

Paul and the Pillars

December 12, 2010 ~ Galatians 2.1-10

Three Acts

1. Sharing the Gospel with the Pillars (**verses 1-2**)
2. Confronted by False Brethren (**verses 3-5**)
3. Acceptance and Blessing (**verses 6-10**)

Cast (in order of appearance)

- Paul, Barnabas and Titus (**verse 1**)
- The Pillars (those who were of reputation – **verses 2, 6 and 9**)
- False Brethren (**verse 4**)

Cast Intro: Paul (hero)

- Paul writing letter from Antioch (**49 AD**) just after 1st missionary journey
- Paul was converted @ **33 AD**
- He first went to Jerusalem 3 years later **36 AD** (**Gal 1.18-19**)
- For 7 years he ministered in Syria and Cilicia (**Gal 1.21-24**)
 - During this time he was based at Tarsus (**Acts 9.30**)
 - **43 AD** ~ Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch (**Acts 11.25-26**)
 - They served together for a year
 - Paul's been a believer for over 10 years (*mostly on his own*)
- **44-45 AD** ~ Agabus comes to Antioch & prophecies famine (**Acts 11.27-28**)
- The prophesied famine hits around **46 AD**
 - Antioch church sends Paul & Barnabas to Jerusalem (**Acts 11.29-30**)
 - This is the 2nd trip to Jerusalem Paul mentions in **Gal 2.1**
- Paul's 1st missionary journey begins upon return ~ lasts 2 years (**47-49 AD**)
- He returns to his home base in Antioch (**Acts 14.26-28**)
 - Peter then visits him (**Gal 2.11ff**) and Paul confronts him c/hypocrisy
 - Paul writes this letter to the Galatians just after this...
 - Jerusalem Council (**Acts 15**) spawned from disputes c/circumcision

Xition: Let's introduce the rest of the cast

Cast Intro: **Barnabas (v1)**

- Levite, from Cyprus, saved to Christ early on (**Acts 4.36-37**)
- Sold land and donated it to in support of the early church
- Barnabas means “*Son of Encouragement*” and that’s what he was
- Barnabas brought Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem (**Acts 9.26-27a**)
- Travelled actively in support of the church (**Acts 11.22-26**)
- He and Paul ministered together for over 7 years

Cast Intro: **Titus (v1)**

- Titus was a Gentile – a Greek (**Gal 2.1-3**)
- He was helpful to Paul in Antioch and Corinth and Crete (**2 Cor 7-8**)
- Paul left him in Crete to establish the church there (**Titus**)

Cast Intro: **3 Pillars (v2,9 ~ Peter, James (Jesus’ brother) and John (son of Zebedee)**

- The 2 special apostles of Jesus who often accompanied him wo/the rest
- Active in Jerusalem for years (James took over for James son of Zebedee)
 - James (Zebedee) martyred ~ 5 years earlier by Herod (**Acts 12.1-2**)

Cast Intro: **False Brethren (villain ~ v4)**

- They were false brethren ~ pretenders
- They had been secretly brought in (this was an attempted coup)
- They entered by stealth – they snuck in – they weren’t asked to come
- They came to spy on those that were free from their shackles
- They wanted to enslave those that were free (they envied them)
- !!!: Watership Down (Fiver ~ story of fat healthy rabbits and their secret)

Melodrama: **Hero and Villain**

- When I speak of Paul and say **HERO** – let’s hear cheers, yeas
- When I speak of the false brethren and say **VILLAINS** –boo and hiss
- Not too loud – let’s not wake up any sleeping babies - or adults
- Practice . . .

Xition: On to the first act...

1st Act: Sharing the Gospel with the Pillars (v2)

Paul's 2nd trip to Jerusalem (14 years after salvation)

- “communicated to them that gospel” ~ They hadn't heard him yet
- “but privately to those that were of reputation” ~ The 3 pillars
- “lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain”
 - Was Paul (our **hero**) ready to stop his work if they didn't agree? **NO!**
 - He's just told the Galatians the gospel doesn't change
 - But he's assumed thus far the apostles in Jerusalem are likeminded
 - He wants to meet with them privately first to verify that...
 - In other words, would he have to 'have it out' with them...
 - To make public enemies of these men would have been bad
 - He wanted to be friends with them ~ and avoid becoming enemies
 - But he was prepared to do so if they did not stand for the gospel
 - Paul is exercising wisdom ~ not fear of man
- This scene ends with us in suspense regarding the outcome . . .
- Paul (our **hero**)'s plans are interrupted . . .

