

Ga 2:1–10 (ESV) Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ⁽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. ⁽³⁾ But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁽⁴⁾ 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—⁽⁵⁾ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁽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. ⁽⁷⁾ 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 ⁽⁸⁾ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁽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. ⁽¹⁰⁾ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

1. Still viewing Paul's defense of his authority and his message

- A. Chapter 1: He argued his apostleship and message *came from God and not from man*
- B. Now he adds – though my calling and message didn't come from man *it is recognized by man*
 - 1). This is to silence the critics who were saying
“The problem with Paul is he is a loose cannon running around doing his own thing. Teaching things the leadership in Jerusalem would never agree with.”
 - 2). Because the church began in Jerusalem and the Apostles made their HQ's there
 - a). Many believers looked at Jerusalem as the mother church that set the standard
 - b). So these legalistic teachers used this to discredit Paul and his message
“We came from Jerusalem and the church there doesn't agree with what Paul is doing”

Point: To counteract this criticism Paul writes chapter 2 of Galatians

- A. His argument: The leadership in Jerusalem does know me – does approve of me
Does agree with the message I preach and believes that my calling has come from God
 - 1). In fact they encouraged me to continue to do exactly what I've been doing

Transition: In this chapter he recounts his trip from Acts 15 to see the Apostles in Jerusalem

- A. Here we have a watershed moment in the church where leadership unites over truth

2. Our outline

- A. Paul's *actions* in defending the truth
- B. The Apostles *acceptance* of Paul and his ministry
- C. Paul's *attitude*. Want to ask the question - was it right?
- D. The Apostles *appeal* to help the poor in Jerusalem

I. PAUL'S ACTIONS IN DEFENDING THE TRUTH

Ga 2:1–2 (ESV) Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ⁽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.

Intro: In chapter 1 he spoke of a trip he took to Jerusalem

- A. Now 14 years later Paul takes another trip
This is 17 years after being saved – 17 years of proclaiming the Gospel

Transition: Let's look at Paul's actions in defending the truth – I see four things that are important

First: He Took Witnesses

Ga 2:1 (ESV) Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with *Barnabas*, taking *Titus* along with me.

Intro: These are two well respected men Paul had handpicked to travel with him – Why?

- A. They could testify to the Apostles in Jerusalem about what was happening in Galilee

And they could testify to the Galatians what had happened in Jerusalem with the Apostles

1. Barnabas

- A. A well-known, well respected **circumcised Jew** who had played a great role in Paul's ministry
 - 1). On Paul's first trip to Jerusalem he had trouble joining with the other believers (Acts 9)
 - a). The believers were afraid of this famous persecutor – wanted nothing to do with him
 - b). But Barnabas personally took him to the leaders to persuade them that Paul had changed
 - 2). He brought them into fellowship with others – great example
 - a). Let's be like Barnabas – see somebody sitting alone go speak to them
Bring them into the circle your speaking too – that is love!
- B. Later in Acts 11 – God began to do great things in Antioch
 - 1). The church sent Barnabas to oversee what was happening
 - a). The Lord used Barnabas in a mighty way – many were saved through his ministry
 - b). Barnabas thought "Paul needs to be a part of this"
He went out of his way to find Paul in Tarsus to bring him back to Antioch
 - 2). Barnabas and Paul began to teach and the church exploded
 - a). That church in Antioch began to raise up missionaries and send them out
 - b). Eventually they sent Paul and Barnabas out as missionaries
 - 1a). On their first trip together the Churches in Galatia were planted

Point: If anybody knew Paul – his character – God's calling on his life – it was Barnabas

2. Titus was a well-known, **uncircumcised gentile**

- A. We'll see in a minute why Paul took Titus – how he becomes a test case for grace
 - 1). He was proof God was working amongst the Gentiles who felt no obligation to be circumcised

Transition: He takes Barnabas who was able to testify about what God was doing in Paul's life
He takes Titus who exhibited God's grace towards those who were not circumcised

He took important witnesses

Second: He Went as an Act of Obedience

Ga 2:2 (ESV) I went up because of a revelation...

