

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP Galatians 2:1-10

Jesus said a house divided against itself cannot stand. And as we come to the second chapter of this incredible book of Galatians, we come to God's house of believers on the verge of being divided from the inside out. False brethren known as Judaizers had snuck into the church and began to divide it by teaching a gospel different than that which Paul preached by requiring certain works to be performed in accordance with the law of Moses. Acts 15 says, men from Judea, a sect of the Pharisees were teaching, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." By teaching this, they were intentionally clipping the wings of these new believers by putting them back under law and keeping them from flying in the freedom of all that grace brings. They were caged-up, imprisoned, and held back in bondage. Because of a revelation given by God to Paul, Paul goes up to Jerusalem to get the situation sorted out by meeting with the other apostles there and making sure they were on the same page, re-establishing their stance on the gospel, and re-affirming Paul's ministry and message.

I've divided this passage up into three main segments:

- I. **Paul's Intention in Going to Jerusalem. (vv. 1-3)**
- II. **The Judaizers' Intention in the Churches. (vv. 4-5)**
- III. **God's Intention in Sending Paul to Jerusalem. (vv. 6-10)**

First, let's look at ...

I. **PAUL'S INTENTION IN GOING TO JERUSALEM (VV. 1-3)**

His first intention is...

A. **To obey God's revelation telling him to go. (vv. 1-2)**

Paul wasn't going on his own initiative as if he needed the other apostles' approval. It's been 14 years and he still didn't think it was necessary. He received his gospel message directly from the Lord Jesus Christ and knew the Lord had called him to be an apostle. But it was the Lord who wanted him to go up and not for Paul's sake of learning but for the sake of silencing the Judaizers and removing doubt in the minds of the congregations of Galatia in regards to the authenticity of Paul's apostolic authority and message. Later we'll see more of God's purpose in sending him but for the time being we need to note that Paul went, not because he really felt like he needed to, but mainly because God told him too. When he went, he took along his ministry partner Barnabas, and Titus, a Greek convert that Paul had made who was not circumcised.

Principle: There's a principle to be made here in that Paul only went where the Lord wanted him to go and we should too. We should prayerfully and carefully seek to know God's will for our lives and sometimes He takes us places. Go where the Lord wants you to go and do what the Lord wants you to do. **The apostles often received revelatory guidance, but God speaks to us through and in accordance with His completed revelation which is the Word of God.** He guides us according to the Word and it requires a close relationship with the Lord to know His will. Romans 12 tells us to surrender of our lives to His Lordship so that we may know His good, pleasing and perfect will for our lives. The key to growing in the Lord and knowing His will is to openly surrender every aspect of our lives to Him.

His next intention is...

B. **To submit the gospel he preaches to the other apostles. (v. 2)**

Paul submitted to them his gospel. He shared his teachings honestly and openly before them and because there was so much controversy over the issue, they also did it in private. I believe they did it in private because they didn't want there to be any pressure in the meeting from anyone. It's kind of like two parents discussing how to respond to their kids' questions. You don't want one parent saying one thing and the other saying another thing. Kids don't need to see that in the conversation. Parents need to come together in private, discuss the matter at hand, and then return with a unified stance and message for the children. It helps the married couple to present themselves as a team and in the eyes of the child, they have a secure authority to look to that's not sending conflicting messages and they see there is no way around it by asking a different parent if one says no to something. There are some things that just need to be discussed in private by the leadership of the church, like in the institution of the family.

When Paul says he feared that he might be running or had run in vain, I don't think it means he had doubts or needed reassurance about his gospel but that he feared that all his hard work and toil had become or was becoming useless (Stott, 41). He says in chapter 4:11, "I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain," because they were being enslaved to the law. Rumors from the false teachers were spreading that the 12 apostles had supported these Judaizers' message but Acts 15:24 the apostles conclude a council saying, "we gave them no instruction." Maybe he feared that the apostolic circle had been compromised by the false teachers.

Thirdly, we see he went up to Jerusalem...

C. To present Titus, a test-case for grace. (v. 3)

The third purpose I have is Paul's desire to present Titus as a test-case. He was a Greek convert of Paul who received the Spirit of God and who was not circumcised and felt no need or conviction to be circumcised. It didn't make any sense to him. It wasn't until the false brethren came along and started bringing up the matter that it even entered into his mind. He would have never even thought about needing to be circumcised if they hadn't introduced it. He was not compelled and the Spirit of God had obviously took up His home in Titus by indwelling him. He was living proof of grace given to Gentiles apart from law.

In the next main division we see...

