

THE PAULINE DILEMNA

There has been much debate as to whether Paul was 'of Christ' in light of the fact that his teaching was almost single-handedly responsible for the doctrinal fracturing of the later church. While some doctrinal divisions arose from gentile misunderstanding of the text due to ignorance of Jewish culture & historical context, the reality is that Paul's teachings often seemed to contradict those of Christ. In fact, unlike Christ, there are repeated instances where Paul even seemed to contradict himself! Peter went so far as to provide this cautionary note:

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation;
even as our beloved brother Paul
also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;
16-As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things;
in which are some things hard to be understood,
which they that are unlearned & unstable wrest,
as they do also the other scriptures,
unto their own destruction.
2Peter 3:15-16

What follows are some of the more egregious inconsistencies found in the Pauline writings:

Paul wrote:

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this;
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
Galatians 5:14

However, Christ stated:

....Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,
& with all thy soul, & with all thy mind.
This is the first & great commandment.
And the second is like unto it,
Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.
On these two commandments hang all the law & the prophets.
Matthew 22:37

Paul stated:

As concerning therefore the eating of those things
that are offered in sacrifice unto idols,
we know that an idol is nothing in the world,
& that there is none other God but one....
But meat commendeth us not to God;
for neither if we eat, are we the better:

neither, if we eat not, are we the worse.....
1Corinthians 8:8

But to the church of Thyatira Christ stated:

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee,
because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,
which calleth herself a prophetess,
to teach & to seduce my servants to commit fornication
& to eat things sacrificed unto idols.
Revelation 2:20

And Christ's inner circle of disciples wrote these words
to instruct new gentile converts after the resurrection:

For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, & to us,
to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:
That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, & from blood,
& from things strangled, & from fornication....
Acts 15:28-29

Certainly what Paul describes as a 'light thing' Christ & his inner circle of 12 took far more seriously.

What is even more strange
is the fact that Paul appears to contradict his earlier statement
in his same letter to the Corinthians:

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord,
& the cup of devils:
ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, & of the table of devils.
22Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?
Are we stronger than he?
1Corinthians 10:21-22

Paul stated:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers
(meaning government).
For there is no power but of God:
the powers that be are ordained of God.
Whosoever therefore resisteth the power,
resisteth the ordinance of God:
& they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.

**Romans 13:1
Yet, this was Christ:**

**And he charged them, saying, Take heed,
Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,
& of the leaven of Herod.**

**(The Pharisees were the religious leaders
& Herod was a governmental ruler.)**

Mark 8:15

**Moreover,
the kingdoms of this world are clearly enemy terrain:**

**Again, the devil taketh him (Christ)
up into an exceeding high mountain,
& sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world,
& the glory of them:**

And saith unto him,

**All these things will I give thee,
if thou wilt fall down & worship me.**

Then saith Jesus unto him,

Get thee hence, Satan:

for it is written,

**Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God,
& him only shalt thou serve.**

Matthew 4:8-10

If Satan owns all the kingdoms of the world why would an apostle of the Living God admonish us to put our souls in subjection to his governments? Christ never suggested such a thing!

Paul stated:

**All things are lawful for me,
but all things are not expedient:
all things are lawful for me,
but all things edify not.**

1Corinthians 10:23

Where in scripture does it say that all things suddenly became lawful?

This was Christ's angry indictment of the Pharisaic leadership:

**Did not Moses give you the law,
& yet none of you keepeth the Law?**

John 7:19

This was John's definition of sin:

Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law:
for sin is transgression of the law....
Whosoever abideth in him (Christ) sinneth not:
whosoever sinneth hath not seen him,
neither known him.
1John 3:4&6

Paul stated:

Now to him that worketh not,
but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly,
his faith is counted for righteousness.
Galatians 3:10

After healing a lame man Christ admonished:

Behold, thou art made whole:
sin no more,
lest a worse thing come unto thee.
John 5:14

When Christ commanded the man to sin no more he was commanding that he cease from transgressing the law & not, as Paul seems to be suggesting, that he merely increase his level of faith.

