

A Heart Set Free (Galatians 2:1-10)

1Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. **2**I 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.” (Galatians 2:1-2)

We need to be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in our lives. Paul received a leading that he should make his way up to Jerusalem. It was 300 miles away from Antioch, they traveled about 20 miles a day, so it would have taken them 15 days, one way. That’s traveling for over a month.

Quite a commitment, but on the other side of the obedience were great rewards and fruit, they got to receive the stamp of approval from the home church in Jerusalem - where it all began. They would join forces to fight against legalism creeping into the church.

I’m sure the Antioch church and the Jerusalem church were very different in how they worshipped. One was a gentile church and the other was a Jewish church. They probably had different styles and preferences (LA churches may have a different flavor than churches in North Carolina, churches in Korea may have a different flow than churches in Africa), but they had the same message of grace. **The methods aren’t sacred, the message is.**

Different churches employ different methods, but what’s most important is the message, they were on the same page there, and there would be no compromises there. Be flexible with the methods, but don’t water down the message of the grace of God.

Paul was a person who would get revelation and direction from the Holy Spirit. **Being led by the Spirit is a great advantage that we have in life (Romans 8:14).**

Now, there will be people who claim that God told them this and God told them that, but you just question if they are really hearing from God, because you look at their lives, and there isn't much fruit/production/establishment of the Kingdom.

Jesus didn't say, "You shall know them by their claims, but you shall know them by their fruit..." (Matthew 7:16)

We have all met people who are always making such spiritual claims who say "God told me this, God told me that!", because they need a smokescreen to cover up the lack of fruit."

Don't be caught up in their words, examine the fruit of their lives. Not just what they say, but what they do. Not what they claim, but what actually comes to fruition.

Jesus wasn't all words, but words and works. He claimed to be the Son of God and then performed works that would support it.

"Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves." (John 14:11)

If we are going to be people who are genuinely led by the Spirit, it requires giving God your attention, for you can hear better when you give someone your attention.

When you are preoccupied, you can't hear.

Sometimes we are so busy, we can no longer be productive.

We are most productive when we can start making decisions based on revelation, not demands. One comes from God, the other comes from people.

What keeps us quieting our hearts and turning our attention to the Lord are two things: worry and regret.

Worry has to do with the future.

Regret has to do with the past, both keep us from living in the now.

It keeps us from being present and it keeps us from practicing His presence.

The negative voices of worry and the screeching voices of regret, scream so loud that they keep us from hearing the gentle voice of the Lord.

Living in regret is keeping us from revelation.

Living in worry is keeping us from revelation.

Living in the past and the future is keeping us from receiving revelation now, for now.

What does God want us to do now? Today? His mercies are new every morning, every morning He wants to give you revelation. Every day should be maximized.

But I can't maximize today, if I'm discouraged by the past and dreading the future. We aren't attentive to the Spirit then.

How tragic is it that we can't enjoy life in the present because we are tethered to the past and hung up on the future

It's never a one-man show, even Paul had his team. We see a plurality of leadership in the Jerusalem church and in the Antioch church. Paul, Barnabas, and Titus were all recognized leaders in

Antioch and Peter, James, and John were all recognized leaders in the Jerusalem church.

The interesting thing about Paul's team was the Barnabas was like a mentor and Titus was like a son to him.

In life and especially in a stressful calling/job, you always need a Barnabas and a Titus.

Barnabas was not his real name, it was his nickname. His real name was Joseph, but because he was such an encourager, his name became changed to Barnabas, the son of encouragement.

You need someone to bring constant encouragement, those who are live-givers. Hebrews, says we should encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:13).

Barnabas was a more seasoned believer. He came in with the first wave of Christian converts following the day of Pentecost. He had seen a lot and had a ton of stories to pass on to Paul. You better believe that Paul milked Barnabas of all his knowledge. Tertullian, an early church father, wrote that Barnabas wrote the book of Hebrews, which is believable.

