

GALATIANS Called to Freedom: #4 Immovable

Galatians 2:1-10

I. The Gospel Delivers us out of our Slavery and brings us into Freedom

- A. Paul – set free from Judaism (Gal. 1:13-16)
- B. The Galatians – set free from pagan religion (Gal. 4:8)

II. Paul Visits Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-10)

A. Paul, Barnabas and Titus

“After 14 years”—after Paul had been preaching the (circumcision-free) gospel for a long time (Gal. 1:21-23) **ESV Note:** There is debate as to whether this visit took place an *additional* 14 years after the 3 years mentioned in Gal. 1:18 (i.e. after Paul’s previous visit with Peter) or whether the 14 years starts from Paul’s conversion and includes those three. The latter seems slightly more probable, placing this visit circ. AD. 47. It probably corresponds to Acts 11:29-30 [when Paul & Barnabas brought famine relief from Antioch to Jerusalem] rather than to the Jerusalem council visit in Acts 15.

1. Met privately with some of the leaders of the Jerusalem church
In contrast the Jerusalem council was “public,” issuing a verdict via a “decree” (Acts 15)
2. Paul presented the Gospel he proclaimed to the Gentiles
 - a. Not for their approval, neither was he unsure that it was real;
 - The Jerusalem leaders’ disapproval of Paul’s gospel would have rendered his gospel much less effective. Their acknowledgment enabled Paul’s gospel to the Gentiles to be effective. [**ESV Note:** Paul is not seriously imagining that he has actually been preaching a false gospel, but he would regard his work as in vain if it were to result in a divided church—a Gentile half and a Jewish half.]
 - F. F. Bruce writes, “What Paul was concerned about was not the validity of his gospel, but its practicability...A cleavage between his Gentile mission and...Jerusalem would be disastrous for the progress of the gospel: the cause of Christ would be divided...” (F. F. Bruce, *PAUL: Apostle of the Heart set Free*, p. 152)
 - b. Declaring what was revealed to him and the evidence (Titus)
 - c. Titus (Greek) was not forced to be circumcised – “test case”

- [ESV Notes: Titus was a Gentile, so some have seen this as Paul issuing a challenge to the Jerusalem leaders. This interpretation is unnecessary, but Titus was certainly a “test case.” Moreover, the issue is not merely circumcision; no doubt the “false brothers,” not only argued that Gentiles had to be circumcised...but also that they were required to keep the whole Mosaic law as well, for circumcision represented a commitment to observe the whole law (Acts 15:5). There is agreement by the Jerusalem apostles, that Titus—and so by implication all Gentiles—does not need to be circumcised. At least Paul, James, Peter, and John agree on this. There was, however, a group of “false brothers” who continued to disagree (see Acts 15). Paul regards the imposition of circumcision on Gentile Christians as a “slavery” producing betrayal of the “freedom” Christ has given.]

B. Paul opposed the “different gospel” of the “false brothers” (Gal. 2:4-5)

1. Steeped in Jewish tradition
2. It robs us of our freedom in Christ Jesus
2. It enslaves us again – adding something doesn’t commend us to God
3. Paul’s immovable stand for the truth of the gospel

C. Those who seemed influential added nothing to Paul (Gal. 2:6-10)

1. They acknowledged Paul’s gospel and commission to the Gentiles (uncircumcised non-Jews)
 - Paul did not require the Jerusalem apostles’ validation of his gospel or apostolic ministry for them to be authentic nor to invest him with authority. In Galatians 1 he insisted strongly that his gospel & apostleship were directly from God & Christ (independent of any human agent—Peter or the Jerusalem apostles). F. F. Bruce writes that Paul “was concerned to argue that at no point between his conversion and the writing of the [Galatian] letter had the Jerusalem leaders conferred on him any authority which he did not possess by direct commission of the risen Christ.” [F. F. Bruce, *PAUL: Apostle of the Heart set Free*, p. 151]
 - Dunn says Paul regarded “this *divine authority* for his ministry and gospel, and its *acknowledgment* by the Jerusalem leadership...as of first importance. That is clearly the main point of his defense in Galatians 1-2; that is clearly what he wanted to impress on the ‘foolish’ Galatians above all else.” [James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul & the Law*, p. 119]

2. They saw the grace given to Paul
3. They gave Paul the right hand of fellowship
 - Two different companies of workers, with different spheres of operation (which overlapped in practice)—Peter and company to the circumcision (Jews), and Paul and company to the uncircumcised Gentiles (non-Jews). [**ESV Note:** As an apostle, Paul was in no way inferior to Peter. It was merely a division of labour, with Paul assigned to evangelize *the uncircumcised* (Gentiles) while Peter was sent to *the circumcised* (Jews). What Paul wants to establish for the Galatians, however, is that his own apostleship is just as genuine as Peter's, and therefore the Galatians should not view themselves as inferior to any other group of believers.]

III. The Ground before the Cross is Level

“We are not to be dazzled by the person, gifts or offices of teachers in the church. They may come to us with dignity, authority, and scholarship. They may be bishops or archbishops, university professors, or even the pope himself. But if they bring a gospel other than the gospel preached by the apostles and recorded in the New Testament, they are to be rejected. ***We judge them by the gospel; we do not judge the gospel by them.***” John Stott

Paul stood for the truth of the gospel — “Christ + nothing”/”Jesus + nothing”

The gospel is “Christ plus nothing,” not “Christ plus circumcision” nor “Christ plus Jewish food laws,” etc. In Paul’s view: “Christ plus anything” is no gospel, it is another (different) gospel, which violates the truth of the gospel. In Paul’s view after being saved, the Gentile believers didn’t need to keep any Jewish ordinances (e.g. circumcision, diet, Sabbath, etc) to make them more acceptable to God nor give them entry into (or higher status among) God’s people.

- A. The Gospel trumps people – James, Peter & John – truth measures them.
 - “By the time Paul wrote Galatians he was no longer prepared to acknowledge the authority of Jerusalem to the same extent [as previously].” [James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus, Paul & the Law*, p. 121] When Paul wrote this letter to the Galatian believers his respect for the Jerusalem apostles was substantially diminished (due to the events recorded in Gal. 2). Hence Paul says “whatever they (once) were (now) matters nothing to me...” (Gal. 2:6) The degree to which we respect or appreciate apostles, elders, etc should depend upon whether they live & act according to the truth of the gospel.
- B. The Gospel trumps position – Pillar apostles
- C. The Gospel trumps history and tradition – “*This is the way we have always done it*”