retelling of these events would have once again aimed the crosshairs at the judaizers and their false propositions and attempts to denigrate him and the one true gospel.

In the following timeline the intersection of Acts 9:26 and Galatians 1:18-19 is critical: on first reading there is an apparent contradiction. Closer inspection leads us to understand that they are not in conflict, but instead show the distinct intentions of the authors points of view. Luke wants to show unity between Paul and the apostles he met (all two of them according to Paul) and Paul wants to show that he didn't meet with all of the apostles as of yet in his chronology and that he was there only briefly (15 days).

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<sup>1</sup> NASB - New American Standard Bible

**Timing of Paul's account in Galatians 1:18-2:2 compared to Luke's in Acts**

Event	Acts	Galatians
Stoning of Stephen	7:58-60	1:13
Damascus Road Revelation	9:3	1:12
Blindness waiting on the Lord (3 days)	9:9	
Healed & Baptized	9:18	
Began teaching	9:20	
Grew in Strength & Understanding	9:22	
Escaped persecution/death (also 2 Cor. 11:32)	9:23-25	
Traveled to Jerusalem Meets with Peter & James	9:26	1:18-19
Remained out of mainstream service for 14 years		2:1a
Barnabas finds Paul	11:25-26a	
Barnabas & Paul teach in Antioch (Syria & Cilicia)	11:26b	1:21
Paul goes to Jerusalem to consult with leadership about the gospel	15:3-30	2:1b-2

**Significance of "James, the Lord's brother"**

When Paul writes of James, the Lord's brother he is writing to clarify two things: He didn't meet with James the brother of John or James the son of Alphaeus. James is mentioned as being with the believers in Acts chapter 1. There seems to be some argument about James' apostleship, but Paul mentions him as being one in this text. It appears that sometimes those who accompany one of the official 13 (Peter, Andrew, James, John, James of Alphaeus, Judas, Thomas, Matthew, Philip, Nathanael, Simon, Matthias & Paul) and operate closely with them are called apostles. Examples of this are:

- Acts 14:4 - Barnabas
- Romans 16:7 - Junia, Andronicus
- Philippians 2:25 - Epaphroditus
- I Thessalonians 2:6 - Silas, Timothy

Though James, the brother of Jesus, is not officially one of the 12 we still see that he worked closely with the church in Jerusalem and appears to be the author of the epistle of the same name. It also appears from historical tradition that James did not leave Jerusalem on missionary journeys like other apostles, but instead stayed in Jerusalem.

### **Paul's Assurance of Truth**

After outlining his long delay in working with the other apostles Paul brings about an oath promising the truthfulness of the statement. In Jewish culture oaths were a very serious thing. The first recorded oath by a man in the Bible is recorded in Genesis 24:3-9 where Abraham makes his servant swear by the Lord. A former pharisee would not use this phrase lightly and he would not promise to Jewish readers the validity of the statement unless he were willing to face death for lying (according to the tradition of the oath). Interestingly James calls believers in his letter to the diaspora to not make oaths (5:12) so that believers wouldn't fall under judgment. Paul, writing by the direction of the Holy Spirit does not suffer from this potential pitfall.

### **Questions for Discussion**

What is the biggest obstacle for the gospel in the world's system?

What can we learn from Paul's accounting of his testimony here about the approach one might want to take in presentation?

When in history should our account start? Why?

Should we be prepared to defend the truth of the gospel in our presentation of the gospel?

What do we need to know about the source of our understanding of the gospel?