



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Vetting The Apostle And His Message—Part 2

GALATIANS 2.1-10

1/23/13

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The vetting process continues regarding the apostle Paul and his position on the gospel of grace. His credibility as a spokesman and vital aspects of the content of his message are at issue. He continues to defend his authority as an apostle and the message of grace apart from the works of the law.

His argument takes a turn in chapter two. In the previous passage, he hammered away at the divine source of his message—that he received not from men, not even from those who were apostles before him, but directly from God. He now presents us with his dealings with the apostles in preserving and confirming the gospel of grace apart from works.

Galatians 2.1-10: Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation and communicated to them that gospel that I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run or had run in vain.

Yet not even Titus, who was with me, being Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel to the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel to the circumcised was to Peter, (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

ADVOCATE THE CONTENT'S CONSIDERATION (1-2)

We all advocate many things—policies, causes, movements, even hobbies. It may be personal experience that stirred your passion for a particular cause, maybe a hardship faced by a loved one that called you to advocate a policy, or associates that recruited you to a movement. It may be your enjoyment of a hobby that compels you to advocate on its behalf. In what ways do you advocate the gospel message?

After 14 years of preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, Paul goes to Jerusalem to lay out the content of his message to the church leaders. Paul advocates the gospel of grace apart from the law for the consideration of these Jewish church leaders. Paul recognizes the importance of the concurrence of the Apostles in Jerusalem to the advance of the gospel to the Gentile world. In this letter, Paul cites his conference with the other apostles to refute those who are claiming these same leaders support circumcision as a requirement for Gentile converts.

Paul had absolute confidence in the content of his message. He did not seek affirmation from the other apostles to bolster some insecurity he harbored regarding his message or his ministry. He knew his gospel was “God-given” and “God-approved.” He simply recognized his responsibility to advocate that message and to work as a co-laborer with the other apostles in this vital clarification of the gospel message.

ADMIT THE CONVERT'S CONFIRMATION (3-5)

Paul mentions taking Titus along on his trip to Jerusalem. Titus was a Gentile convert and provided Paul with an actual case to support his position and obliterate the contention of his opponents. Even the Jewish church leaders at Jerusalem did not compel an uncircumcised Gentile convert to be circumcised. What more needed to be said?

“...THAT THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL MIGHT CONTINUE WITH YOU.”

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30AM OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)
OR THURSDAY BREAKFAST @7:30AM IN MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY STUDY: FRIDAY BREAKFAST @ 8AM IN MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

Texas

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Paul's opponents made the church leaders at Jerusalem aware of Titus' presence and his uncircumcised condition. Still, these apostles did not compel him to be circumcised. Paul is fiery in his opposition to the intent of those he refers to as false brethren. He draws attention to their covert activity and their motive of putting believers into bondage to the law. They are not one of us, Paul argues, and they mean to do us harm. He did not respect their position or their arguments, even for a moment. His urgent concern was that the truth of the gospel might be established among the Galatian believers.

ACTIVATE THE CALLING'S COORDINATION (6-10)

Anytime an undertaking involves a vast number of people, coordination becomes imperative to the success of that undertaking. Regarding the calling of the universal church to take the gospel to every tribe, tongue, and nation, God himself has taken the initiative to coordinate the activity of those involved. Though Jesus commissioned the disciples to take the gospel unto all the world, they took no action until God scattered them through persecution. Now God prods further coordination of the calling to take the gospel unto all the world through the circumstances prompting Paul's visit to Jerusalem.

The apostles perceive God's blessings upon Paul's years of labor among the Gentiles as a minister of the gospel. Be careful to remember that Paul is confident of God's calling to preach the gospel among the Gentiles and doesn't seek the approval of the church leaders in Jerusalem for his own sake. Yet he wisely values the confidence that such approval will give to the Galatian church in relation to the message they have received from Paul.

The church leaders at Jerusalem grant Paul's calling to take the gospel to the Gentiles equal status with Peter's calling to take the gospel to the circumcised. Paul's message and calling were validated by God. He did not require the approval or validation of the other apostles. But he did appeal for their recognition of his God-given status as an apostle. This allows the leaders to coordinate Paul's activity among the Gentiles with theirs among the circumcised.

CONCLUSION

How strong is your advocacy for the gospel? Consider some concrete steps you might take to become a more effective advocate for the gospel.

Do you judge those who don't live by your rules as 'unchristian'? Are you willing to set aside any 'extra-biblical' rules you use to discount the testimony of another professing believer?

Are you actively involved in the advance of the gospel mission in the world? How so? How might God desire to use you and your present circumstances to coordinate the advance of the gospel?