Barnabas was a giver, he had a big generous heart (Acts 4). He wouldn't stop believing in people, even when they failed.

Barnabas was able to see people beyond their past and their faults.

You need people who will see you beyond your flaws, not those who will showcase them or attack you for them.

Barnabas was the first person to endorse Paul and bring him into the church, and calm the fears the people had of Paul. There was a time when Paul and Barnabas were on a missionary

journey and John Mark deserted them. But Barnabas didn't give up on John Mark, and restored him back to ministry. Mark was restored enough to right the book of Mark.

Paul was not married, yet lived a very full life. For us married people, who are on a mission together, we should be the Barnabas for our spouse.

We should be a Barnabas for our children. I do not believe Paul would have been able to maximize his potential, without a Barnabas on his team.

We need to create the right diet of people in our lives.

The right diet of food is essential for our physical well-being and the right diet of people is essential for our emotional well-being.

There are some foods that we could and should have everyday, then there are foods that if you have them too often, it's going to clog your arteries.

There are some people you could afford to have around you daily, and there are some people that you can only handle in small portions.

You have to determine who is who, and how much of who you can have. That person is like brown rice, that person is like carrots and broccoli, that person is like an apple, oh- that person is like a donut, that person is like butter pop-corn (don't have too often), that person is like a big greasy hotdog- just once a month is fine.

If you want to have a healthier soul, you have to have a healthier diet of people in your life.

For Paul, he chose his environment wisely. Your environment is essential to your success. Certain trees can only flourish in certain environments. Particular plants can only grow in particular environments. If you ever drive on Crenshaw by the big refinery you will find all the trees are dying, because of the toxic environment.

Paul knew that for his work to flourish, he needed the right environment. What's more important than what kind of house you live in is what kind of people you live with.

#1) You need someone who can love you and root for you despite your imperfections, past, flaws, and poor decisions- that's a Barnabas.

#2) You also need someone who is a young Titus- someone who is always asking you questions, trying to learn what you know. They keep you sharp and in shape. You need an inquisitive someone pulling the treasures out of you, via questions. It's healthy to have someone who respects who you are, they see the fruit of your life, and they honor you.

Paul did a whole lot for his protégés- Timothy and Titus- he paved the way for their ministries, his ceiling became their floor. But, they did so much for his soul.

So Paul proactively established a culture of honor around him in those he traveled with. He needed it, because he had so many naysayers and opponents. In life, we face so many trials and tribulations, so many toxic people in this world, you better find your Barnabas and Titus.

Now, if you are thinking, "Where in the world can you find such people? Do they exist? Aren't they all taken?" You can start your search for a Barnabas and Titus by being one.

Even in our marriages, be a Titus.

If we ask more questions than making statements, we show we are interested in our spouse, and we want to become a good student of our spouses. Don't assume last years answers are still valid, we all change, we all evolve. Stay current with your spouse.

Now, if Paul was NOT SELECTIVE with his environment, and had a regular diet of people who were pointing out all his flaws, beating him up, belittling him, nitpicking at him, wanting to use him for their own agendas, and always wanting to give him unsolicited lectures- he would have burned out, the arteries of his heart would have been clogged, and he could have contracted a heart disease.

Don't be passive about the kind of people that you allow around you, be selective, your health, your longevity, and your fruitfulness depends on it.

So Paul went with his team, over 30 days of travel, to visit with the leaders of the Jerusalem church, to find that they were speaking the same message- that brought great confirmation to Paul's heart.

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. (Galatians 2:3-5)

Paul took Titus, who was Greek, and the leaders of the Jerusalem church, did not ask Titus to be circumcised. That was a big deal (because that would be pretty painful for Titus.) but there was something bigger going on.

There was a popular teaching going around to early Christians, that if you are going to become a follower of Jesus, you have to first convert to Judaism. The proof that you converted to Judaism was the trim.

