

PAUL'S DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL

TEXT: GALATIANS 2:1-10

Introduction:

1. Galatians 2 is a continuation from chapter 1 -- the apostle Paul's defence of the Gospel (cf. 1:6-9).
2. "Then" (2:1) continues his narration. The trip to Jerusalem referred to in 2:1 is recorded in Acts 15. Since the first church was established in Jerusalem, and since most of the apostles lived there, it was chosen as the designated meeting place for this important conference.
3. According to Galatians 2:1 and Acts 15:2, Paul traveled with Barnabas and Titus. (Acts 15:2 does not mention Titus, only Barnabas.)
4. Barnabas was a close associate and traveling companion of Paul. Acts 9:26 says that when Paul came to Jerusalem after his conversion on the road to Damascus, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."
5. Acts 9:27 says, "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."
6. According to Acts 4:36, Barnabas' name means "The son of consolation" or "son of encouragement," and he certainly lived up to that name (cf. Acts 11:22-26).
7. Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:1-4).
8. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their first missionary journey, they reported how the Lord had "opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27).
9. But the Judaizers (those who mixed law and grace) in Jerusalem were not happy with this report, so they came to Antioch to stir up trouble. Acts 15:1 says, "And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved."
10. It is significant that Paul brought Titus with him to the conference in Jerusalem because Titus was a saved Gentile who had never been circumcised (Gal. 2:3).
11. Therefore, Titus' testimony would reinforce Paul's position -- i.e., that circumcision has nothing to do with salvation (cf. Gal. 2:4; Acts 15:7-11).

I. PAUL DID NOT WANT TO RUN IN VAIN (2:2).

1. The Bible often describes the Christian life as a race to be won (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).
2. Paul did not want to "run in vain" (Gal. 2:2). Paul said in Philippians 2:16, "Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."
3. Paul went up to Jerusalem "by revelation" (2:2; cf. 1:12).
4. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul preached "privately to them which were of reputation" (2:2), i.e., the church leaders.
5. Apparently Paul wanted their approval before he faced the whole assembly. By presenting a united front at the conference, Paul avoided a split among the preachers.
6. Paul was led by the Lord, therefore he behaved wisely. He did not want to "run in vain" (2:2).

II. PAUL HAD TO CONTEND WITH FALSE BRETHREN (2:3-5).

1. Notice these "false brethren" crept in "unawares" and "privily" (2:4).
2. Jude 4 says, "For there are certain men crept in unawares."
3. Second Peter 2:1 says, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies."
4. There are many similar warnings in Scripture regarding false teachers. The epistle to the Galatians was written to refute false doctrine.
5. Back in Paul's day, the false brethren were teaching one had to be circumcised in order to be saved. Today, it is baptism, or sacraments, or good works, or Sabbath-keeping, etc. (cf. Eph. 2:8, 9).
6. Those trapped in a works-salvation system are in "bondage" (Gal. 2:4; cf. Acts 15:10).
7. According to the false brethren, Titus needed to be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1; cf. Gal. 2:3, 4).
8. It would have been wrong for Titus to submit to circumcision, for he was converting to Christ, not to Judaism (2:3).
9. Paul and Titus understood that to cave in on this issue would seriously compromise the Gospel. Later on, Paul did circumcise Timothy, but the circumstances were much different (Acts 16:3). Timothy had a Jewish mother. Paul felt that Timothy's willingness to submit to circumcision would remove a stumbling block.
10. Paul said in I Corinthians 9:22, "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."

11. Matthew Henry said Paul "circumcised Timothy, not, as those teachers designed in imposing circumcision, to oblige him to keep the ceremonial law, but only to render his conversation and ministry passable, and, if it might be, acceptable among the Jews that abounded in those quarters. He knew Timothy was a man likely to do a great deal of good among them, being admirably qualified for the ministry, if they were not invincibly prejudiced against him; and therefore, that they might not shun him as one unclean, because uncircumcised, he took him and *circumcised him*. Thus *to the Jews he became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, and all things to all men, that he might gain some*. He was against those who made circumcision necessary to salvation, but used it himself when it was conducive to edification; nor was he rigid in opposing it, as they were in imposing it. Thus, though he went not in this instance according to the letter of the decree, he went according to the spirit of it, which was a spirit of tenderness towards the Jews, and willingness to bring them off gradually from their prejudices. Paul made no difficulty of taking Timothy to be his companion, though he was uncircumcised; but the Jews would not hear him if he were, and therefore Paul will humour them herein."

III. PAUL WAS ACCEPTED BY THE APOSTLES (2:6-10).

1. The apostles "added nothing" to Paul's message or to his apostolic authority (2:6). They approved Paul's message and they declared the Judaizers wrong.
2. The other apostles accepted Paul's apostleship, and gave him "the right hand of fellowship" (2:9).
3. This signifies partnership. God was working "effectually" in all the apostles (2:7, 8). The Lord gave Peter a ministry to the Jews, and Paul to the Gentiles (2:7-9).
4. The first "pillar" of the church mentioned is James (2:9), probably the pastor of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; 21:18).
5. James was the half-brother of our Lord (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; I Cor. 15:7), and the brother of Jude (Jude 1). He wrote the epistle of James.
6. Cephas (Peter) and John are mentioned as well (2:9). Their only suggestion was to "remember the poor," which Paul was "forward (eager) to do" (2:10).
7. This probably refers to the poor believers in Jerusalem. Acts 11:29 says, "Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea."

8. Romans 15:26 says, "For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem."
9. This special need is often referred to in the New Testament. In addition to this, the church in Judea was afflicted with famine.

CONCLUSION:

Paul said in Acts 20:35, "to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."