

Galatians 2 pt. 1 v. 1-10

V.1-3 Paul's ministry continues -

In chapter 1 Paul recounted briefly his former conduct in Judaism, how he excelled beyond his peers, how he persecuted the church, but was brought into the Kingdom, brought to belief by the resurrected Jesus Christ Himself.

He makes a point to note in chapter 1 how he did not receive the gospel from men, nor did he consult with men to confirm his apostleship or call to ministry or the validity of the gospel he received from Jesus.

He makes a special note that after he saw Jesus he did not go up to Jerusalem for three years and now in chapter 2 his second trip to Jerusalem takes place fourteen years later.

The point Paul is making is that the city of Jerusalem was not the epicenter of his faith. For all of those years he was busy with the Lord's business and seemingly unconcerned with the showiness of it all.

We see here that Paul mentions two of his partners in ministry - Barnabas and Titus.

Barnabas - He was born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Levi.
(Easton's)

Titus - his name nowhere occurs in the Acts of the Apostles. He appears to have been a Gentile, and to have been chiefly engaged in ministering to Gentiles; - recipient of Paul's letter - Titus - one of the pastoral epistles. (Easton's)

Paul didn't do ministry alone. Men were with him, did they agree all of the time? No, as we will see later, but they were joined together by the common bond of Christ and their labor for the Lord.

Paul also tells us that he was directed by revelation on this journey to Jerusalem - he wasn't commanded by some supreme council or anything like that but rather directed by God. God still does this, He still moves His people in a very real and practical sense.

Paul, Barnabas, and Titus travelled to Jerusalem from a place called Antioch.

Antioch has a unique place in the formation of the first century church, and has a unique bearing on Paul's letter to the Galatians.

[Act 11:19-26 NKJV] 19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. 23 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. 24 For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. 25 Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

It was at Antioch too that sneaky legalists crept into the Body and began to subvert the gospel and impose their own form of religious

requirements - fulfill the law, be circumcised, be a better believer.
These men were called Judaizers.

Relative to the similar situation among the churches in Galatia we find that...(JFB)"The Galatians were Judaizing, not because the Jewish law was imposed by authority of the Church as *necessary to Christianity*, but because they thought it necessary to be observed by those who aspired to *higher perfection*."

So in Paul's case, this type of thing - men creeping into an assembly of believers to teach them a "better way," which is really bondage and a one way trip to carrying the burden of guilt - is not new.

He had dealt with it before in Antioch. We can assume this must have made Paul quite upset to see that this kind of thing keeps happening in different churches.

Preach the gospel, people are saved by grace, they have new life in Christ, there is abundant joy, they are rid of the shame and guilt of their past life and then other "religious" people hear of that good work and try to improve upon God's grace with a set of rules, regulations, and ceremonies that could never reconcile us to God in the first place.

So Paul goes to Jerusalem from Antioch to lay it out for the other Apostles to get their thoughts to make sure that he did not run in vain. After all this time, Paul has a conversation to establish the facts.

Incidentally, It's possible to do that, of course. There are multitudes of sincere people in cults, and false religions, that are running in vain.

Interesting that he brings up his trip to Jerusalem here with the Galatians. He may have done so to counteract the bad teaching from these Judaizers who in their hyper-religious zeal may have overstated the importance of Jerusalem. This may have been Paul's way of demonstrating consensus on the part of the Apostles and letting the Galatian churches know that this has already been dealt with.

Sometimes people come along with some new thing - new doctrine, new idea, new interpretation, new way to worship, new best practices for being a christian, etc...but here's the deal - it's been done before!

These things have been talked about, argued over, and ultimately resolved by coming back to the certainty of Christ and God's Word.

In Paul's case all of these men in Jerusalem that he met with would have seen and heard the risen Lord, including Paul. There is no speculating or hypothesizing but straight up truth, experience and

practical living that informs their debate - all supported by the Holy Spirit.

And in the midst of all that was going on: Judaizers, the great debate, the Apostles meeting, not even Titus is convinced or persuaded to undergo circumcision.

It would have been quite tempting for Titus I imagine.

In Jerusalem of all places - where the Lord was crucified, home of the Temple, home of the first church, there the Apostles were gathered (all Jewish men). Do you think Titus ever considered he should do it just to be part of the team? Paul says no.

Titus was secure in Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace, and he relied on Jesus' righteousness. If Jesus' righteousness would allow him to stand before God on the day of judgement then certainly it was enough for him to stand before these men - recipients of that same grace.

The same is true for us today.

V.4-5 How this all began

False brethren - false brothers! Men who appeared to be family, who speak the language, look the part, ostensibly know the word, fit in, but were found to be false, contrived, not authentic.

