

## Message #5

## Galatians 2:1-10

There is a man in our church who challenged another Christian with a series of theological statements and asked him which statements were accurate. All of the statements had to do with salvation. Some of the statements were as follows:

- If you are to be saved you must turn from all your sin and believe.
- If you are to be saved you must repent and believe.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and make public confession before men.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and be baptized.
- If you are to be saved you must raise your hand indicating you want to be saved.
- If you are to be saved you must go forward and receive Christ.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and commit yourself to following Christ.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and count the cost of being a disciple.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and purpose to obey.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and make Jesus Lord of your life.
- If you are to be saved you must believe and then obey the Law.

All of these statements are used in church settings and all of the statements are wrong because they all infuse works into salvation. Every one of those statements modifies what Paul taught one must do to be saved. Now you may say well this is being nitpicky, isn't it? Well when it comes to the Gospel of the grace of God, the book of Galatians challenges every form of faulty religious thinking.

One of the many things this book of Galatians teaches us about Paul and that is he did not let things slide, especially when it came to the doctrine of grace or discussions about salvation. This apostle did not let people get away with their religious opinions. Paul knew the man in the church is still a man in sin. The sin issue must be resolved if we are to be right with God. That sin issue is only resolved by Jesus Christ. He and He alone is the grace remedy. Paul did not tolerate anything other than that message. He did not think religious thinking was good; in fact, he marched all over the world saying if anyone teaches any other message other than what I do, "let him be accursed."

Now the Gospel Paul was preaching came directly from Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:12). The grace Gospel Paul was preaching was carefully recorded by Luke: "Therefore let it be known to you brethren that through Him (*Jesus Christ*) forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you and through Him **everyone who believes is freed from all things**, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39). **What Paul taught was that the only way to be right with God is to place your faith totally, solely and only in Jesus Christ to save you from your sins.** You cannot be right with God by your works. You cannot be right with God by keeping the O.T. Law. You cannot be right with God by anything human that you do. To be right with God, you must cast all of your faith upon Jesus Christ to save you.

When Paul presented that message, especially to the religious Jews, it had been drilled into their minds that the only way to be right with God was by keeping the O.T. Mosaic Law. Along comes Paul and says that law is nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ and any who believe in Jesus Christ are forever saved from their sins.

Now this grace message was not well-received by those law-keeping Jews. In fact, it is clear that Paul was the topic of discussion in Jerusalem. So God decided that it was important for Paul to go to Jerusalem and present His grace Gospel right to the face of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. What we actually see here is this:

**PAUL'S WILLINGNESS TO GO TO JERUSALEM, A CITY DEDICATED TO O.T. LAW, AND PRESENT HIS GRACE GOSPEL, WHICH WAS RECEIVED BY THE LEADERS IN THE CHURCH OF JERUSALEM, PROVES THAT MAN IS SAVED BY FAITH ALONE IN CHRIST ALONE.**

Paul was not afraid to take on the entire theological world because his grace Gospel was given to him directly by Jesus Christ. He was not afraid to square off with any religion or religious leader. He did not let people get away with adding one thing to the Gospel of grace.

There are three main events that take place in Jerusalem that clearly communicate the grace Gospel:

**EVENT #1** – Paul has a private consultation with those of reputation in Jerusalem. **2:1-2**

**Verse 1** opens by informing us that for a minimum of 14 years, Paul had been preaching a pure grace Gospel before he went to Jerusalem. He did not preach that people needed to be circumcised; he did not preach that people needed to keep the O.T. Law; he preached faith in Jesus Christ and he had been doing that for at least 14 years.

**In fact, the only reason he decided to go to Jerusalem was because of a direct revelation that he received from God.** Paul was an apostle and apostles did receive direct revelation from God. So the reason he even went to Jerusalem was because God revealed to him that this is what He wanted him to do. Paul was not obligated to get an approval of his grace message from the church in Jerusalem, but God wanted him to go there and straighten those boys out.