Paul stated:

For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse:
for it is written,
Cursed is everyone that continueth not
in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.
Galatians 3:10

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised,
that he is a debtor to do the whole law.
Christ is become of no effect unto you,
whosoever of you are justified by the law;
ye are fallen from grace.
Galatians 5:3-4

However, Christ never claimed to be the 'end of the law':

Think not that I am come to destroy the law,
or the prophets:
I am not come to destroy but to fulfill.
Matthew 5:17

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments,
& shall teach men so,
he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:
but whosoever shall do & teach them,
the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 5:19

And a certain ruler asked (Christ), saying,
Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
And Jesus said unto him,
...Thou knowest the commandments,
Do not commit adultery, Do not kill,
Do not steal, Do not bear false witness,
Honour thy father & thy mother....
Luke 18:18-20

The reality is that Paul never walked with Christ. In his letter to the Galatians he actually boasted about the fact that following his vision of Christ he did not even meet with Christ's inner circle for three years & then only for a brief amount of time.

But when it pleased God,
Who separated me from my mother's womb,
& called me by his grace,
16To reveal his Son in me,
that I might preach him among the heathen;
immediately I conferred not with flesh & blood:
17Neither went I up to Jerusalem
to them which were apostles before me:
but I went into Arabia, & returned again unto Damascus.
18Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter,
& abode with him fifteen days.
19But other of the apostles saw I none,
save James the Lord's brother.
Galatians 1:15-19

Of course, Paul was already an accomplished Pharisee who had studied under the most reputable teacher of his day, Gamaliel. Thus, he was probably correct in assuming that there was little in the way of doctrinal training that the other disciples would have been able to provide outside the scope of his own

understanding. Let us not forget also that Paul did not have the advantage of reading the gospel literature since it was not compiled & disseminated until a later time.

Paul was admittedly *spirit* led & his writings clearly reflect a developmental growth process, but unfortunately we lack the advantage of any precise historical chronology. In the book of Galatians Paul appears to be rejecting the value of observing God's laws:

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised,
that he is a debtor to do the whole law.
Christ is become of no effect unto you,
whosoever of you are justified by the law;
ye are fallen from grace.
Galatians 5:3-4

However, this was not his stance in his letter to the Romans where he wrote the following:

Do we then make void the law through faith?
God forbid:
Yea, we establish the law.
Romans 3:31

Then there is the fact that the 'law' to which Paul refers in his letters is often the Oral Law of the Pharisees and not the commandments of Moses. In addition, when Paul speaks about the fact that there is no law that can justify a man to God, this is absolutely the case. However, the commandments must be observed *after* the reconciliation has been made & the walk begins. Paul does not suggest otherwise.

Paul's writings consist of a compilation of personal letters. It is doubtful that Paul was aware that they were going to be placed among canonical scripture. Had he known, his writings would probably have undergone far greater scrutiny for doctrinal dissonance.

Unfortunately there is a dangerous practice within contemporary churches to quote single scriptures from Paul's writings while disregarding the many other biblical scriptures that speak to the contrary. One of the most common examples is Paul's statement that suggests the primary function of the Christian prophet is to edify:

...he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification,
and exhortation, and comfort.
1Corinthians 14:3

Meanwhile, this statement flatly contradicts the many other prophets, Christ among them, who vociferously declared that it was only the false prophets that sought to 'edify' & that the primary role of the authentic prophet was to convict God's people of their sins.

(Please refer to 'True Prophet/False Prophet)

While the Paul's writings provide invaluable insights that cannot be found in any other biblical text, my advice is that if his words contradict or appear to be inconsistent with the words of Christ or those closest to Christ, then the Pauline version should be demoted to a distant second place. His writings are significant only if & when they support the teachings of Christ. When they are at variance, let's just assume that Paul was somewhere along in a training process that had yet to be contextualized or completed.