

“False Brothers... and the Right Hand of Fellowship”

Galatians 2:1-10

September 22, 2024

Introduction/Organization

- We have been following Paul as he builds an argument (verses 1:11 – 2:14) that he has authority to write about the controversy of circumcision being required for salvation
- He establishes his authenticity as an apostle by arguing:
 - The gospel message he preaches is of divine origin
 - This divine gospel resulted in his own transformation – and Gentile salvation
 - His message was received independent of the other apostles
 - His message was yet affirmed by those apostles
 - He has been given equal authority with the other apostles
- This time we’ll see how his message was affirmed by the apostles

Paul Visits the Jerusalem Apostles Again (Gal. 2:1-2)

- “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem” (2:1)
 - Paul visited Jerusalem again and brought his companions Barnabas and Titus
 - He continues to demonstrate that he had only sporadic contact with the other apostles in those early years
- “I went up because of a revelation...” (2:2a)
 - Compare Acts 11:27-30:
“Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). 29 So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. 30 And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.”
- “To make sure that I was not running... in vain” (2:2b)
 - Is Paul now seeking the approval of man? (Cf. Gal. 1:10)
 - What was his reason for consulting with the apostles? For what had he been “running” all this time?

Paul's message is affirmed by the other apostles (Gal. 2:3-10)

- “But even Titus... was not forced to be circumcised...: (2:3-5)
 - The context seems to suggest there were some Judaizers who slipped in to this private meeting and they wanted Titus to be circumcised
 - Paul calls these men “false brothers,” a very serious charge
 - Compare 2 Cor. 11:13-15:
“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 15 So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.”
 - Why such strong condemnation of these “false brothers”? **This requires much discernment**
 - Verse 5 is the key – the Truth of the Gospel

- “Influential leaders” (2:6)
 - Paul is not denigrating the Jerusalem church leaders here, but he is setting up the next part of his argument by pointing out that God doesn’t show favoritism
 - We will return to this verse next week

- “Gave the right hand of fellowship...” (2:7-10)
 - After the meeting, the other apostles could see God’s grace upon Paul
 - They could all see that the same One had entrusted them each with complementary mission fields, so they come to an agreement
 - This is a powerful message for us today: Even when we have differences with others in style, approach, politics, or theology, we should be united in message and in mission!

Next week we will see how Paul demonstrates his authority as an apostle in an unexpected way – through a confrontation!