Paul was always obedient to God even if what he was being asked to do went against the grain of the way he thought. Paul was not interested in pleasing men; but he was always interested in pleasing God. So when God revealed to him to go, he took Barnabas and Titus with him and he went to Jerusalem. Barnabas was a Jew and Titus was a Gentile. His own traveling companions proved that in Christ, both Jew and Gentile were one. **But what we learn is there were many eyewitnesses to this Jerusalem defense of grace.**

According to **verse 2**, when he got to Jerusalem, he met privately with those who were of “reputation.” This particular word (dokeo) is used four times in these verses (**2, 6 (twice), 9**). The word actually refers to those who some consider to be highly esteemed. Nobody considered Paul to be much of anything. In fact, apparently Paul’s reputation was under attack to the point he actually had to say, “I am not lying” (1:20). So he met with the reputable men who included Peter, James and John (**2:9**).

**God does not ever measure any believer by their public reputation. He measures people by their private faithfulness.** A person could have a powerful public reputation, but not be believing right or living right.

Now Paul met privately with these reputable men and he “submitted to them the gospel” that he preached. That word “submit” means he carefully laid open the grace Gospel he was preaching for their consideration. He did not start sharing stories of all the results he had seen, like some missionaries do. Wouldn’t it be interesting if leaders of a church were to require that missionaries not tell stories about their work, but demand they explain their Gospel and their doctrines?

Paul first met privately with them, probably because that is what God revealed to him to do. Certainly before you have some public meeting with all of the people, it is a wise move on behalf of the leaders of the church to know what the person believes. It is also a wise move on Paul’s part to meet privately because people could try to publicly slaughter Paul. He was already under attack for what he was preaching and teaching.

If you begin to understand grace and then to stand for it and defend it, sooner or later you will find yourself being criticized and having to defend yourself. There will be those who will take you to task. They will question your belief. They will try to get you to go back under law or their legal system of works. They may mock you and challenge you because you are not fitting into their religious system. They will do what they can to undermine your faith and your grasp of grace. They will try to convince you to go back to some formal system of religion. But you stand your ground like Paul and God will bless you like Paul.

**EVENT #2** – Paul gives a practical illustration to the leaders of Jerusalem. **2:3-5**

When the Apostle Paul went to Jerusalem, he took Titus with him. Titus was a pure Gentile. He was not a Jew. Now one of the major things the religious leaders were claiming was that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough to make you right with God, but that you must also follow the O.T. legal Abrahamic and Mosaic rite of circumcision (Gal. 5:2-3,6). No believer needs to be circumcised because every believer has already been circumcised in the heart without hands (Col. 2:9-14). But that is what they were claiming.

As **verse 4** says, some “false brethren,” literally pseudo brothers, false Christians, or as one writer said, “sham Christians,” had discovered Titus was not circumcised and they said he had to be in order to be really right with God.

These legalists had apparently followed Titus into a bathroom or bathhouse to see whether or not he was circumcised. S. Lewis Johnson said, “Legalists always act like spies. They come in among the congregation. Seek to bring simple-minded member who do not yet fully understand the grace principle of the gospel. And seek to bring them into bondage to their own legalistic ways. They are Satan’s CIA” (*Galatians 2:1-10*, p. 15).

They actually tried to get Titus to follow the O.T. Law, but Paul says we would not be brought into bondage of it for one moment. So Paul said to them that Titus is my exhibit “A” that God’s grace Gospel has nothing to do with keeping the O.T. Law. Paul took Titus with him to Jerusalem to prove the point. Paul said in **verse 5**, I went to Jerusalem all right, but I did not submit to them and their nonsense thinking for even one hour.

