

PTB2-35: The Apostle Paul, Chief Editor of the New Testament.

3-1: Other Scriptures to Support Colossians 1:25.

As stated earlier it is possible to overlook this writing and editing aspect of the ministry of Paul until you focus on it as found in Colossians 1:25; however once it has your attention, you can find other scriptures to support the same thesis.

NOTE: It should be stated here something that will be emphasized later. That is, the sufferings and preaching and other aspects of the ministry of Paul are closely related and essential to the ministry of writing. In fact those other aspects of the ministry make the writing ministry possible. Also Paul's acceptance in the church as an Apostle was also essential to the ministry of writing, since it was a well-known fact that only Prophets and Apostles wrote Scriptures. Something else that we will look at in more detail later.

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...” (Ephesians 3:2,3)

Notice several obvious exegetical points from these two verses: (1) the method of Jesus by which He let Paul know of this great mystery was through “revelation”, and everyone knows from the study of the Bible in totality that the method by which Scriptures are written is revelation; (2) when this mystery was revealed to Paul he passed it on in a letter which became a book of the Bible (no doubt this was the book of Colossians); (3) if you read the verse before, Ephesians 1:1 you will notice that Paul relates this ministry of revelation and writing to both being a “prisoner” (sufferings for Christ and the church) and for the fact that it is all done for the church; (4) you also see this fact in the “which is given me to you-ward” in the wording of Ephesians 3:2; (5) in Ephesians 3:5 this great mystery is “now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”, once again all Bible students knowing that this is the method of revelations from God--revelation to apostles and prophets through the work of the Holy Spirit (II Timothy 3:16,17); (6) the great mystery hidden from the foundation of the earth is that the Gentiles are members of the same body of Christ through the same Gospel, Ephesians 3:6; (7) and this is the reason that Paul is made a “minister”, Ephesians 3:7; (8) part of this ministry to the preaching of this mystery and gospel to the Gentiles, Ephesians 3:8; and (9) another aspect is in order that all men on the earth of all time might know this mystery--“and to make all men see what...”, Ephesians 3:9.

Now what seemed at first to be a little unclear from internal evidence in the Scriptures begins to become obvious!

II Timothy 3:16,17.

In a later section of this chapter we will look at Paul's concept of “the word of God” as used in Colossians 1:25 to determine if it had a written Scriptural context as well as the more obvious aspect of preaching, so that since we mentioned above this verse of II

Timothy 3:16,17, it behooves us now to put it up front as part of the understanding of the Apostle Paul about inspiration, revelation, and the Scriptures.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Timothy 3:16,17)

All written Scripture is given by the inspiration of God through the Holy Spirit. If you look at the verse before, II Timothy 3:15, you will notice that Paul is talking about written Scriptures as he relates how Timothy has learned the written and “holy” Scriptures from his childhood.

This would also be a good time to look at the Apostle Peter’s concept of inspiration and Scriptures, and how in particular that Peter had accepted the writing of Scriptures as an important aspect of the ministry of the Apostle Paul, and that furthermore Peter sought to gain this acceptance of writing Scripture among the rest of the church.

(1). II Peter 1:20,21.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (II Peter 1:20,21)

Here the speaking or preaching of Scripture is closely related to the writing of the Old Testament books by the Prophets.

(2). II Peter 3:15,16.

“...even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to be understood, which they are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (II Peter 3:15,16)

You didn’t miss that did you: (1) Peter puts the written epistles of the Apostle Paul in the same category with the Scriptures of the Old Testament; (2) in those epistles Paul is “speaking” while he writes; and (3) it is because of the wisdom given to him from God that Paul writes to these churches in epistles that have become accepted as Bible.

3. Romans 15:19.

Where were we when we got carried away with this great doctrine of the inspiration of Scriptures? We were looking at support in other Bible verses for the writing of Scriptures as the most significant aspect of the ministry of the Apostle Paul.

3-2: Where Paul Got His Doctrine.

Paul leaves little doubt in the mind of readers where he learned what He did about the Doctrine of Christ and other teachings. It was from the Risen and Ascended Christ Himself!

