

The Letter of St. Paul To the Galatians

Thursday Morning Bible Study
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

1

Recap: Paul's Gospel from Christ

- Paul has stated in Ch. 1 that his Gospel came from God, and was accepted by the Apostles.
- 3 years after his conversion, he was chased out of Damascus and went to Jerusalem (Acts 9)
- Paul had to escape from Jerusalem and went back to Tarsus. While in Tarsus, Peter has his vision to go to Cornelius (Acts 10)

2

Paul was accepted by the Apostles

- Acts 11 tells the story of a large number of Gentiles come to faith in Antioch. Barnabas is sent from Jerusalem and gets Paul from Tarsus to help him.
- As the result of a vision prophesying a famine, the church in Antioch sends Paul to Jerusalem with gifts to help them prepare.

3

Paul was accepted by the Apostles

- V. 1 – Paul had been by himself for 14 years after his conversion. He would have spent his time studying the Torah to confirm Jesus as the Messiah.
- Paul was eager to go to Jerusalem. Here is where the chief leaders were: James, the brother of Jesus, Peter and John Paul wants the affirmation of the apostolic leaders that his Gospel is true and correct. Without that affirmation, Paul would be teaching in vain.

4

Paul was accepted by the Apostles

- Paul brings Barnabas and Titus: Barnabas was from the inner circle in Jerusalem. Titus was a God-fearing Gentile from Antioch who was not circumcised. He is Paul’s “test case”
- V. 2 – Paul goes to Jerusalem because of another revelation. Paul is a mystic.
- The gift that Paul brings to Jerusalem will help prepare for the famine to come, but also give him the chance for apostolic approval.

5

Paul was accepted by the Apostles

- V. 2 – “The Gospel that I preach” – Paul has been preaching a different message than what has been proclaimed in Jerusalem, so Paul wants their approval. If his Gospel is rejected, then he has no basis for his teaching. He is running in vain.
- The apostles had the authority of “binding and loosing”. They could stop Paul or approve of him.
- V. 3 – To show the Galatians that he was approved, Titus was not compelled to be circumcised.

6

Paul was accepted by the Apostles

- V. 4 – “False brothers” infiltrated. They are “brothers” in that they were Jewish believers. They were “false” because of their methods.
- They had come to Antioch to check out what was going on there, but did not openly tell Paul and Barnabas why they were there.
- For Paul, to require the Gentiles to be circumcised was to put the freedom of the Gospel in jeopardy.

7

Circumcision

- Circumcision is not about the physical act. It is a short-hand term for full conversion.
- For a man, conversion to Judaism meant circumcision, baptism, name change, an offering in the temple, and the willingness to take on all the obligations of the Torah. (For a woman, it was 3 of the 4!)
- God told Abraham that all males must be circumcised. Paul said that through faith, Gentiles were also sons of Abraham. But the sign of the covenant was circumcision.

8

Paul fights for the truth of the Gospel

- V. 4 – “We” refers to Paul, Barnabas, Titus, and the believers in Antioch. The “slavery” would be that the God-fearing Gentiles must go through full conversion when they became believers.
- V. 5 - Paul did not yield to these men for a minute so that the truth might be preserved.
- The “we” here includes the apostolic leaders. In the end, the leaders endorse Paul’s gospel.

9

Paul’s Gospel is approved

- V. 6 – “Those who seem to be important” is not as insulting as it sounds to us. It’s a rabbinic term to show that what was important was that they did not change his Gospel in any way.
- V. 7 – They saw that Paul’s revelation was indeed true, but had a different purpose. Paul’s gospel was for the Gentiles; Peter’s gospel was for the Jews.
- V. 8 – The God of distinctions. Oneness does not mean sameness. Unity does not mean uniformity.

10

The Three Pillars give approval

- V. 9 – In the Jewish “Midrash” (a collection of Jewish teachings) Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are called “The Three Pillars.” In the Christian community, Peter, James and John are The Three Pillars. They have the position of authority given by Jesus himself.
- The right hand of fellowship is their commissioning of Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

11

Remember the Poor

- V. 10 – Paul was asked “to remember the poor”.
- It does not mean that he should support the poor financially.
- To “remember” is not just to be mindful of something, but to act on it.
- “The Poor” was the Jerusalem community of believers with James, Peter and Paul as their head. Paul is to remember their authority and act accordingly.

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