

BIG IDEA
The False Gospel Divides
The True Gospel Unites

Title Card

Well, good morning, everyone.

We're continuing in our series **Witness for the Defense: Defending the True Gospel of Faith** this morning, which is a study of the book of Galatians. If you'll remember from our first two sermons in this series in November and December, this is the first letter Paul wrote.

And the reason he wrote this letter is because after he had established the church in Galatia, false teachers came in after he left and somehow were able to convince the Galatians that Paul was a false apostle whose gospel was wrong, incomplete.

These false teachers told the Galatians that Paul's gospel of faith alone wasn't enough to ensure salvation, that one must add works to their faith in order to be truly saved.

And so Paul takes pen in hand and sets out to defend the True Gospel of Faith from the lies of these false teachers. And in doing so, he presents his defense much like a lawyer arguing their case in a court of law.

In our first two messages, Paul presented his opening statement, introducing himself to the court and spelling out the charge and the penalty if found guilty of preaching a false gospel.

As part of his opening statement, Paul reassures the Galatians of the apostolic calling he received directly from Jesus Himself and contrasted that with the false teachers who were most assuredly **NOT** appointed as apostles by the Lord.

After finishing his opening statement, Paul now calls his first witness, his fellow laborer, Titus.

In presenting Titus to the court, he reminds us of the important role Titus played in uniting the church, which was on the verge of splitting along Jewish and Gentile lines.

In today's message, we'll see that Paul calls to mind a meeting in Jerusalem where the Apostles and leaders settled and rejected this idea of faith plus works once and for all. As we'll see just a little later in our message, this was a crucial moment in church history where there was a very real possibility that the church would split. And Titus was instrumental in the unity that prevailed.

This concept of division and unity is actually our Big Idea for this morning, the point I want you to remember about this morning's sermon:

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The False Gospel Divides
The True Gospel Unites

As we study the first 10 verses in Chapter 2, we'll see how the false teachers with their false gospel were dividing the church while Paul's True Gospel of Faith united those early believers.

So why don't we dig into our passage this morning and see how the testimony of Titus calls upon Christian believers to unite in the True Gospel of Faith.

I First Point – Unity Threatened

In the first 2 verses, Paul lets us know that the unity of the Church was threatened by these false teachers and their false gospel:

Galatians 2:1 – Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ESV

So a little backstory on Titus.

A Little Backstory on Titus

To begin with, we don't know much about Titus before we meet him here in Galatians. But based on what we read here and in a few other places in the New Testament, Titus was a trusted friend and co-worker of Paul's, someone Paul trusted with some of the most important ministries in Paul's life.

The first mention of Titus in the Bible is here in our text this morning. Paul is referring to a meeting in Jerusalem that was called to discuss the issue of whether or not Gentiles had to follow the Old Testament Law in order to be saved, especially whether or not Gentiles had to be circumcised as a condition of salvation.

You have to remember, at this point in time, the vast majority of believers were Jews who had come to believe in Jesus as their Messiah. Every one of these Jewish believers were raised in the Old Testament Law. They were taught and lived with such things as dietary restrictions, clothing restrictions, celebrating Jewish holy days like Passover and, of course, circumcision.

So we have the vast majority of believers who were Jewish. To them, Christianity was the culmination or fulfillment of Jewish belief. It seemed only natural to many of them that believers in Christ, whether Jews or converted Gentiles, had to follow Jewish law.

And this became a problem for the new belief as everyone – Jews and Gentiles – were being taught that the only thing necessary for salvation was belief in Jesus Christ. But many Jews continued to live their lives following the Law, it only seemed natural to them.

But Gentiles never had followed Jewish law. They ate pork, blended different materials to make their clothes and the Gentile men most certainly were not circumcised. All in contradiction to the Law.

Naturally, many Jewish Christians believed Gentiles had to follow Jewish customs and laws and, just as naturally, Gentile Christians believed they didn't have to. Especially that whole circumcision thing. Seriously, who wants that kind of pain as an adult?