1. From out in the Desert of Saudi Arabia.

“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....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: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother." (Galatians 1:11-12,15-19)

- (1). Much of the doctrine of Christ that Paul wrote of is almost synonymous with the gospel, and above Paul is saying that it came from direct revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (2). Paul didn't get the teachings of Christ from the other Apostles as after his conversion he only saw two of them, Peter and James, and that was 3 years after his conversion, those three years being spent listening to Jesus in Arabia.
- (3). Part of my major theory on Paul being the chief editor of the New Testament, continuing his work through Mark and Luke for whom he left written manuscripts on Old Testament quotations, is also that Paul left the gospel testimony manuscripts from Peter and James--written during his first visit back to Jerusalem to Peter and James--respectively becoming the Gospels of Mark and Luke.

From Peter and James.

As mentioned above, Paul already knowing that his responsibility was to be Chief Editor of the New Testament, having learned that from Christ on the road to Damascus, from Ananias in Damascus, and from Christ in Saudi Arabia, began to do research on the task by recording the gospel testimonies of Peter and James on parchments. From reading back through the Old Testament during the 7 "silent years" at Tarsus, recording on manuscripts all the quotes that would become part of the 14 letters that he wrote, plus Acts, Mark, and Luke. Quite often the seven years or so of Acts 9:30 are called the silent years. I think not; as Paul was reading back through the whole Old Testament in light of his conversion, the teachings of Jesus in Saudi Arabia, what Ananias told him, and what Paul learned from Peter and James. All of the quotes that would later become book of the New Testament were recorded on parchments as he read through the Old Testament.

3-3: The Apostle Peter acknowledged Paul as a Scripture Writing Apostle.

"...as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures." (II Peter 3:15,16)

By the time the Apostle Peter wrote II Peter, approximately 66 A.D., Paul was well established as the "beloved brother". The source of Paul's doctrine and Scriptures is obvious here, it was "according to the wisdom given him". It came from outside himself, from God the Father, the Ascended Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. In a few paragraphs we will briefly discuss "inspiration" of all Scriptures as (1) divine in origin, (2) absolute in authority, and (3) sufficient in message. By this time in approximately 66

A.D.--"in all his epistles"--Paul had written many epistles. Paul wrote of these things that Peter had been addressing in II Peter, in particular as mentioned a few verses before, the coming of the day of God when the heavens and the earth shall dissolve; and how the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.

Paul writes in his epistles of some things hard to understand.

It would seem that except for the Apostle John near the end of the First Century when he wrote the difficult book of Revelation, that the Apostle Paul was given the task (as a chief editor should have) of writing the most difficult and deep things of salvation. But this was the way it should be as Paul was a lawyer before his conversion, and being a lawyer in Israel in the first century meant based on the law of the Bible as the law of the Bible was the law of the nation. All Paul needed was conversion, a word of encouragement from Ananias, several years in the desert with Christ, a brief visit back at Jerusalem with the Apostles Peter and James, and then seven years at Tarsus to read back through the Old Testament with which he was already very familiar--but in the light on the new experiences and testimonies.

3-4: Word of God (Scriptures) from the Apostle Paul.

Paul was a holy man of God that spoke or wrote as moved by the Holy Spirit.

"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (II Peter 1:21)

Paul was not making an private interpretations of Jesus or the Old Testament when he wrote Scriptures.

The Doctrine of Paul is the doctrine of Christ and of God. It is consistent with the teachings and epistles of the other Apostles. In fact, if proof were needed of the Bible as the Word of God, it is the unity of content from the Prophets and the Apostles that convinces us that a common source was necessary, that source being God the Father through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

It was not recorded yet but I am sure that either the Ascended Christ or Peter or James had told Paul as Jesus said, and later the Apostle John recorded in the Gospel of John that there would be no doubts about "doctrine" if a person were willing to do the will of God.

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." (John 7:17)

Of course, in the context, Jesus was primarily speaking of the group of teachings and of Himself as the reliable source that passed on doctrine from God the Father.

