

Galatians 2:1-10 “The Battle Belongs to the Lord”

GAL 2:1-10 “Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. As for those who seemed to be important - whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance - those men added nothing to my message. On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”

This portion is very interesting in that it suggests that Paul was already doing the Lord's work as an apostle and yet it doesn't nail down a precise chronology of his life. Some commentators believe this part of Scripture is describing what we read of in Acts chapter eleven, where Barnabas goes to Tarsus to bring Paul back to Antioch to help in the work there.

And so, for a whole year Paul and Barnabas taught the saints and evangelized the area around Antioch. It was during this time that Barnabas and Paul were encouraged to help the poor saints in Jerusalem by bringing some financial relief from the church in Antioch.

And so, some suggest that at the end of the fourteen year period is descriptive of the financial relief that Paul and Barnabas bring to Jerusalem. Of course in our text Paul mentions that Titus comes along with them to Jerusalem, whereas in Acts chapter 11 no

mention is made of Titus. And so, some conclude that this was probably not the visit to Jerusalem that Paul speaks of here in Galatians.

Add to that that there did not seem to be any tension regarding the law being added to the gospel at this time when Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem on their relief trip seems to suggest that this issue was not yet raised.

This is why other commentators believe that this time that Paul describes in Galatians is probably describing his trip from Antioch to Jerusalem when he was called upon to settle this issue of the law being added to the gospel in Acts 15.

ACT 15:1 “Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.”

This seems like a natural tie with our text in Galatians. In any event, the real issue has to do with Paul and Barnabas, along with Titus, having to deal with this problem once and for all, so that the church world-wide will not be affected by this heresy. And so, Paul goes up to Jerusalem to put an end to it, despite the fact that he still had not met with the majority of the apostles up to this point.

In all likelihood 17 years have gone by since Paul came to Christ, where he has been an active apostle, and yet he still has not met with the other apostles, with the exception of Peter, and James, the Lord’s brother, 14 years earlier, and then only for 15 days.

This again is part of Paul’s argument to the Judaizers that he did not receive his gospel from any man, but from the risen Jesus Christ Himself, who appointed Paul to be an apostle.

So, Paul continues his case and describes the reason for him going to Jerusalem.

GAL 2:2 “I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.”

Unlike the reason for Paul going to Jerusalem in Acts chapter 11, where he was taking financial relief to those saints, Paul makes it clear that the reason he is going to Jerusalem in this case, according to our text, is that he is going to deal with a problem which the Holy Spirit has prompted him to address.

The problem is related to his credibility as an apostle, which includes the very gospel he is preaching among the Gentiles, and in all likelihood the problem which has come to a head regarding some Jews, both in Jerusalem and elsewhere, who were trying to create a gospel which was out of accord with pure grace as they were pushing the law of Moses.

Evidently, the Lord told Paul that it was time to deal with this once and for all. And so, he goes up to Jerusalem. By the way, it doesn't matter where in the world you are, be it North, South, East or West of Jerusalem. According to Scripture you are always going up to Jerusalem which is the city of the great King and the mount upon which the Lord resides.

So, despite the fact that Antioch is north of Jerusalem, Paul is still going up to this city as every Jew would have understood this expression. But notice that when he gets to Jerusalem he meets with the leaders in private. And there is a reason he does this, "for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain."

Now, does Paul really think that there is a possibility that his gospel might have been a false gospel and that he risks going to Jerusalem only to be told that he has been preaching the wrong message and therefore would have been running his race, or his ministry in vain?

Not a chance. This is the same Paul who had said earlier in this letter, "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ." (GAL 1:11-12)

He has not spent the last 17 years preaching and teaching this gospel he received from the Lord Jesus, and watching many people come to Christ through this message, only to go to Jerusalem to be told by the leaders there that he has been out to lunch during this entire time in his life.

He's not looking for approval from these leaders to verify whether or not his gospel is the true one. If he's looking for any approval

it's for the sake of the Judaizers who are questioning his apostolic authority and the gospel he was given for the sake of the rest of the church. In other words, he's not in fear that the apostles are going to find his gospel deficient.