So the church leadership met in Jerusalem to discuss this issue and settle it, once and for all.

And as an Apostle, Paul shows up to this meeting with young Titus in tow.

Titus was not a Jew, that is, he was not born into a Jewish family. Nor was he a proselyte, that is, a Gentile who had converted to Judaism at some point. He was not now, nor had he ever been, observant of the Law. He ate whatever he wanted, wore whatever he wanted and he was not circumcised.

But Titus was a believer in Jesus Christ for eternal life and the Bible said he had the Holy Spirit.

As we'll see when we get to verse 3, the leadership decided not to force Titus to be circumcised. Acts says that after things like much discussion, searching the scriptures, reviewing what Jesus said in His earthly ministry and much prayer, they came to the conclusion that faith in Jesus was the one and only criteria for salvation.

Titus – and by extension all Gentiles – were accepted into fellowship with Jewish believers based solely on the grace of God based on their faith in Jesus, nothing more.

Titus became one of Paul's most trusted co-workers in spreading the Gospel, spending years by his side. He joined Paul on both his second and third missionary journeys.

So, what kind of man is Titus? I mean, sure, we've got some biographical information on him, but what kind of person was he? Can we get to know the real person, the real Titus?

Well, I think so. I think we can get an idea of the type of man Titus was.

I'd like us to look at several passages and see what Paul has to say about his friend, Titus, in order to get an idea of who he was.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 8, Paul tells the Corinthians:

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 – 16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ESV

So, Paul decided to send Titus as part of a delegation to Corinth to help them with all the troubles they'd been having. And the Corinthians had a **LOT** of troubles, which we'll review in just a few moments.

In verse 16, Paul tells the Corinthians that Titus has the same, "earnest care" for them that he does.

spoude

To invest one's self most earnestly

In the Greek, this is a single word, spoude. It means to invest one's self most earnestly.

Paul is saying that Titus is just as invested in the welfare and spiritual growth of the Corinthians as Paul himself is. That's quite a recommendation, if you ask me.

But there's an aspect to this phrase that is lost in the translation, a little nuance that doesn't show up in English. This word spoude carries with it the concept of eagerness or haste.

Not only did Titus care enough to visit the Corinthians and work with them on their problems and issues, but he couldn't wait to get there! His love for the Corinthians meant that he was in a hurry to travel hundreds of miles just to help them.

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 – 16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal but being himself very earnest his is going to you of his own accord. ESV

And just to make sure there's no doubt in the Corinthian's minds that Titus is the man to help, Paul says that Titus is, "earnest" in verse 17, which means more prompt, very diligent, zealous in Greek.

That is, Titus can't wait to get to Corinth and help them sort out their problems and theology. He's eager to leave, he wants to leave as soon as possible so he can arrive in Corinth as soon as possible.

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 – 16 But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. 17 For he not only accepted our appeal but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord. ESV

And not only that, but you see the last part of verse 17, where Paul said Titus is, “going to you of his own accord?”

Accord in Greek is where we get our word authority from. Paul was letting the Corinthians know that Titus wasn't just going to Corinth because Paul asked him to. He wasn't just fulfilling some chore he had to do, he wasn't just doing Paul a favor or obeying his boss. No, he **WANTED** to go to Corinth. One gets the sense that even if Paul hadn't asked Titus to go, he would've volunteered to go, probably would've begged Paul to let him go.

2 Corinthians 8:23 – As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. ESV

Then in verse 23, Paul calls Titus his, “partner” and, “fellow worker.” If you'll remember from our last series on the book of Philippians, these descriptors are similar to terms Paul used to describe the partnership he had with the Philippian church. Paul is saying that his relationship with Titus is similar to a business partnership, where all partners are equally invested in the success of their business.

Partners share equally in the success or failure of their business, so, as you might imagine, the partners must work together to ensure their business succeeds.

By referring to Titus as his partner and fellow worker, Paul was saying that Titus was just as invested in the success of the Corinthian believers as Paul was and that they were working together to ensure that success.

So, in his letter to the Corinthians, we start to get a sense of who Titus was.

Then, in Paul's letter to Titus many years later, Paul writes:

Titus 1:4 – To Titus, my true child in a common faith: ESV

Paul is using a term in Greek that refers to an intimate and reciprocal relationship formed by the bonds of love, friendship and trust, just as the relationship is formed between parents and children.

Like Timothy, Paul looks upon Titus as a son. In Paul's heart, Titus is Paul's child and Paul is his father in the faith.

The bond between Paul and Titus is so strong and the trust between them is so deep, that Paul appointed Titus to shepherd the two most troublesome churches in the world: Corinth and Crete.

Remember, Paul sent Titus to Corinth to help them resolve some troubles and issues they were facing. Corinth was arguably the most troubled church in the world at that time.

Listen to a list of the problems the Corinthian church was facing:

- **Arrogance**
- **Disdain**
- **Poor reputation**
- **Division**
- **Insistence on their own, individual rights**
- **Love of social standing**
- **Disregard of God’s holiness**
- **Open rebellion against Paul**
- **Rampant sexual immorality**
- **Unaddressed affair between a member and his stepmother**

- **Divided over the arrogance of some of the more prominent members.**
- **Disdain for “weaker” members who were struggling with their faith.**
- **They had a poor reputation among the unbelievers of Corinth.**
- **Disagreements and arguments over marriage-divorce-remarriage, participating in pagan religious festivals, the concept of resurrection, even how to conduct their worship services.**
- **A self-centered insistence on their own, individual rights as opposed to the rights of others.**
- **A self-centered insistence on their own, individual social advancement rather than the advancement of the Gospel.**
- **Disregarding God’s standard for holiness in their lives.**
- **An open rebellion against Paul’s authority as an apostle.**
- **Rampant sexual immorality.**
- **A man who was having an affair with his own stepmother without any sense of shame on his part and without any sense of church discipline on the part of the church elders.**

And it was into this quagmire that Paul sent Titus to straighten things out. No problem, right? But what a picture we can get of Titus from this story. Who would Paul send to rebuke the Corinthians, correct their theology and behavior and set them on the right path but someone who was loved and trusted by Paul, someone who would love the Corinthians as much as Paul did?

He wouldn’t send just anyone. He would send someone who was a spiritual elder, a spiritual leader, someone who was loved, respected and trusted by both Paul and the Corinthians.

And who did he send? He sent Titus.

But Corinth isn't the only time Paul trusted Titus implicitly to lead a congregation that was in danger. About 7 or 8 years later, Paul appointed Titus as pastor to the floundering church on the island of Crete.

Crete had similar problems as Corinth: Rampant sexual immorality, false teachers who were trying to cast doubts on Paul's apostleship, a complete disregard for God's standards of holiness, and so on.

Interesting little side note, in both Corinth and Crete, the ancient world had colloquial sayings that described how they viewed both places.

Corinth was known as the capital of temple prostitutes in the first century. At some point, the phrase Korinthazesthai was coined which means sexual promiscuity. Korinthios Kore or Corinthian Girl was a euphemism for a prostitute, while the phrase, "to act the Corinthian" was used to describe someone who lived a life of debauchery.

It wasn't that much better over in Crete. The Cretans were thought to be gluttons in food, drink and sex and were considered to be liars, untrustworthy and lazy by the rest of the Roman empire.

Cretin

Stupid, vulgar or insensitive — Merriam Webster

It's where we get our word cretin from, which means stupid, vulgar or insensitive.

So, as you can see, both Corinth and Crete had some significant issues that had to be dealt with. Paul had to find someone he could trust to love these congregations back to the truth. And he chose Titus.

So who was Titus? Titus was someone who was trustworthy, someone who was a spiritual leader, someone who loved the Corinthians and the Cretans as much as Paul did. He was faithful, kind, sincere and loving who had a firm grasp on the theology of this fledgling faith of Christianity.

Why is all this information important? Why did Paul call Titus as his first witness in his defense of the True Gospel of Faith?

