

There are powerful words spoken by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians:

Galatians 1:15-17 (NIV)

“But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased

16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being.

17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.”

From these verses, we can understand that in those days, there was a prevailing tradition or expectation: if someone received a call to serve God especially in the early church it was often expected that they would first go up to Jerusalem, the birthplace of the church, and consult with the key apostles such as Peter and John, who were seen as pillars of the faith (Galatians 2:9).

They would often undergo a form of validation or mentorship under these established leaders before beginning their ministry.

HOW THE APOSTLE PAUL VALUED HIS CALLING ABOVE HUMAN RANK AND RECOGNITION

Paul's Different Path

However, Paul's experience was radically different. After his dramatic conversion (Acts 9), he did not seek out the approval or tutelage of those in high positions. Instead, he went away *into Arabia* and sought the face of God directly for three years (Galatians 1:18).

He wasn't dismissing the apostles; rather, he was prioritizing the voice and leading of Jesus Christ, who had personally appeared to him (Acts 9:3-6). This unique path reflected Paul's deep understanding that calling comes from God, not from human institutions.

Later, Paul testified:

Galatians 1:21-24 (ESV)

"Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

22 And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

23 They only were hearing it said, 'He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.'

24 And they glorified God because of me.”

Although the churches didn't recognize Paul personally, the fruit of his ministry was undeniable. He didn't wait to be “licensed” or “recognized” before preaching Christ. His testimony alone caused many to glorify God.

What About Recognition by Leaders?

It's likely that people questioned Paul's legitimacy:

“Do the apostles in Jerusalem recognize this man?”

“Who ordained him to preach?”

But these questions did not stop Paul from preaching the Gospel boldly. His focus was not on titles or approval from other men but on faithfulness to the One who had called him Jesus Christ.

Even when Paul later did meet the apostles in Jerusalem after 14 years he made it clear that they added nothing to his message:

Galatians 2:6 (NIV)

“As for those who were held in high esteem whatever they

were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism they added nothing to my message.”

In fact, in Galatians 2:11–14, we see Paul even confronting Peter (Cephas) for hypocrisy when Peter started behaving differently out of fear of the Jewish believers. Paul rebuked him publicly because the truth of the Gospel was at stake.

Galatians 2:11 (ESV)

“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”

Paul did this not out of pride, but because he valued truth over titles, and calling over tradition.

What Can the Church Learn Today?

In the early church, there were only 12 apostles recognized with great authority. But today, the number of “recognized” leaders is countless bishops, reverends, archbishops, and so on. While leadership and order in the church are biblical and necessary

(Hebrews 13:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12), it becomes problematic when man made hierarchies hinder people from obeying the call of God.

Many today feel disqualified from serving simply because they haven't received approval from those in positions above them. You may be told:

- "Go to Bible school for 4 years first."
- "You need ordination papers."
- "Get approval from this council or committee."

While formal training and mentorship have their value, they are not the source of calling God is.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (NIV)

"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards... But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise... so that no one may boast before him."

Personal Application

Sometimes, God may want to begin with *you alone*. Like Paul, He may call you to a season in “Arabia” a place of personal training, hidden from public view, where you learn to hear His voice directly.

That doesn’t mean we should reject learning from others or dishonor leaders. Paul himself respected the apostles, and later worked alongside many of them. But the key is to remember:

You are called to serve Christ not to be approved by men.

Galatians 1:10 (NIV)

“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? ... If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”

Let us then follow Paul’s example:

- Listen to God first
- Be faithful to the call
- Let fruit speak louder than titles
- Honor leaders, but don’t wait forever for validation

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- Remember that God's approval outweighs man's recognition

1 Corinthians 15:10 (ESV)

"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."

Let's not be held back by the fear of not being recognized by religious institutions. If God has placed something in your heart go after it with humility and boldness. The church is stronger when every part of the Body functions (Ephesians 4:16), not just those with titles.

Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters... It is the Lord Christ you are serving."

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May the Lord bless you and give you boldness to fulfill your calling without fear, without compromise, and without delay.

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