

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

GALATIANS 2:1-10, *PAUL'S APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY AND MESSAGE ENDORSED*

- A. A listing of Paul's trips to Jerusalem
1. The visit after he left Damascus, Acts 9:26-30; Galatians 1:18-20
 2. The famine visit, Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 2:1-10
 3. The visit to attend the Jerusalem Council, Acts 15:1-29
 4. The visit at the end of the second missionary journey, Acts 18:22
 5. The final visit that resulted in Paul's Caesarean imprisonment, Acts 21:15-23:35
- B. Paul's trip to Jerusalem (1-2)
1. Paul was accompanied by Barnabas and Titus (1), *Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.*
 - a. *then*
 - 1) Paul uses a series of *then* clauses to form an argument for his independence from the Jerusalem church.
 - 2) Galatians 1:18, *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.*
 - 3) Galatians 1:21, *Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*
 - 4) Galatians 2:1, *Then after fourteen years...*
 - b. *Barnabas*
 - 1) He was first seen in Acts 4:36-37, *Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*
 - 2) He defended Saul before the apostles and explained that Saul's conversion was genuine.
 - 3) He was probably known to the churches in Galatia since Barnabas was Paul's fellow missionary to them on the first missionary journey.
 - 4) He brought Paul back from Cilicia to assist in the ministry in Antioch, Acts 11:25-26, *So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. And in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.*
 - c. *after 14 years*
 - 1) He was probably counting from his conversion rather than his first visit to Jerusalem, Galatians 1:18, *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days.*
 - 2) This visit was made for several reasons, one is noted in Acts 11:27-30, *Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*
 - 3) The other is noted in Galatians 2:2, *...because of a revelation.*
 - d. *Titus*
 - 1) He was a non-Jew who was probably converted by Paul.
 - 2) Paul called him in *brother, partner, and fellow worker.*
 - 3) He was entrusted with a number of difficult missions by Paul, note Titus 1:5, *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—*
 - 4) According to tradition, Titus became the bishop of Crete.
 2. The reason Paul went to Jerusalem was because of a revelation (2), *I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.*
 - a. *a revelation*
 - 1) Paul went to Jerusalem to give the gift provided by Antioch Christians to those suffering from a famine.
 - 2) The other reason was because of a divine revelation.
 - a) The revelation may have concerned the famine in Jerusalem.
 - b) Or, it may have been a call from God for Paul to meet with the apostles concerning his ministry.

- b. He chose to speak privately with the other apostles.
 - 1) Galatians 2:6, *And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.*
 - 2) Galatians 2:9, *and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*
 - 3) He called the apostles, *those who seemed influential.*
 - a) It probably was not a negative comment against the apostles but a comment on an attempt by the Judaizers to build up the apostles as more important than Paul and that their message of the Gospel was more accurate than his.
 - b) This will be discussed further in Galatians 2:6.
 - c. His purpose was that they affirm his Gospel message.
 - 1) Donald Campbell, *This does not mean Paul sought their approval of its truth and accuracy, for he had received the gospel from God by revelation. Rather, he wanted them to consider its relationship to the gospel they were proclaiming.*
 - 2) Paul's concern was that Judaizers could say that there had been no contact between Paul and the other apostles because they preached different messages.
 - 3) He certainly wanted the apostles and church leaders in Jerusalem to recognize his Gentile converts as genuine Christians who need not become Jews before becoming Christian.
 - 4) Another concern dealt with church unity. Paul did not want there to be a rupture, real or perceived, that the one Church had two separate branches of Jewish and Gentile Christians, note Acts 15:1, *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."*
 - 5) Warren Wiersbe, *What he was concerned about was the future of the Gospel among the Gentiles, because this was his specific ministry from Christ. If the "pillars" sided with the Judaizers, or tried to compromise, then Paul's ministry would be in jeopardy.*
- C. Titus was Paul's test case concerning his ministry to the Gentiles (3-5)
1. Ceremonial circumcision was not part of Paul's Gospel message (3), ***But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.***
 - a. It appears Paul brought Titus to see if it would be required that he be circumcised.
 - b. John Stott, *It was not in order to stir up strife that he brought Titus with him to Jerusalem, but in order to establish the truth of the gospel. This truth is that Jews and Gentiles are accepted by God on the same terms, namely through faith in Jesus Christ, and must therefore be accepted by the church without any discrimination between them.*
 - c. Paul declared that church leaders affirmed salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone because Titus was not forced to be circumcised.
 2. Judaizers were requiring circumcision for Gentile believers but Paul did not submit to their false teaching (4-5), ***Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.***
 - a. The Galatian agitators were Judaizers.
 - 1) They sought to impose on Gentile Christians circumcision and observance of the law.
 - 2) They may have been connected with the *circumcision party* of the Jerusalem church.
 - a) Acts 15:1, *But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."*
 - b) Acts 15:24, *Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,*
 - 3) Ronald Fung, *It thus emerges that the interlopers were sham-Christians precisely because they had not really grasped the fundamental principle of the gospel—justification by faith apart from works of the law.*
 - 4) John Stott, *The Christian has been set free from the law in the sense that his acceptance before God depends entirely upon God's grace in the death of Jesus Christ received by faith. To introduce the works of the law and make our acceptance depend on our obedience to rules and regulations was to bring a free man into bondage again.*