1. He went because God told him to go

- A. He probably emphasizes this for two reasons
 - 1). Showing he wasn't called to Jerusalem to be disciplined by the Apostles – correct his doctrine
 - 2). He didn't go because he was confused – wanting to see if his message was accurate

2. Why did God tell him to go?

Ga 2:4 (ESV) 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—

Clearer: Gal 2:4 (NIV) 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.

- A. He is writing about the trip we see in Acts 15 where the Jewish council met

Ac 15:1–2 (ESV) 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." ⁽²⁾ And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.
- B. These Jews posing as believers had infiltrated the church to steal the freedom they enjoyed in Christ
 - 1). Legalist hate the joy of those who are walk by grace – not keeping their little man-made rules
 - 2). They will watch for any opportunity to slip in their extra-biblical regulations in

If you were really spiritual you would do this or that... not in the Bible – it's their opinion
They want you to be like them! You just being you steals their joy – their power

Swindoll: "Legalism is an attitude, a mentality based on pride. *It is an obsessive conformity to an artificial standard for the purpose of exalting oneself.*"

- a). Their pride is fed by controlling you – forcing you to comply to them
- 3). The result of legalism – you obey like a slave – afraid of being beaten – no joy
- a). You can't find what they are saying in the Bible – but the legalist intimidates you
You become a hypocrite – complying in church – but living differently when you're away

Thought: This plan of the legalist trying to force extra-biblical standards upon these believers failed – why?

- A. Because God's purposes are built around grace and nobody thwarts God's purposes
- B. AND because God's ministers were courageous enough to stand against this satanic onslaught

Ga 2:5 (ESV) to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

- 1). Grace prevailed because these godly men rose up and contended for the faith – for truth
- C. I like the way Swindoll put it – here is a courageous minister – *not a man-pleaser*

Chuck Swindoll: "The problem with legalists is that not enough people have confronted them and told them to get lost (I'd be a little gentler. I simply ask. "Where is that in the Bible?"). Those are strong words, but I don't mess with legalism anymore. I'm 72 years old; what have I got to lose? Seriously, I used to kowtow to legalists, but they're dangerous. They are grace-killers. They'll drive off every new Christian you bring to church. They are enemies of the faith. Other than that, I don't have any opinion!"

3. Our responsibility to the next generation (If the Lord tarries)

Ga 2:5 (ESV) 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. Every generation of the church has this solemn call to defend truth for those coming behind us
 - 1). To pass on a Gospel that is accurate – that is Biblical – able to save
 - 2). Salvation based on the work of Christ alone – not on the work of man
- B. This is what Paul was doing – why he went to Jerusalem - why the Apostles met
To settle the issue: How is a person made right with God?
 - 1). By faith alone – or does a person have to be circumcised and obey the law?
Does a person receive by grace the free gift of salvation or does he earn it?

He took witnesses to validate his ministry

He went as an act of obedience – God told him to go – minister has to be open to God interrupting his schedule

Third: He Submitted the Gospel He Preached to the Apostles

Ga 2:2 (ESV) 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.*

Gal 2:2 (NASB) It was because of a revelation that I went up; and *I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.*

1. He went to the Apostles and laid out the Gospel he was preaching to the Gentiles

- A. He didn't change a thing to get their approval – he told them exactly what he was telling the Galatians
- B. Here is one reason he took along Barnabas and Titus
 - 1). They'd be able to testify that Paul didn't change the message to please the Apostles
The message they heard Paul proclaim in that meeting was the same they'd heard in Galatia

Thought: Look at the end of v. 2 – you sense the urgency of the situation in Galatia

Ga 2:2 (ESV) 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.*

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- A. He's not saying he presented his message to them to discover if it really was the truth
"I'd better find out if my message is right – I hope all my ministering hasn't been in vain."
 1). He'd been preaching for 17 years by now – He know his message was from God!
 a). He had watched God use that message again and again in miraculous ways
 - B. He is saying: Because the legalists were so successful in spreading their lies in Galatia
 1). One of the most damaging being that the leadership in Jerusalem didn't agree with Paul
 2). If Paul couldn't prove the Apostles did approve – did stand with him in his work
 a). So much damage might be done to the Gospel and those who responded
 That Paul's work could be so weakened it could seem to be in vain
 - C. Why it's so necessary to deal with heresy quickly and decisively – it destroys the work of God
 1). So Paul goes to Jerusalem – takes witnesses with him
 To bring back to Galatia the truth that the leadership in Jerusalem did stand with him
 So he could say: "I took my message to Peter and James and the others. I told them exactly what I'm telling you. You can ask Barnabas and Titus who were there. AND they fully agree that this message is the same message they're preaching. That my message and ministry is from God."
 2). This would protect the truth and weaken the lies of the false teachers
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He took important witnesses to validate his ministry