II. THE JUDAIZERS' INTENTION IN THE CHURCHES (VV. 4-5)

Paul exposes the goal of the Judaizers – their main objectives in why they're doing what they're doing. First, he says they came...

A. To sneak in. (v. 4)

Whenever someone's sneaking around or sneaking something, they're usually doing something wrong and trying to get away with it. If you're hunting, you're sneaking to get close up on an animal and take a shot at it. Or if you're in war, you're sneaking up on the enemy to take them out. That's exactly what false teachers do. They're sneaks. They don't come into the church with their false doctrines outlined on a piece of paper and hand it to the board members and say, "Hi, I'm a Judaizer. This is what I believe and even though it goes against your doctrines and the Biblical teachings of grace you hold too, I would like to start teaching this in your Church." That's not what they do. 1 Peter 5:8 says Satan prowls around like lion, seeking someone to devour. Have you ever watched a lion sneak up on its prey? They crawl on their belly very patiently, inching their way closer and closer

to it when its not looking or not paying attention, and is willing to wait for the right moment to pounce. That's the way false teachers get in. They snuck into the Galatians churches.

The second thing they do is...

B. To spy out the church's freedom in Christ. (v. 4)

It almost sounds like something you would hear in a mission impossible movie. They snuck in and were spying out. These spies could have been brought in systematically by Pharisees in Jerusalem to join the churches secretly and send word back as to what was happening in the movement. I imagine they lied about their beliefs just to join the churches and gain intel on them. If they were to join a church today they would probably have no regard for their conscience in signing a doctrinal statement that they don't agree with just to become a member of the church to divide it from the inside out. Spies do whatever they have to do to get the job done. They don't care about conscience, only whatever helps them gain traction. False ministers of Satan have no problem lying to your face about their mission. There is no truth in Satan. Satan is a liar, the father of lies, and when he lies, he speaks that which is natural to him (John 8:44). So we need to be sober and be on the alert for such men in case they walk through our doors.

The ultimate intention and goal of their mission is...

C. To bring the believers into bondage. (v. 4)

They want believers far from grace and bound by works. The word bondage doesn't bring to mind happy thoughts does it? It makes us think of slavery and prison bars and handcuffs. The basic idea behind bondage is a loss of freedom and increase in servitude to that of another. The false brethren distracted believers away from serving Christ in freedom and fooled them into serving the law again. Bondage is used to describe the Israelites as forced slaves under Egypt and Assyria and Babylon instead of being in their Promised Land and freely serving God. The Israelites couldn't serve God in Egypt because Pharaoh weighed them down with his increased demands on them to fulfill a quota of bricks. In Exodus, I counted six times, God telling Pharaoh during the rounds of plagues on the Egyptians to, "Let My people go that they may serve me." **God wants His people free and available to serve Him.** Apply that to law and grace. Believers living under a performance-based religion and relationship with the Lord through rule-keeping and rituals and religion are like Israelites trapped under Pharaoh's harsh demands. God desires His people be free so that they can serve Him in grace. Only grace produces the right motivation for serving the Lord. You can't serve the Lord if you have to serve a Law.

You should all have on the back of your bulletin notes a chart contrasting Law and Grace. Quickly, I want to look at each verse and see how law keeps us in bondage.

CONTRASTING LAW AND GRACE

(Christian Life Ministries - Rapid City, SD – *Freedom in Grace*, pg. 6 – edited)

	<u>GRACE</u>	<u>LAW</u>
1. Romans 5:20-21	Abounds all the more	Sin increases
2. Romans 6:14	Sin is no longer your Master	Sin is your Master
3. Romans 6:18	Freed from sin	Slave to sin
4. Romans 7:4-5	Bear fruit for God	Bear fruit for death
5. Romans 7:8	Sin is dead	Sin is produced
6. Romans 7:9-11	I am alive	Sin alive & I am dead
7. Romans 8:6	Life and peace	Mind on flesh = death
8. 2 Cor. 3:5-11	Glory; Life-giving; R'ness	No Glory; Kills; Condemnation
9. Jas. 2:10	Walk freely	Brings Stumbling/Guilt
10. Gal. 2:16	Man is justified	No flesh is justified

Look at this list. It's not exhaustive; more could be said. But can you see any reason why anyone should ever want to live even just the tiniest bit under law?! We shouldn't even think about tip-toeing over into law! It's deadly! You don't want to play with it. It's like playing with poison. It's condemning yourself.

The next intention is...

