

Galatians 2

Meeting in Jerusalem (2:1-10)

1 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

- The 14-year interval was probably related to his conversion. That is, 14 years after his Damascus-road experience, Paul went to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.

2 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.

- Paul went to Jerusalem because of a revelation. Not because the 12 apostles called for him. The Lord sent him to Jerusalem.
- We don't know for certain what the revelation was, but it was likely the prophecy given by Agabus about a coming worldwide famine. When the brethren at Antioch heard this prophecy, they took up an offering and sent Paul and Barnabas to deliver it to the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:27-30).
- When Paul went to Jerusalem, he submitted his gospel to the twelve. This was a private meeting with the apostles and some others. Most likely, Peter, James, and John were part of the meeting—the ones of high reputation.
- Paul had been preaching this gospel for 14 years. Even so, there was a subtle fear within him. Had he been preaching a false gospel? Had he been running in vain?
- After the Judaizers disturbed the Galatians, they were concerned that Paul's gospel was a watered-down gospel. And Paul opens up to them about his deep inner fear. He was 99.99% confident that his gospel was the true gospel. But there was a very small part of him that needed validation from the 12.

3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

- Not only did the 12 heartedly agree with Paul's gospel. They didn't require Titus to be circumcised. Titus, one of Paul's Gentile converts, was accepted in Jesus Christ by the 12 just as he was.

4 But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

- The Judaizers somehow wormed their way into this small gathering. The Judaizers' mantra was: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).
- They preached faith in Jesus Christ plus full obedience to the Law of Moses for salvation.
- Paul called the Judaizers, perhaps the same people who went to Galatia, "false brethren." They secretly sneaked into this meeting. They spied on Paul, Barnabas, and Titus with disdain for the liberty and freedom they had in Jesus Christ.
- They were seeking to bring them back under the bondage of the Law. They wanted to circumcise Titus.

Galatians 2

- But Paul is firm. He said, “We did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour.” The battle was over Titus. The Judaizers claimed that he must be circumcised to be saved. Paul rebutted this claim and said Titus was justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Paul was fighting for the truth of the gospel.
- Paul told the Galatians this story because they had the same experience with the Judaizers. Paul wanted them to know that his gospel was accepted by the 12—the same gospel he preached to the Galatians.

6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.

- This almost sounds arrogant. But Paul was making this point: His gospel was given to him by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.
- Even though the 12 were highly respected in the church, they didn’t give him the gospel he preached. Paul didn’t even articulate his gospel to them until 14 years after his conversion.

7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),

- Not only did the 12 accept Paul’s gospel. They didn’t require Titus to be circumcised. They acknowledged God’s hand was on Paul. They confirmed his apostleship to the uncircumcised Gentiles.
- Peter was an apostle sent to the circumcised Jews while Paul was an apostle sent to the uncircumcised Gentiles.

9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

10 They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

- Peter, James, and John were the pillars of the church and these three leaders accepted Paul and Barnabas with “the right hand of fellowship.”
- Their only requirement was to remember the poor.

Paul Opposed Peter (Gal. 2:11-21)

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

Galatians 2

- Peter was the most famous apostle in the church. He was the water-walker and the miracle-worker. And Paul has been branded by the Judaizers as an imposter and wannabe. So, Paul shared a story about how he had to rebuke this highly reputed apostle.
- When Peter came to Antioch, he freely accepted the uncircumcised Gentiles with open arms. Peter even had a vision of God welcoming the Gentiles into the church in Acts 10. From this vision, Peter goes to Cornelius's house and the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles.
- Now we see areas of compromise within Peter. He feared the Jews. He still had a fear of man. He didn't want to be labeled unlawful by his Jewish brethren.
- When the Judaizers from James came to Antioch, they gave Peter a hard time for eating with the defiled and unclean Gentiles. Peter feared "the party of the circumcision" and stopped having table fellowship with the Gentiles.
- The rest of the Jews, including Barnabas, joined Peter and stopped eating with the Gentiles.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

15 "We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles;"

- When Paul heard about this, he was livid. Paul openly rebuked Peter in front of everyone. He let Peter know he was being a hypocrite.
- Paul likely told the Galatians this story to prove he was not inferior to the highly reputed apostles. This was not motivated by pride or insecurity. It was for the sake of the gospel. His message was undermined because he was wrongly criticized. Therefore, Paul wanted them to know he was not inferior to the apostles.
- Even Paul saw the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews had the Law and were to a degree holy and righteous—at least externally. The Gentiles, who didn't have the Law, were sinners. Nevertheless, both Jew and Gentile need Jesus Christ's atoning work for salvation.

Justification by Faith (2:16-18)

16 "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."

- For the first time, we are introduced to Paul's gospel of justification by faith apart from the works of the Law.
- Justification means to be just as if you had never sinned. It is far more than forgiveness for the wrong we have done. It is a declaration that we are righteous in the matter for which we were accused.
- This means, though we are sinners who have transgressed God's holy Law, when we put our faith in Jesus Christ apart from any works we do, we are declared righteous in God's sight. We are declared to be accepted in God's eyes. Because Christ obeyed the Law perfectly, His perfect obedience is imputed to us so that we are reckoned to have obeyed the Law perfectly as well.

