

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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Paul's Epistles

--By Terry Carter

"15 And consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, 16 as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and *unstable people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures." **2 Peter 3:15-16** (NKJV)

There are a number of groups who try to discredit Paul's writings. There are a number of different ways in which they do this.

Some claim that Paul and Peter taught different things. Some even claim they taught different Gospels. Others claim that Paul was not really an apostle or that his writings were not really inspired.

Finally, there are those who accept that Paul was an apostle and that his writings were inspired, but each letter that Paul wrote was only intended for those to whom it was addressed. The verses quoted above actually refute all these ideas.

First of all, Peter referred to Paul as "our beloved brother". I can't imagine Peter speaking of Paul this way if they taught very different things.

This is especially true if they taught different Gospels. Paul himself said

that there's only one Gospel and that anybody who tried to teach another one should be accursed. In fact, he went so far as to say that even if "we or an angel from Heaven preach any other gospel...let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:8-9

Certainly, Peter and Paul would not have been on good terms if they were preaching different Gospels.

Secondly, Peter made it clear here that he believed Paul's writings were inspired. He referred to them as Scriptures.

Since Paul's writings were inspired there could be no doubt about his apostleship. After all, he repeatedly called himself an apostle and defended his apostleship against his detractors in his epistles.

If Paul were not an apostle or his writings are not inspired, Peter could have ended the debate right here. Instead, he calls all of Paul's epistles, Scripture. That ought to end the debate alright. Paul was an apostle and his writings are inspired.

Finally, Peter made it clear that Paul's epistles were not just for those to whom they were addressed.

Most of Paul's letters were addressed to specific congregations like the congregation at Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, etc.

Some of them were addressed to individuals like Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. But here, Peter made it

clear that he was familiar with "all of his (Paul's) epistles".

Not only that, but he made it clear that those to whom he was writing were also familiar with all of Paul's epistles.

Peter addressed this book to "those who have obtained like precious faith with us". **2 Peter 1:1** That is, he was writing a general epistle to all Christians everywhere.

What this means is that Peter expected that any Christian anywhere who reads his letter to be familiar with all of Paul's epistles.

This is pretty strong evidence that Paul's writings were widely circulated among the congregations everywhere.

That pretty well destroys the idea that Paul's letters are only intended for those to whom they were addressed. They may not be addressed to a general audience, but they did have a general audience.

Whether you like what Paul wrote or not, he was an Apostle and his writings are inspired. They are meant for all Christians everywhere and at all times. They are Scripture and need to be believed and followed.