

**Title:** Paul's Autobiographical Defense: The Divine Origin of Paul's Gospel and its Evidence.

**Text:** Galatians 2:1-10

**Theme:** In the autobiographical section Paul seeks to establish his recognition by the other apostles.

**Introduction:**

"The Judaizers claimed connections with the mother church in Jerusalem and the apostles of Christ, and who were teaching that righteousness came by faith in Christ AND the works of the Law. The opponents of the apostle had possibly called the visit as an act of submission to Jerusalem, but the point of the paragraph is to show that it really was an acknowledgement of Paul's superiority in the sphere of the Gentiles." (Johnson, "Believers Chapel," March 26, 1978, Lesson 4, Gal. 2:1-10).

**BIG PICTURE:**

- I. The Origin of Paul's Communication (1:11, 12)
- II. The Evidence of Paul's Conversion (1:13-24)
- III. The Evidence of the Apostle's Confirmation (2:1-10)
- IV. The Evidence of Peter's Confrontation (2:11-14)

**Its Eternal Value:**

The gospel of grace begun in justification must be maintained and kept in sanctification. It is possible to begin well but to continue poorly. The grace of God liberates. It does not move the believing from one form of bondage for another.

**The Problem:**

A significant problem within evangelical thinking is how we begin by faith, but continue to progress by works. Evangelicals guard stringently a gospel justification, but fail in maintaining a gospel sanctification.

**The Storyline:**

The promise of God to deliver His people by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone is fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ. What Christ was and did continues today. The mission of God is to publicly and purely proclaim the gospel salvation to all who hear. In the time between His comings His people are to be busy in protecting and proclaiming the gospel of grace that is Christ Jesus.

**Questions:**

1. How long had Paul been absent from Jerusalem?
2. Had Paul been to Jerusalem before this visit?
3. Who accompanied the apostle Paul?
4. Was Paul willing to submit himself to his peers in certain matters?
5. Did Paul use discretion when addressing the issues of the gospel?
6. Why was Titus not compelled to be circumcised?

7. Is it possible to have false brethren in leadership?
8. How are the actions of the false brethren described?
9. What was their intent behind their preaching and actions?
10. How adamant was Paul's stand against the false brethren?
11. How do we show respect without showing partiality and what is the difference between the two?
12. To whom does Paul compare himself and his ministry?
13. Why will this become significant in verses 11-14?
14. What does the right hand of fellowship represent?
15. What significance does remembering the poor have?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the purity of the gospel received and proclaimed by the apostle Paul.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to protect and proclaim a gospel of grace and not one of works.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of protecting and proclaiming a gospel of grace and not one of works.

### **Outline:**

#### I. The Timing of Paul's Visit (2:1)

"Fourteen years later," Paul had been ministering for over a decade (33 plus 14 is 47 AD minimum. James was written in approximately 46 AD and Galatians at about 49 AD. Paul is speaking of his first missionary journey and the events surrounding it). Some suggest "The events surrounding Galatians 2:1 appear to be Paul's famine-relief trip mentioned in Acts 11:27-30." However, this would put Acts 11 at 47AD which is before Acts 13 at 46AD. This leaves me somewhat perplexed.

I find the chronology of events fuzzy. My presupposition is that Paul wrote Galatians shortly after his first missionary journey and just before Acts 15. However as I read both sides I often find myself shifting from one position to the next. So I would probably not be too dogmatic concerning the placement of this book.

"In essence, it is extremely surprising that Paul would make no mention of the Council's decision, since it would substantially support his case and discredit the Judaizers, if Gal. 2 has the same referent as Acts 15. Further, whereas Gal. 2 records a private conversation, Acts 15 speaks of a public meeting."

[http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=1237](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=1237)

#### II. The Purpose for Paul's Visit (2:2a)

Paul is explaining to them the gospel of grace in Christ Jesus to those in Jerusalem. Apparently his message was 'different.' Paul came with the express purpose of explaining to the leadership in Jerusalem the message he was preaching to the Gentiles.

It is interesting to see how Paul went about the process.

A. Paul was discrete in his presentation (v. 2).

Notice the contrast with 2:11-14. Peter was rebuked publicly. Apparently Paul is following the pattern of 1 Timothy 5:20, “Those [elders] who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning.” The assumption I am making is that he followed the paradigm of Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 “But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.” We will deal with this next week.

B. Paul was determined in his principles (vv. 3-5).

Paul was gracious and exhibited humility. He did not wish to see a divided church and thus he dealt with issues privately. He would not, however, compromise the gospel of grace that is in Christ Jesus. **We must be willing to suffer for the gospel, but we must not let the gospel suffer.**

C. The Issues Surrounding Paul's Visit (2:2b-10)

Paul asks a series of four questions. The questions summarize the meeting he had when he visited Jerusalem for a second time.

1. Has my labor been in vain? (v. 2b).

Paul’s statement is interesting, “For fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.” The word “vain” means, “empty.” He sounds this same note in several other passages as well (1 Cor. 15:10, 14, 58; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 3:5).

1 Cor. 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and **His grace toward me did not prove vain**; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

1 Cor. 15:14 and if Christ has not been raised, then **our preaching is vain**, your faith also is vain.

1 Cor. 15:58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, **knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.**

Philippians 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory **because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.**

1 Thess. 3:5 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and **our labor would be in vain.**

Paul uses a different word that communicates the same idea in Galatians 3:4 and 4:11.

Gal. 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain?

Gal. 4:11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

I believe in eternal security, but I also believe in personal perseverance. It is possible for some who appear to start well to never finish the race. This much can be gleaned from the first three soil types in Mark 4 as well as in 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us."

