

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

January 6, 2020

Series – The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

Paul's Excursion for Grace

Text – Galatians 2:1 - 10

Introduction

In chapter 2, Paul will explain what happened at the Jerusalem Council, which was a meeting held between the representatives of the Church at Antioch along with the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem. The purpose of this meeting was to settle the question that had arisen regarding the Gentile believers. Do they have to observe the Law by being circumcised, or not?

The historical background for both the cause and the results of this meeting is found in Acts 15.

I The Proof of Grace – Titus (vs. 1 – 3)

"1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

Note – after Paul was saved on the Road to Damascus, and after he went into Arabia (1:17); he went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and James (the Lord's half-brother). After that, he went to Tarsus, which is where his family was from. Barnabas finds him there and brings him to Antioch in Syria. Paul, Barnabas, and Titus go back to Jerusalem after this first meeting with James and Peter.

2 And I went up by revelation (ἀποκάλυψιν from ἀποκάλυψις – apokalypsis [Noun Acc. Sing. Fem. – a disclosure of truth; an instruction] - meaning that God revealed to him that he needed to go – see Galatians 1:12), and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

Note – He was preaching the gospel to them as if he was trying to lead them to Christ. He was communicating to them the message that he and Barnabas were using to lead the Gentiles to Christ in Antioch as well as Galatia.

Notice also that he spoke privately “to them which were of reputation” (δοκοῦσιν from δοκέω – *dokeō*). That is an important phrase referring to “influential men; men that were highly esteemed.” We will see in a minute specifically who these men were, but they are the same “apostles and leaders” that we read about in Acts 15:2. Paul was

dealing with a problem here, and he wanted to discuss it privately with some of the men of reputation who were the leaders in Jerusalem.

“lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.” – Paul wanted to make sure that his ministry to the Gentiles – the doctrine that he was preaching - was on the same page as what the apostles and the leaders of the church at Jerusalem.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

Titus was a Gentile and Titus was clearly manifesting the fruit of the fulness of the Spirit of God, and probably the gifts of the Spirit as well. He was Paul’s poster boy. Paul was stating that Titus is not circumcised; yet, he was clearly saved.

Titus was the proof. Paul brought Titus with him to this meeting because Titus was not a Jew, and was not circumcised; yet it was evident to everyone that knew him that he had experienced the filling of the Holy Spirit, which could only come from a genuine salvation. The example of Titus would prove that the Gentiles did not have to “become Jews” in order to be saved.

II The Predators of Grace – Troublemakers from Judaea (vs. 4 – 5)

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

The false brethren that Paul speaks about here we will learn about more fully in a minute. These predators of grace are the men that also travelled to Antioch (Acts 15:1) and caused a great deal of doctrinal division there. These false brethren “unawares brought in” (παρεισάκτους from παρείσακτος – *pareisaktos* – secretly or surreptitiously); they came in “privily” (παρεισῆλθον – *pareiserchomai* – to creep in or come in secretly, by stealth); they came to come to “spy out” (κατασκοπήσαι from κατασκοπέω – *kataskopeō* – to view closely in order to plot against). These legalist were seeking to attack the liberty that these Galatian believers had in Christ. They were saved by grace through faith, completely apart from works; but these false brethren were trying to put them back under the bondage of the Old Testament Law.

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Paul, Barnabas, and Titus (“we”) did not “give place” (εἶξαμεν from εἶκω – *eikō* – to yield) “by subjection” (ὑποταγῆ from ὑποταγή - *hypotagē* – the act of subjection; obedience). Paul basically was saying that he and Barnabas and Titus didn’t “budge” from their correct position regarding salvation. They didn’t give these false teachers the time of day. Why, because they were wrong, and knew that they were undermining the

truth of the gospel. The message these false brethren were bringing wasn't a true gospel at all; it was a "faith plus works salvation, which isn't salvation at all.

It is important to note that the outward ritual of circumcision never saved anybody. God was always concerned with peoples hearts, not their religious rituals:

*"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."
(Romans 2:28-29)*

"And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:" (Colossians 2:10-11)

Circumcision was intended to be an outward sign that you belonged to the Lord, but if you did not truly belong to the Lord by faith then your outward circumcision didn't benefit you at all in the sight of God.

Note – Don't make the same mistake today regarding baptism, or church membership.

III The Perceivers of Grace – Trio of Leaders from the Church at Jerusalem (vs. 6 – 9)

6 But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

The "these" here is not referring to the false brethren from verse four, but actually is referring back to "the men of reputation" from verse 2. The phrase used twice here – "seemed to be" (δοκοῦντες - δοκέω – *dokeō*) actually comes from the exact same word as "men of reputation." It means the same thing. These men were apparently; easily seen to be influential men; men of reputation; men that were highly esteemed.) When Paul states here that these men "added nothing to" him, he wasn't being sarcastic; he was merely stating that these "men of reputation," these men "who seemed to be somewhat," were teaching the same things that Paul was teaching, and that they added no new conditions for salvation. When Paul, Barnabas, and Titus discuss this problem with these men of reputation, they discovered that they were all on the same page.

