

Guarding the Gospel
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Text: Galatians 2:1-5

Galatians: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: Paul Accepted by the Other Apostles

Central Idea of Message: Paul steadfastly refused to subordinate himself or his gospel to legalism because he was convinced that justification is by grace through faith.

Introduction: After a short visit of fifteen days to Jerusalem to meet Peter and James, the half brother of Jesus, Paul apparently waited fourteen years before returning to the great city. And when he did return, **Paul steadfastly refused to subordinate himself or his gospel to legalism because he was convinced that justification is by grace through faith.**

I. Going to Jerusalem (vv. 1-2)

A. Paul visits Jerusalem again (v. 1)

1. Paul probably visited Jerusalem fourteen years after his stay with Cephas, not fourteen years after his conversion (Acts 15:1-4)
2. Paul was accompanied by Barnabas and Titus
 - a) Barnabas: son of encouragement
 - b) Titus
 - (1) Gentile convert
 - (2) Brother of Luke (cf. Robertson 4:282)?
 - (3) Test case for discussion regarding the necessity of circumcision and how Gentiles would be received in the church

B. Paul visits Jerusalem because of a revelation (v. 2)

1. Paul received some sort of contact from the Lord which prompted him to go to Jerusalem
 - a) He was not "called on the carpet"
 - b) **God led Paul to Jerusalem to discuss the matter of justification by faith with other Christian leaders**
 - c) This is commonly called the *Jerusalem Conference*

- d) Paul was sensitive to the impressions and leadership of the Holy Spirit

2. Paul submitted to the leaders of the church in Jerusalem the gospel he was preaching to the Gentiles

- a) Presumably to have these Jewish Christian apostles and elders approve it: James, Cephas, and John (Gal. 2:9)
- b) He shared his preaching content in private
 - (1) Perhaps he was seeking to avoid a public dispute with Jews and Jewish Christians
 - (2) If the private meeting turned sour, Paul and his companions could have left town with minimal disturbance
- c) **Paul deeply desired harmony between the Jewish and Gentile sectors of Christianity, but would not distort the gospel in order to produce concord**
- d) **Nobody should ever distort the gospel in any way just to appease those uncomfortable with its assertions and demands**

3. Had circumcision and keeping the Mosaic Law been required for salvation, Paul would have been evangelizing in vain

- a) Paul wanted the apostles and elders in Jerusalem to hear the testimonies of the work God was doing through him with the Gentiles
- b) **The radical spiritual changes observed by Paul and expressed to these leaders, and shown in the person of Titus, demonstrated the authenticity of Paul's gospel and proved that he was not running in vain**
- c) Paul wanted swift defusing by addressing the matter
 - (1) Boiling opposition could minimize the impact of his past evangelistic work, rendering it done in vain, or obstruct his future kingdom work
 - (2) **Although discussions about points of possible disagreement are awkward, the alternative of no dialogue is worse and frequently results in ruptures**

II. Guarding the Gospel (vv. 3-5)

- A. **Paul's visit did not alter his position regarding the all-sufficiency of grace over law (v. 3)**
 - 1. Titus was a Greek, not a Jew
 - 2. Titus was not compelled to subject himself to circumcision, even after he and Paul met with Christian leaders and agitators in Jerusalem who wanted to force the issue
 - 3. Paul and the other Christian leaders were absolutely convinced that justification was solely by faith, not law
 - a) Circumcision was not necessary
 - b) Baptism was not necessary
- B. **False brethren sought to add legalistic requirements to grace for salvation to be complete (v. 4)**
 - 1. False believers are in the ranks of the church (cf. Acts 15:1)
 - 2. Paul believed that some had crept into the church intent on restoring enslavement to the law
 - 3. **Some people simply cannot accept the liberating effect of grace [undeserved love], so they feel compelled to add to it**
 - 4. **Adding anything to salvation by grace through faith with repentance is to distort the biblical gospel and to resuscitate the enslavement of law**
 - 5. Had Paul ordered Titus to be circumcised, he would have set an irreversible precedent for Gentile converts to Christianity
- C. **Paul steadfastly refused to alter the gospel (v. 5)**
 - 1. Paul declined to force circumcision on Titus
 - 2. Paul refused to add anything to the gospel
 - a) Even if it meant parting company with some
 - b) **Paul's top priority was the purity of the gospel, for he knew that adding to or taking away from the gospel would result in disaster**
 - c) Paul would not budge from his gospel position

Conclusion: Illustration. Justification is by faith, not works of any kind, including the "works" of circumcision, or even baptism. Jesus plus anything equals a distorted gospel, for the cross of Jesus Christ alone is the central focus around which all authentic Christianity revolves.