"And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." (John 7:15,16)

Paul could likewise talk of his doctrine while making it clear, as he often did, that it was really doctrine from God and Christ; and likewise in the title of this volume, THE MINISTRY AND DOCTRINE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL, we can talk of the doctrine of Paul while knowing unmistakably the source.

3. Peter must have known also of the time and effort Paul made at Tarsus when he carefully reread the Old Testament Scriptures, of the matters of salvation, of the grace that was presently coming to his generation, and what the Spirit of Christ had recorded in the Old Testament of the sufferings of Christ.

“Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven...” (I Peter 1:10-12)

(1). Paul would have been on the mind of Peter as one of the Apostles who preached that gospel with the Holy Spirit help.

(2). Paul along with the Old Testament Prophets would among those who “minister the things”.

(3). The “Spirit of Christ” was with Paul in Arabia even as it was with the Old Testament Prophets in the writing of Scriptures.

3-5: The Apostle Paul, a champion of inspiration of scriptures and all other doctrines.

1. It was the Apostle Paul as a medium that gave us those great verses on “All scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (II Timothy 3:16,17)

You just know that Paul had to be aware of the fact that he like the Prophets and other Apostles was writing Scripture: if he didn't know before Peter told him in the epistle of II Peter.

What do we mean by “inspiration of God”? Certainly it is not inspired as the same sense as Robert Browning or any other poet is inspired.

(1). We mean that the Bible is divine in origin

While over 40 authors over a period of thousands of years did the human penmanship, whatever we believe related to various theories of “inspiration” we must believe that God is the origin. Over at Socorro, New Mexico is the Very Large Array of antennas pointed to pick up some communication from space. Well, in the Bible we have communications from heaven, from the Maker of all in the universe. And somehow the Word of God transcends within the Bible all verbal shortcomings and the limitations of pen and paper to communicate the truth to us.

(2). We mean that the Bible is Absolute in Authority.

When God has spoken as He has in the Bible, what could man possibly have to say that would be in the same category. We dare not compare even Baptist statements of faith or

the commentaries of our best to the Bible itself. Like one teacher of theology said, “Study your Bible: it will throw a lot of light on the commentaries.”

(3). We mean that the Bible is Sufficient in Its Message.

It may not tell us all that we want to know: however, it tells us all that we need to know for salvation, for the worship of God, for faith in Jesus Christ, for the living of the Christian life, and etc. (4). We mean that the Bible is high fidelity.

High fidelity literally means “faithful in reproduction”. We can debate extensively the exact mode of revelation; or we can simply admit that the Word of God communicates through languages and words and translations exactly as God wants it to with the help of the Holy Spirit and the faithful study of the Bible.

2. The Word or Word of Truth were favorite terms for Bible or Scriptures in the writings, and we will look at those extensively in the chapters of this volume. Two will be briefly mentioned now as examples.

(1). II Timothy 4:2.

This verse as a preliminary to the warning of the time when there will be little tolerance for sound doctrine, tells a possible preventive measure.

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” (II Timothy 4:2)

(2). I Corinthians 14:3.

This concludes with a good combination. Even as preaching must include the triad elements of exhortation, comfort, and edification (I Cor 14:3), so here preaching the word ends in exhortation with longsuffering and doctrine. The longsuffering tells of love and patience; and certainly on all doctrine we would dare not be among those that cast the first stone. It is no person or persons that we are aiming at when we talk about what the Bible teaches: it is not personal; it is something that was in the Bible before you and I were born.

3-6: Sufferings and the Ministry of Paul.

Above all Paul was told in his call to the Ministry of the great things he must suffer, and I think somewhere in those scriptures about “suffering” we will find also the great thing that Paul did as Chief Editor of the New Testament. When you stop to consider that second to Christ Himself Paul is the most famous Christian that has ever lived, I frankly am surprised that there are not several Old Testament predictions that foretold of Paul and his work. Perhaps there are, and during this volume study we can seek them out.

1. The call to Paul’s Ministry in the vision of Ananias.

Ananias in the vision was told to go to this one Saul of Tarsus who was praying, and to put his hands on him so that he could receive his sight. Ananias objected. He said, “I’ve heard of this man, of the evil he has done in Jerusalem to Christians, and how he has authority from the chief priests to put all in prison that call on the name of Jesus.”

