



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, June 5-11 (C) – Galatians 1:11-24

Focus: *By What Authority?*

word of life

“For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:11-12 (NRSV)

Read Galatians 1:11-24

Today’s reading from Paul’s letter to the Galatians is a continuation of last week’s lesson. Paul continues his defense and validation of his ministry to the Gentiles as a response to those who challenged his calling and his message of an all-inclusive grace of God that welcomed all—Gentiles and Jews—equally and unconditionally into the community of faith. It is a challenge that has confronted the church throughout its history; and Paul’s message is one needing to be proclaimed in every age.

1. *Are there conditions to God’s grace? Explain your answer.*
2. *What are some of the barriers that exclude or limit our experience of God’s grace?*

Paul’s makes several arguments validating his message and his calling as an apostle:

The source of his message – Paul writes, “... the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:11-12 NRSV) Paul was not taught the good news of Jesus Christ. He was not one of the twelve disciples who heard Jesus’ teachings and gospel message; rather, he received it, experienced it, and lived it. He had a personal encounter with the risen Lord which became the source of his proclamation and witness and a validation of his message.

3. *How could it strengthen Paul’s authority if his primary source was Jesus Christ?*

The zeal of his former life – Paul knew well the Jewish faith and was a fervent follower of Jewish tradition. His words reflect his zeal: “I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it.” (Galatians 1:13 NRSV) His devotion exceeded others, which made his mission to the Gentiles that much more radical. He learned that it is only by God’s grace in Christ that all are included.

4. *Does Paul’s persecution of Christians help or hinder his ability to preach and teach? Explain.*

The prophetic call – Like the Old Testament prophets Isaiah (Isaiah 49:1) and Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), Paul validated that his call was from God “... who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace.....” (Galatians 1:15 NRSV) Paul argues he was destined by God to proclaim the good news of Christ to the Gentiles. His call was revealed by God.

No need for human approval – Paul did not “confer with any human being” (Galatians 1:16), nor did he go to Jerusalem to get approval for his mission to the Gentiles. He instead went “at once” (Galatians 1:17) and began proclaiming to all people the good news of God’s all-inclusive grace as he experienced it through the risen Christ. It is several years later that Paul visited the church in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18).

Paul’s call, message, and mission did not come from human councils, church leaders, or human authorities. They were from God as revealed and experienced in the risen Christ – whose grace is not limited by nationality, culture, or race.

5. *Why was it so important to Paul to establish his credentials and his calling?*

word among us

Authority ... Validation ... Credibility ... Integrity.... These words are often heard in business circles as people evaluate and come to a decision about a person or an institution. We value these traits and look for them in times of conflict, controversy, and uncertainty.

1. *What credentials in a church leader are important to you?*

In today's reading, Paul is responding to those who questioned the source of his message and his authority. Other messages and authorities had surfaced in the community of believers in Galatia, and the community was straying from the message Paul had proclaimed. His authority, credibility, and integrity were being challenged.

Paul responds by pointing to the source of his message—the risen Christ. Paul's eye-blinding, eye-opening experience on the Damascus road serves as the bedrock pillar on which his mission and ministry is built. He does not rely on human institutions or authorities for validation. He trusts that he is doing what God called him to do—to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to everyone.

2. *Can someone be an effective church leader without a dramatic conversion story? Is it helpful? Explain your answer.*

There are times in the church when questions of validity, authority, and integrity are raised. The Reformation is an obvious example. Luther had many questions for those “in charge” and in positions of authority. But his questions were always grounded in the gospel message of Jesus Christ. He would daily remind himself of his calling as a baptized child of God. His overarching principle was one of “saved by grace through faith” in Christ. Any teaching, doctrine, or ritual that did not express this principle was to be examined and challenged.

Like Luther, and like Paul, we find the source of our integrity, credibility and authority – the guiding principle directing our actions and decisions – in God's revelation to us in Jesus Christ. On Christ, the solid rock we stand; all other ground is sinking sand!

3. *Where do you find your source to guide your actions and decisions?*

faith practice in daily life

Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper

Living faithfully is tough. There are so many different messages clamoring for our allegiance and attention. It becomes difficult to faithfully follow Christ in our decision-making. We need one another – all of us, needing all of us. We need to be reminded of our baptism and our grounding in Christ. We need the guiding light of God's Word. We need the nourishment of the Lord's Table for direction and for the strengthening of faith. We need the gifts of God, given for the people of God. THANKS BE TO GOD!

4. *When you were young who was a Christian role model? By what authority did he or she live?*

5. *When you face difficulty, who do you turn to for Christian guidance?*

Prayer

Guide us, O great Redeemer, on our journey of life. Remind us always that you are our rock and source of grace. Help us, O God, to be faithful in our calling to bear witness of your saving love to all people, so that through us, your grace is seen and heard. Amen

last word

Pray for your pastor and other leaders in your faith community.

Daily Faith Practices

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