The church started predominately Jewish, and the Jewish believers in Jesus believed that if anyone wanted to be a follower of Jesus, they had to become Jewish culturally. But that's not what Paul believed. That's not what the Jerusalem church leaders believed. It was not the true gospel, it was a perversion, wrong version.

This was the message that these false teachers were trying to hammer home: If you want to come into right relationship with God, you need to convert to Judaism, get the trim, and follow the laws of Moses.

Yet, that wasn't the true early Christian message coming from Peter, James, John, and Paul. **The early Christian message was that Jesus died for our sins and brought us into right relationship with God. Our salvation is from Jesus, not from practicing Judaism or any other "-ISM" for that matter.**

If we start believing that it's us who saves ourselves, and we have to earn right relationship with God through our performance, Paul calls that bondage, slavery.

Slavery is marked by three things:

- **Lack of relationship with the boss.**
- **Lack of power in your life.**
- **Lack of peace in your heart.**

#1 When we start seeing God as a boss we have to impress and perform for, in order to gain favor from him, it will kill intimacy with God.

- Your prayer life will not be like spending time with your best friend (who you don't have to perform for), but it will feel like a circus act- where you better not drop the ball while juggling to get his attention.
- Your worship will be like the priest of Baal, who engaged in self-torture, hoping to earn the attention of their deity.
- You wouldn't think to bother asking Him to speak to you, for you just see yourself as a mere pawn in his army- he could care less about you. (He will talk to important people, like prophets, and they will give you a word from God- but you are just a nobody to Him, except an able body.)

#2) To not have a healthy and vibrant relationship with God, means that you are not plugged into the power source, and therefore our lives will be powerless.

#3) God will be the number one cause of stress in your life, not the source of comfort and hope.

Listening to the false teachers, who are preaching a false gospel, will cause you to be without those three things: Intimacy, Power, and Peace.

This is the good news: Jesus has put you in right relationship with God. He came to take away the sins of the world. Now, believe it and experience it.

- **Stop trying to save yourself, you aren't the Savior, Jesus is.**
- **Stop trying to earn righteousness, it's a gift that Jesus gave.**
- **Stop trying to win God's heart, He's trying to win yours.**

On the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished!" which meant, "Paid in full!" He didn't say, "To be continued by you...good luck...get a trim for starters..."

How freeing is that message?

God wants to free the heart.

He wants to free us from shame, self-hatred, the facades, and the need to find our identity in our stuff or success.

- It was Paul's dream that these Gentile believers in the churches of Galatia, would not spend the next 50 years, trying to accomplish in their works, what Jesus already accomplished on the cross. Rather spend the next 50 years, realizing more and more how great of a salvation Jesus won for us.

- Paul's dream was that rather than spending the next 30 years trying to pay off their salvation- like a mortgage with the down payment of circumcision, they would enjoy all that was paid for to the max, and rejoicing that it's been paid in full.

- Paul's dream was that there would be a people who would believe in the true gospel, and walk in the power and peace of God. (The Gospel of the false teachers was "DO, DO...", the gospel of Paul was "DONE, DONE, DONE", and walk in the power of God and in the peace of God.

Why would some people want to preach a different message than the good news that salvation is done by Jesus?

- **#1) They believed that their culture was superior to the other cultures, focusing on the externals.**

- They wanted to change the culture of the Gentiles. We are not talking about heart-culture, but the external-cultural. God wants to change the culture within, and it will seep out.

- He's not saying that you need to wear a white collar shirt and a tie, and get all your tattoos laser-ed off, and don't wear make up, and be keeping up with the Amish. He wants our hearts to be converted by love.

- In Romans, Paul talked about the circumcision of the heart, as the most essential (Romans 2:29).

- There are some people who do are and do everything culturally Christian on the outside, and yet, their hearts have not been converted by love.

- We should be known by our love. The heart is converted by love, as we preach the right gospel. If we preach a do-it-yourself salvation/religion, it can change people's actions temporarily, but it will not change the heart.