“But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15,16)

Here is what we can nail down so far on the Call to the Ministry of the Apostle Paul.

- (1). He was a chosen vessel to Christ.
- (2). Paul’s call was to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel
- (3). Later Christ (no doubt in Arabia and subsequently) would show Paul “how great things he must suffer” for Christ.

Suffering was always part of the ministry of the Old Testament Prophets, especially the writing prophets, and Paul as a lawyer was very familiar with that.

Stephen in his famous last words of Acts 7, in a condensed history of the Old Testament, tells us of the sufferings of the prophets.

“Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers...” (Acts 7:52)

The Ministry of Jesus Himself is often referred to as a ministry of suffering.

The famous passage of Isaiah 53 tells of the Ministry of Jesus in terms of the “Suffering Servant”.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” (Isaiah 53:3)

And with many others similar words like--borne our griefs, carried our sorrows, stricken, smitten of God, afflicted, wounded, bruised, chastisement, stripes, oppressed, as a lamb to the slaughter--Isaiah 53 tells of the suffering ministry of Christ.

Paul testified that the ultimate in the Ministry and in being a Christian was what could result from suffering, that is the attainment of the Resurrection from the dead.

Let us also not forget that the preparations of Paul before the call to the ministry were also preparations for his ministry. He tells us of some of those educational, training, and experience backgrounds before His call.

“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” (Philippians 3:4-6) Yet those were not the sufferings that helped Paul fulfill His call to the Ministry. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss of Christ.” (Philippians 3:7) There is the obvious motivation in the Ministry of Paul!

“Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ...” (Philippians 3:8)

There is “sufferings” again, in the loss of all things that were important of the flesh and in the world. Surely in order to fulfill the Ministry of Paul, in preaching, in missionary journeys, and in the writing and editorship of New Testament books the essential foundation was the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Not only knowledge, but to be a leader in these avenues of expression about Jesus, Paul needed “excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus...”

Somewhere before we finish this volume, we must prove from the Scriptures that EXCELLENCY and SUFFERINGS are closely correlated.

“...and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” (Philippians 3:9-11)

There it is again: know Him, the power of His resurrection, and “THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS”.

Ephesians and the Ephesian ministry form a benchmark in the writings of Paul and in the ministry of the Apostle Paul. It was after the three year ministry in Ephesus and in the area of Asia Minor near Ephesus, that he could truly say that he had worked where he was not building on other men’s ministry. You can detect that landmark in the way that Paul addressed his letters, boldly calling himself “an apostle of Jesus Christ” with children (I Timothy 1:1 and II Corinthians 1:1).

In the writing of I Corinthians he was almost there as he was “called to be an Apostle”. A little weaker than that would be the “servant and called to be an Apostle” of Romans and Titus. Begging the issue of Apostleship would be the “an Apostle, not of men but of Jesus” of Galatians. (Remember like with any other author, you must distinguish between the time of writing and the time of publication.) When Paul came to formally write his earliest synagogue address as recorded in the book of Hebrews, it without the salutation of any name at all. Therefore if you continue this trend and sequence the 14 letters written by the Apostle Paul in terms of Paul’s own concept of his ministry--at least, as he felt accepted in the Church and churches--then it would go as follows.

Galatians	Apostle not of men but of Jesus
Hebrews	no name
I, II Thessalonians	names only (Paul, Silas, Timothy)
Romans, Titus	servant and called to be an Apostle
I Corinthians	called to be an Apostle
I Timothy, II Corinthians	an Apostle with children

Ephesians, Colossians, and II Timothy an Apostle
 Philippians servant with Timothy
 Philemon Prisoner

3-7: Apostle with Children, I Timothy and II Corinthians.

