

# GALATIANS

## Lesson 5 - 2:1-10 - “Standing For Truth”

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### *Galatians 2:1-10*

*v. 1-9 Then after in interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus long also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, thought he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.*

*v. 6-10 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor – the very thing I also was eager to do.*

Most scholars are agreed that Galatians 2:1-10 correlates with Paul’s visit to the Council in Jerusalem recorded in Acts, chapter 15. This Council most likely took place in A.D. 49. Here is a helpful timeline to help us in understanding the events Paul speaks of in Galatians through 2:10, squaring with the more detailed account in Acts 9-15. (Dates are within a year or two – scholars differ on specifics, but little on the flow)

### **EARLY PAULINE TIMELINE**

- A.D. 33 Jesus is crucified (Paul attends)
- A.D. 35 Paul converted by Jesus (Acts 9)
- A.D. 35-38 Paul in Arabia (1:17)
- A.D. 39 Damascus to Jerusalem to Tarsus (1:17-24)
- A.D. 44 Brought to Antioch to teach (Acts 11:25-26)
- A.D. 46 Takes a relief offering to Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30)
- A.D. 47 First missionary journey – into Galatia (Acts 13-14)
- A.D. 48 In Antioch for a “long time” (Acts 14:28)
- A.D. 49 With Barnabas & Titus, attends the Jerusalem Council (Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 15:1-35)

Note that the “interval of fourteen years” Paul speaks of in 2:1 is from his conversion to the Jerusalem Council. After his conversion, Paul measured time from the beginning of his new life in Christ. (*How long has it been since YOU were saved?? For me, it has been 53 years this month!*)

Note also that God was not in a “hurry” to send Paul out on the mission field. He spent 3 years in Arabia with God, some 6 years in Tarsus with family, and some 3 years in Antioch with the church there. Thus it was some 12 years from conversion to his first missionary journey. He was probably in his early 40’s at that time.

## **THE JERUSALEM COUNCIL**

The Council of Jerusalem, c. A.D. 49, was a BIG DEAL – for them & for us.

### **WHY Paul went**

Galatians 2:2 tells us that God had given a “revelation” to Paul to attend. Paul, as an apostle, enjoyed a special/supernatural man to God relationship. Think not that after the apostles these “revelations” still come – they were for the apostolic age.

Acts 15:2 tells us that the brethren from the church in Antioch “determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem.” From a human standpoint it always appears to be a decision of man, but from divine perspective is always about God’s guidance.

The “others” in Acts 15:2 would include Titus, as Paul mentions in Galatians 2:1

### **WITH WHOM Paul went**

Galatians 2:1 tells us that Paul went with Barnabas and Titus. Taking Titus was a “stroke of genius” because Titus was a Greek believer who had not been circumcised. Titus was to be the TEST CASE of the Jerusalem Council: must a Gentile believer become “Jewish?”

### **WHAT THE COUNCIL WAS ABOUT**

Acts 15:1 explains the essence of the controversy that prompted the Jerusalem Council: “unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”

TRUE or FALSE? The answer to this question would determine the course of the church as unified or split, almost from the beginning. Would Peter & Co. have one church and one gospel, while Paul & Co. would have another church and another gospel?? The stakes were high – for them, and for us. And Titus was to be Paul’s chief witness – the TEST CASE to determine the outcome.

This was the Council that would determine whether we were truly “free in Christ.”

This was the Council that would determine whether all Christians must become Jewish. Not all Jews were Christians, but must all Christians be Jewish? HIGH STAKES!

**Galatians 2:2** *It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.*

Galatians 2:2 says that Paul privately shared his gospel presentation with the Jerusalem apostles. It also tells us that he had a “fear that I might be running . . . in vain.” We must not think that he was fearful that his gospel message was faulty – God had clearly revealed the truth to him. And some 10 years ago he had gone to Jerusalem to be sure his message squared with the apostles (Galatians 1:18-19; Acts 9:26-31). There was indeed agreed unity of message, and Acts 9:31 relates the result:

**Acts 9:31** *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.*

So 10 years later, Paul did not come in fear that his message was faulty. Rather, he was in fear that the fruit of his ministry would be in jeopardy if Gentile converts were required by the Jerusalem apostles to be circumcised and follow other Jewish traditions. This would be a “false gospel.”

**Galatians 2:3** *But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*

This verse might seem to be relatively unimportant to us. We might just think that a Greek, Titus, didn’t want to be circumcised. BUT – this was the crux of the issue – did a Gentile Christian have to become “Jewish?” And Titus was not compelled to do so – he, with Paul’s teaching, knew that he was fully saved without circumcision and free in Christ through grace to choose not to be circumcised.