**Eternal security is not a license to sin, but the liberty to serve.** Eternal security is not a "get out of jail free card." It gives you freedom to fail and the confidence to continue because you are unconditionally loved and accepted by God.

It is a hard truth but you will encounter at some point in your life "a failed faith." **For the true believer this moment is but a point in time not a pattern of life.** At some point in life you might find yourself blinded by the blackness of unbelief, you might find yourself stumbling under the burden of denial; you might be lost in the bottomless pit of anger's rage. Your heart might cry out with the horrific voice of rejection. And it is here that you will find the loving arms of God wrapped around your broken and bruised heart. It is at that moment in time that your faith will be shown genuine. To you who find yourself being swallowed up in the darkness of despair I say, "Hold fast to sound words for grace and peace . . . hold fast!"

## 2. Is the Law necessary to salvation? (vv. 3, 5)

His antagonists wanted to see Titus circumcised, but Paul refused because to do so would have been to compromise the gospel of grace. And yet in Acts 16:3 *after* the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 Paul had Timothy circumcised "because of the Jews who were in those parts." The principle Paul worked off of was "to become all things to all men, that he might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). In Acts 16 the issue was not the message, but ministry. **It was an issue of culture, not content.** I will love all people unconditionally, but I must never compromise the gospel of grace that is in Christ Jesus. Paul refused to compromise the gospel of grace that is in Christ Jesus.

## 3. Am I truly liberated in Christ? (vv. 4-5)

Do you remember the liberty and joy you experienced when you first were saved? Do you remember the pure obedience that flowed from your love for Him? Do you also remember when it became a "work?" Perhaps today you find His yoke heavy. Maybe Christ is not joy and the Word is not restoring your soul. My friend, you have become the victim of modern day slave traders.

Some people were still trying to get Christians to embrace the law or at least elements of the law. Remember, the real issue here is not a gospel justification, but a gospel sanctification. Paul uses several descriptive words to paint his picture.

First, he calls them “false brethren.” There is such a thing as a false brother. Satan can transform himself into “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). It is tragic, but possible that we have in our midst this morning, “False brothers” whose sole intent is to destroy the work of God. How tragic. You have been blinded by unbelief. Paul reminds us of this same idea in Acts 20:28ff when he reminds the elders of Ephesus to be on guard for the savage wolves that will arise from within. John also reminds us of this idea in 1 John 2:19.

Second, they came in unaware and brought in privately. The word Paul uses for “Privately” (**pareiserchomai**) means, “To smuggle in alongside of.” “The word was used of spies or traitors who infiltrate an opposing camp.” (Rogers & Rogers). His word choice is telling concerning the character and intent of the false brethren. He uses the statement, “Spy out” (**kataskoteo**). “The word usually implies stealth. The metaphor is that of spies or traitors introducing themselves by stealth into the enemy’s camp.” (Rogers & Rogers).

His third statement gives us the reason as to why they came in secretly? They came under the cloak of brotherhood in order to rob them of their liberty. The verse provides for us the purpose behind their coming. To me, this is despicable. “It was a planned campaign against the freedom that grace had brought to the believers there.” (Johnson). In Christ there is liberty (2 Cor. 3:17). Consider Paul’s word in 5:1 and 5:13. Their sole intent was that “they might bring us into bondage.” Their desire was to bring the free back into bondage.

We as believers where in a position of bondage than we were set free. The two thoughts are opposites. You are either in liberty or in bondage, but not both at the same time. Paul says this liberty is something we have (present active indicative) right now. Why would I wish to strip you of your liberty in Christ and bring you back into bondage, in order that I might control you? Legalism is about having power or control over someone or something. Legalism is not of God, it is of man. It is for this reason that Paul stood his ground. Notice the emphatic language used by the apostle Paul. He would not yield, not even for an hour.

#### 4. Is the ground level at the cross? (v. 6)

In the body of Christ we have different functions, but we are not different in essence. My head is far more visible than my heart, but I would never wish to live without either one.

God does not judge me by my external appearance. God is not impressed with our ‘big shooters.’ Jesus was always placing Himself in a compromising position without

compromising principle. He identified with the drunks, the prostitutes, the tax-collectors. In every situation He was becoming all things to all men that he might by all means save some. Yet never did He compromise the gospel. We are so prone to set ourselves up as “somebody’s” when we are really all the same.

We are so quick to judge people by their appearance and to do so is a form of legalism. Grace does not judge by one’s appearance, though grace does judge. The judgment grace makes is different.

<u>In legalism</u>	<u>In grace</u>
Man judges	God judges
The judgment is on appearance	The judgment is on motive (which only God can judge)
The non-conformist is judged	Non-Christ-likeness is judged

Grace living does judge, but it is willing to leave all of it in the hands of God.

D. The Result of Paul's Visit (2:7-10)

1. They acknowledged His Message (2:7-8).
2. They approved of His Mission (“Receive the Right Hand of Fellowship” 2:9).

There were two missions but only one message. One was to the Jewish populace and the other to the Gentile people.

3. They asked for His Money (“Continue to Remember the Poor” 2:10)

**Shepherding the Sheep:** (Making the transfer)

1. You have started well, now finish the race. “Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.” (1 Thess. 5:24).
2. What you have merited by grace you cannot maintain by works.
3. Learn to live free in Christ Jesus. Do not allow yourselves to be put back into bondage.
4. Friend, the ground is level at the foot of the cross. The only thing that impresses me is how great our God is and what He can do with the likes of you and me. Let us live to give Him the glory and to find our complete satisfaction in Him and share this message with every tribe, tongue, people and nation.