It is felt that the exact sequencing should not be overlabeled, and that it should be considered helpful only in that it leads to the spiritual messages of the letters. No doubt Paul digressed back to servant near the end of his ministry in order to identify with the ministry of Timothy, or have the churches identify with the ministry of Timothy, and also out of deference to the friend-servant concept of the final teachings of Jesus on earth. Paul almost called himself an Apostle in the first writing of Galatians; however, it was little or no concern for the acceptance of the churches which came later. Of course this writer is aware of different sequencings and respects especially that of the conservative Bible scholar F.F. Bruce which goes like this: (1) Galatians; (2) Thessalonians; (3) I Corinthians; (4) Philippians; (5) II Corinthians; (6) Romans; (7) Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians; and (8) Pastoral epistles. It is obvious that Bruce has not attempted to sequence the pastoral epistles of Titus, I, and II Timothy.

However, enough of this sequencing. Recall that the emphasis in this volume as in all three volumes of THE LEARN CHRIST COMMENTARIES that the emphasis is to be on the internal content. That is interpreted to mean that the 14 New Testament books themselves and their context, rather than information about them, will be the focus in this volume.

An Outline of I Timothy.

Historical Background of Ephesus, Timothy there, Paul's Apostleship, and his charge to Timothy. I Timothy 1:1-2:15

Elders and Deacons. I Timothy 3:1-13

The Church and the Mystery of Godliness. I Timothy 3:14-6:2

The Church is the pillar and ground of truth. 3:15

From the God manifested in the flesh in the Christ through the received into heaven, the Ascension of Christ. 3:16

The work of a minister during the last days. 4:1-6:21.

- a. Some will depart from the faith, getting into seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.
- b. Be an example of believers.

How specifically to treat certain groups of people in the church, 5:1-6:4.

Godliness with contentment is great gain: follow after godliness, I Timothy 6:6-19.

Keep what has been committed to your trust, not as those who have erred from the faith, 6:20,21.

There is a very real sense in which we Christians today are also the children of the Apostle Paul, and John also as we feel akin to John also as he speaks of his “little children” in the little epistles of John. Recall that it was the Apostle Paul who reminded us in several books that we are a body of Christ built on the “foundation of the apostles and prophets” with Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone. Not to belittle the work of the Apostle John in the writing of the last five books of the New Testament, which I like to call the New Pentateuch of the Apostle John; and in this one volume commentary on the Bible I call “The End”; nor would I belittle the work of the Old Testament Prophets in setting the stage with quote-potentials that Paul could explain and around which Paul could build the core of Christian doctrine as we have come to know it.

After all, after Jesus time of teachings of the 12 apostles was terminated by His death and resurrection, then Paul was chosen specially in a special way to complete the work of the writing of the New Testament. It was only Paul that the resurrected Christ took out into the desert to explain what the Old Testament was all about. Then with that knowledge, Paul, a very organized religious lawyer in the Hebrew tradition, re-read the Old Testament manuscripts through recording on a separate manuscript those portions that must be quoted in his writings along with the explanation of those quotes that Christ gave him in Saudi Arabia. Here is how Paul brought the whole Bible together as one as Chief Editor under the leadership of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Paul provided leadership in an exhaustive and complete quoting of the Old Testament in the 14 letters he wrote and the 3 that he sponsored through Dr. Luke and John Mark. Jesus quoted extensively from the Old Testament, then lead Paul to do the same. Matthew also quoted from Jesus and the Old Testament as did Peter and James and later John; but when you take all the quotes from the Old Testament in the New Testament you will find that Paul is the majority stockholder. Why? Because that is the way Christ wanted it! After all, what was according to the Spirit and Paul in Romans the chief contribution to the world of the Jewish people. It was to be a custodian of the oracles of God. It was to a Jew of the Jews, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, that was given the privilege under the leadership of Christ to bring it all together.

Paul wrote Ephesians. We can find many things in Ephesians as I have through over 50 years of Bible study. At this my pinnacle of Bible study and understanding, I find in Ephesians as it's place at the center of the total Bible the first half as “Essentials of Faith”, and the second half on “How to Learn Christ”. Now, along with that you should know that all of the little book of Ephesians is a summary of the first ten books that were written by the Apostle Paul

Chapter 4: The Bible is Christ, Next session PTB2-36.