

Paul Defends His Ministry and Message - 2

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AM Service

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Text:

Galatians 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2: And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. 3: But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: 4: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: 5: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6: But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: 7: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8: (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9: And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. 10: Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Introduction

There were false teachers in Jerusalem claiming that Paul was not a true apostle and that he was preaching a gospel that was deficient, therefore not the same gospel that the apostles in Jerusalem were preaching. So, in this section the apostle **Paul continues to defend his apostolic authority and the gospel he preaches**. But this time instead of focusing on the source of his authority and the origin of his message, **he focuses on the nature of his message**. He now focuses on the message itself. Although he did not learn the gospel from the other apostles, Paul declares that the gospel he preaches is **the very same gospel that James and Cephas [Peter] and John and the other disciples preach**. In [chapter 1](#), Paul asserts that he has learned the gospel exclusively from Christ, independent from the other apostles. But here in [chapter 2](#), he says that although he received the gospel from Christ alone, the gospel he preaches and the gospel that the other apostles preach is **one and the same**. The apostle Paul will show in this chapter that while his apostleship and his gospel are independent of other apostles, **both his ministry and message have been fully endorsed by the leaders in the church at Jerusalem and the other apostles**.

Now, let's consider this section in three headings, namely, the apostle **Paul's Coming**, the apostle **Paul's Companion**, and the apostle **Paul's Confirmation**.

I – The Apostle Paul’s Coming

Galatians 2:1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

If you study the book of Acts, you will learn that the apostle Paul took at least **five visits to Jerusalem**. **First**, his visit to meet Peter, **second**, his visit to deliver relief funds to the believers who lived in Judea, **third**, his visit to be part of the Jerusalem Council, **fourth**, his visit at the end of his **second missionary journey**, and **fifth and final** is his visit after his **third missionary journey** that resulted in his arrest and taken to prison in Caesarea. Of all the visits he made to Jerusalem, **the third visit was the most critical one**. As he recounts his third visit to Jerusalem Paul write in Galatians 2:2, “And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles ...”

Here Paul declares that it was God who led him to go to Jerusalem to be a part of the **Jerusalem Council**. The Jerusalem Council was called **to deal with the subject of salvation**. This meeting is recorded in Acts 15.

Paul and Barnabas had just returned to Antioch from their first missionary journey. Excited about their fruitful missionary journey, they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. **Many Gentiles are responding to the gospel of grace** and coming to faith in Christ. **But not everyone was happy**. Some of the Jews in Jerusalem, known as **the Judaizers did not receive the report with delight**. The Judaizers were Legalists. These were Jews who professed Christ but still hung on to their Judaism, in particular to **the rite of circumcision and to the law of Moses**. They came to Antioch and began to teach the believers that unless they are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, they cannot be saved (Acts 15:1). In effect, these Judaizers are teaching that unless a person accepts and obeys the whole Mosaic Law he cannot be saved. **These Judaizers are corrupting the gospel**. They are teaching salvation by faith plus good works. They are teaching salvation by Christ and keeping the Mosaic Law. This is not the gospel that Jesus Christ handed down to his apostles and his disciples, and to the church.

And so, Paul and Barnabas confronted these men with the truth of the gospel. And this resulted in a sharp debate with them. After engaging these men in heated debate, it was determined that Paul and Barnabas, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this issue.

So, they arrived in Jerusalem and we read in ...

Galatians 2:2b ... but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

By God’s revelation and direction Paul went to Jerusalem and when he and his company arrived, they met privately with those who were of reputation, meaning the church leaders, namely Peter, John, and James. There is wisdom here.

Phillips comments that *“Paul's first concern, upon arriving in Jerusalem, had been to secure a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders of the Jerusalem church. This was simple common sense. It is far easier to arrive at a consensus when a few fair-minded and intelligent people sit down together to discuss an issue than it is to carry the day with a crowd. Paul, Barnabas, Peter, John, and James, the Lord's brother, in conference together, could pray, meditate, wait upon the Holy Spirit, reason, discuss, disagree, and seek calmly and rationally to find common ground.”*

Then, Paul goes on to say in [Galatians 2:2c](#) ... *lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.* This doesn't mean that Paul feared that he has been wrong about the gospel. No, he is sure about the gospel. What **he was afraid of is that the message the Judaizers might spread and draw people away**, and in that sense had run in vain.

Luther explains had run in vain, *“Not that Paul himself ever thought he had run in vain. However, many did think that Paul had preached the gospel in vain, because he kept the Gentiles free from the yoke of the Law. The opinion that obedience to the Law was mandatory unto salvation was gaining ground. Paul meant to remedy this evil. By this conference he hoped to establish the identity of his gospel with that of the other apostles, to stop the talk of his opponents that he had been running around in vain.”*

In their private meeting with Peter, John, and James who were in Jerusalem, Paul said, *“I ... communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.”* Paul laid before them the gospel which he has preaching among the Gentiles. Understand, that **he did this not because he doubted his gospel but to simply proved to them that the gospel which he had been preaching to the Gentiles was the gospel believed and held by all true believers.**

II – The Apostle Paul's Companion

In this visit Paul was accompanied by **two important people**, namely, **Barnabas** and **Titus**. In [Acts 4:36](#), we read of a man from Cyprus named **Joses**, whom the apostles called **Barnabas**. He was called by the Holy Spirit to be Paul's traveling and preaching companion to the Gentiles. **Barnabas** means *“son of consolation”* or *“son of encouragement”*. In [verse 37](#), he was described as, *“Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.”* In [Acts 11:23](#), we are told that when he came to Antioch, and had seen the grace of God in the believers there, he *“was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.”* **Barnabas** was a man who **delights to see others displaying the grace of God in their lives**, exhorting and encouraging others to remain faithful. This is probably why they nicknamed Joses, Barnabas because of his **generous spirit** and his **disposition to serve** and to **encourage** others. Many of you are like Barnabas to me, **“sons and daughters of consolation”**, **“sons and daughters of encouragement.”** I thank God for you all.