- **#2) Some people don't like free things, because it makes them feel powerless and helpless.**

- They want to work hard and pay themselves on the back.

- They want to compete with others and be more spiritual than her, more committed than him.

- The false gospel will breed pride and contempt for others.

- The true gospel causes us to lose our superiority complexes and inferiority complexes, because we know the same grace that saves me is the same grace that saves you, we are all saved by it and no one is saved without it.

- The white man, the black man, the red, yellow, and brown—we all need the GRACE OF GOD.

- This is why we will see in the next verse that Paul has no inferiority complex when it comes to the super apostles—Peter, James, and John. He knew that the same blood of Jesus that washed his sin away, washed theirs away too. He knew they were all redeemed by the blood of God.

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. (Galatians 2:6)

There is a positioning that happens from God, and Peter, James, and John were uniquely chosen, they passed some tests, and they were promoted into a prominent place of leadership.

- Paul recognized them for the authority that was given to them, but Paul knew that even though that was their role, at the core of who they are, they were human beings just like Him, who needed the blood of Jesus.

That's what he meant by God doesn't show favoritism- we all get into God's Kingdom the same way, BY GRACE.

- Paul received great confirmation, not as much expanded revelation, but was relieved to know that they all had the same message when they compared notes.

- The same Holy Spirit who was guiding the super apostles into truth, was also guiding Paul into truth too, and they were on the same page.

- Paul would need their backup to combat the false teaching that was going on.

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.” (Galatians 2:7-8)

This always blew my mind, because Paul the Pharisee should have been sent to the Jews, but why was He sent to the Gentiles, when his training was in Judaism.

We have to go to those we are sent to.

Paul would not have done well with the Jews. Peter would not have done will with 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. (Galatians 2:9-10)

Those were the pillars in the church, which means that the church is not a building. It's the people. The people are the pillars of the church, not wood and steel. A church is as strong as the pillars (the leadership).

But the church is made up of all kinds of parts, as a building. There are toilets, there is windows, there are doors, there is air conditioning, there are chairs, there are tables- a church can't have only pillars, it needs to have carpet, ceiling, lighting.

God is building a house here, and we all have a part to play. Some will have more prominent roles, others will have less prominent roles, but every role is significant. (Plug for Connections Luncheon).

Why should we remember the poor?

Benefiting those who can't benefit you materially, only relationally - is a picture of the gospel, God didn't benefit too much from us materially from us, but relationally.

The leading philosophers of their day believed that the gods don't interact with measly humans. That wasn't the message of the Christians, they taught that **"we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although he was rich for your sakes became poor, so you through his poverty might be made rich."** (2 Corinthians 8:9)

The poor don't have much to offer. We didn't have much to offer Him, but He still wanted to help us and have relationship with us.

God doesn't just pursue those who have it together, but those whose lives are falling apart.

- There were women who lost their husbands, and now the widow can't support her kids.
- There were kids who were on the street because their parents were murdered.
- There were men who contracted diseases and could no longer work to support the family.
- Tragedy strikes. When tragedy hits a home, we are to be the hands, feet, and face of Jesus and display mercy and compassion! Let them know, by our actions, that they are not forgotten.

Those who are morally poor.

- He still pursues and values.
- Jesus modeled that: the prostitutes, adulterers, tax-collectors, were those He ministered to (helping them see their value), hence collecting the label "Friend of sinners."

Culturally, the rich didn't interact with the poor- they wouldn't have much in common.

By giving to the poor, they were breaking down the walls of social differences, saying, "I know in the world, the rich and the poor don't hang out...but in Jesus you are my brother, you are my sister, and I'll take care of you, I'll eat with you."

In a multi-cultural church like ours we have many cultural differences- yet that should not divide us, we should be united in Jesus, because we know on the outside, we may not have much in common, but on the INSIDE WE HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON.