

**Text:** Gal. 2.20; 1 Cor. 2.1–5; Rom. 15.18–19

Last week we opened describing an attack by unbelievers where they try to show that the Lord and the apostles were somehow at odds with one another, contradicting one another, and teaching different things.

There are four main ways they claim this division:

1. A division between Jesus and Paul
2. A division between John and the Synoptics
3. A division between Paul and Paul (*i.e.* Paul in Acts and Paul in the Epistles)
4. A division between young Paul and old Paul so that he contradicted himself

We stand against all these alleged disagreements. The Lord and the apostles speak with a unified voice.

Last week we talked about the alleged difference between John and the Synoptics. This week, its “Paul vs. Paul,” or, as I call it:

### *Will the Real Paul Stand Up? (Part 1)*

The claim that Paul is different in Acts than he is in the epistles is foolish, but since it forms a ground of attack, we must look at some Scriptural points contradicting it.

We will start with Paul’s own “self-image:”

Read: Gal. 2.20; 1 Cor. 2.1–5; Rom. 15.18–19

Now we will discuss points that defend against this charge.

## **I. Understandable differences of emphasis**

- A. Luke portrays Paul as “the leading proponent of the early church who overcame all obstacles by his complete dependence upon God.”<sup>1</sup>
- B. Paul, when writing about himself, “set out to portray himself in the shadow of Christ’s redeeming work as one who was merely a conduit for Christ and not a celebrity to be admired.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy*, Kindle Edition (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway, 2010), 87.

<sup>2</sup> Köstenberger and Kruger, 87.

## II. Numerous convergences between Acts and Epistles

### A. The claim to credentials the same

Ac 22.3 ¶ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

2 Cor 11.22 Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I.

Gal 1.14 and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.

Phil 3.6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

### B. The honesty about Paul’s history as a persecutor

Ac 8.3 But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

Ac 9.1 ¶ Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

Gal 1.13 For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;

Gal 1.22-23 I was *still* unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;<sup>23</sup> but only, they kept hearing, “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.”

1 Cor 15.9 For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

1 Tim 1.13 even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

### C. The conversion stories (Ac 9, 22, 26) are echoed in the epistles

Gal 1.15 But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

1 Cor 9.1 ¶ Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?

1 Cor 15.8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

2 Cor 4.6 For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

### D. The "tent-making" activity: an apostle on self-support

Ac 18.2-3 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,<sup>3</sup> and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

Ac 20.34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my *own* needs and to the men who were with me.

1Th 2.9 ¶ For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, *how* working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

2Th 3.7-8 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example, because we did not act in an undisciplined manner among you,<sup>8</sup> nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with labor and hardship we *kept* working night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you;

1 Cor 9.18 What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

## E. The pattern of going to the Jews first

Ac 13.46-48 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.<sup>47</sup> "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'" <sup>48</sup> ¶ When the Gentiles heard this, they *began* rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Ac 28.25-28 And when they did not agree with one another, they *began* leaving after Paul had spoken one *parting* word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,<sup>26</sup> saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, "YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;"<sup>27</sup> FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'" <sup>28</sup> "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."

Rm 1.16 ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Rm 2.9-10 *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,<sup>10</sup> but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

## Conclusion:

This challenge against the Bible seems foolish. There is no real substantive difference in the presentation of Paul's ministry between Acts and the Epistles. The only differences are really ones of emphasis, not substance.

The fact that men will attempt to attack the Bible with such silly charges shows their desperate desire to avoid accepting the Bible in any way.

We can have confidence in our Scriptures, and in the major character of the NT after Jesus, the apostle Paul.

“The Paul of Acts and the Paul of his letters ... are the same person.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Köstenberger and Kruger, 88.