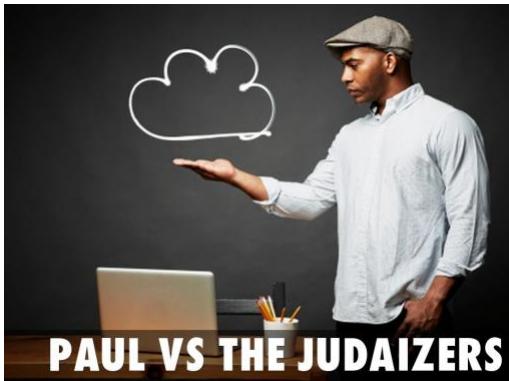




Galatians 2 New International Version (NIV)

Paul Accepted by the Apostles

2 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ²I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. ³Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴This matter arose because some false believers 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 be preserved for you.



Paul continues his theme in this passage of fighting against the Judaizers. These were those that came along behind him as he shared they gospel. It was hard for them to accept that JESUS ALONE was enough to save. Basically, they wanted to require everyone who was coming to Christ to also be an observant Jew. As I look at this chapter of scripture, several things jump out at me. I think the easiest way to analyze it will be to just walk through the text and make commentary as we work our way through it.

Paul continues to preach the “finished work of Jesus Christ”. Paul constantly in this letter drives the point home that it is JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING. You might have never heard the phrase “the finished work of Jesus”, but it is a beautiful phrase. When I use that term I am saying that when Jesus went to the cross for you and for me, HE DID IT ALL. HE FINISHED IT. THE BUSINESS OF SAVING MANKIND WAS TAKEN CARE OF. Paul is trying to say over and over that “Jesus alone is enough.” When He said, “It is finished” on the cross, He meant it.



Paul starts off saying that he, Titus, and Barnabas went up to Jerusalem. If you will remember, Paul first went to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion. He went there to make sure that what he had received from the Lord was in fact divine revelation. Then in 14 years (either after his conversion or after that three year period when he was in Arabia and

Damascus, Paul went to meet with some of the early elders of the Church.

Before I talk about the implications of Paul taking Titus (a gentile), I want to talk about that time that Paul was alone in Arabia, Damascus, and then Tarsus. I had a seminary professor that referred to this time as when Paul was in seminary. Some scholars think that after his conversion, he spent time in Arabia possibly at Sinai receiving instruction directly from the Lord. It would be rational for Paul to go to Sinai where God has revealed His law to His people some 1,000 years prior to Paul's conversion. We don't know exactly how this revelation might have happened, but Paul does talk about instructions that he had received. You'll hear it today when I read his writings concerning the instruction he was given for observing communion. So in this time of instruction Paul had spent over a decade since coming to faith in Christ, learning about matters of the faith, and after the time in Arabia, much of Paul's time was spent in Tarsus. Scholars think that perhaps as he worked there the Lord steadily revealed to him the outline of what was to be the doctrine of the Christian church.

Anyway, here Paul is taking Titus to Jerusalem. He took Titus and Barnabas to see those who were esteemed as leaders there. What's so unusual about this? Well, Titus was a gentile and he was not circumcised. Paul was taking Titus into the very heart of early Christian Judaism to see what reaction these leaders would have to having Titus among them. It was a test of sorts to see how the church fathers would react to Titus. Would they be able to accept Titus as a fellow believer without him being Jewish at all.

The problem was that as some Jews became Christians they just couldn't accept the fact that gentiles were loved and saved by God. It was outside of their thinking of what a Christian should look like.



We've all experienced the feeling of being uncomfortable when someone mixes something in to be a "good Christian". We have been set free in Christ. Let me give you a couple of obvious examples that some of us might relate to. When I was first called to Union Grove, I talked for example about alcohol. Alcohol is a gift from the Lord. It does not make you more holy before God to be a tea totaller. If you choose to refrain from alcohol because

you're unable to enjoy it without abusing it, then DON'T DRINK. If you choose to not drink for health reasons, then DON'T DRINK. But don't ever confuse "not drinking alcohol" with somehow being more holy and righteous before God. That thinking is not found in scripture.

I've told you guys over and over that I don't watch television. I don't watch it for a lot of reasons. I think most of the content of TV is worldly and base. I personally find TV to be very boring. In times like these, watching TV would probably drive me over the edge emotionally. But it doesn't mean that YOU should feel guilty because you watch television. There is nothing holy about being a person who doesn't watch TV. I think if you do watch TV and network

programming holiness DOES require that you are very careful what you let come into your mind. But NOT WATCHING TV doesn't NOT make me more holy before God. Think of it sort of in an opposite way. I am holy THEREFORE there is certain conduct I will refrain from doing. But REFRAINING FROM DOING CERTAIN CONDUCT DOES NOT MAKE ME HOLY. I am holy and you are holy NOT BECAUSE OF ANYTHING WE'VE DONE, but because I've put my faith in the precious blood of Jesus and the finished work on the cross.