Galatians 2

- The *works of the Law* are all that is required to obey the 613 commandments contained in the Mosaic Law. This would include all the commandments of the moral, civil, ceremonial, and dietary laws.
- Obeying all 613 commandments does not make us acceptable to God. It does not make us righteous before Him. Only faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross makes us acceptable to Him.
- Here's a brief summary of six characteristics of justification.
 1. *Justification is not based upon obedience to God's commands.* No amount of commandment-keeping can ever make us acceptable to God.
 2. *Justification ends boasting.* Obedience through willpower glorifies us while obedience through faith in the finished work of the cross glorifies God. Justification by faith apart from works is vitally important because it severs pride at the root and brings glory to God.
 3. *Justification is by grace alone through faith alone.* We do not achieve justification by what we do. We receive justification by what Christ has done. The Law condemns the best of us while grace saves the worst of us. Justification is therefore by grace alone through faith alone. Grace is the free and undeserved gift of God that justifies us and the unmerited and unearned power of God that sanctifies us as the Spirit prepares to glorify us. Faith is the conduit that allows the endless supply of supernatural grace to flow into our lives.
 4. *Justification breaks the power of sin.* The deepest root of slavery to sin is the feeling we can never be forgiven or made righteous. Stronger than the allurements of future sin is the bondage from past sins. When we feel unforgiveable, unrighteous, and unworthy because of what we did in the past, we are held captive by sin's greatest weapons of guilt, shame, and condemnation. In this condition, despair, hopelessness, and despondency rule our lives. Guilt drives us. Condemnation weighs on us. Shame defines who we are. God cancels sin by justifying the ungodly, thus destroying sin's powerful arsenal of guilt, shame, and condemnation. Then God breaks the power of this canceled sin. That is, the guilt is removed before the lure is broken.
 5. *Justification precedes sanctification.* Because justification breaks the power of sin, justification also precedes sanctification. Before we have any hope of deliverance from sin and the transformation of our mind, will, and emotions, we must first escape God's condemnation, receive the gift of righteousness, and experience justification. The key to overcoming lust, anger, pride, envy, addictions, or any other besetting sin is to know deep in our hearts that we have received the gift of imputed righteousness and that the Judge of the universe has declared us legally righteous before the Supreme Court of heaven. Justification does not make sanctification optional; it makes it possible. Sanctification, the lifelong process of being transformed into the likeness of Christ in our soul, is an indispensable part of salvation. The only sins that we can overcome in our pursuit of sanctification are the forgiven sins resulting from our justification.
 6. *Justification precedes obedience.* Obedience before faith is what Paul termed "the works of the Law." This type of obedience results in being severed from Christ, nullifying grace, and placing ourselves under a curse. For this reason, it is vitally important that our obedience proceed from our faith rather than precede our faith. The obedience that proceeded from faith was the goal of Paul's ministry and he called it "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5).

Take note of the difference between obedience that precedes faith and obedience that proceeds from faith.

Obedience that precedes faith...

Obeys to gain God's approval

Obedience that proceeds from faith...

Obeys because we have God's approval

Galatians 2

Obedience that precedes faith...

Obeys to become righteous
Obeys for acceptance
Obeys for favor
Obeys to avoid condemnation
Obeys so that God will love us
Obeys to prove our love for God
Nullifies grace
Leads to self-glorification and boasting
Places us under a curse
Severs us from Christ

Obedience that proceeds from faith...

Obeys because we are declared righteous
Obeys from acceptance
Obeys from favor
Obeys because there is now no condemnation
Obeys because God loves us
Obeys because we love God
Is empowered by grace
Leads to God-glorification and worship
Positions us for blessings
Connects us to Christ

17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be!

18 "For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

Crucified with Christ (2:19-21)

19 "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.

- Paul developed this thought in much greater depth in Romans 7. When Christ died on the cross, we died in Him. And that means we died to the Law. We died to having to keep the 613 commandments in order to be righteous before Him. We died to having to meticulously obey every commandment without the slightest compromise.
- This gives us the freedom to live for God. This gives us the ability to bear fruit for God because the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us.

20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 up for me.

- This verse, perhaps more than any other, summarizes the Christian life.
- "I have been crucified with Christ." Here, Paul was not saying he had been completely crucified experientially. For much later in his life, in Philippians, Paul said he wanted to experience the deeper work of the cross. Rather, Paul was talking about our legal position in Christ. When Christ died, we died in Him.
- For the rest of our lives, the Holy Spirit wants to align our living condition with our legal position.
- Though Paul's legal position was complete crucifixion with Christ, after 14 years of walking with the Lord, Paul had experienced the work of the cross deeply within his soul. Though the cross would work deeper

Galatians 2

in the years to come, much of Paul's self-life had been crucified. This paved the way for Christ's indwelling life to be the primary source of Paul's living.

- Paul said, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." Paul allowed Christ to increase and himself to decrease. Paul was living by Christ's indwelling life.
- "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." To a large degree, Paul's life in his body was lived in total reliance upon Christ's indwelling life.
- The "faith in the Son of God" could be translated "the faith of the Son of God." Christ's faith in Paul was the source of Paul's faith in Christ. He lived by the Son of God's faith imparted to him by the indwelling Spirit.

21 "I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."

- God's grace can be nullified when we seek to obey the Law. When we seek to gain righteousness by what we do for God, it short-circuits God's grace from operating in our lives.
- Paul developed this theme later in the book of Galatians.
- If the external commandments in the Law could impart righteousness and life, then Christ died in vain. There was no reason for Him to suffer on the cross.
- External commandments cannot impart righteousness or life. Only Christ's indwelling Spirit can do that.