He went as an act of obedience – He went because God told him to go

He submitted the Gospel he preached to the Apostles – not to see if it was right – but to silence the lies of the legalists

Fourth: He Presented Titus as a Living Argument Against Legalism

Ga 2:3 (ESV) But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

1. Brilliant move. Paul brings this saved by uncircumcised Gentile with him

- A. In the process Titus becomes an airtight argument against legalism
- B. The legalists were claiming to be saved a man had to be circumcised
 1). To add weight to their argument they were claiming the Apostles in Jerusalem were teaching this
 2). So Paul brings an uncircumcised - saved man with him – sets him before the Apostles as a test
 Let's see what they say to him! Will they tell him to be circumcised?

Thought: In a sense we are brought into the courtroom

- A. On one side the legalist: Claiming to be saved you had to be circumcised and keep the law
- B. On the other side is Paul: Saying we are accepted
 By grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone apart from any works of the law
 1). We can do nothing to earn it – we are accepted because of Christ's work and not ours
- C. Right in the middle stands Timothy as a test case – what will the Apostles do with him?
 1). If he is compelled to be circumcised then man does relate to God through the law
 a). Our acceptance with God is not based on Christ's work alone – it is His PLUS ours
 1a). His work wasn't sufficient – we have to add to it to be saved
 b). So the Judaizers are right – Paul has been lying to the Galatians
 2). But if the Apostles receive him into fellowship just like he is – then it is all by grace!
 a). Paul is telling the truth – the legalistic teachers are lying
- D. The outcome: It is by grace!

Ga 2:3 (ESV) But even Titus, who was with me, *was not forced to be circumcised*, though he was a Greek.

Thought: Grace doesn't mean we won't obey – we won't have good works

- A. It just changes the reason we obey and serve – because we are accepted not to be accepted

- 1). We now obey as sons and daughters – who delight in serving the one who loves us so much
- 2). Legalism forces obedience – as a slave – who obeys only out of fear
 - a). Seminary student – well known for his faithfulness in morning devotions – never missed
“Why do you do that?” – “Because I’m afraid God will hurt me if I don’t”
 - 1a). That’s the obedience of a slave – no joy in it – that’s the result of legalism
 - b). But to be consistent in your morning devotions because you ARE accepted
 - 1a). That’s grace – now you’re being compelled by love NOT fear

Now there is joy and delight

2. The importance of this test case – Paul’s message is validated

The logic: “If the Apostles in Jerusalem – the recognized leaders of the church did not require circumcision of the Gentiles, then how can these non-apostolic legalists outside of Jerusalem require it!”

- A. What a powerful blow to those false teachers who had infiltrated their ranks

3. Paul’s summary of what had happened

Ga 2:6 (ESV) 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. He says: The leadership in Jerusalem agreed completely with the message I was preaching
- 1). They added nothing at all. Felt no need to contribute anything else
NOT “Paul, your message is good, just not complete – add this or that and you have it”
 - a). What the legalists were saying – faith in Christ PLUS works
 - b). Paul says “No, they heard my message of faith in Christ alone and added nothing else”

Transition: So we see Paul’s actions in defending the truth - brilliant

- A. Now we move to the Apostles acceptance of his ministry

II. THE APOSTLES ACCEPTANCE OF PAUL’S MINISTRY

Ga 2:7–9 (ESV) 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 ⁽⁸⁾ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁽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.