When you take hold of the finished work of Jesus you'll get off of that human performance track that will get you in a rut. You'll wear yourself out trying to perform or stay in a rut. When Jesus did what He did on the cross, HE FINISHED THE WORK. THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN ADD.

Let's continue on with verse 6.

⁶As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message. ⁷On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter had been to the circumcised. ⁸For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as 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 circumcised. ¹⁰All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

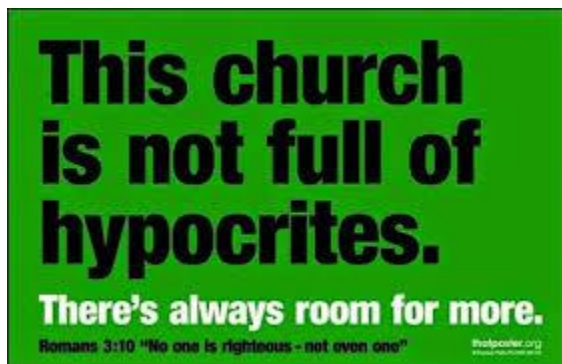
Paul then goes on to say that after he told the Church Fathers what he had learned, they added nothing to his message. He said, on the contrary they recognized the calling on Paul's life. God called Paul specifically to minister to the gentiles. God entrusted the gospel to him to bring the gospel to the uncircumcised. In the same way Peter was called to bring the gospel to the "circumcised", the Jews. He then mentions James (the brother of Jesus), Cephas (the Hebrew name for Peter), and John (the disciple whom Jesus loved). He said that these three "pillars" extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas, realizing the grace that had been poured out on Paul. He also pointed out that God has no favorites, and although these leaders had been disciples to the Lord, we are all equal at the foot of the cross. After explaining what His message was to the gentiles, the church fathers just asked Paul and Barnabas to not forget the poor. He adds that he had always been eager to do that sort of ministry all along.

Paul then continues.

¹¹When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. ¹⁴When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?" ¹⁵"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ¹⁶know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we, too, have put our faith in

Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

Paul really exposes the fallacy of living a hypocritical life. The Judaizers and legalists came along and shamed him. Paul calls out Peter for acting like a Jew when the Judaizers showed up and acting like a gentile when they were gone. Probably Peter was just worn down with the whole struggle. There are all kinds of forces in the world that want to wear us down from following Jesus. Peter probably just got worn down with the fight. I'd like to encourage you today to not get worn down in the fight of faith.



I think Paul is talking about this because he sees the problem with hypocrisy. And things can be especially poisonous when a leader is hypocritical. It is deadly to the faith of others. If you guys see me preaching one way and living another way, it weakens your resolve to stand on the power of God's Word. It will demoralize you and make you wonder what's the use of trying. The power of influence is enormous. We are all being pressured these days to give up and to take in the negativity

around us. I would caution you to avoid influences that are dragging you down. We have a great need to be influenced by godly people. Seek out godly people who walk the walk and walk the talk. If you get down and get discouraged, you'll falter and you'll fail. When you come into this fellowship you should be built up and you should feel good about your faith and be equipped and ready to go another day!

Paul then says, ¹⁷ *“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.*

This is one of those thoughts of Paul that's hard to understand. What he's saying to Jews is something like “hey, I know it bothers you hanging around gentiles/sinners/dogs. Don't think that it is. You know I wouldn't suggest anything that pulled down the proper use of the law.”

Let's now finish with probably one of the greatest couple of verses in the Bible.

¹⁹ “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

HERE'S THAT SAME COUPLE OF VERSES IN THE MESSAGE

19-21 What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn't work. So, I quit being a "law man" so that I could be God's man. Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God's grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.

So Union Grove, the message this morning is the same message. You and I have a wonderful freedom in Christ. We are not to live lives of rule-keeping. Let Christ come into you and let Him live through you. Righteous living FOLLOWS being made HOLY IN CHRIST. It cannot be the other way around or you'll be miserable. Some of you have tried being perfect and it doesn't get you there. Here's the order of things this morning:

- 1 If you don't know Him, accept His grace, the free gift that He gave you on the cross.
- 2 If you do know Him, but you're trying to live out a life of rules and regulations to be a "holy person", stop doing that today and rejoice in the freedom you have in Christ.
- 3 If you are in Christ, ask Him to change your heart to have a desire to live your life in a way that is pleasing to Him.
- 4 REJOICE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT JESUS + NOTHING = EVERYTHING

Let us pray.

