

## Harmony Requires Diversity

### 2:1-10

**vs.1**, 14 years have now passed.

Paul now returns to Jerusalem (this is his second visit).

The initial reason for Paul's return is most likely explained in

**Acts 11:27-30** In those days some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. **28** One of them, named Agabus, stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine throughout the Roman world. This took place during the reign of Claudius. **29** Each of the disciples, according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters who lived in Judea. **30** They did this, sending it to the elders by means of Barnabas and Saul.

Josephus (1st century historian) speaks of just such a famine which took place in Rome, Greece, Egypt, and Judea from AD 45-48.

Hospitality, generosity, and care were clear values of followers of Jesus. They understood fellow-believers to be family and if family is in need you help.

The church in Jerusalem needed help. Barnabas' faith began in the value of generosity.

**Acts 4:36-37** Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus by birth, the one the apostles called Barnabas (which is translated Son of Encouragement), **37** sold a field he owned, brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Paul had also benefited from Barnabas' hospitality.

**Acts 9:26-27** When he arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, since they did not believe he was a disciple. **27** Barnabas, however, took him and brought him to the apostles and explained to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road and that the Lord had talked to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken boldly in the name of Jesus.

Paul understood the value of hospitality, generosity, and care. He continued to encourage new churches to remember the needs of other churches and the leaders in Jerusalem by supporting them financially.

**Romans 15:25-26** Right now I am traveling to Jerusalem to serve the saints, **26** because Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

**1 Corinthians 16:1-3** Now about the collection for the saints: Do the same as I instructed the Galatian churches. **2** On the first day of the week, each of you is to set something aside and save in keeping with how he is prospering, so that no collections will need to be made when I come. **3** When I arrive, I will send with letters those you recommend to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

The family of God is a family of hospitality, generosity, and genuine care. Jesus (Messiah) people are a fellowship of diversity.

- This fellowship of diversity is a single church with different ethnicities, slaves and freeman, women and men who are all worshiping together as siblings (brothers and sisters).
- The Messiah has one family, not two. (It is not the Jews and everyone else).

**vs. 10**, Remember the poor (This cannot, it must not be neglected).

**vs. 2**, Paul, Barnabas, and Titus head to Jerusalem taking money for famine relief. Paul is eager to share with the Jerusalem leaders all that God is doing in his ministry to the Gentiles. The family is growing and its diversity is beautiful. Titus is a representative of this diversity.

Privately -> I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running in vain.

**Isaiah 49:4** But I myself said: I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and futility; yet my vindication is with the Lord, and my reward is with my God.

Paul is asking the question that all Jesus loving leaders ask.

Is all of this worth it? Are we just spinning our wheels? How do I continue to find strength in the depth of my fatigue?

Key Historical Moment -> which reverberates throughout each generation.

The Jerusalem church cannot be teaching something different that Paul is teaching among the Gentiles. This would be devastating and fracture the movement taking place with those who are giving their lives to Jesus.

Cutting across all human division, working together, and celebrating God's new creation was the sign to the powers of the world that God was God.

The new has been inaugurated by King Jesus.

All other human powers and empires in the world would not be able to detour the establishment and growth of the church!

**Question:** How many of our divisions have nothing to do with the truth of Jesus and good news of salvation? How is your relationship with others, who do not think like you, a sign to the world that Jesus is greater?

Western Christianity is so obsessed with being right we have found ourselves in a lot of very wrong places with wrong motives, and wrong conclusions.

**vs. 3-5**, Titus is an example of the fellowship of diversity.

Titus - a Greek, not circumcised

We did not give into the pressure.

We did not budge.

Why?

So that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you.

What is the truth of the gospel? What is the good news (1:3-4)?

- Jesus gave himself for our sins.
- To rescue us from the present evil age.
- According to the will of God our father.
- To him be glory forever and ever.

I have been rescued from the dark powers that have enslaved the world.

Jesus has rescued us from this present evil age.

We are filled with the Spirit which enables us to live our lives in continued faith.

Jesus desires to set you free.

Freedom or Slavery?

**vs. 6**, Perhaps we aren't on the exact same page, but we are certainly reading from the same chapter.

The Jerusalem leaders preference was set aside because of the power of the gospel and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of Paul and his mission activity.

**vs. 7-8**, God asks his people to be passionate about different thing, But all of those passions must be centered on the exaltation of Jesus and the good news of salvation.

**vs. 9**, James (brother of Jesus). Not James (brother of John) one of the original 12 apostles.

James (brother of John) has already been martyred (AD 44).

**Acts 12:1** About that time King Herod violently attacked some who belonged to the church, **2** and he executed James, John's brother, with the sword.

The pillars of the church in Jerusalem are in agreement with Paul. They extended their blessing to continue his mission.

The church is united! Those in opposition to Paul cannot claim that the church in Jerusalem has not given Paul their support.

Review:

- Paul's calling is independent of men.
- Paul has had little contact with the apostles in Jerusalem (only twice in 14 years).
- On this visit (2nd time) he meets privately with Peter, James, and John. He isn't seeking their approval but he does want to work in harmony with them. They have fully accepted Paul and Barnabas as partners in the gospel (fellowship of diversity).
- The apostles acceptance is in stark contrast to the Judiazers who continue to insist Titus be circumcised.

**Question:** Are we busy engaged with Jesus' mission of rescue or are we pre-occupied with choosing our team colors?