D. To malign the truth of the gospel (v. 5)

Paul says we didn't yield in subjection to them for even an hour so that the truth of the gospel would remain. These Judaizer didn't want the gospel to remain. They wanted it maligned; removed; distorted; diluted. Anything but solid and clear and simple and pure. Paul wasn't going to put up with it because he knew the doctrines of grace and the devastating implications any sort of legalism has on a New Covenant believer. It results in a loss of the benefits of grace blessings in Christ experientially. We don't yield to grace-maligning legalists.

In the next main division we see...

III. GOD'S INTENTION IN SENDING PAUL TO JERUSALEM (VV. 6-10)

It's not explicitly stated but implied that God sent him there to...

A. To reaffirm his apostleship before doubters. (vv. 6-7)

God's purpose in sending Paul was to remove any doubts about him or his message because of the lies of the false teachers. One commentator shed some light on the situation by noting how Paul used the word "reputation" so much and how that probably described the general attitude of the church towards the 12 apostles (MacArthur, 36). The 12 were the top dogs, looked up too, and we can imagine these Judaizers were lying through their teeth, claiming to have some form of approval from them and degrading Paul since he wasn't one of them. But Paul was not there to submit himself to them as though they were above him or he was accountable to them. Paul didn't care who they were or what their reputation was or what their position was. Just because someone is high up somewhere in the church doesn't mean they have the gospel. Paul was so confident that he knew the gospel and that Christ had given him this gospel that he pronounced a curse upon anyone who preaches anything different. And we need to be certain that we have the gospel down as well so that we're not

intimidated by figures in authority who might say something different. If the president of the fellowship came in and started preaching something other than faith in Christ (not that he would), we should have the confidence to confront the president on it. If the pope came in here and started telling us justification by faith in Christ isn't sufficient (and he probably would) like the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent affirmed, we'd call him out too and let him be accursed. When Martin Luther broke off from that church they used the argument of position saying, "Who are you to dissent from the fathers and the entire Church, and to bring a contradictory doctrine? Are you wiser than so many holy men, wiser than the whole Church?" Martin Luther didn't care who they were because they didn't have the gospel of grace and he did and he knew it. Before he had the gospel, he said in his own words that he, "stood in awe of the pope's authority. To dissent from him I considered a crime worthy of eternal death." The gospel freed him from that man-pleasing bondage! Paul accepts the office of apostle but he's not over-awed by it (Stott, 45). But in verses 6-8 we do see these clearly chosen apostles of God reaffirming his apostleship in a couple ways.

1. The other apostles contributed nothing to Paul's teaching. (v. 6)

When it says that they added nothing to Paul it is in reference to his teaching as evidenced by the way he contrasts that statement with the fact that he was entrusted with the gospel. "They...contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel..." That's how we know that they didn't add anything to Paul's faith alone message. And that's exactly what we need to think. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, a raised three days later so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. That's it. Believe in Christ because of what He's done on the cross for you.

2. The other apostles saw God entrusted him with the gospel. (v. 7)

I think this is neat because it says something unique about Paul and his teachings. The Scofield reference Bible footnoted, "They added nothing to his *revelations*." That's more like it. He didn't just have that simple gospel down like I just said, but he could really break it down and all the doctrines that go along with it. None of the other writers of Scripture explain the gospel like Paul does, or the ramifications of the gospel to the extent that Paul does like in Romans 1-11, talking about justification, propitiation, redemption, righteousness, sanctification and the plan for the ages. He was **graced by God with revelations of the doctrines of grace. He explained mysteries** (e.g. Rom. 11:25, Col. 1:26-27)!

It's also interesting to me that they liken Paul's calling to the uncircumcised like Peter was to the circumcised because Peter had a very clear, personal calling from Jesus to the ministry (John 21:15-19). Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved him and Peter replied, "Yes, Lord." Jesus said then, "Tend My lambs... Shepherd My sheep... Tend My sheep." Peter was clearly singled out by the resurrected Jesus and called to ministry that morning after breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias. Paul was also clearly singled out by the resurrected Jesus and called to ministry (we could say) along the desert shores of Damascus.

The second implied purpose of God is...

B. To strengthen the unity between the church leaders. (vv. 9-10)

The unity between the leaders of the universal Church was glued together even further, being cemented and strengthened, giving them all confidence in each other and silencing the rumors of a possible schism. The only schism that was going to take place was between

the real brethren and fake brethren. The apostles were on the same page, serving the same God with the same life-transforming message and it was indicated in a couple of ways.

1. The other apostles gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

(v. 9)

They recognized the grace given to Paul and shook his hand, saying, “We’re with you, Paul. We’ve got your back. You ever need anything, you let us know. Be sure to remember us as well.”