Keep in mind that when Paul met with Peter and James 14 years earlier they most certainly discussed the gospel and had shared in some depth and detail what that gospel entailed. And so, Paul knows that when he comes to Jerusalem he is expecting that Peter and James have already discussed this with the rest of the apostles years earlier.

But he wanted to meet with them privately so that when he shared what the Lord was doing through his ministry there would not be some zoo with myriad's of these Judaizers trying to discredit him with false accusations as they ganged up on him.

He wanted to assure these leaders that he was not running in vain and the gospel he was preaching was the same gospel he preached in Damascus 17 years earlier, right after the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road into that city.

This is designed to alert the Judaizers to the fact that Paul has been consistent with his message and that when all is said and done it is the same message the rest of the apostles are teaching and preaching, which they also received from Jesus Christ Himself.

Now, there may have been the temptation for Paul to come into Jerusalem, knowing that there was a problem with some Jews regarding the law, and to try and appease them by abiding by certain aspects of the law.

Paul had done this with Timothy when he decided to take Timothy along with him on one of his missionary journeys which would have taken them into areas where there were Jews who knew Timothy.

ACT 16:3 "Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek."

Was Paul compromising his principles here? Not at all. He was not circumcising Timothy because he wanted to bring people a gospel which included circumcision. Rather, Paul circumcised Timothy, not as a Christian, but as a Jew, which is what he was.

His father was a Greek, but his mother was a Jew. And as such, if Timothy was going to go with Paul as a minister of the gospel then it would have been impossible for Timothy to go into a Synagogue and mingle with Jews, not being circumcised.

And so, Paul's intent was that if Timothy is going to be accepted by unbelieving Jews, then he needs to honor their traditions by being circumcised himself. Since these unbelieving Jews knew that Timothy's father was a Greek there would be no way they would have let Timothy minister with Paul if he was not circumcised as a Jew, because of his mother.

In the case at Jerusalem in our text Paul says that when he brought Titus with him, who was a Greek, he did not feel compelled to be circumcised. So, Paul didn't circumcise him. Well, what's different here from the time Paul circumcised Timothy?

Well, there's a vast difference. Number one, Titus was not a Jew. And unless he had plans on becoming a Jew there was no reason to be circumcised. Number two, Titus was probably not planning on ministering to unbelieving Jews in the Synagogues with this particular trip to Jerusalem.

Number three, the Jews, some of whom might have had a problem with Titus, were reportedly believing Jews; Jews who claimed to have trusted in Christ for their salvation. Today we call them Messianic Jews.

And number four, to have circumcised Timothy for the sake of these alleged believing Jews would have sent the message to the believing community that Paul was adding circumcision as a requirement for Titus to be a true believer and now acceptable for fellowship with the saints.

And this was the issue. Remember what we read earlier in Acts.

ACT 15:1 "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

This would have been a victory for the false brothers if Paul had circumcised Titus. And even Titus recognized this which is why it says in verse three that he didn't feel compelled to be circumcised.

The word compelled in Greek in verse 3 is anagkazo and it implies to do something out of necessity. Titus knew enough about the

grace of God, even as a Greek, that being circumcised was not necessary to be saved.

Timothy knew this as well, and yet in his case he felt it was necessary to be circumcised so as to be able to mingle among fellow Jews, who didn't know Christ, so that he might assist Paul in leading some to our Lord through the gospel which was delivered to Paul by Jesus Himself. The two cases are entirely different.

Paul knew that there would be some false brethren of Jewish background in the company of the Christians in Jerusalem who were looking for an opportunity to advance their false gospel as they discredited Paul in the process.

GAL 2:4-5 "This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you."

Here Paul is showing the Christians in Galatia that nothing would deter him from the true course of the only gospel. And if that meant not circumcising Titus then so be it. But he wanted these believers in Galatia to know that he did it for their sake. If it came down to believing these false brethren or Paul then these Galatian believers needed to know that there was a distinct difference in the two messages; one message which lead to life, and one which lead to death.

What amazes me is how false brothers could have infiltrated the ranks there in Jerusalem to spy out and undermine the freedom Paul had in Christ. How could this be when many of the apostles were ministering there in Jerusalem?