INTRO: They saw my message lined up exactly with theirs & they added nothing – same message – same source

On the contrary = *instead of correcting me they commissioned and commended me*

1. They commended Paul

- A. They realized God had entrusted Paul with the task of preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles
Just as He had entrusted Peter with preaching the Gospel to the Jews
- 1). It was the same message – with the same results – just to a different audience

Notice: How Paul puts it – *“They perceived the grace that was given to me...”*

- A. They recognized God’s grace in Paul’s life and ministry
- 1). What was happening was beyond what any man could accomplish on their own
- B. Notice their response – after recognizing the grace of God given to Paul

Ga 2:9 (ESV) ...they gave the *right hand of fellowship* to Barnabas and me...

- 1). Right hand of fellowship = a sign of trust, friendship, partnership
- 2). They fully accepted Paul as a partner in ministry

Transition: Then rather than condemning him as the false teachers said they would

They did exactly the opposite – they received him as a fellow Apostle and commissioned him

- A. And all this can be verified by Titus and Barnabas – they saw it all

2. They commissioned Paul

Ga 2:9 (ESV) 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. Paul is now commissioned to go the Gentiles
17 years after he had been turning the Gentile world upside down through the gospel message
- B. What a blow to the legalistic Judaizers – Paul can now officially say
“I am not ministering on my own. The leadership in Jerusalem stands with me. They have recognized God’s touch upon my life and ministry and they commissioned me to continue to do what I’m doing”

Transition: Let’s look at a question that might have arisen in your mind

III. PAUL’S ATTITUDE: WAS IT RIGHT?

1. On the surface it can seem he’s being sarcastic to the leadership in Jerusalem

Ga 2:6 (ESV) 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.

Ga 2:9 (ESV) and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars...

- A. Paul was not a person who would treat leadership with contempt
He said: 1 Th 5:12–13 (ESV) We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, ⁽¹³⁾ and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work...

Point: Paul wasn’t denigrating those godly men in Jerusalem one bit

- A. If he hadn’t respected them he would have never sought their public confirmation

2. I believe Paul’s sarcasm was aimed at the Judaizers

- A. They were exaggerating the status of the Jerusalem Apostles – claiming Paul was inferior
“The Apostles in Jerusalem knew Jesus personally – Paul didn’t”
“He’s just a second class man with a second class ministry. Not to be taken seriously”

Point: Paul is being sarcastic but it is aimed at these false teachers and what they were saying

- A. You’ve exalted these Apostle in Jerusalem so high
You’ve constantly measured me against them – treating me like a second class citizen
 - 1). But God hasn’t done that! He doesn’t honor them above me – He’s not a respecter of persons
 - 2). He has placed the same calling and the same anointing on my ministry as theirs
AND they publicly recognized that! They treated me as an equal

Summary: He is not disrespecting his fellow Apostles one bit

- A. He is simply exposing the foolishness of the claims of the false teachers

IV. THE APOSTLES APPEAL

Ga 2:10 (ESV) Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

1. They were fully satisfied with Paul’s ministry and message

- A. They didn’t command but asked him to remember the poor in Jerusalem
Which was something Paul wanted to do anyway

2. The church in Jerusalem was facing some very serious problems

- A. There were so many poor who were living in the city
 - 1). Add to that all who were coming in for various reasons and getting saved
 - a). They became part of the church and were deciding to stay – for fellowship – to be taught
 - 2). Problem: They had no means of support in the city

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- B. The Apostles ask Paul to remember these poor believers in the city – he is more than willing to help
 - 1). You see him in the epistles taking up a collection for the Jewish saints
 - 2). Paul's doctrine always lead to practical living – loving actions and concerns
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CONCLUSION

1. In this passage Paul has taken us back to a key event in church history

- A. The showdown with the Judaizers before the Apostolic leadership in Jerusalem
 - 1). Where the question was answered: How is a person made right with God
 - Is it by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone apart from the works of the law?
 - Or is it a combination of faith and works – faith in Christ's work plus your own
- B. We see the outcome: *Salvation is by grace alone!*

2. We also learn that Paul's words carry the same weight as Peter and John's

- A. Even today there are those who say that Paul wasn't a true Apostle
 - 1). That his words were not divinely inspired
- B. Here we learn that is a lie – Paul's words carry as much weight as the other Apostles
 - 1). They may have walked with Jesus for 3 years while He was on earth
 - But as we saw last time Jesus personally met with Paul for 3 years in desert
 - a). He was called by God – his message came from God
 - And in this section we see the other Apostles recognized that