2nd Act: Confronted by False Brethren (v3 to v5)

Act 2 opens with Titus – a Greek (v3)

- Hebrews did not associate with Greeks c/religious matters
- But proselytes (converts to Judaism) were accepted
- But they were circumcised when they embraced Judaism

Villains Introduced ~ False Brothers Sneak in (v4)

- “This” refers to the “false brothers” plan to have Titus circumcised
- These **villains** somehow gained admittance to this private meeting
- They're false brothers and they're secretive ~ sneaky ~ spies
- Paul pulls no punches
 - “false brethren secretly brought in by stealth to spy out our liberty ..”
 - “that they might bring us into bondage”

Paul (our **hero**) Triumphs (v5)

- “We did not yield submission even for an hour”
- The demands of these “pretend” brothers were rejected
- Paul, Barnabus, Titus and the apostles were in total agreement
 - Christian Gentiles were to be kept free from Judaistic practices
 - One didn't have to pass through Judaism to be a Christian

“Why is this Victory Important?”

- Often in a play or movie you see the seeds of a sequel
 - Here at the end of the 2nd act we’re given a glimpse at the sequel
 - **verse 5** – *“that the truth of the gospel might continue with you”*
 - Paul (**hero**) tells of a prior victory to preserve the gospel
 - To keep the Galatians and others like them free from bondage
 - Paul and the other apostles succeeded in that battle
- *“Why were the Galatians giving in to the **villains**?”*

3rd Act: Acceptance and Blessing

Reputations

- Though the 3rd act ends beautifully, there is tension as we enter into it
- The tension regards the reputations of Peter, James and John
- In **v2** Paul refers to speaking *“to those who were of reputation”* (read **v2**)
- In **v6** Paul refers to them as *“those who seemed to be something”* (read **v6**)
- In **v9** Paul says the 3 *“seemed to be pillars”* (read **v9**)

“Why is Paul speaking like this?”

- Is this the green-eyed monster in Paul’s heart? (*jealousy*)
 - III: Punching bag gift my Dad bought for Danny (boss’ son)
 - III: Little League practice near the school (Susan and Bill)
 - Paul used to be somebody... (*“I coulda been a contender”* ~ Brando)
 - But now he *“gets no respect”* (Rodney Dangerfield)
- *“Is Paul just jealous?”*
 - Perhaps this answer will surprise you . . . **Yes! Paul is jealous . . .**
 - But he’s not jealous of his own reputation . . . but of God’s . . .
- Everybody has the pillars on a pedestal
 - Paul sees danger in this ~ cults of celebrity are idolatry
 - At Lystra Paul & Barnabas were called Hermes & Zeus (later stoned)

Note God’s Plan

- Jesus chose men of no reputation ~ fisherman and tax collectors
- Yet he then chose Paul ~ a young bright Pharisee
 - The people heap praise upon those of no repute
 - Yet they heap scorn upon Paul

Xition: Let’s now get into the 3rd Act . . .

Acceptance & Blessing

- **v6** shows that Paul was not in awe of the 3 Pillars
 - Nor did they instruct him in the gospel
- But they did recognize God's blessing of Paul's ministry
- **Read verses 7 through 9**
- The 3 extend to Paul and Barnabas the "right hand of fellowship"

Five Missionaries for the Entire World

- Imagine this... Reflect on the significance of this moment . . .
- These five men in **47 AD** divided the entire world up into two peoples
 - The Jews and the Gentiles
 - The Circumcised and the Uncircumcised
- Within 20 years 4 of the 5 would be martyred
- Dead to this world ~ but alive to God forever...

Traditional martyrdom of 4 of the 5

- **Barnabas**: Tortured and stoned to death in **61 AD** at Salamis, Cyprus
- **James the Just**: Thrown off of the Temple in **62 AD**
 - He survived the fall but was then stoned and clubbed to death
- **Peter**: Crucified by Nero in **64 or 67 AD** ~ He supposedly asked to be crucified upside down, being unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus
- **Paul**: Tortured and beheaded by Nero in Rome in **67 AD**
- **John**: Escaped death by being boiled in oil once ~ died peacefully

Missionaries Still Die:

- Five missionaries to Auca Indians:
 - Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, Ed McCully, Pete Fleming, Roger Youderian
 - All killed in Ecuador on Jan 8, 1956 shortly after landing their plane
- Jim Elliot was a great writer. . . He said:
 - *"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."*
 - *"'He makes His ministers a flame of fire.' Am I ignitable?" he wrote. "God deliver me from the dread asbestos of 'other things.' Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be aflame. But a flame is transient, often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul short life? In me there dwells the Spirit of the Great Short-Lived, whose zeal for God's house consumed Him."* - Jim Elliott
- You don't have to be a missionary to be ignitable . . .

Let's Pray