Well, in verse 2, Paul says:

Galatians 2:2 – I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ESV

So Paul received a revelation from the Lord that he should travel to Jerusalem and meet with the other Apostles and leaders of the church and he brought Titus along.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul and Titus first met with the leaders and other Apostles. According to verse 9, this group included Peter, James and John. Others may have been present, but these three were definitely in attendance.

And Paul's reason for attending and bringing Titus with him? It's found here in verse 2.

Paul was preaching that the only thing needed for salvation was faith in Jesus Christ. Conversion to Judaism was not necessary, adherence to the Old Testament Law was not necessary, meaning circumcision was not necessary.

Remember from our earlier discussion, though, there were some who taught that Gentiles had to convert to Judaism and follow the OT Law, including circumcision. They taught that these things were necessary for salvation.

These false teachers were teaching that if Gentiles failed to convert and receive circumcision, then they weren't really saved. And of course, the Gentile believers were quite upset over this, believing that circumcision and the OT Law were **NOT** requirements for salvation.

And this schism threatened to tear the young church apart.

Paul alludes to this threat at the end of verse 2:

Galatians 2:2 – I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ESV

Paul said that he spoke to the other Apostles about the gospel he was preaching, "in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain."

A cursory reading of this phrase might lead one to believe that Paul was starting to doubt the True Gospel of Faith he had been preaching. Perhaps he was having second thoughts and needed to clarify the truth regarding Gentiles and the Law, so he had to confer with the other Apostles to find out what was true and what was false.

But a deeper reading of this phrase reveals that's not what Paul is saying here.

Theologians who are far more versed in Greek word definitions and sentence structure than I will ever be, have studied this verse in great detail in the original Greek and they all seem to come to the same conclusion:

Paul isn't worried that he'd been wrong this whole time and maybe those other guys were right, rather he was worried that the church could be divided over this issue.

My Nelson Study Bible says this about Paul's meeting with the other Apostles:

...(this) does not mean he considered altering his gospel, as the following section (verses 3-10) clearly shows. "In vain" does not reflect on the effectiveness of Paul's gospel, but rather on his efforts to maintain a unity in the church without sacrificing the truth of the gospel, as he states in verse 5.

And theologian Marvin R. Vincent paraphrases Paul's statement as:

I laid before them that gospel which I preach to the Gentiles, that they might examine and settle for themselves the question *whether I am not running or had run in vain.* — Marvin R. Vincent

Vincent further explains what Paul meant by saying:

The investigation was to be for *their* satisfaction, not for Paul's. — Marvin R. Vincent

Paul was never worried that he had been preaching the wrong gospel for the past 14 years.

Remember, from our previous messages, he had received this gospel not from other men, not even from the other Apostles, but from Jesus Christ Himself.

One must conclude that if God is perfect and cannot be wrong, then logically, it would be impossible for God to teach the wrong gospel to Paul, or anyone else for that matter.

Since Paul received instruction directly from the Lord, then logically, Paul's gospel is correct.

The whole purpose of the meeting was similar to the meeting Paul had with Peter a little over a decade earlier and that we discussed in our last sermon: He agreed to be interviewed in order to ensure the church remained unified around the True Gospel of Faith.

So in the first 2 verses, we see that the unity of the church was threatened. If the false gospel of faith plus works were to take hold, it would divide believers, it would divide the church. But ultimately, we find the True Gospel of Faith united believers in the grace of God, which is our Big Idea this morning:

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II Second Point –Division Avoided

In verses 1-2, we saw that the unity of the early church was threatened by the insistence of some that everyone – Jews and Gentiles – had to follow the OT Law in addition to simply believing in Jesus for eternal life.

In verses 3-5, Paul tells us how Division was avoided.

After meeting with the other Apostles and presenting the gospel he's been preaching for past 14 years, the issue was fully resolved as we see in verse 3:

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

If the false teachers and their gospel were correct, that Gentiles had to convert to Judaism and follow OT Law, then the Apostles would have ordered Titus to undergo circumcision.

But since the Apostles, including Paul, were teaching the True Gospel of Faith, then they ruled that Titus was a believer based solely on his profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Following the OT Law and being circumcised was unnecessary.

This was extremely important for the early church, because as we found just a few moments ago, there was a very real threat that the church could split along these lines.

And the church was spared this split because the Apostles ruled that Titus – and by extension, all Gentiles – did not need to be circumcised. Their faith in Christ brought them forgiveness from their sins and they were saved just as much as Jews who had followed the OT Law their entire lives.

The Apostles decreed that salvation is obtained solely by the grace of God based solely on our faith in Jesus Christ. Conversion to Judaism and following the OT Law such as circumcision was and is completely unnecessary. All that is necessary is faith in Christ, nothing else.

In effect, Titus was a test case. My ESV study bible makes that point, my Ryrie study bible makes that point and my Nelson study bible makes that point.

Charles Ryrie said it this way:

Titus was a test case. If he were compelled to be circumcised, then other Gentile believers could be too; if not, then freedom from the law was confirmed. Charles C. Ryrie

That is, if circumcision would have been required for Titus, it would be a signal to everyone, Jews and Gentiles, that following Jewish Law was a requirement for

salvation. But this is the exact opposite of what Jesus taught the Apostles, that salvation is God's gift to those who believe on His Son.

Then, In verse 4, Paul writes:

Galatians 2:4 – Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in – who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery – ESV

You see the term, "false brothers" in the beginning of the verse? These were men who said they were Christians, but they weren't. They claimed to be fellow believers, brothers in Christ, but they weren't.

The goal of a real brother in Christ would be to free everyone from a life of hopelessness, found in a life of enslavement to the Law and works.

But Paul recognized them as false brothers because they refused to confess that salvation was God's gift through faith alone.

Their goal was not to liberate but to enslave Christians to works such as circumcision and obeying the Law, a betrayal of the freedom we have in Christ.

Paul realized they were false brothers because he saw them for who they really were: A group of unbelievers who had never preached the True Gospel of Faith.

The false brothers pretended they knew the truth, when in fact they were teaching a lie. And they were able to experience some success because, as we said earlier, it only seems natural for Jewish Christians to continue living the life they've always known and it only seems natural that Gentiles would have to live this life as well.

And so these false brothers were able to persuade many in the church that they were right, that one must follow the OT Law and be circumcised in order to receive eternal life.

And these false brothers were very convincing. Paul spent his entire life after his conversion fighting against these false teachers and their false gospel, that's how convincing they were.

This is what happened to the Galatians. False brothers came into Galatia after Paul left and convinced the Galatians that their salvation was incomplete, that Paul's gospel was wrong, that they needed to add works to their faith. Just like the false brothers Paul mentions in this story of the Jerusalem meeting.

Believers can get confused when it comes to theology. We're not immune. Remember, these false brothers tricked not only unbelievers, but they came into the church and tricked people who were already believers! That's why it's so important that we study God's Word, seeking the truth.



In the book, “**Free Grace Theology: 5 Ways It Magnifies the Gospel**,” one of the authors, Jeremy Edmondson, has this to say about the importance of seeking the truth found in the Word of God and how it can provide a defense against false teaching:

It is essential to let the Bible shape our theology rather than bringing a theology or assumption to the text. When this happens, all one does is come to biblically unsupportable conclusions that reinforce a system that is derived from men and not from God. Jeremy Edmondson

He goes on to say:

We are all responsible to persistently pursue God in the Scriptures and ask humbly for the leading of the Holy Spirit and wisdom in discernment. This cannot be stressed too strongly. Jeremy Edmondson

Study the Word, delve into it...this is our only defense against a false gospel taught by false brothers.

That’s why it’s so important that we remember the truth of the Gospel as spelled out in multiple passages in Scripture – salvation is by Grace Alone through Faith Alone in Christ Alone.

The story is the same, whether it’s Jerusalem or Galatia or modern day America – false teachers will come in and try to convince believers that their faith is lacking if they don’t add works.

But Paul has the answer to resisting and overcoming these false brothers with their false gospel of faith plus works. Look at verse 5:

Galatians 2:5 – to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ESV

Paul refused to allow them even an inch with their false gospel of faith plus works.

Paul's response to the false brothers was of huge importance because if he had yielded for the sake of keeping the peace, then Gentiles would have to convert to Judaism and keep the OT Law in a vain attempt to earn God's love and forgiveness. The True Gospel of Faith might have died right then and there.

Because Paul never gave space to the false teachers and their false gospel of faith plus works, the Galatians could trust Paul's True Gospel of Faith, which had been revealed to him by God.

One Bible scholar puts it this way: Grace is for everyone. To compromise this truth was unthinkable.

You know, there's an important truth here regarding peace, unity and how to deal with those who believe differently than we do. What I'm about to say isn't new, I didn't come up with it, but it's true and the principle is one that bears repeating:

**In essentials, unity.
In secondary issues, grace.
In heresy, opposition.**

Regarding the essentials of the Christian faith, such as how someone receives salvation, the nature of Christ and His death, burial and resurrection, the inerrancy of Scripture, etc., we should ensure unity within the body of believers.

But not every believer will agree with everything we say or teach. As we move past the essentials of the faith and move into secondary areas such as how a worship service should be conducted, the type of music we listen to, whether we can drink alcohol or must abstain completely, etc., believers should show grace to one another.

But when heresy arises from false brothers, then we must confront that false teaching and ensure the True Gospel of Faith is proclaimed.

I'm not making this up. Scripture tells us this very thing when Paul addressed confronting false teachers and their false teaching in his letter to Titus almost 15 after this letter to the Galatians.

He tells Titus in chapter 1 verse 11 how to deal with false teachers:

Titus 1:11 – They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach. ESV

Paul told Titus that he was to confront these false teachers and silence them. Pretty straightforward, not a whole lot of room for interpretation there.

Titus 1:11 – Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. KJV

I like the way the King James version puts it: Whose mouths must be stopped. This is one reason why I love the King James. It’s very colorful!

In our passages from Galatians and the letter to Titus, we realize that there are times when it’s appropriate to confront another person: when their false teaching creates a very real risk of leading people astray from the True Gospel of Faith.

The testimony of Titus first reminded the Galatians of the threat of division from the false gospel of faith plus works, then showed us how Paul avoided the division by confronting the heresy head on with the truth.

In the first 5 verses chapter 2, we see our Big Idea in action:

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III Third Point – Unity Prevailed

So, to recap our message this morning:

In verses 1 and 2, Paul reminds us that the unity of the church was threatened by the false teachers who were teaching their false gospel of faith plus works.

Then in verses 3, 4 and 5, we saw that Paul, with Titus, opposed those false brothers and division was avoided. The church would not split, the Apostles all agreed that salvation is by the grace of God alone, based on our faith alone in Christ alone. Works – and specifically the requirements of the OT Law such as circumcision – cannot save us from our sins.

Now, in the closing remarks of Titus’ testimony, we see that not only was division avoided, but unity prevailed.

In verse 6, Paul says:

Galatians 2:6 – And to those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality,) those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ESV

After meeting privately with the other apostles, they publicly proclaimed that they were satisfied with Paul’s understanding of the gospel. The other apostles did not need to

correct, add or subtract anything from Paul's gospel because – wait for it – it was same as theirs.

Not only did they approve of Paul's gospel and oppose the false brothers, but they actually encouraged Paul's ministry!

We see this in verses 7-9:

Galatians 2:7 – On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised
ESV

Galatians 2:8 – (for He Who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles,) ESV

Galatians 2:9 – and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ESV

The council publicly approved and even encouraged Paul's ministry of faith alone and they opposed the false brothers and their false gospel of faith plus works!

After meeting with Paul and Titus, the other apostles realized they could add nothing to Paul's message or ministry, nor could they take anything away. The meeting resulted in agreement and unity: one gospel would be preached to both Jews and Gentiles.

The pillars of the church – the apostles James, Peter and John – extended the right hand of fellowship to Paul. This indicated to the world that James, Peter, John and Paul were on an equal footing. Paul's message wasn't wrong and he didn't have to change anything as it was the same message preached by the original apostles.

The testimony of Titus was important for the Galatians to hear. Remember, the false teachers that came into Galatia after Paul left were able to convince many of the Galatians that Paul was not a real Apostle. But the testimony of Titus proves otherwise.

Paul's apostleship is just as real and genuine as Peter's. Peter, James and John accepted Paul's appointment as an Apostle and the gospel he preached. They were all partners in ministry. If the Galatians were concerned that Paul was a false Apostle, they no longer need worry. Paul had the full support of the pillars in Jerusalem.

Finally, the testimony from Titus ends with unity in the church.

In verse 10, we read:

Galatians 2:10 – Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. ESV

So, who are, “the poor” mentioned here? They were Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem.

Let’s take just a moment to understand who these believers are and why they’re so poor.

After the Crucifixion, the church grew exponentially in Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside. However, remember that the Sadducees and Pharisees – the religious leaders of the day – hated Jesus and His followers. They were determined to stamp out this belief as they considered it to be a betrayal of Jewish beliefs and customs as well as a threat to their own, personal power. In a word, they considered this new faith blasphemy.

So, to exterminate this new belief, Jewish converts to faith in Jesus were excommunicated and ostracized.

Friends and family were expected to disown these new believers. Employers were required to fire them and were forbidden from hiring them. If they owned their own business, they were to be blacklisted by the community and no Jew who wished to remain in good standing with the Sadducees and Pharisees were allowed to do business with them.

Suddenly, believers found themselves penniless, without a safety net or any kind of support from their friends and families.

And so the Jerusalem Apostles asked Paul to “remember” the poor Jewish believers who were unable to provide for themselves, unable to put food on the table to feed their families.

Galatians 2:10 – Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. ESV

Paul said he was, “eager” to help.

spoudazo
To hasten to exert one’s self

The Greek word, spoudazo, is related to our earlier word, spoude. It carries a sense similar to the way Titus felt traveling to Corinth.

Paul not only wanted to help the poor in Jerusalem, he couldn’t wait to help them and he was willing to work hard at helping them.

I can think of several reasons why Paul was in such a hurry to help.

To begin with, he would be following the example of Christ Himself. When we read the Gospels, we're struck with the truth that Jesus met the physical needs of the population as well as their spiritual needs.

Time after time, we read in the Gospels of how Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, raised the dead. While the Good News of Jesus is primarily focused on our spiritual needs, God never forgets we have physical needs as well.

Look, James wrote an entire book on remembering to meet the physical needs of people in addition to paying attention to their spiritual needs.

Second, I think Paul was eager to help because he was a man with a big heart who wanted to help. When we read Paul's letters, we see his love for his fellow man on full display. Paul wrote constantly about showing the grace and love of the Lord to all.

Finally, I think Paul realized that working with the Gentile churches he founded to meet the financial needs of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem represented a further opportunity to unite the Gentile and Jewish believers in the church.

Paul spent his ministry remembering the poor Jewish Christians. In multiple letters to multiple congregations, Paul asked that they would take up a collection for the Jerusalem church that he could send back in their name.

Think of it this way: It's really hard to dislike someone who is sacrificially taking care of your needs and it's really hard to dislike someone who you are sacrificially taking care of.

In my opinion, these collections united the Jewish and Gentile believers in a way that nothing else could. The love from each side for each side would only grow as time went on.

The unity shown between Paul and the other Apostles and between the Jewish and Gentile believers in verses 6-10 are proof positive of our Big Idea:

BIG IDEA
The False Gospel Divides
The True Gospel Unites

Let's close in prayer.

I'd like to remind you that we have someone at our Connect Desk in the lobby waiting to greet you with a smile and answer any questions you might have.

Also, someone will be waiting in the prayer room next to the Café if you need to pray about anything at all.

Have a great week. Bob will be back next Sunday. See you then.

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