

The Divine Authority of Paul's Gospel (1:10 to 2:14)

by C.I. Scofield

C.I. Scofield emphasizes the divine authority of Paul's gospel and its foundational role in Christianity against competing teachings.

Topics: "Apostolic Authority", "Divine Revelation"

Description

C.I. Scofield emphasizes the importance of the body of revelation entrusted to the Apostle Paul, which explains grace, defines the doctrine of the Church, and forms the basis of Christianity. Paul defends his apostolic authority to the Galatians by highlighting his character, the divine origin of his gospel, his background in Judaism, his life transformation, and his testing of circumcision and the law in Jerusalem. He also establishes his apostleship through the acknowledgment of James, Peter, and John, and by addressing Peter's fallibility at Antioch. Scofield stresses that Paul's teachings are not merely theological opinions but direct revelations from Christ, urging believers to recognize the source of Paul's authority in the modern era.

Transcript

To the Apostle Paul was committed that body of revelation which explains grace and defines the doctrine of the Church. Our Lord, indeed, predicted the Church (Matt. 16:18), but He did not describe it. Apart from the revelation through Paul, we should know almost nothing of the Church. To Paul also was committed that body of truth concerning salvation which forms what he calls "my gospel," and which is the great doctrinal basis of Christianity. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, that Paul shall remind the Galatians who are forsaking him for teachers who claim a superior authority as coming from Jerusalem, and as pretending to speak for Peter or James, that they are turning not from a man, but from God's man.

Let us note briefly the steps of this demonstration:

First of all, the Apostle appeals to the knowledge which the Galatian saints had of his character (1:10). He was no men-pleaser; but, on the contrary, sacrificed popularity to the cause of truth. He was therefore worthy of credence.

Second, he plainly asserts the divine origin of his gospel (1:11, 12). He received it, not by tradition, nor from man, but by revelation.

Third, as to the pretensions of the Judaizers, who made much of their affiliation with the church at Jerusalem, if any living man knew Judaism it was himself (1:13, 14). He had been a foremost Jew. Indeed, he was saved, not from immorality, idolatry, or atheism, but from Judaism. If, therefore, he had not exalted Mosaism in his evangelistic labors in Galatia, it was because it was the mere chrysalis, the mere empty shell, out of which the Gospel had emerged.

Fourth, Paul recounts his life from his conversion to show that he was not an apostle-taught man, but a divinely sent, divinely equipped witness (1:15-24).

Fifth, as to circumcision and the law, the Apostle had tested that very issue in Jerusalem itself (2:1-5). Going thither by revelation, he had taken with him Titus, a Greek, whose presence was seized upon by false brethren as an occasion to bring up the question of circumcision; and there, in the very mother church whose authority the Judaizers exalted, the circumcision of Gentile converts was not required. Why, then, should circumcision be insisted on in Galatia?

Sixth, Paul's apostleship was fully acknowledged by James, Peter, and John, the very foremost of those who were apostles before him (2:6-10).

Seventh, since the Judaizers were claiming some special authorization from Peter, it became necessary to point out that Peter was by no means infallible. At Antioch he had so dissembled for fear of Jewish opinion that Paul had to publicly rebuke him (2:11-14).

Here, then, were the solid bases of the apostolic authority of him who had called them into the grace of Christ, whose direct revelation from Christ they were forsaking to follow men who made much of tradition and of human authority. And this question of the source of Paul's teaching, permit me to remind you, is by no means an obsolete question of interest only in the first century. It is a burning question today, in the twentieth century. Men speak of "Pauline" theology, as if Paul were a mere theologian, the framer of a system of Christian doctrine--a system with which one may disagree, in whole or in part, and still be a good Christian. Against these, as against the objectors of the first century, the truth runs that Paul spoke, even as to the very words (1 Cor. 2:13), not as a system-maker, but as the mouth of God (John 17:18, 20).

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