There are four points to consider on this:

- 1) We do not throw away sound doctrine for the sake of unity. We do not compromise truth. Paul would not concede false doctrine for one second. The doctrine of grace is non-negotiable.
- 2) We tend of think of taking a stand for truth against those who may lead into that which is immoral. Paul was taking a stand for truth here against the most moral group of all—those who had convinced themselves they were right with God by their man-made standards.
- 3) If you decide to have a male circumcised, that is your parental right and choice, but it has absolutely nothing to do with a person being right with a Holy God.
- 4) When true grace is understood, one realizes the liberty that exists because of Jesus Christ **(v. 4). Grace sets you free from sin, from legal codes and from the O.T. Law.**

Years ago, I was in a graduate course of Greek Exegesis and we were studying this passage in Greek. We had dissected the sentences grammatically and one of my fellow students blurted out this text really does teach you do not need to be circumcised to be right with God. The professor said that is absolutely correct. The student got so excited that he said this is tremendous because I have never been circumcised. Now that was something he needed to know, but it was also something we didn’t need to know. But the truth is he was set free that day because he began to understand grace.

There are very religious people who will try and convince you that your faith in Jesus Christ is not quite enough to make you right with God. Some will try to get you to go under some of the O.T. Laws. Some will try to get you to wear certain clothing or not eat or drink certain things. It is a sham and it is not grace.

**EVENT #3** – Paul presents the historical vindication by the leaders in Jerusalem. **2:6-10**

Paul marched right into Jerusalem and faced off with the leader and he says to these Galatians, there were four results:

**(Result #1)** - The leaders contributed nothing to Paul's grace message or ministry. **2:6**

The Jerusalem leaders realized Paul was presenting truth. They realized that Paul was presenting the real grace Gospel and **verse 6** says they did not contribute or add one thing to what he was preaching. They did not add works; O.T. law; or circumcision. They added nothing.

Paul taught that God was no respecter of persons and we were all sinners and we all need grace. This is true about those with high reputation and those with no reputation. God is not partial. The real issue to being right with God is not your reputation as a very religious person; it is whether or not you have faith in Jesus Christ. Either you do or you don't.

The fact is if you have a great reputation with people, you might want to check yourself to see if it is really that way in the sight of God. Truth is most people who have a great reputation with God don't have a real great reputation with people.

**(Result #2)** - The leaders recognized Paul's apostolic grace message and ministry. **2:7-8**

These leaders unanimously agreed that Paul had been entrusted with the grace Gospel. Just as Peter was taking the Gospel to the Jews, Paul was taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul was just as much an apostle as they were and these leaders realized that.

**(Result #3)** - The leaders supported Paul's grace message and ministry. **2:9a**

Look very carefully at **verse 9** because three men are named who fully supported his message and the first one on the list is James. This is James, the half-brother of the Lord, who wrote the book of James. The reason why we point this out is because many times people want to pull a verse or two from James to say that he presents a works message contrary to Paul's grace message. Well James agreed with Paul.

If you look at the names in this verse—James, Peter, John and then Paul, all together they wrote 21 of the 27 N.T. books of the Bible and these three all agreed with Paul's grace message that says we are saved apart from works or law.

Now James was written in A.D. 45 and Galatians was written in A.D. 48-49, so when James wrote James he had not met Paul or even learned of his grace Gospel message. But when he heard Paul present it, he agreed with it and so did Peter and John.

**(Result #4)** - The leaders sanctioned Paul's grace message and ministry. **2:9b**

These leaders gave these men the "right hand of fellowship." What these words mean is that they were of kindred mind and heart with Paul. They sanctioned him and his grace message. They were unified and behind him. They supported him and they recognized he was one of them and his grace message was the truth. Peter agreed with Paul. James agreed with Paul. John agreed with Paul.

The only thing they said to Paul in **verse 10** is as you are traveling around, do not forget the poor. This was something Paul was eager to do.

What an amazing meeting this turned out to be. Paul took his pure grace message to Jerusalem and when he left they were all supportive of him and his message.

#### **PARTING THOUGHTS:**

- 1) If one adds anything to believe in Jesus Christ, it is not grace.**
- 2) If one adds anything to believe in Jesus Christ, we insult the finished work of Christ.**
- 3) If one adds anything to believe in Jesus Christ, it is another gospel and let that one be accursed and go to hell.**