

ACTS Lesson 15

Rom 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

- Festus
- Paul Before Herod Agrippa II and Bernice
- What the prophets and Moses said would come to pass
- Paul, you are out of your mind?
- What does Paul's testimony accomplish?
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.

Paul's Conversion

Galatians 1:15–17

“When he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me...I did not immediately consult with anyone” (vv. 15–16).

Facing men who seek to undermine his ministry, Paul describes the events surrounding his conversion to prove the Judaizers are liars for making accusations that Jesus never directly called him to be an apostle. He reminds us that he persecuted the church before meeting Christ because the contrast with his new calling as one of the Savior’s greatest ambassadors is powerful evidence that Jesus met and changed Paul on the Damascus Road (Gal. 1:13–14). Yet he knows more is needed to prove conclusively that Christ alone is the source of his gospel. There are also rumors that Paul relies on others for his teaching, and in today’s passage he answers them, emphasizing his independence as an apostle.

We ought to keep these accusations in mind lest we think Galatians 1:15–17 somehow contradicts Luke’s account of the same events (Acts 9:1–19a). Paul does not mean that he had no contact with other believers following his conversion when he tells us he did not immediately “consult with anyone” after seeing the Son of God. As the note on Galatians 1:16 in the Reformation Study Bible explains, the idea that Paul consulted with no one means in the Greek that he did not seek others out to approve his message, not that he went into isolation straight away. Paul probably leaves out his baptism under Ananias (Acts 9:17–19a) only because he does not want to give his opponents any ground to argue he learned the gospel from others. Important as his encounters with Ananias and other Christians were during his time in Arabia and Damascus (Gal. 1:17), Paul was instructed in the message of salvation at the feet of Jesus Christ Himself.

Paul’s description of his divine call has similarities to Jeremiah 1:4–5 and the prophet’s description of his own commissioning, which is fitting since both men were appointed to mediate God’s Word. We are not agents of revelation in the same way; nevertheless, our Creator in His grace also calls us to service. John Calvin comments, “We owe it to the goodness of God, not only that we have been elected and adopted to everlasting life, but that he deigns to make use of our services, who would otherwise have been altogether useless, and that he assigns to us a lawful calling, in which we may be employed.”