- b. The Judaizers had intruded (*slipped in*) without invitation into the apostles' meeting with Paul.
 - 1) They wanted to turn grace into works.
 - 2) Their intent was to *spy out* the freedom of Paul and his associates which they would declare to be false.
 - 3) Also, they wanted to turn grace into slavery to the Mosaic Law's rules and ceremonies.
 - c. Paul stood firm on the truth of the Gospel.
 - 1) The Gospel must be *preserved, unchanged*.
 - 2) The test case was insistence that Titus must be circumcised.
 - 3) Donald Campbell, *To impose circumcision on Titus would be to deny that salvation was by faith alone and to affirm that in addition to faith there must be obedience to the Law for acceptance before God*.
3. Paul declared that the other apostles had not contributed to his authority or message (6), ***And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.***
- a. Paul emphasized his confidence in the message of the Gospel received from the Lord.
 - 1) James, Peter and John were not superior apostles to Paul.
 - a) They contributed nothing to his authority or message.
 - b) Paul's concern was not personal pride but confidence in the message he received.
 - 2) Note Paul's clear message in his introduction to Galatians.
 - a) Christ was resurrected (1:1)
 - b) He is the substitutionary atonement for our sins (1:4)
 - c) He will deliver believers from this present evil age (1:4)
 - d) The work of Christ was the will of the Father and to His glory (1:4)
 - b. Paul did not deny the authority of James, Peter, and John but was stressing that his Gospel message was authoritative.
 - 1) Judaizers had hoped to undermine Paul's message of grace by showing that his message was not acceptable to the apostles in Jerusalem.
 - 2) Paul was not impressed by the Judaizers attempt to build up one group at his expense since God is impartial.
 - 3) John Stott on Paul, *...he accepts their office as apostles, he is not overawed by their person as it was being inflated by the Judaizers*.
- D. Paul's endorsement by James, Peter and John (7-10)
1. They recognized that God had entrusted Paul with the message to the Gentiles (7-9), ***On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.***
 - a. The apostles acknowledged that Christ assigned Paul to be the apostle to Gentiles and Peter to be the apostle to the Jews.
 - 1) *On the contrary*
 - a) It looks back to Paul's declaration in verse 6 that the apostles had added nothing to his message.
 - b) It looks forward to verse 7 where the apostles acknowledged that Paul's ministry was a work of God.
 - 2) The Lord's assignments were acts of His grace.
 - a) Ephesians 3:8, *To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,*
 - b) Romans 1:5, *through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,*
 - c) The grace of God on Paul's ministry was acknowledged by the apostles.
 - b. *right hand of fellowship*
 - 1) It was an affirmation or pledge of fellowship, recognition of Paul and Barnabas as fellow-laborers.
 - a) It came from *pillars*, Peter, James and John who were the key leaders of the church in Jerusalem.
 - b) It overturned any hope the Judaizers had to change the Gospel of grace to a message of works.
 - c) It was an endorsement by the church in Jerusalem of Paul's message and missionary work to the Gentiles.

- 2) There are not two Gospel messages, one for Jews and the other for Gentiles.
 - a) It is the same message with a leader for each group as noted by Warren Wiersbe, *There was agreement and unity: one Gospel would be preached to Jews and to Gentiles.*
 - b) It did not mean that Paul could not evangelize Jews or that Peter could not evangelize Gentiles, but each had a particular emphasis with no rivalry between them.
 - c) Donald Campbell, *They did not correct or modify Paul's message but recognized its divine source and affirmed its truth and completeness.*

2. Their only request was that Paul was to remember the poor (10), ***Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.***
 - a. The reason Paul went to Jerusalem at that time was because of his concern for the poor.
 - 1) Paul, Barnabas and Titus were delivering aid to the poor in Judea.
 - 2) Acts 11:29-30, *So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*

 - b. Paul showed his concern for the need on his third missionary journey, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, *Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.*

 - c. Comments on benevolence
 - 1) Donald Campbell, *Such offerings would alleviate human suffering, but they would also demonstrate genuine concern on the part of Gentile Christians for Jewish Christians. This in turn would help promote unity and love among believers and help prevent the kinds of misunderstandings which were undermining the Galatian churches.*
 - 2) Warren Wiersbe, *Correct doctrine is never a substitute for Christian duty, James 2:15–16, If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?*
 - 3) Grant Osborne, *A benevolence ministry is essential for any church that wishes to please God and follow his will.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Paul knew his message was true but desired affirmation from the church in Jerusalem to thwart the attempt of Judaizers to change the Gospel message.
- B. The message of the Gospel is all grace from God and no works from man.
- C. Helping the poor is not a work for salvation but a response of thanksgiving for salvation.