The apostle Paul's other companion was **Titus**. It was important that Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem. Titus was a **native of Greece**, and a **Gentile** by birth and was **converted to Christ through Paul's ministry**. Being a Gentile, Titus was uncircumcised. Paul took Titus with him

for a definite purpose. His purpose was **to test the apostles that were in Jerusalem**. Will they force Titus to be circumcised? Paul wanted to make sure that false teachings of the Judaizers, have not been embraced by the other apostles.

Paul goes on to say in [verse 3](#), “[But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised](#)”. In other words, the church leaders in Jerusalem, namely **Peter, John, and James did not compel Titus to be circumcised**. The Apostles all agreed that Titus did not have to be circumcised to be saved. **They concluded that salvation was by grace through faith in Christ alone**. This is recorded in [Acts 15:13-21](#), where James the leader of Jerusalem church, gave the conclusion of the matter. James, the leader of Jerusalem church made it clear that a Gentile does not have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. That a person becomes spiritually clean and acceptable through faith in Christ, and not through any deeds or rituals. **We need to keep repeating this truth to ourselves and each other, just as the early Christians did.**

What if the apostles and the church leaders in Jerusalem **compromised** with the Judaizers and **insisted that Titus be circumcised**, what would be the consequences? **That mistake would destroy our freedom in Christ and ultimately the truth of the gospel.**

[Galatians 2:4](#) And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: [5](#): To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

The false brethren who had infiltrated the churches teaches **a doctrine that would bring believers back into bondage**. This is why the apostle **Paul was steadfast and resolute** and said, “[to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour](#)”. Paul was steadfast and resolute because “[the freedom we have in Christ](#)” was under threat, and therefore **the very “truth of the gospel” was at stake.**

III – The Apostle Paul’s Confirmation

In the following verses, Paul will show his readers how **the church leaders and apostles in Jerusalem confirmed his message and his ministry**. He continues to say in [verse 6](#), “[But of these who seemed to be somewhat, \(whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:\) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:](#)”

Paul here is referring to the church leaders in Jerusalem, namely Peter, John, and James, whom he describes earlier as those of “**reputation**”. Paul is not denying or disrespecting their apostolic authority, but he was merely asserting his own independence of them. Don Anderson puts it this way, “*He [Paul] certainly is not degrading the Jerusalem leadership here. He is just emphasizing the fact that really the message of no Christian worker is right just simply because of the greatness of the worker. God is not accepting man’s person—He uses man as a mere vehicle to communicate His message, even as the apostle has referred to this in [Galatians 1:11-12](#).*”

Though they were the first apostles to be called, and they have seen Christ face to face, it did not make any difference to Paul because they added nothing to him and to his message. **They changed nothing, added nothing, and subtracted nothing** to the gospel of grace that Paul preached. **They did not contradict nor rejected Paul's gospel** but instead, as we read in [verse 9](#), James, Peter, and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship. In other words, **they recognized that the gospel for the Gentiles** which had been committed to Paul and Barnabas by God; and that **the gospel for the Jews which had been committed to Peter, are one and the same gospel.**

We must understand that there is only one gospel. The gospel for the Gentiles is the same gospel for the Jews and that is the gospel of grace. **A gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.** This gospel has not change, men may try to change and corrupt the gospel but **by the grace of God we will be true to the gospel of Jesus Christ.**

So, the result of the Jerusalem Council was that the Apostles accepted Paul's gospel as from God and declared themselves in **perfect agreement** with Paul. The Apostles were **united one hundred percent** and **the Judaizers were defeated by their unity in the gospel.**

Closing Thoughts

What a meeting that was! Hundreds of years have already passed since that Jerusalem Council, but **how thankful we should** be for Paul, Peter, John, and James **for fighting for the purity of the gospel.** As Tim Keller wrote, *"We should read this passage with great fear and gratitude. It takes us to a meeting in Jerusalem which may seem distant from the concerns of 21st-century Christians. But in fact, the stakes could not have been higher—it was a meeting which had huge consequences for us all, even today... God protected all of us—you and me—on that day."*

Aren't you thankful for Paul and his associates for **standing up and maintaining the purity of the gospel of grace?** We owe a great debt to the men and women who had gone before us contending for the truth of the gospel. We owe a great debt to the men and women who had gone before us and **stood fast in one spirit**, with one mind **striving together for the faith of the gospel.** They have done their part. They have fought a good faith. Now, it's our turn. **We have a great responsibility to the current and next generation** to do the same—contend for the faith, fight a good fight of faith to preserve the purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. **Let us strive together for the faith of the gospel.**

Now let me speak to those who are not saved in our midst this morning. **You are not saved because you have not believed the one true gospel.** There is only one true gospel and that is the gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. If you are going to be saved, **you have to reject a gospel of works-righteousness.** You must completely abandon the belief that you can be saved by your own goodness and your good works. **You must completely trust in the One who came to live a perfectly righteous life and died the sinner's death but rose again victoriously** on the third day. I pray that you will do that today. And the moment you put your faith in Christ and His sacrificial death on the cross alone, you have God's faithful and

sure promise, “whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Do it and do it now, before it’s too late.

AMEN!