

Many non-Christians and those formerly involved in Christianity have a real problem with Paul. Namely, they say he started a new religion.

### PAUL WAS CRAFTY

Some simply claim Paul of making up his new religion. They point out the times he speaks of "my Gospel" and they take him at his word. And this is exactly what they should do, but they don't take the full counsel of Paul. They claim that Paul called it "my gospel" (Romans 2:16), that he said he didn't learn his gospel from anyone else (i.e.: it's proprietary) (Galatians 1:11-12), and thus Paul is clearly saying he started a new religion.

And they really are right with this. Paul does claim to have a unique and new gospel, but he explains that it came from the Lord. They totally reject Paul's claim on this. And it was even happening in Paul's day. Paul had to assert his honesty and the divine origin of his message multiple times. For example, in Galatians 1:20, Paul writes, "Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not." Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 11:31, he states, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not."

In fact, they teach that Paul was simply crafty, beguiling his listeners. They use 2 Corinthians 12:16 for this, in which Paul says, "But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile," as proof that Paul was crafty and caught them with guile. (In context, Paul is speaking of accusations that were being given in that day also).

In the end, Paul had to tell Timothy that all his followers in Asia had left him (2 Timothy 1:15). This statement underscores the challenges Paul faced, even among those who initially accepted his teachings.

Why did Paul have so many problems that he had to constantly defend his apostleship, tell others he wasn't lying, be accused of using craftiness and guile, and in the end, have his closest followers abandon him? Should we say, "where there's smoke, there's fire?"

### LOOKING AT CHURCH HISTORY

In church history, Christendom took a cafeteria approach to Peter and Paul. They did not fully reject Paul, nor did they fully accept him. They liked some of his teachings and disliked others, so they took the "sweet stuff" and abandoned the parts that didn't sit well with them. The truth is that the church became neither purely aligned with Jesus, nor with Peter, nor with Paul. Instead, it turned into a confused conglomeration of all of the above, along with an unhealthy mixture of Moses thrown in for good measure.

Some Pauline ideas the church loved, including:

- Salvation by grace alone through faith
- The concept of justification by faith
- The universality of the gospel, extending beyond Jews to Gentiles
- The teachings on love and the fruit of the Spirit
- The importance of spiritual gifts and their role in the church
- The emphasis on the resurrection of Christ and its implications for believers.

But the early church also loved some of the things of life under the Law and the Kingdom Gospel which they were not willing to separate from, including:

- The necessity of baptism for the remission of sins
- The call to repentance and turning away from sin
- The ethical teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount
- Observance of the Jewish festivals and holy days, such as Pentecost
- The Kingdom of God (making it a present reality rather than a future promise)
- Adherence to some aspects of the Mosaic Law, such as tithing
- The practice of communal living and sharing of possessions (koinonia).

So while a few abandoned Paul altogether, the majority in Christendom mixed Paul with Peter and created a hybrid.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU REMOVE PAUL

If you remove Pauline scriptures, you are left with Judaism. This is because Paul's writings are foundational to many of the distinct doctrines and practices of Christianity that differentiate it from Judaism. Without Paul's teachings on salvation by

grace through faith, the universality of the gospel to include Gentiles, and the grace gift offered through Christ's blood, the theological framework reverts to the Mosaic Law and the covenant made with Israel. Thus, the core elements that define Christianity as separate from Judaism would be absent.

Paul insists on a total separation from the Mosaic Law and the covenants of Israel for the body of Christ by emphasizing that believers are no longer under the Law but under grace. In Romans 6:14, Paul states, "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace." He further elaborates in Galatians 5:1-4, where he urges believers to stand firm in the freedom Christ has given them and not to be entangled again with a yoke of bondage, referring to the Law. Additionally, in Romans 7:4-6, Paul teaches that believers have died to the Law through the body of Christ so that they may serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code. By doing so, Paul delineates a clear distinction between the old covenant of the Law and the new gospel of grace, underscoring that the body of Christ operates under the latter.