We had a neat example of this the other day at our Thursday morning Bible study across town. Men from a few different churches in town were studying this very passage together. Even though some might disagree with each other on matters of eschatology, teachings on the end times, we could still give the right hand of fellowship based upon our agreement of what matters most – grace, through faith, in Christ. The apostles gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship to continue on working mainly with the Gentiles, while James and Peter and John continue ministering to the circumcised.

Something important to note here is that James and John and Paul shook hands and agreed on what the gospel is. Many works-based teachers will turn to 1 John or James chapter 2 to get proof for works-based salvation. But what James basically said is that if someone has really trusted in Christ, they should start to show it by the way they live. Works are the fruit of faith, not the roots. Like a tree must have roots first before it can bear fruit, so believers put their roots in Christ by faith and are made alive to be able to bear good, genuine fruit. James and John emphasized obedience because they had problems with hypocrites and lawlessness. Paul wrote on free grace doctrine because he has issues in his church with legalism. But they were all unified on the gospel.

The next indicator is that...

2. The other apostles asked Paul and Barnabas to remember the poor. (v. 10)

They were on the same page in regards to the church’s need to remember the poor. At first glance, this verse seems a little out of place. But it actually adds greatly to Paul’s argument by his openness and honesty about everything that was discussed. He wasn’t leaving anything out that was discussed. The poor that is brought up here is likely and specifically the poor believers in Jerusalem who became poor as a result of a recent famine and the persecution that was taking place. The poor were genuinely under-privileged and helpless. Many couldn’t find work simply because they were Christians. They couldn’t help the situation they were in. That’s the kind of poor we love to be able to help out. People who are having a rough go at it or are trying to make a better life and looking for work in the meantime.

But to the other type of poor who come looking for financial help who are professional panhandlers and unwilling to work, or not even looking for work, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, “then he is not to eat.” I went on a mission trip to Portland while I was at Frontier School of the Bible and I couldn’t believe all the panhandling that went on, people begging for money on the street corners. Many of them actually did it full time. They would work together, taking shifts and rotating from corner to corner. They aren’t poor. They’re just lazy and unwilling to work and they’re living in sin by stealing people’s money. They had a similar problem with laziness in the Thessalonian church and Paul commanded if a brother

leads an unruly life, we are commanded in Christ to keep away from them so they'll be put to shame. If they're able to work but don't work, they don't eat. Many believers have gotten themselves in debt because they don't know how to say no to people who ask them for money or food, so this is great instruction for us today from the Word of God. We want to help and love to but we're not supposed to help the lazy. We are stewards of God's resources and He wants us to use His resources wisely. Jesus said you will always have to poor with you and we need to use discernment on deciding which poor to remember. The apostles were diligent about remembering the genuine, underprivileged poor.

IV. MAJOR APPLICATIONS TO REMEMBER:

A. The gospel does not change.

The gospel is the gospel and it always will be (Stott, 46). It does not change. Nothing can be added to it and nothing removed. Man must acknowledge himself as a sinner before a holy God whom his sins have offended and realize that the only remedy is found in Jesus Christ who paid for those sins so that he could be born again by the Spirit of God and receive eternal life. If you've never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, don't leave here today without doing that by praying to God and accepting Christ.

B. There's a time to separate and a time to come together.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20 about wolves in sheep's clothing who would come in among you and not spare the flock. One of the wolves' lies that goes around is the ecumenical idea that we all basically believe the same thing and all churches or all faiths just need to come together in unity. That's nonsense. You don't forsake the gospel or core beliefs/doctrines for the sake unity. Core beliefs are things like the gospel. Salvation by grace and not works. Separate from anyone who denies grace, the Trinity or a literal, physical resurrection of Christ, etc. But if two people from two different churches believe something different about the end times, sometimes we can and need to set aside those differences. You won't be teaching your belief in their church or they in yours, but you can come together for fellowship in Christ. Be balanced and know which doctrines to die for and which doctrines aren't necessarily hills to die on. All situations are unique. Pray and follow your conscience with Scripture. Know who to give the right hand of fellowship too.

C. Be eager to reach out!

Some churches are great on doctrine but not very influential at reaching out (Swindoll, 43). Their doctrine keeps them huddled up as separatists, afraid to reach out. The Pharisees were the epitome of separatists. But on the other hand, some churches do a great job of reaching out but they're not great on doctrine. Their lack of doctrine would make them minimalists. We need to strike a balance, being committed to solid Bible teaching but getting out and showing the love of Christ to a lost world.