

Galatians 2:1-10 “Freedom for All”

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Thesis Once you’ve confirmed that Jesus’ gospel is true, you enter into a dynamic relationship with the true and living God. As you discover your freedom in Christ, you also begin to appreciate that God desires all people to experience freedom in Christ; and each of Jesus’ followers have been commissioned to communicate and convey the good news. The challenge is to actually fulfill our commission. Let’s discover the blessings of fulfilling our commission...

Subject: Freedom for all

Object: Fulfill your commission

1. The Gospel Confirmed [1-6]

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run,

or had run, in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), ⁵ to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. ⁶ But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.

Paul returned *after fourteen years to Jerusalem* [1]. Paul's first trip to Jerusalem occurred three years after he was saved, and he spent two weeks with Peter and James the half-brother of Jesus [Gal. 1:18-19]. Paul had spent eleven years in Syria and Tarsus, and then as Gentiles were saved at Antioch, Barnabas brought Paul to help disciple them [Ac. 11:25-26]. This second trip was likely related to the famine relief from Gentile churches for the Jewish believers or possibly the Jerusalem Council to address questions about Gentiles and the gospel [Ac. 11:27-30, Ac.15]. Paul traveled with Barnabas [1] a Jew and leader in the early church [Ac. 4:36-37, 11:22] and Titus [1] a Greek Gentile believer who served with and was mentored by Paul, and later pastored a church on Crete (a NT letter from Paul is addressed to Titus). Paul *went by revelation* or was led by God to *communicate the gospel which Paul proclaimed to the Gentiles* [2]. The message that people are saved by grace

through faith in Christ [Eph. 2:8-9]. Paul met *privately with those of reputation* referring to Peter, James and John who were leaders in the church at Jerusalem [2,9].

Jews and Gentiles are saved by grace through faith in Christ not by Mosaic Law nor ritual. Peter, James, and John agreed with Paul that God made no distinction between Jew and Gentile. Peter could bear witness that God had poured out His Spirit upon Gentiles by faith just as he had done upon the Jews at Pentecost [Ac. 10, Ac. 2]. The fact that *Titus was not circumcised* was a living example that the other apostles approved the gospel of grace [3].

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between God and the Jews [Gen. 17:1-12]. It is a symbol of being separated from the world to God; and when vulnerable and uncovered a person either belonged to God or not. Because it was the symbol of the Old Covenant (Testament), Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism and be circumcised to enter a covenant relationship with God. However, in the New Covenant (NT), circumcision of the foreskin doesn't matter, what is critical is faith in Christ [Ph. 3:3]. **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love [Gal. 5:6].**

The problem arose in the early church, when Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah told the Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law to be saved [4]. They were still thinking per the Old Covenant. They were *false brethren* [4], because their confidence was in the

flesh or their performance of the Mosaic Law which is a yoke of *bondage* [4]. If the basis of being right with God is dependent upon performance, Jew (“us”) and Gentile realize they can never measure up [4].

Jew and Gentile, all people, have liberty from the penalty, power and presence of sin by grace through faith in Christ [4]. This truth is so essential to the Christian Faith that Paul would not yield so that the truth of the gospel would continue [5]. The gospel is not to be compromised. Paul’s respect for the apostles is seen in his request for an audience with them, yet he knew his message and ministry had come from God, not man, and the other apostles *added nothing* [6].

2. The Gospel Commissioned [7-9]

⁷ But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸ (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

The apostles recognized that Peter had been called to proclaim the gospel primarily to Jews (circumcised) and that Paul was called primarily to Gentiles (uncircumcised) [7]. The same

God who was working through Peter was also working through Paul [8]. The term *Gentiles* [8] is the Greek *ethnos* often referring people groups or nations. In the O.T. the term often referred to foreign nations that did not worship the true God, but here Paul is referring to non-Jews who had or would come to faith in Christ.

When Paul encountered the risen Jesus on the Damascus Rd., he realized that Jesus was resurrected and is the Messiah. Paul submitted to Jesus as Lord, received His salvation, and received a commission to bear witness of Jesus and His gospel to Gentiles [Ac. 9:1-15]. Paul's efforts to Jews generally failed [Ac. 22:21-22], but Paul loved the Jews and wanted to see them saved [Rom. 9:1-6].

Peter, James, and John as leaders in the early church at Jerusalem and apostles gave Paul and Barnabas *the right hand of fellowship that they should go to the Gentiles* [8]. To give your right hand and grasp another's right arm was a solemn vow of friendship, fellowship, and partnership. Paul and Barnabas would bring the gospel to non-Jews, and Peter, James, and John as co-workers would proclaim the gospel to the Jews [8].

Each of us has been commissioned to share the gospel and make disciples [Mt.28:18-20]

Is there a particular group that you feel a burden to reach? Perhaps you feel a desire to see the poor, widows, orphans, incarcerated, marginalized, disabled, oppressed, persecuted, children, teens, young adults, the elderly, married, singles, widows, unengaged, unreached, or a particular ethnos reached for Christ.

Who are the people that God has brought into your sphere of influence? Consider the neighbors where you live, work, study, play and worship. How are you seeking to engage and reach them with the gospel? There are people that you will be able to influence that others are not likely to influence. The issue is whether we are being faithful to *our* commission...

3. The Gospel Conveyed [10] *They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

The exhortation to *remember the poor* is at the heart of God and Jesus' gospel. The gospel is centered upon God giving to those in need; "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" [Jn. 3:16].

Caring for the needs of others in tangible ways builds bridges to convey the gospel.

God's people are to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God [Mic. 6:8]. The sense of *justly* or justice is the idea of doing the "right thing" more than criminal justice. To a Jewish mindset, which is the mind of Paul, Peter, James and John, doing justly is the sense that those in a community with more than they need share their resources with those in need. Paul demonstrated that he did care for those in need as he personally sacrificed, and led others to care for those in need [1 Cor. 9, Ac. 11:29-30].

A community of faith should invest in God's kingdom, the advancement of the gospel, and the care of financial needs, by giving regularly, systematically, and proportionately [2Cor. 9:6-8, 1Cor 16:1-2].

When you fulfill your commission, and communicate and convey the gospel, you'll experience remarkable feelings. First, you will have the confidence of knowing you're being transformed by Jesus. Second, you will have the joy of living on God's mission for your life. Third, you'll have the satisfaction of being used by God to help people discover their freedom in Christ, and influence eternity.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Have you confirmed that the gospel is true? When and how did you decide that the gospel is true?

Q2. Is there a particular group that you feel a burden to reach?

Q3. Who are some of the people that God has brought into your sphere of influence that need to be engaged for Christ? Write their names and how you are connected to them.

Q4. What are some of the blessings that you've experienced flowing from fulfilling your commission and communicating and conveying the gospel?

Digging Deeper

1. Spend time praying for those God may be commissioning you to engage. Pray for open doors to befriend and share the gospel. Pray for boldness to share as led by God's Spirit.

2. Reflect on some of your efforts to communicate and convey the gospel during the last season of your life (e.g. Six months or a year). As you consider the last season, how do you feel about your commission? How would you like to apply this lesson in the next season?