Paul says that these men “came in by stealth to spy out our liberty...that they were brought in” There appears to have been some sort of conspiracy in the church in Antioch to make this happen.

That doesn't sound very up front. That doesn't sound very Christ-like, dealing in schemes, devising ways to bring people down. What wickedness lived in the hearts of these men.

But here's the thing! They thought they were doing right! They thought they were teaching better way! The root of their sneaking, spying, desire to bring men into bondage is a fundamental misunderstanding of the gospel.

Paul, who lived his life as a Pharisee, who was a pro at the law did not allow this to happen. This is the heart of a shepherd - he defended the Body. Is it any wonder that he warned the Ephesian elders that wolves would creep into the Body, even from among themselves? Paul had seen it time and time again. And we must be on guard today - not in a fearful sense but a discerning sense.

The time for defending was at hand - when the faith of the Body is threatened, when bad doctrine creeps in, that is a time to defend, to set right, to teach sound doctrine, in the clearest terms.

Paul points out to the Galatians they received the benefits of Paul's work in Antioch - opposing legalism, correcting bad doctrine.

V.6 - The men who crept into Antioch perhaps relied on their reputation or their credentials or their church-y pedigree. They "seemed" to be something but they lacked the substance of the truth of the gospel.

This happens today too - across denominations. Each tribe has their own group of highly respected Bible teachers and pastors. Wonderful servants of God who are humble, and gracious, and gentle. People who resemble Jesus and we are blessed by them.

And then there are those who flit and float among the churches never really staying in one place for too long proclaiming their tenuous relationships with those blessed servants in an effort to appear to be something.

"I came up under Pastor so and so..."

There's no need for that - reflect on 1 Corinthians 1 - is Christ divided? Also, if you are ever wondering how to tell if somebody is legit - you tell a tree by the fruit that it bears.

Unfortunately this is all too common - men want to be something, but rarely do they want to be servants.

This kind of self-promotion, and delusional aggrandizement based on somebody else's ministry is never good for the church. Let us cling to Jesus and not the reputation of others.

Paul says, these men added nothing to him. Their self-promotion and need for a reputation didn't produce any fruit, or edification, or love - added nothing.

He also points out that God shows personal favoritism to no man. Sometimes if we fall in love with ourselves we may very well believe that we are God's favorite! How would the kingdom go on without us? That is pride, plain and simple. And many people have fallen away from the faith that way - they start believing their own publicity.

We are God's treasured possession but we don't deserve any bit of this glory that we get to be a part of. It all belongs to God and

inasmuch as we are allowed to walk behind the plough in God's kingdom we find ourselves blessed by the labor.

Only let us be servants - let us put on the character and humility of Christ, shunning any form of celebrity that may come because it is Jesus we want to see high and lifted up.

V.7-9 The Apostles in Jerusalem (James, Peter, and John) confirm Paul's ministry and extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas.

I love what we find here too with regards to Peter's ministry to the Jewish people and Paul's ministry to the gentiles!

Think about it - Paul, a dyed in the wool Pharisee with a reputable Jewish education - God sends to the Gentiles. Paul tried over and over again to preach to the Jews but God sent him expressly to the Gentiles.

What good is all that education and brain worth when you're convincing a gentile, a pagan with no baseline for the Levitical law, the covenant, etc?

Then, we have Peter, a fisherman, with an accent strong enough to peg him as a Galilean, no formal high-level education to speak of -- that's the guy God uses to preach to the Jews!

Confounding! We might flip that if we were in charge. We would match them up based on their experience, background, education, etc.

But it is God who calls, equips, and sends people for His glory and He often does so irrespective of our "best strengths." Don't we find ourselves beggars for His grace when that happens! Certainly!

But, consider too, this man Paul is now in a position to defend these new christians who are being tempted to forsake their liberty in Christ in exchange for the law. Who better to defend them?

God's wisdom is perfect! His designs are perfect. These gentiles have the ultimate defender, Paul, through Christ to make sure that the gospel doesn't get twisted. That it stays rooted in scripture and grounded in the person and work of Jesus.

V10 - One thing to remember - remember the poor. Why? Because it's nice? Because it makes for good social media posts, good social capital, good reputations? No - because it's Jesus' heart!

Compassion. Remember the poor.

We need this exhortation today as well. Sometimes we can get so caught up in building our own brand that we forget we are called to live out Jesus' heart to those around us in a practical sense too - not just a theoretical sense.

Lord teach us your ways, show us your wisdom, help us remember the poor and to be open to the guiding of your Spirit.

Make servants of us all.

BUT...just in case we think ministry is all rainbows and butterflies let us look at verse 11 - [Gal 2:11 KJV] 11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Man...I thought the meeting in Jerusalem went so well though...perhaps Peter is still a work in progress...but that's for next week.