This Council brought the “death” of legalism. And it was PETER who led the way. Remember, Peter had seen a vision of unclean animals and been told by the Lord to “eat” them – an abomination to a Jew. Then the Lord revealed that it was a lesson that Peter must preach to the Gentiles as well, accepting them as full members of God’s family without becoming Jewish. He must “eat” them metaphorically, meaning to fully accept them as brothers in the faith. So, let’s read part of Peter’s speech given at the Jerusalem Council in A.D. 49:

**Acts 15:6-11** *The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”*

Wow! Go Peter! This is the “death” of legalism.

Not only does it say that faith is by grace alone – and it does say that, praise God!

It also says that we must not put “shackles” of regulations on fellow believers that please our personal idea of what a Christian, or Christian behavior should be.

Here are some examples of “shackles” that have been placed upon Christians and churches in the name of “righteousness” but rather are “legalism” and opinions, not Biblical command:

Length of hair, length of skirt, makeup, ear rings (male or female), tattoos, smoking, drinking (not to excess), use of drums in worship service, volume of music, style of music, appropriate dress for church, dancing, playing of cards, playing of certain board games, preference of musical style listened to, going to a movie theater, or dance hall, kind of books read, schools attended – Christian vs. non-Christian, careers entered into, and on and on.

Now, certainly we must apply wisdom and common sense, as well as social appropriateness to our choices. God warns us not to be a stumbling block by flaunting our freedom. He also warns not to be held captive or “addicted” to our choices or preferences. We are also to be subject to our parents and leaders, despite our preferences. We must ever watch that our freedom of choice does not in any way compromise our devotion to our God and Savior.

BUT – these are not issues that determine salvation or good Christian character. They are not to be issues that divide us, or make us take sides in the church. Just as Paul stood up for truth in defending our Christian freedom, so we must do the same, not holding others to our personal standards of what is right – unless clearly taught as such in Scripture.

Notice in v. 5 that Paul “did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.” He stood strong for the truth.

And how glad we must be that he did – or else our Christian faith and membership covenant might be a collection of do’s and don’ts, rather than a receiving of God’s unconditional love and grace.

In v. 9 Paul received from the Jerusalem apostles the “right hand of fellowship.” The word “fellowship” comes from the Greek word “koinonia” which is the deep bond of love and grace shared between believers. They agreed to each concentrate on their own calling (sharing the gospel to Jews or to Gentiles), yet they were united in the Lord.

Questions: **Are you “sectarian?”** – meaning, do you have a low view of Christians with distinction of belief and practice different from yours that have less to do with the core gospel beliefs and more to do with specific convictions about ethical behavior or church policy. **Are you “classist?”** – meaning, do you have attitudes that put some Christians into a different “class” than yourself. Does race, social status, intelligence, or age make you want to associate less with certain Christians than others? Would you politely sit by “those

other people” in church but not invite them into your home or associate with them outside of church? Do we REALLY have a deep fellowship with ALL of the members of our Oaks family? I’m not saying that everyone will be your “best friend” – but are their distinctions? There shouldn’t be.

Paul stood up for the TRUTH that was in danger of being compromised in his day. And because he did, that freedom in Christ which is GRACE is taught yet today.

Later in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Martin Luther stood up for TRUTH in his day, and because he did, it is still taught that salvation is by grace alone, and not in any way by what we do.

Let me close with some of today’s challenges to the TRUTH of God’s word. Will we stand up to them – will we fight for truth in our generation?? I give you 7 “hot issues.”

1. The TRUTH is that our universe was created by an act of God. This is under attack.
2. The TRUTH is that marriage is between a man and a woman. This is under attack.
3. The TRUTH is that sexual relationship outside of the bond of marriage is sin. This is under attack.
4. The TRUTH is that homosexual behavior is abhorrent to God and is unnatural and sinful for humans. This is under attack.
5. The TRUTH is that life begins at conception, not at birth. This is under attack.
6. The TRUTH is that the church, both collective and individual, is loved by God as His bride, for whom he died and through whom he carries out his ministry to the world. This is under attack.
7. The TRUTH is that Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man, and that no one can come to God apart from Him. This is under attack.

Let us stand unwaveringly for the GRACE and UNITY of God’s church.

Let us stand unashamedly for the TRUTH of God’s Word.

Amen.