7 But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

What Paul is saying here is that the leader; the “men of reputation” in Jerusalem recognized the same apostolic authority in Paul as was known to be in Peter. The only difference was, however, that Paul’s ministry was primarily focused on the Gentiles, whereas Peter’s was to the Jews (the circumcision).

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. (Galatians 2:9)

Here we see specifically who these “men of reputation” were – James (the Lord’s brother – not John’s brother; he was not one of the twelve), Cephas (Peter), and John (the Apostle).

Notice the phrase “the right hands of fellowship” (fellowship - *κοινωνία* from *κοινωνία* – *koinonia*). What Paul was saying here is that this church in Jerusalem could fellowship with the church in Antioch. They were on the same page, doctrinally. The church in Jerusalem could support, both with their influence and with their resources the missionary work of the Apostle Paul.

Note – we should only give the right hand of fellowship to churches and people who believe the same things, doctrinally that we believe. Just because someone is conservative politically, does not mean that they are on the same page doctrinally.

This brings me to the main thought of this message. Notice the phrase – “seemed to be pillars.” – James, Peter, and John were the pillars of the church at Jerusalem. They were the men who were the leaders; the men who “seemed to be somewhat;” the men who had influence on within the church; but they were also influential outside of the church, in the community. They were the “men of reputation.”

Men – We need to be developing more “pillars;” more influential men within our churches.

In the spiritual building of a local church, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6); the apostles and prophets who gave us the Scriptures and established the first churches are the foundation. Within our local church there are a lot of people who serve in a variety of functions and are all useful parts of the building; but the strength of the building above the foundation are in the pillars – the leaders.

A “pillar” (*στῦλοι* from *στῦλος* – *stylos*) is a support. In construction, a pillar would be used, particularly in larger rooms to support the roof and secure the rest of the building. If the space is large enough, the pillars would be visible and may even be ornamented, but oftentimes they are hidden, inside an interior wall – a bearing wall)

We need more “pillars” in our churches. Pillars need to be strong, stable, secure, and they need to support.

The leadership at Jerusalem immediately recognized that Paul was right, and that these troublemaking legalist from Judaea were wrong; and they apologized for it. It was clearly evident to them that Paul and Barnabas were in fact preaching the pure gospel, and it was also easy to see that their converts were genuine believers.

IV The Practice of Grace – Taking Action (v. 10)

10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." (Galatians 2:10)

Those who have experienced the grace of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ do not feel like they can live any way they choose. No – the grace that they have experienced compels them to live their lives in submission to the will of God.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" (Titus 2:11-12)

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The difference between those who believe that salvation comes solely through the grace of God, and those who would preach a works salvation is that the people that espouse grace know that true salvation is solely a work of God, but it is a work that continues beyond the initial act of salvation. Once we are truly saved by grace, the work of transformation begins to take place conforming us to the very image of Christ. We who believe in grace also believe in good works; we just don't believe it is our good works that save us. On the contrary, we believe that the good things that we do are a result of our salvation, really a result of God working through us.

The leaders from the church at Jerusalem were concerned that the Gentiles would still remember the poor, which was the right thing to do.

Conclusion

Have you **experienced** the grace of God by placing your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Are you **evangelizing** others to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

Are you **exemplifying** the grace of God by living a life that demonstrates that Christ is in you?

John Newton (1725-1807)

A "wretch" who found "Amazing Grace!"

John Newton was nurtured by a devoted Christian mother who dreamed that her only son would become a preacher. But she died when John was a child, and he followed his sea-captain father to a sailor's life. John didn't care for the discipline of the Royal Navy: he deserted ship, was flogged, and eventually was discharged.

He then headed for regions where he could "sin freely," and ended up on the western coast of Africa, working for a slave trader who mistreated him. Newton's life during that period bore the appearance of a modern Prodigal Son's: "a wretched looking man toiling in a plantation of lemon trees in the Island of Plaintains--clothes had become rags, no shelter and begging for unhealthy roots to allay his hunger." After more than a year of such treatment, he managed to escape from the island, in 1747.

The following year his ship was battered by a severe storm. Newton had read *The Imitation of Christ*, and during the life-threatening voyage he became a Christian. Ironically, Newton then served as captain of a slave ship for six years. He gradually came to abhor slavery and later crusaded against it.

Newton became greatly influenced by George Whitefield and the Wesleys. He married his long-time sweetheart and began studying for the ministry and preaching in whatever vacant building he could procure. Known as the "old converted sea captain," he attracted large audiences. He was ordained within the Anglican Church, and in 1764 he took a curacy (*pastorate*) in Olney.

Newton felt dissatisfied with the hymns of the traditional psalter. He began writing his own, many autobiographical in nature, including "Amazing Grace!"

Newton became very influential in the life of a young man named William Wilberforce who was the man responsible for abolishing slavery in England.

In his old age, it was suggested that Newton retire because of bad health and failing memory. He replied, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior!"

[The above illustration (*except the italicized portion*) was taken from the "*The Golden Age of Hymns*," *Christian History*, no. 31.