Well, this was no small church there in Jerusalem. Even if all 12 apostles were still in Jerusalem they would find it difficult in keeping such false brethren out of their ranks, especially if they were promoting their beliefs in a covert way.

And so, to keep the integrity of the gospel in tact, Paul had to make a clear statement that circumcision has nothing to do with being saved. And of course he goes into some detail regarding this issue later in this letter.

But Paul now turns his attention away from the Judaizers to the apostles.

GAL 2:6 “As for those who seemed to be important -whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance - those men added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.”

Now, some have taken this passage and have concluded that Paul is being a bit prideful and boastful as though he didn't care at all that these apostles were called by Christ. But that's not what he is saying.

Remember, the context of this entire letter has to do with the Judaizers in Galatia making the case that Paul is not a real apostle because he didn't come up through the ranks of those who spent three years with Jesus during His earthly ministry, like the other twelve did, and therefore Paul has no authority over them.

And so, when he says in verse 6 that it makes no difference to him whether they are important in the church or not, has nothing to do with his attitude toward them being chosen by Christ, but it has everything to do with sending a message to these Judaizers that he is still an apostle whether the rest of the apostles recognize him or not.

Of course they will, but he is sending a very strong message that God can choose and use anyone He desires. And the Lord doesn't necessarily have to do it in a way that has the other apostles ordaining Paul prior to him becoming an apostle.

Again, this is the point Paul has been making all along which is why he ends verse 6 with the repeated message that these apostles in Jerusalem didn't add anything to his message.

In other words, there was nothing to add since the message Paul received in Damascus is the same message these apostles received when they were with Christ. It's not as though Paul was unwilling to learn anything from the other apostles, it just so happened that what Jesus taught Paul during those 17 years before coming to Jerusalem was exactly what the other apostles subscribed to. They all had the same teacher.

Now this next verse had to just clinch it for Paul and probably had the Judaizers gnashing their teeth, both in Jerusalem when Paul brought his testimony about the gospel and how it affected the

Gentiles in many regions of the world, as well as in Galatia as these Judaizers are confronted with this letter.

GAL 2:7 “On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. 8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.”

Instead of the apostles scrutinizing Paul and arriving at the conclusion that he was a lone ranger and a rebel out on his own doing his own thing, without the permission and sanction of the other apostles, they instead recognize that just as the Lord was using them, He was obviously using Paul, despite the fact that they never had anything to do with his conversion or discipling.

“... they saw that [he] had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.”

This verse speaks volumes to the Judaizers in that just as Peter was a true apostle who was recognized among the other apostles, Paul was also recognized as a true apostle. And so, in turn, the Judaizers must also recognize Paul, as do the rest of the apostles, that his ministry is valid.

Their offices of apostle are identical, though their audiences are somewhat different. Paul ministered to the Gentiles, whereas the Lord called Peter primarily to the Jews. I say primarily because neither Paul or Peter would be so rigid that they wouldn't share the gospel with those outside of their primary scope.

Can you imagine Peter not taking an opportunity of sharing the gospel with a Gentile heathen simply because he wasn't Jewish? Not a chance. In fact, Peter was very comfortable around Gentiles as we read later in this letter to the Galatians. Unfortunately, at least on this one occasion, he was intimidated by other Jews who subscribed to this notion that a good Gentile Christian must also be a good Jew when it came to the law.

But, I'm sure Peter's ministry included him preaching the gospel to whomever the Lord laid in his path, be they Jew or Gentile. The same is true of Paul. In fact, the very first place Paul would minister to when going into different regions of the world was in the Jewish Synagogues.

Why, if he was an apostle primarily to the Gentiles? Because he was not so rigid as to exclude his own Jewish brethren. Plus this was a great place to start since it was a common touch stone for Paul, being a former Pharisee, and therefore being recognized as a Rabbi, a teacher.

He would have been, and in fact was welcomed into these Synagogues for this very reason. Now, when he opened his mouth to teach is when many of the Jews decided he was a heretic from a Jewish standpoint since he was proclaiming that the O.T. Scriptures spoke of the Messiah as being fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

But at least he was able to share his message of hope with those whom he loved dearly. And when he was run out of the Synagogue, and often out of town by many of these Jews, he would then concentrate on those who were Gentiles.