Most in Christendom are not willing to make a full break with the Law. This reluctance is evident in several areas where the church continues to embrace aspects of the Mosaic Law and traditional Jewish practices. Some of these areas include:

- **Sabbath Observance:** Some Christian denominations observe the Sabbath on Saturday or designate Sunday as a "Christian Sabbath." This practice reflects the Fourth Commandment's influence, despite Paul's teaching that believers are not under the law (Colossians 2:16-17).
- **Tithing:** The practice of tithing, giving 10% of one's income, is rooted in the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 27:30-32). While Paul encourages generous giving, he does not prescribe a fixed percentage, advocating for cheerful and voluntary contributions (2 Corinthians 9:7).
- **Dietary Laws:** Certain Christian groups follow dietary restrictions akin to those in the Mosaic Law, such as abstaining from pork or observing kosher guidelines. Paul, however, teaches that all foods are clean (1 Timothy 4:4-5).
- **Priesthood and Clergy:** The concept of a distinct priesthood or clergy within the church can be seen as a carryover from the Levitical priesthood. Paul teaches the priesthood of all believers, where each person has direct access to God through Christ (1 Peter 2:9).
- **Moral Law:** While Paul upholds moral principles, the insistence on adhering to the Ten Commandments as binding law reflects an ongoing connection to the Mosaic Law. Paul teaches that believers are led by the Spirit, which fulfills the righteous requirement of the law (Romans 8:4).

By holding onto these elements the church maintains a connection to its Jewish predecessor while also incorporating Pauline doctrines, resulting in a hybrid of both traditions.

## A CONSISTENT TRUTH

In studying those who dislike and/or deny Paul, you will find a consistent truth: they all fail to recognize that Paul insists on being separate from the previous religion in which people were called "Christian" (Acts 11:26).

Paul's insistence on being separate from the Twelve Apostles and the early Christians as they were known can be observed in several key passages and actions in the New Testament. Here are some examples that illustrate this distinction:

- **Independent Revelation:** Paul emphasizes that his gospel was received directly from Jesus Christ and not from any human source, including the Twelve Apostles. He states in Galatians 1:11-12, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."
- **Minimal Contact with the Apostles:** Paul highlights his limited interaction with the Twelve after his conversion. In Galatians 1:15-19, he explains that he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did he go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before him. Instead, he went to Arabia and later returned to Damascus. It was only three years later that he went to Jerusalem to visit Peter and stayed with him for fifteen days, seeing none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.
- **Distinct Mission to the Gentiles:** Paul consistently portrays his mission as distinct from that of the Twelve, who primarily focused on preaching to the Jews. In Galatians 2:7-9, Paul writes, "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter... they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."
- **Conflict over the Law:** Paul's confrontation with Peter in Antioch underscores his insistence on a separate approach to the Gentiles, particularly regarding the observance of Jewish law. In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul recounts how he opposed Peter to his face because Peter withdrew from eating with Gentiles when certain men from James arrived,

fearing the circumcision group. Paul rebuked Peter for not acting in line with the truth of his gospel, emphasizing freedom from the Mosaic Law for Gentile believers.

- **Jerusalem Council:** At the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), Paul and Barnabas argued against imposing Jewish customs on Gentile converts. The council's decision, influenced by Paul's arguments, was to place minimal requirements on Gentile believers, further distinguishing Paul's ministry from the Jewish Christian tradition of the Twelve.
- **Personal Authority and Identity:** Paul often defends his apostolic authority by highlighting his unique calling and mission. In 1 Corinthians 15:8-10, he describes himself as "the least of the apostles," who is "not meet to be called an apostle," but emphasizes that he labored more abundantly than all the others, yet not he, but the grace of God with him.
- **Distinct Body of Teaching:** Paul's epistles contain distinct theological teachings, such as the doctrine of justification by faith apart from the works of the law (Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16), the mystery of the church as the body of Christ (Ephesians 3:1-6), and the rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). These teachings are presented as revelations given specifically to Paul, setting his message apart from that of the Twelve.
- **Distinct Terminology:** In his letters, Paul often uses terminology and concepts that are distinct from those used by the Twelve. For example, he frequently refers to believers as being "in Christ," a phrase that underscores the mystical union with Christ that is central to his theology (Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 1:3).

These examples illustrate Paul's insistence on the distinctiveness of his apostleship and message, highlighting his separation from the Twelve Apostles and the early Christians in terms of mission, teaching, and practice.

Pauline deniers consistently misinterpret or fail to take into account these distinctions. Because they do not listen to Paul when he says he started something new, they accuse him of doing the wrong thing by starting something new.

### THEY ARE RIGHT

What is sad is that the Pauline deniers who have left the Christian family are, in large part, more biblically accurate than those who insist Paul says the same thing as those who went before him (see Chapter 6).

A simple reading of scripture shows that Paul introduced teachings that were radically different from those of the early apostles and the Jewish tradition. Paul emphasized salvation by grace through faith apart from the works of the Law, a universal gospel for both Jews and Gentiles, and the concept of being "in Christ" as a new creation. His teachings on the church as the body of Christ, justification by faith, and the mystery of the gospel were distinct and foundational to the development of Christianity as separate from Judaism.

