

Introduction: Public Persona & Personal Testimony

In the social media age in which we live it is easier than ever to create a public persona. When certain people come to faith who have a level of notoriety, Christians tend to respond in one of two ways. Some rejoice and platform these professed new believers while others, perhaps somewhat cynically, are suspicious of them. When someone of notoriety professes faith, we should pray that they would be grounded in a local church and disciplined so that their public testimony would be a proper reflection of their private life of faithfulness.

Main Point: A faithful _____ witness to Christ is built upon a _____ life of devotion and obedience to Him.

Galatians 1:18-24

- Paul describes his first visit to _____ three years after his conversion. (vv. 18-20)

(1) Paul spent time with _____.

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.

- What was Paul doing in those three years?

A visit to Mt. Sinai?

Solitude?

Ministry?

- Paul uses *Kepha* and *Petros* to refer to Simon (Peter), the leader of the Twelve. Peter had a clear position of leadership in the early Jerusalem church, having preached the Pentecost sermon (Acts 2).

“*visit*”—ἱστορέω (historeō)—to visit for the purpose of getting to know someone or something

“[Paul] was successful in developing a relationship. The length of time implies a great deal of personal time together; a fifteen-day visit would include two full Sabbaths as well as multiple opportunities for meals.”—Michael Burer

(2) Paul also interacted with _____.

But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother.

- This “James” is not to be confused with the Lord’s disciples, the son of Zebedee and son of Alphaeus. He became known as ‘James the Just’ and was martyred in AD 62. He came to hold a place of prominence in the Jerusalem church particularly after Peter began missionary journeys (Acts 12).

Excursus: Was Mary perpetually a virgin?

- The gospels imply that Mary and Joseph consummated their marriage and had more children together. (Matt. 1:24-25; Lk. 2:7,22)
- The gospels explicitly refer to Jesus’ siblings (Mk. 3:31-33; 6:2-3; John 7:3-5)
- Tertullian (AD 160-220) speaks of James and the other siblings as the biological children of Joseph and Mary
- The doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary first appears in a writing falsely attributed to James (*The Protoevangelium of James*, AD 2nd—3rd c.) and came to be taught widely only in the 4th c. AD

“...Paul owes nothing of his gospel to James. Paul would say the same about Peter, whatever details he may have learned from him about the life and ministry of Jesus. Paul’s Gospel is basically *not* about the day to day events of the earthly ministry of Jesus, but rather about the soteriological effects and benefits of his life, death, resurrection, and appearances. Paul’s focus and distinctive message has to do with Christ crucified and risen, and mainly focuses on the now exalted Lord.”
- Ben Witherington III

Paul’s time with these men was likely for the purpose of becoming _____ with them.

(3) He affirmed his account of these events to the Galatians with an _____ before the Lord.

In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!

- Paul's language takes the form of a sworn deposition, and it is before the presence of _____ as Judge that he affirms the truth of what he has said. This was possibly to counter claims made by opponents that he owed his apostleship to the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Key Point: Our faith is strengthened through mutually encouraging _____ with other believers.

- Paul then explains that he remained _____ among the Judean churches as he continued to minister in other places. (vv. 21-24)

(1) After leaving Jerusalem, he went to regions to the North and West of Judea.

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

- The two most prominent cities of these regions were _____ (in Syria) and _____ (in Cilicia).

- This was a time of ministry among the diaspora _____ as well as God-fearing _____. It is likely that many of the hardships that Paul mentions in 2 Cor. 11:23-29 occurred during this time.

(2) He stresses to the Galatians that this work was independent of influence from the Jerusalem church as well as those churches under its immediate influence.

"And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea"

(3) News of his _____, however, spread among the believers during these years.

"They only were hearing"

"And they glorified God because of me."

Relating Paul's Account to the Events in Acts 9:23-30

1. The account in Acts hints at Paul being there a short time (fifteen days according to Gal. 1:18)
2. Barnabas appears to have made the necessary introductions to Peter and James.
3. His time there also included the preaching of the Gospel until opposition arose.
4. For his protection, he left the city and went to Tarsus where he began his ministry referenced in Gal. 1:21-24.
5. Although he would have been known by some in Jerusalem, he would not have had time to fellowship with the churches in the rest of Judah face to face, supporting his claim in Gal. 1:22-24.

Key Point: Our testimony, in both word and deed, should ultimately lead others to _____ God.

Paul's Message to the Galatians

"[Paul's] personal history proves the action of God himself in his conversion. His travels after his conversion show that he was not beholden to the Jerusalem apostles but instead learned about them in appropriate ways. His reputation among the churches of Judea demonstrates his effective ministry without any input from contemporary leaders." – Michael Burer

Concluding Thoughts

1. If we are to live as faithful witnesses to Christ, our lives must be characterized by personal _____.

The strength of our public witness is _____ in the reality of our private walk with Christ!

2. If we are to live as faithful witnesses to Christ, our lives must be characterized by _____ worship and _____ with other believers.

God uses fellowship with other believers to _____ and _____ faithful servants!

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The strength of our public witness is rooted in the reality of our private walk with Christ!

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God uses fellowship with other believers to shape and sustain faithful servants!