



# CAPITOL COMMISSION™

## Vetting The Apostle And His Message

GALATIANS 1.10-24

1/15/13

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / Don.Garner@capitolcom.org

The vetting process is common in the sphere of government. A potential candidate or appointee will often warrant the careful examination of their actions, character, and words, both spoken and written. To what views do they hold? How did they come to hold these views?

Paul's primary message is being undermined. There are those who are questioning his motives, his authority, and the origin of his message. Paul conducts a thorough vetting of himself as an apostle. His aim is not to protect his personal reputation. For the sake of the gospel, Paul makes it clear that the message he preached among them came to him by direct revelation from God and was not received from men.

*Galatians 1.10-24: For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men I would not be a bondservant of Christ. But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

*For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles, except James, the Lord's brother. (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.) Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God in me.*

### DIRECT REVELATION OF THE MESSAGE (10-12)

None of us likes it when our motives are called into question. Paul's opponents have likely accused him of altering his message to suit his audience that he might gain their acceptance. It could be that Paul wanted to reader to consider the strong indictments of the last few verses as to whether they sound consistent with a desire to tickle the ears of the crowd. Paul knew he could not faithfully serve Christ if given to a man-pleasing spirit.

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**"FOR I NEITHER RECEIVED IT FROM MAN, NOR WAS I TAUGHT IT, BUT IT CAME THROUGH THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST."**

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Paul lays out the primary emphasis of the first two chapters in verse 11 when he wrote, "the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man." The gospel he preached to them from his first visit, the one that they received at the first, was not something he received from interaction with any mere man. No one taught it to him or passed it along to him in any other way.

He came by this message via the revelation of Jesus Christ. Is Christ the revealer of the gospel Paul preached or did Paul receive the gospel he preached by the means of Christ being revealed to him? Whichever meaning Paul intended, it makes little difference. Even if Christ was the revealer, it was Himself that He revealed to Paul. For Paul, Jesus Christ is the gospel he preached.

### PREVIOUS OPPOSITION TO THE MESSAGE (13-14)

After his conversion, Paul did not shrink from sharing his storied past as an enemy of the gospel and the church. It was too widely known for him to have hidden from it had he wanted to. Paul held the coats of those who stoned Stephen and later travelled throughout ancient Palestine harassing and, even, arresting and imprisoning professing Christians. These actions, coupled with Paul's academic work as a student of Rabbi Gamaliel, and his zealous adherence to Jewish tradition argued against his being receptive to the preaching of the gospel at the time of his conversion.

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### BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS ONLY: TUESDAY LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30AM OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)

# Texas

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Paul's argument here may be that a person with a past like his would not have come to receive the gospel except by direct revelation by God. He certainly wasn't going to receive it from those he sought to destroy. But it seems that Paul has also made a case against his opponents in another way. If it were in fact necessary for these Gentile believers to place themselves under the Mosaic law, no one would have been more zealously urged them to do so than him. Paul's resume as a Jew eclipsed that of any of his opponents.

### **INDEPENDENT TESTIMONY OF THE MESSAGE (15-24)**

Now Paul seeks to prove that he came to the gospel without the corroboration of the apostles or any other teachers in Jerusalem. Paul again describes his experience of coming to faith, but from God's side of the matter. In His own timing, at His pleasure, having pre-ordained Paul for salvation, God called Paul through His gracious interruption in his life, for the purpose of sending him as a messenger to declare the message of salvation in Christ to the Gentile.

Having re-introduced the matter of his conversion, he chronicles his travels and those he visited along the way and for how long after his conversion. He aims to demonstrate the independence of his message. He did not gradually develop it as he sat under the teaching of others. He spent most of the early days of his Christian life in the desert. Sharing carefully details of places, time-frames, and persons visited, he goes so far as to swear to the accuracy of the facts he reports here. It is important to Paul that these young Gentile believers understand that he received his message directly from God and not from men.

### **CONCLUSION**

All too often we learn something shocking about a candidate for national office too late in the process for them to recover. How can it happen that these things are not uncovered during the vetting process? God delivered His message through a messenger that had been thoroughly vetted. Paul established his credibility as a messenger to give us confidence in the message—the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a trustworthy message. Have you received it? If not, will you receive it today?