

Galatians 2:1-10

Fourteen years after his conversion, where did Paul go (v. 1)? To Jerusalem. In Galatians 1:18-19, Paul described a trip he made to Jerusalem three years after Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Here he describes a second trip to Jerusalem, fourteen years later. Probably Paul calculated the "14 years" from his conversion date, rather than from his first visit to Jerusalem (1:18).¹

Remember Paul's point from Galatians 1. He demonstrated that his gospel came by a revelation from Jesus and not from man, not even from the apostles in Jerusalem. A mere two visits to Jerusalem over 14 years demonstrated that Paul did not sit at the feet of the disciples of Jesus in order to learn the gospel.

Who did he go with (v. 1)? Traveling with Paul to Jerusalem were both Barnabas -- who was well respected among the leadership in Jerusalem (Acts 4:36-37;11:22) and Titus -- who was a Gentile convert.

Why did he go (v. 2)? In response to a revelation. The idea is that Paul went to Jerusalem by the express direction of God. He did not go because any man called him to come; it was because God told him to go. He did not go so the Jerusalem elders could call him on the carpet for preaching to the Gentiles.

Because the church began in Jerusalem, and the apostles made that city their headquarters, certain Christians felt that the church there was the mother church. Thus, Paul had to contend with the charge that he was somewhat inferior because he was not one of the original Jerusalem apostles. That is why he gives a detailed account of his later trip to Jerusalem.²

What did he do (v. 2)? He communicated to them the gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, thus assuring the leaders there that he was obedient to God in his presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul was not seeking the approval of the truth and accuracy of his gospel.....because he had received it by revelation from God. Rather he wanted them to consider its relationship to the gospel they were proclaiming. If the Jerusalem leaders insisted on circumcision and other requirements of the Law for Gentile converts, Paul's labor among the Gentiles was in vain. He feared his ministry might have been compromised by the influence of the Judaizers on the Jerusalem leaders.

To whom did he preach and why (v. 2)? He spoke privately to the church leaders. Paul knew he had the true gospel but he wasn't sure how everyone would receive it. Perhaps some of the apostles themselves were wrong on this point and needed to be corrected. But if there was any confrontation to be done, Paul did it privately to those who were of reputation. He did the best he could to not publicly embarrass any of the church leaders.

What was the significance of Titus being uncircumcised (v. 3)? The whole question of legalism is in view here. The leadership in Jerusalem accepted Titus (a Gentile convert) even though he was not circumcised in accordance with the Mosaic Law. Circumcision was a rite by which Gentile males became Jewish proselytes.³ This shows that the Jerusalem leadership accepted the gospel of grace as Paul understood it.

What had the Judaizers (false brothers) done (v. 4)? Paul says these men secretly came in by stealth. They did not come in with name badges that said, "False Brother." They did not come in with a mission statement that said, "We have come to spy out your liberty in Jesus."

What was their motive? To get them to adhere to the requirements of the Law.....which would equate to making them slaves (bringing them into bondage.) The Judaizers had insisted that Titus, a gentile converted through Paul's ministry, be circumcised for full salvation.

It is significant that Paul says these men might bring us into bondage. For Paul, this wasn't just an issue between the false brethren and Gentiles. It could have been easy for Paul to say, "This doesn't affect me. After all, I am a Jew and have been circumcised under the Law of Moses. I'll let Titus or other Gentiles deal with this problem, because these false brethren have a problem with them, not me." Paul realized that if the message of the gospel was

compromised, it wasn't just bondage for the Gentiles, but it was bondage for *everyone* who named the name of Jesus.

Their intent was to bring Paul and all other preachers and hearers of the true gospel "into bondage," by imposing circumcision as a condition for salvation. They were not successful.⁴ To settle the matter, Paul and Barnabas had come to Jerusalem to obtain an opinion from the apostles and leaders there.

How did Paul respond (v. 5)? The truth of the Gospel was at stake and Paul would not deviate or budge for a moment. To impose circumcision of Titus would be to deny that salvation was by faith.

What point was Paul making (v. 6)? His gospel or apostolic credentials did not depend on any sort of approval or influence from men, even influential men. Paul knew that in his day, there were leaders of high reputation – "famous" Christians, if you will. But they did not overly impress or intimidate Paul.

James, Peter, and John were not superior as apostles to him as an apostle. They "contributed nothing" to his authority or message. They did not correct or modify Paul's message but recognized its divine source and affirmed its truth and completeness

This isn't to say that Paul received nothing from others or that no one else could ever bless him; but his Christian life was not *built* upon what other people did for him.

"Paul's words are neither a denial of, nor a mark of disrespect for, their apostolic authority. He is simply indicating that, although he accepts their *office* as apostles, he is not overawed by their *person* as it was being inflated (by the false teachers)." (Stott)

What was the reaction of the Jerusalem apostles (vv. 7-8)? The leaders of the Jerusalem church (James, Peter, and John) accepted Paul and approved his ministry to the Gentiles knowing that Paul did not require the Gentiles to come under the Mosaic Law in order to find favor with God.

They recognized that Paul had been commissioned as he said to take the gospel to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews. These distinctions however, were not absolute; both Peter and Paul did minister to the other groups.

How did the church leaders further respond to Paul (vv. 9-10)? They gave him the right hand of fellowship confirming their approval and endorsement of Paul's work even though the focuses of their ministries were different. It was a pledge of friendship between them as well.

Even though Paul's contact with the others apostles had been minimal, when he finally did confer with them they agreed that he had been preaching the same gospel as theythat His gospel was not defective in any way. Though Paul had been independent of them and had not been taught by them, the gospel they preached was exactly the same as his own.⁵

What suggestion did they offer (v. 10)? The only caution from the leaders in Jerusalem was that Paul should remember the poor. In this case, these were probably the poor saints in Jerusalem, whom Gentile believers should not forget. Paul was already eager to do.

Later Paul certainly did remember the poor in Jerusalem. He put a lot of effort into gathering a contribution among the Gentile churches for the sake of the saints in Jerusalem (Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8)

Offerings would help eliminate human suffering but they would also demonstrate genuine concern on the part of Gentile Christians for Jewish Christians. This in turn would promote unity and love among believers.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Galatians, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 22

² Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 1878

³ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Galatians, 2017 Edition (published by <http://planobiblechapel.org/soniclight/>), p. 25

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Believer's Bible Commentary, William MacDonald, 1995 Edition, (published by Thomas Nelson Publishers), p. 1878