

Galatians 2:1-10 ~ Paul accepted by the Apostles ~ Discussion

Introduction: This passage refers to Paul's third trip to Jerusalem taken after a revelation in which God told him to go and discuss with the church leaders the message he was preaching. **Review:** What was that message?

1. This meeting may well have prevented a major split in the early church. Why? (Acts 15:1-11, 19-21)
2. Who did Paul meet with? (v. 2)
3. Even though Paul asserted his independence from the other (mostly original) apostles, he also showed solidarity with them. Why? How?
4. Apparently, the leaders in Jerusalem agreed that Titus did not have to be circumcised (v. 3-5). Why does Paul include this information?
5. Sometimes we avoid conferring with others because we are worried about how they may react. Do you normally discuss your ideas and plans with others? With whom? What usually happens when you do/don't?
6. Give an example of a time when you did or did not discuss or get support for your plans from others. What happened? (Proverbs 15:22, 27:17, 16:3, Joshua 1:8)
7. We normally think of "taking a stand" as something we do when someone is trying to lead us into immoral behavior, but Paul is taking a hard line against people who appeared to be and thought that they were super-moral. Why did the Judaizers consider themselves better than others?
8. Are there any man-made standards that you or other Christians impose on others, e.g., dress, speech, actions, etc.? How do you or others impose these rules?
9. In verse 6, Paul says that God does not show favoritism or judge by external appearances. What message(s) should we take from that statement? Give examples of how that message is or is not reinforced in our society.
10. What does caring for the poor (v. 10) have to do with telling others about Christ? What can we learn from this? (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)
11. How would you change the way you live your life if you unexpectedly inherited \$10 million? How do you think God would feel about your plan? With whom would you discuss your plan?

Galatians 2:1-10 ~ Paul accepted by the Apostles ~ Leader's Guide

Introduction: This passage refers to what was probably Paul's third trip to Jerusalem in the 14 years since his conversion. He tells us (v. 1) that he was traveling with his two good friends, Barnabas and Titus. He goes on to say that he contacted his travel agent only after a revelation in which God told him to go and confer with church leaders in Jerusalem about the message that he was preaching to the Gentiles.

Review: What was that message?

Quite simply, the message Paul was preaching was the good news of God's love for us and his providing for our salvation by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. What is needed for salvation is belief (or faith), not works, not obedience to the law, not circumcision, not any rituals.

1. This meeting may well have prevented a major split in the early church. Why? (Acts 15:1-11, 19-21)

The converted Pharisees still felt that the Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses before they could become Christians and be saved. Paul, Barabus, and Peter believed that this was not necessary.

Acts 15:1-11 – Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.³ The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad.⁴ When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question.⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe.⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.⁹ He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear?¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

After much discussion, James summed up the conclusions of the council in Vs

19-20 – “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.²¹ For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

Note that he did not say that the law of Moses (the ten commandments and other rules of behavior) were unimportant or null and void, but rather that people were familiar with them, hopefully saw their value, and would continue to be guided by them.

2. Who did Paul meet with? (v. 2)

The NIV says “meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders.” Young’s and the Amplified Bibles, plus several commentators suggest that the original Greek actually refers to *two* meetings, one with the whole church followed by one with the leaders.

3. Even though Paul asserted his independence from the other (mostly original) apostles, he also showed solidarity with them. Why? How?

Paul didn’t actually have to make this trip to Jerusalem. He was successfully preaching and earning his own financial support. However, some Judiazers (converted Pharisees, see Q 1, Acts 15:1) wanted new believers to be circumcised and obey the law of Moses before becoming Christians, in Paul’s terms, “make us slaves” (v. 4).

Paul says he was concerned that he might have “been running my race in vain,” (v. 2) . Paul expresses this concern elsewhere: 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Philippians 2:14-16 – Do everything without grumbling or arguing,¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

So we see that Paul needed some support from the other apostles and some reassurance that he was on the right track. He also wanted to tell them of his success, which is one of the reasons he brought Titus along, as Titus was a converted Gentile who served as Paul’s delegate to Corinth.

4. Apparently, the leaders in Jerusalem agreed that Titus did not have to be circumcised (v. 3-5). Why does Paul include this information?

When Paul took Titus (a Greek) to Jerusalem the first time, the Judaizers said that he must be circumcised. Paul adamantly refused to give in to their demands. The Apostles agreed that circumcism was an unnecessary rite for Gentile believers. Remember, this is letter is being written to the Galatians and by showing that the Apostles agreed that Titus, a Gentile, did not have to be

circumcised it certainly shows that it was not necessary for the Galatians either.

5. Sometimes we avoid conferring with others because we are worried about how they may react. Do you normally discuss your ideas and plans with others? With whom? What usually happens when you do/don't?

We often avoid conferring with others because we fear that problems or arguments might develop. Sometimes we feel it is easier to walk away from a problem than to confront it. Sometimes we feel that we are doing the “right thing” and that others just wouldn't understand.