The Pauline deniers are right in recognizing Paul's distinct teachings but wrong in concluding that this makes his teachings illegitimate or contradictory to the message of Jesus and the early apostles.

Paul himself instructs believers to rightly divide the word of truth. In 2 Timothy 2:15, he writes, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." This means understanding the different contexts within the Bible, recognizing that Paul's teachings were given for a specific purpose and time, distinct from the Mosaic Law and the earlier gospel preached to the Jews.

### TAKE 1 TIMOTHY 1:15-16 AT FACE VALUE

In 1 Timothy 1:15-16, Paul emphatically insists on the truth and trustworthiness of his message, declaring it a "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance." He asserts his position as the first sinner, "protos," who was saved by grace, highlighting that his salvation serves as a pattern for all who would come to believe thereafter. Paul sees himself as the inaugural recipient of this new dispensation of grace, setting a precedent for others. This aligns with his directive in 1 Corinthians 11:1, where he instructs believers to follow him as he follows Christ, underscoring his role as the model for the new believers in the body of Christ. Paul's explicit emphasis on his unique position and the distinctiveness of his message reinforces the idea that he is initiating a new phase in God's redemptive plan, separate from the ministry of the Twelve Apostles.

Paul's role as the inaugural recipient of the new dispensation of grace and the distinctiveness of his message are further supported by several Pauline passages:

- **Ephesians 3:2-3:** "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words)." Here, Paul speaks of the unique revelation given to him, which he refers to as a "mystery" that was previously hidden but now revealed through him.
- **1 Corinthians 3:10:** "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon." Paul describes himself as a "wise masterbuilder" who has laid a new foundation, emphasizing his foundational role in the establishment of the church.

- **Romans 16:25:** "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began." Paul again highlights the unique and previously hidden nature of the gospel he preaches, which was revealed to him for the establishment of believers.
- **Colossians 1:25-26:** "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints." Paul reiterates his role as a minister of a new dispensation, revealing a mystery hidden for ages but now made known.
- **Galatians 1:15-16:** "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." Paul underscores his divine calling and the direct revelation from God, setting him apart for a unique mission to the Gentiles.

These passages collectively reinforce Paul's position as the pioneer of a new phase in God's redemptive plan, marked by the dispensation of grace and the revelation of mysteries previously unknown.

### IF YOU ACCEPT THE PROPRIETARY PROGRAM

If, after reading the seven chapters of this book, you accept the idea that Paul has a proprietary program, you have both a wonderful and challenging ride in front of you. Embracing Paul's unique teachings offers a deeper understanding of the distinct role of grace in the Christian faith and the freedom it brings from the Mosaic Law. However, this journey will also challenge you to reconsider long-held beliefs and traditions, requiring careful study and discernment to fully grasp the implications of Paul's message.

I recently received this letter from an online listener who has discovered the joy (and heartache) of the acceptance of the idea of a Proprietary Program under Paul.

"I can't tell you how much I have benefited from your teaching. I feel like I did when I got saved....just so excited about learning the Bible. When I got saved, I was surprised how the unbelievers in my family weren't as excited as I was about finding out "the truth." I feel the same way now about right division. I share with my Christian friends who enjoy studying the Bible but are so skeptical and look at me funny when I try to explain right division. They are not interested at all and it is discouraging and they think it is borderline heretical/false teaching."

Here is my advice to someone who is just beginning to recognize the Pauline proprietary program:

1. You don't have to learn it all today. Take your time and pace yourself.
2. Be gracious to those who haven't learned it yet and are skeptical. Understand that it might take them time to see things from your perspective.
3. Never stop learning, because it will take years to "unlearn" some of the things you may have been taught. Be patient with yourself.
4. Be prepared to lose some close Christian friends and fellowship, because many of them will refuse to see it. This can be a difficult part of the journey.
5. Be cautious of your own fears. You may start shedding so many bad assumptions from the past that you become scared to shed another one. When that happens, go slow!
6. Don't be afraid to not understand something. You're learning a new thing for the very first time, and it's okay to have questions.
7. Grow in your love for the knowledge of the content of God's word. Knowing books like Hosea, Ezekiel, Ruth, and 2 Samuel will be a rich blessing to your knowledge and understanding of Paul's proprietary program.

May God bless you as you learn Paul's Proprietary Program!