

# THE PROOF OF BEING AN AUTHENTIC SERVANT OF GOD

## GALATIANS 1:17-24

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*<sup>1:17</sup> Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

*<sup>18</sup> Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

*<sup>19</sup> But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

*<sup>20</sup> Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.*

*<sup>21</sup> Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia;*

*<sup>22</sup> And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ:*

*<sup>23</sup> But they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.*

*<sup>24</sup> And they glorified God in me.*

What would you do if your very Christian character was under attack? How would you respond if someone declared that, “You are believing a false gospel?”, “You are declaring a false gospel?”, “You are false through and through!”. Nothing stings our human lives like character attacks, and nothing can be more unnerving than having others declare to us personally that we are “false teacher and believers”. Paul is facing precisely that reality in his own life as he is in Galatia. There have been those individuals that have risen up declaring that everything Paul declares is “false”, “untrue” and “without merit”. Their poisonous lips of gossip had the potential of not only affecting that church, but the future of the church as well. How can a person declare their “authenticity” under persecution and lies. What does the apostle do to declare the accuracy that he is an apostle of God and a messenger of Jesus Christ? It is important to notice what he does not do.

First...he is NOT silent. If Paul would have remained silent, then the lies of the those accusing him would have been fanned even further.

Second...he does not become angry. Paul knew that becoming “angry” with those that accused him does nothing in accomplishing the purposes of the Father. In fact they would hurt and hinder the work of the kingdom.

Third...Paul sets down an orderly process revealing how the Father spoke to him, and revealed to him the truth, calling him unto Himself, and putting him (Paul) into the ministry. It is a sobering reminder that we must be ready and able to give an account to any man of the hope that we have in us. Simply declaring that “I go to church” gives no person hope. Only a relationship with Christ gives hope.

**1. PROOF...GETTING ALONE WITH GOD (v.17).** The first proof that Paul makes clear that he is “authentic before God and is preaching an “authentic” gospel is found in the very fact that he went to Arabia to get alone with God the Father. Prior to his conversion, Paul had been very self-righteous, and thought that he was pleasing God, when in fact he was really hurting God and the work of His kingdom. Paul felt that his life was right, and that he was doing all the “right things” to be acceptable before God. But when Jesus encountered him on the road to Damascus, Paul realized that his “self-righteousness” was misguided. In getting alone with God, God redirected Him, and reoriented his life to truth. Paul was both self righteous, and deceived prior to his coming to Christ.

Paul knew the Scripture, however, he knew it from a legalistic twisted way. He had head knowledge of God, but he did not have a relationship with Him. In getting alone with God, the Father oriented Paul how to walk obediently, day by day, and God revealed to Paul how to apply Scripture and handle the Word of God. In his aloneness, God oriented Paul to the fact that Christianity was a “relationship” not a religion, therefore the greatest goal in life for Paul was not to “accomplish things” but to have a walk daily with the Father and carry out His agenda. It was approximately three hours that Paul spent alone with the Lord learning His ways, learning His truth, learning to follow His assignments. It is important to notice that in the life of Paul that immediately after conversion God didn’t give him a “job-assignment” but rather a “relationship-assignment”.

When any person allows time for the Father to develop an intimate relationship, then there will be a character designed for a large assignment. Sadly, many refuse to develop an intimate relationship with the Father, and their assignment is “small” to match their character. *2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

2. **PROOF...CORRECTING WRONGS PREVIOUSLY DONE (v.17).** In the life of Paul, it was much on his heart to correct wrongs that he had previously done. He had hurt the church, offended individuals, and was desirous to stamp out Christianity. Since Christ redeemed him, Christ moved in the heart of Paul to return to the places where he had offended and hurt others for the express purpose of “bearing witness” to the glorious grace and goodness of God. Paul’s first witness was to those whom he had deliberately and intentionally hurt and offended. Paul made it his business to return to Damascus to ask forgiveness of those that he hurt, and to advance the work of the Lord’s church, proving himself to be an “authentic” disciple of Christ. While others at first were “skeptical” of Paul, in short time, the Lord revealed through Paul, a changed life, a new nature, and a beloved friend that he would become. When any person has been changed by the gospel of Christ, it will be much on their heart to make right any wrongs of the past...revealing themselves to be a true disciple of Christ. *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” (Col. 3:13)*

When we claim to have a relationship with God, but refuse to make right past wrongs that we have done, it not only affects the work of God, but causes others to question “our authenticity”.

3. **PROOF...FACING THE PAST (vv.18-20).** Paul also made a deliberate decision to face his past. After three years, he went to Jerusalem. Paul had been one of the officials on the Sanhedrin Court (Comparable to our Supreme Court). Paul had attacked Christians and he also knew that his friends there would also think that he was betraying their religion. Yet Paul wanted to share his testimony of the marvelous life in Christ to all that would listen. Yet it was the business of Paul to go to Peter, one of the leaders of the church that he deliberately persecuted. Paul felt that in sharing to Peter, it would benefit the entire church. While Paul didn’t see Peter on this occasion, he had opportunity to meet and fellowship with James the Lord’s brother. All this he is sharing to the saints and to all in Galatia to declare his authenticity before both God and man. When Christ changes a person...there is “ample evidence” in the life to mark the change, for Christ doesn’t change a man “secretly”, but rather that person becomes a “living example” before the lives of others.

4. **PROOF...PAUL FACED HIS HOMETOWN (v. 21).** When Paul’s life was changed by the hand of God, not only did he face his past, and face the church, but he also returned home to face his hometown. It was in Tarsus, where he grew up and played, and went to school. Here was the place of his childhood friends, and those that remembered the things of Paul’s childhood. It was here that Paul desired to share his testimony of what Christ did in his life and bear witness to others. As Paul recounts his life to the friends in Galatia, he reminds him that “his authenticity” has “many proofs”, and the testimony he give is bearing witness of those truths.

5. **PROOF...A GOD CENTERED LIFE (vv.22-24).** Paul was no more breathing out threatenings to the church. Neither was he claiming a righteousness of himself but a righteousness that stems from the very heart of God. Paul was not telling what he had done, but what God had done. Second, Paul’s testimony pricked the lives of others to live a life honoring to God. While there were many churches that never saw Paul, the reality of his changed life stirred them to a deeper trust, confidence, and walk with the God that could change the heart of a man with a bent against God’s church.

The reality of the life of Paul revealed “many proofs” that he was authentic before God, and that those that breathed out lies and gossips against him were really fighting against the Lord God, and the same holds true today as well. When we are serving and following the Lord God to the best of our ability, and allowing Him full access to our lives, then He will assume the consequences for our lives in full obedience as we walk before him, being His servants.