6. Give an example of a time when you did or did not discuss or get support for your plans from others. What happened? (Proverbs 15:22, 27:17,16:3, Joshua 1:8)

In mid-1973, Nate Wadsworth and Bob Findley, founders of the brand new Scelbi Computer Consulting Co. (SCientific ELectronic BIological, pronounced "sell-bee"), of Milford, Connecticut, designed the 8008-based Scelbi-8H microcomputer, which is now recognized as being the first microprocessor-based computer kit to hit the market. Does anyone (except a computer geek like me) remember the Scelbi? Of course not. But how many of you remember the Altair, the Commodore PET, or the Apple II? What's the difference? Support, getting others involved (for example, Steve Wozniak, designer of the Apple, joining with Steve Jobs, a marketing and finance guy), and some planning.

Bottom line: while you may be successful on your own, it's good to have support and encouragement from others. It's also good to pray about your plans and ask God for wisdom and guidance in their execution.

Proverbs 15:22 – Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.

Proverbs 27:17 – As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Proverbs 16:3 – Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.

Joshua 1:8 – Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

7. We normally think of “taking a stand” as something we do when someone is trying to lead us into immoral behavior, but Paul is taking a hard line against people who appeared to be and thought that they were super-moral. Why did the Judaizers consider themselves better than others?

First of all, Paul concedes that they are believers in Christ (“brothers” in the Greek), but he calls them “false brothers.” They were from the party of the Pharisees, the strictest religious leaders of Judaism. They had more education and were the church leaders and teachers. He said earlier (v. 1:6-7) that “they are

throwing the Galatians into confusing and trying to pervert the Gospel of Christ.”

Sometimes people who put themselves up on a platform or project themselves as being better than you are really no better or are using their higher position or education in an inappropriate way and you have to stand up against it.

There’s a fellow in our church who is a real Bible scholar, and not a Sunday goes by that he doesn’t point out to the pastor and anyone else who will listen all the Biblical “mistakes” in the sermon. After 10 years of this, he has no friends at church and there is only one other (extremely nice) guy that will even listen to him. Paul certainly would have taken a stand against him.

8. Are there any man-made standards that you or other Christians impose on others, e.g., dress, speech, actions, etc.? How do you or others impose these rules?

These rules may be applied by actual publishing requirements (wedding invitation, entry to a restaurant or club, audience with the queen), by implied requirements (luncheon in the White House, meeting with company board of directors, applying for a bank loan), by suggestion (seeing everyone else wearing a tie, sitting down in a restaurant and saying to your group “I used to drink but I don’t anymore”). Don’t get the idea that all man-made standards are bad; they’re not. We have standards of cleanliness, hygiene, education, safety, medical care, and fairness that help our society function in a beneficial and efficient way.

9. In verse 6, Paul says that God does not show favoritism or judge by external appearances. What message(s) should we take from that statement? Give examples of how that message is or is not reinforced in our society.

Young Christians today love the middle phrase of this verse (God does not judge by external appearance), especially the International Standard Version (What sort of people they were makes no difference to me, since God pays no attention to outward appearances.) This idea is supported in other scripture as well, such as John 7:24 – “Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment.” To many people that means that it’s okay to come to church in torn jeans, short shorts, or whatever is comfortable because God doesn’t judge your appearance; he judges your heart. God loves you and he wants you to live in faith and obedience to his will. That’s all that matters.

This is correct to a degree. But your appearance and what you wear is also an indication of your respect, your honor and esteem for the creator of the universe. So in a sense, both are important: showing honor and respect to God by making yourself presentable but also focusing on developing a godly character.

10. What does caring for the poor (v. 10) have to do with telling others about Christ? What can we learn from this? (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

Christ said we should love others as we love ourselves. So caring for the poor

clearly shows that you are a Christ follower. But this particular verse has even more about the way we should give for the care of the poor.

This request from the leaders in Jerusalem was not that Paul care for the poor in Galatia, but that the Antioch church (in southern Galatia) should support the impoverished Jerusalem church financially. Paul had no hesitation in accepting this request and we know it was carried out.

1 Corinthians 16:1-3 – Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ² On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. ³ Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.

The way Paul carried out this request has four lessons for us.

- 1) *When to give*: the first day of the week, Sunday, was now the new day of worship and a collection was probably taken up at the worship service.
- 2) *Frequency of giving*: “every week.” Paul explains this is important so a special collection will not have to be taken up when he arrives. It is important to have a regular reminder that we are just stewards, that everything actually belongs to God. (2 Corinthians 9:3-5)
- 3) *Cheerfully given*. 2 Corinthians 9:5b – ... it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given.
- 4) *Amount of gift*: “a sum of money in keeping with his income” or “a certain part of what you have earned.”

11. How would you change the way you live your life if you unexpectedly inherited \$10 million? How do you think God would feel about your plan? With whom would you discuss your plan?

Galatians 2:1-10~ Scripture Verses [NIV, 1984]

Paul accepted by the Apostles

Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ²I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. ³Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴[This matter arose] because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

⁶As for those who seemed to be important—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance—those men added nothing to my message. ⁷On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. ⁸For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. ¹⁰All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.