And for us today we need to be willing to share our faith with anyone, no matter how different they are from us. They may reject our message of hope found in Christ, but at least we are being faithful to give the hope and to plant seeds where the Holy Spirit can then cause life to come to that seed.

When we look at the ministry of Paul it seems he got rejected more than he was accepted, and yet he never gave up. He ran the race, he finished the course which Christ put him on. And when we're tempted to give up we need to realize that each of us has been placed on a particular path where we too are to be faithful to the end.

The other thing about Paul's ministry is that the other apostles recognized that the Spirit of God was working in him just as the Lord did with Peter. In other words, the miraculous signs and wonders, along with people actually coming to Christ were quite evident in Paul. The other apostles could not find fault with this.

And so, the Judaizers in Galatia need only ask the other apostles if Paul's ministry was valid since the Spirit of God was to be working in his ministry just as He did with Peter. And none of the Judaizers were questioning Peter.

So, if Paul is preaching the same message as the rest of the apostles; if God is working in his ministry just as He is with Peter and the rest of the apostles, then who can question that Paul's ministry is just as valid as the rest?

The answer is no one, not even these Judaizers who are doing just that. And the message Paul is sending to these people is that they are in fear of being judged by God because of their opposition to God's choice found in Paul, and their opposition to the message Paul brings which does not include the law being added to the gospel.

And here's the clincher, as if these Judaizers have not already got the message. All of the other apostles welcome Paul with open arms into the company of those who have been specially called as apostles.

GAL 2:9 "James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews."

There is no longer any debate. The company of the apostles in Jerusalem recognize Paul as one of them when it comes to this special office. And so, when Paul delivers his message, devoid of any part of the law being added to the gospel of grace, this immediately places anyone preaching a different gospel as those who are opposed to the true Christian faith, and therefore opposed to Christ.

In today's world there is the temptation to just want to get along with anyone who names the name of Christ. And yet, Paul is saying that that is not enough. These Judaizers were naming the name of Christ, but they denied the Lord by teaching that His atonement on the cross was not sufficient in and of itself for our complete salvation.

There are many groups today who name the name of Christ and yet who are preaching a different gospel. We cannot align ourselves with them any more than Paul aligned himself with these Judaizers.

This is why we need to be diligent in teaching and adhering to the whole counsel of God's word and knowing the difference between the truth and falsehood, so that when we come across someone who is preaching another gospel we can give them the truth, and do it in love.

As we go through this study we are going to examine different groups today who name the name of Christ and yet who teach a false gospel. We will do this, not to simply be critical of them, but

to distinguish the truth from falsehood and how to recognize the essentials of the faith so as not to be swayed as they take Scripture out of context to promote their false teaching.

We'll look at different groups like the Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Roman Catholics among others who all have a brand of what they call Christianity. It's important to know the difference and why.

But in our reaching out to the lost in meeting their spiritual need in love we should never be so insensitive that we miss opportunity to meet people where they are. And this is why we also need to be willing to meet the physical needs of people if we can.

This is of course true of those unbelievers we may be able to minister to, but it is also true of the family of God we find ourselves attached to. And Paul was always willing to do the same.

GAL 2:10 "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."

Paul was not "so heavenly minded that he was no earthly good." He saw the need and tried to meet it. And in this case Paul understands that many believers in Jerusalem had gone through hard times and were not able to meet their physical needs because of past and present persecution taking place there.

It wasn't enough for Paul to simply pray for them, which he certainly did, but he put feet to his faith and prayers and relied on the generosity of other believers to meet those needs. This is part of what it means to love as the Lord loves.

This was a difficult time for Paul, but it was also a time of vindication. The enemy was doing all he could to deter Paul from his ministry as he's trying to put out these fires, but he knows the fire which is in store for Satan, and he knows that greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world.

We serve a great and mighty God who has every intention of using us in the battle in the power of the Spirit. And as long as we are willing servants, faithful servants, He will accomplish His work and will in our lives and the life of this church. To Him be the glory.