

Trinity Lutheran Church

Norman, Oklahoma – www.tlcnorman.org

The Book of Galatians

Theme: “The True Gospel You Have Received”

Date: 5-1-22

Lesson: 9 - Chapter 2:1-10

TEXT AND STUDY



(1) Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. (2) I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) **the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles**, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

(Ac 4:36; 11:30; 13:1 – 14:28; 15:2,4,12; 1 Cor 9:24; 15:58; 2 Cor 2:10-13; Php 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Titus 1:5)

(3) But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. (4) Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in--who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have **in Christ Jesus**, so that they might bring us into slavery-- (5) to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that **the truth of the gospel** might be preserved for you. (6) And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; **God shows no partiality**)--those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

(7) On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with **the gospel** to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with **the gospel** to the circumcised (8) (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), (9) and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived **the grace that was given to me**, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. (10) Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Luther's Commentary - Vol. 26

1. Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem.

THIS was the bitter conflict in which Paul was suddenly so deeply involved. Paul taught that the Gentiles were justified by faith alone, without the works of the Law (Rom. 3:28). When he had broadcast this doctrine among the Gentiles, he came to Antioch and told the disciples what he had been doing. Then those who had been reared according to the old traditions of the Law rose up against Paul and declared that it was intolerable for him to preach to the Gentiles about liberty from the slavery of the Law. This gave rise to an outburst in Antioch. Paul and Barnabas took a strong stand and testified: “Wherever we preached among the Gentiles, the **Holy Spirit** came down upon those who heard the Word.

This happened throughout all the Gentile churches. But we neither preached circumcision nor required observance of **the Law of Moses**. All we preached was faith in **Christ**, and upon this proclamation of faith **God gave the Holy Spirit** to the hearers. Therefore **the Holy Spirit** gives His approval to the faith of the Gentiles without the Law or circumcision. For if the preaching of **the Gospel** and the faith of the Gentiles in **Christ** had not been pleasing to **Him**, He would not have descended in a visible form upon the uncircumcised who heard the Word. Since He descended upon them merely through the hearing of faith, it is altogether certain that by this sign **the Holy Spirit** has given His approval to their faith; for this seems never to have happened through the preaching of the Law.” This was how Paul and Barnabas argued.

Then many took the opposite position. They said that the Law had to be observed and that if the Gentiles were not circumcised in accordance with **the Law of Moses**, they could not be saved. Paul fought back vigorously. And this controversy over the observance of the Law continued to plague him for a long time to come. Yet I do not think that this is the same controversy that Luke describes in Acts 15. For that one seems to

have arisen right after the beginning of **the Gospel**; but the history that Paul is reciting here seems to have happened much later, because he had already been preaching **the Gospel** for almost eighteen years.

Then the Jews, who were very zealous for the Law and very contentious, resisted Paul vigorously for preaching that the Gentiles were justified by faith alone, without the works of the Law. And no wonder, for the very name “Law of God” is very forceful and impressive to the human heart. If a pagan who has never known anything about **the Law of God** hears someone say: “This teaching is the Law of God,” he will surely be stirred. Then how could the Jews not be stirred to take a strong stand in support of **the Law of God**, in which they had been trained since infancy and which they had absorbed deeply into their bones and marrow? In our day we see how obstinately the papists defend their traditions and the doctrines of demons (1 Tim. 4:1).

So it is much less surprising that the Jews were so vigorous and zealous in support of their Law, which they had received from **God Himself**. The force of habit strengthens our nature, which has an inclination of itself to observe the Law; thus a habit of long standing and tradition becomes second nature. Therefore it was impossible for the Jews to give up the Law immediately after being converted to **Christ**.

Although they had accepted faith in **Christ**, they still thought that it was necessary to observe the Law. God tolerated this weakness of theirs for a while, until there would be a clear distinction between the doctrine of the Gospel and the Law. Thus He tolerated the weakness of Israel during the time of Ahab, when the people were undecided between two sides (1 Kings 16:29 ff.). He tolerated our weakness too while we were under the papacy, for He is patient and merciful. But we must not abuse **this goodness of God** or persist in our weakness and error, for now the truth is being revealed to us by **the light of the Gospel**.

Those who opposed Paul and claimed that the Gentiles were to be circumcised had on their side first the Law of the land, then also the example of the apostles, and finally the example of Paul himself, who had circumcised Timothy. Therefore if Paul said that he had done this, not out of compulsion but out of Christian charity and freedom, to keep from offending the weak, who among them would understand him or believe him? The response of all the crowd to this defense would be: “Since it is obvious that you have circumcised Timothy, you may say what you please.

The fact remains that you did it.” This was a matter that transcended the understanding of the crowd. Besides, when a man has lost favor with the people and has come under such bitter hatred, no defense is of any avail. Seeing that this controversy and this outcry were increasing every day, and having been warned by a divine revelation, Paul went up to Jerusalem to compare **his Gospel** with that of the other apostles, not indeed on his own account but on account of the people.

With Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

Paul associates himself with two witnesses, Barnabas and Titus. Barnabas was Paul’s companion in preaching to the Gentiles about freedom from the Law. He was also a witness of everything that Paul had done; he had seen that merely through the preaching of faith in **Christ the Holy Spirit** had been granted to Gentiles who were not circumcised or subject to the Law of Moses. He was the only one to support Paul in the insistence that it was not necessary to burden the Gentiles with the Law, but that it was enough for them to believe in **Christ**. Therefore he testifies for Paul and against the zealous and legalistic Jews on the basis of his own experience that the Gentiles became **children of God** and were saved solely by faith in **Jesus Christ**, without the Law or circumcision.

Titus was not only a Christian. He was an archbishop, to whom Paul had committed the rule of the churches in Crete. (Titus 1:5). And this Titus was a Gentile.

LIFE APPLICATION

How do we, along with Paul, center our lives on the gospel that we proclaim among the Gentiles,

so that we do not run in vain?