

Parson to Person
(Galatians 2 – Part 1)

“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, ‘If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2).

Meeting—Alone

Paul, having personally experienced the Gospel of Grace, waited three years before heading to Jerusalem. There he spoke with Peter. *“Then after fourteen years”* (vs. 1a) he returned to Jerusalem to meet with others. Presumably this meeting was with all the apostles—but with certainty, *“those who seemed to be something”* (vs. 6a), *“James, Cephas/[Peter] and John”* (vs. 9). His journey was directed *“by revelation”* (vs. 2a); therefore, it was not his desire, per se, but was a directive of the Holy Spirit.

The meeting was intentionally kept private. Some suggest the meeting was handled this way because Paul feared the apostles and was protecting himself. Others suggest this was a courtesy toward *“those who were of reputation”* (vs. 2b) based upon the possibility

there may have been disagreement to which Paul would have brought insight and correction—He had no second thoughts about “*his gospel*” (see Romans 2:16, 16:25, 2 Timothy 2:8).

Correction Needed—No

Had the apostles needed correction, a public meeting would have certainly been an embarrassment. However, there was no need for correction. The apostles heard the gospel Paul proclaimed and recognized it as given directly from the Lord. Therefore, the apostles gave Paul (and Barnabas) “*the right hand of fellowship*” and agreed that they (Titus included) should go “*to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised*” (vs. 9).

No Divided Message—Not Even for An Hour

A divided message is disastrous. It is compromise. A false gospel (like the one Paul was battling in Galatia) could not then and cannot now be tolerated. Therefore, Paul gave this glaring testimony of personal and Gospel defense.

The Galatians were being directly tortured by false teaching Judaizers. Paul called them “*false brethren*” (vs. 4)—a label no one would want. It was an indictment indeed! Their false gospel was the blending of the Old Covenant Law with the Gospel of Grace. Namely, that one must abide by the standards of the Law *and* trust in Jesus, in order to be saved. Sadly, this false gospel survives today—and it cannot be tolerated, not “*even for an hour*” (vs. 5).

Run, In Vain?

If we are preaching the true Gospel, and the recipients are influenced into believing a false gospel, it might cause us to feel that we who preach the truth “*might run, or had run, in vain*” (vs. 2c). Apparently, this was a concern to Paul. He was being undermined and did not want his work in the Lord to suffer or be discarded.

Did Paul preach the same gospel the apostles were preaching? Yes! Would it have been concerning to him if they were preaching a different gospel? Absolutely! However, even if there were/are false apostles, false teachers, and/or false brethren, we must “run.” It is never in vain. God sees to that!

Paul was pleased to learn that he did not run in vain. Nonetheless, he was concerned about the Galatians. For this reason, he asked, *“You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?”* (Galatians 5:7).

The Galatians were being influence by error at the hands of *“false brethren.”* Paul would not tolerate it *“even for an hour”* (vs. 5). Not with *“those who were of reputation,”* not with the Galatians, not with the *“false brethren.”* Not for a minute!

Our Call

A false gospel diminishes the true Gospel—and the salvific work of Jesus. Therefore, we must contend for the truth—even as Paul.

Paul served the Philippians so that they might *“become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom [they were called to] shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that [he might] rejoice in the day of Christ [and that he might see the fruit of his “run”]. [He had] not run in vain or labored in vain”* (Philippians 2:15b–16 abridged). We do the same!

Therefore, we must say, as Paul did, *“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain”* (Galatians 2:21).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul

2 paragraphs needed indention

1 comment was deleted