

Set Apart to Proclaim the Gospel

Galatians 2:1-10 (vv. 7-9).

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

A. Historical Background

There are *several unbroken threads in history* which demonstrate God's Sovereignty and Faithfulness in fulfilling **His Plan of Salvation** in spite of the persistent unfaithfulness and disobedience of His people, the Israelites and now the Christians. Let us examine a few of them:

- a) **Set Apart:** One of the major threads of history highlighted throughout the Bible is that God sets apart, i.e., He calls, appoints and uses certain individuals that *He chooses* to advance **His Kingdom on earth**. Examples, Abraham and Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Caleb, Joshua, Rahab, Ruth and Boaz, Hannah, Samuel, David, ..., Apostle Paul, Barnabas, Titus, Priscilla and Aquila, etc.
- b) **The Revelations:** God *revealed* about Himself, His Purpose, His Plan, His Law, the Future, etc. by **Revelations** given to and through those *whom He chose* which included Moses, Joshua, David, the Prophets and Prophetess and the Apostles all of which is recorded and preserved in the Scriptures for all generations.
- c) **The Proclamation of The Word:** God made the Proclamation of His Word through preaching and teaching to become the means by which His Truth, His Plan, His Kingdom, etc. will be perpetually revealed in every generation.
- d) **True Teachers and False Teachers:** The Bible makes it clear that the struggle between True Teachers and False Teachers shall continue to the end of times.
- e) **God's Word Shall Prevail to The End:** As we examine the Scriptures and History, we realize The Truth of God prevails regardless of the unfaithfulness of His people and the evilness that persists in the world.

B. Biblical Context

The high priests, Pharisees and Sadducees proved themselves to be **False Teachers** of even the Law of Moses since they became vehemently opposed to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "*by whom and for whom the whole universe is created*" (Colossians 1:15-20). The Pharisees were particularly insistent upon **circumcision** as a requirement for Salvation which contradicts

even the Law of Moses which emphasizes *unwavering faith in God* is the way to Salvation as *demonstrated* by Abraham. **Circumcision** was just the *visible sign/evidence* that a **Covenant** between God and the Israelites existed (Genesis 17) which was meant to *distinguish them* from other people who believed in *various idols*. **Circumcision does not prove that the person believes in God**. One can be circumcised and yet believe in all kinds of idols as the Jews did! *To the extent that a person who wears a chain of gold with a cross attached to it **does not prove** he or she truly believes in Christ, so is the case with a circumcised Jew!*

II. The Lesson: Set Apart to Proclaim the Gospel

By his own account in Galatians chapter 1:15-24 and 2:1, Apostle Paul's visit to Jerusalem took place **two decades** after his **radical conversion** on the road to Damascus recorded in Acts chapter 9. We also know from close examination of the Book of Acts regarding the three missionary journeys undertaken by Apostle Paul that the churches in **Galatia** were established during his 1st Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14) which took place around **47 A.D.** One thing that Apostle Paul and Barnabas *repeatedly encountered* is the persistent efforts of the **False Teachers** in the person of the Pharisees who tried to *undermine* both the legitimacy of Paul's authority as an apostle and the Truth of the Gospel he proclaimed (preached and taught) everywhere.

1. vv. 1-2. Always Remember Who Set You Apart

The authority and power to take the Gospel to the Gentiles was specifically expressed when God "set apart" Paul for His divine purpose. When Christ sent Ananias to *anoint* Paul, He said, "**Go! This man is My instrument to carry My Name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for My Name**" (Acts 9:15-16). Because the False Teachers continued to accuse Apostle Paul as enemy of the Jews for preaching Christ to the Gentiles, he came back to Jerusalem to "privately" confer with the other apostles. Paul was *concerned* about how he was *perceived* by the Apostles in Jerusalem. We know Paul was *concerned* because he said that he had had to come to Jerusalem "**for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain**" (v. 2). It is crucial that you remind yourself **who** "set you apart," **why** you serve and for **what** purpose!

2. vv. 3-5. Don't Let False Teachers Steal Your Freedom in Christ!

The devil does not want us to be free in Jesus Christ. The enemy wants to enslave us by robbing our freedom that Jesus granted us when we received Him as our Savior and Lord! The enemy does not want the church to be united in Christ and thrive in their freedom! Therefore, he sends False Teachers to *confuse* the believers by emphasizing old traditions and promoting customs

which do not save people. One of the major ways the enemy divides the church is by sending False Teachers to “infiltrate” the ranks of the leaders. The False Teachers succeeded in *diluting the Gospel* in the Galatian churches by *promoting circumcision as a requirement* for Salvation. Apostle Paul was *astonished* by how quickly the Galatians *turned away from their faith* in Jesus Christ!

3. **vv. 6-8. There is No Need to Compare Your Ministry to Others**

Everyone who was Redeemed by the Blood of Christ shares the same Love, Grace and Mercy extended toward them by God when they accepted His Son as their Savior by faith. Paul understood that the God who “set him apart” to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles is the same God who worked through Peter, James and John. The Grace that God extended to them was the same which was at work in him. Paul also understood that the God who was at work in the Ministry of Peter in Jerusalem was also at work in his Ministry to the Gentiles everywhere. As long as they were peaching Jesus Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world to both Jews and Gentiles, there was no need to *compare* ministries! As long as those “set apart” by God to preach the Gospel remained faithful to His Word, there is no need to compare *the size or location* of their ministries!

4. **vv. 9-10. Extending the Right Hand of Fellowship**

The one thing that was common among the apostles was the fact that each of them were “set apart” by God to do His will – to advance His kingdom on earth by proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Only Son of God, the Savior of the world. Because God singled them out to proclaim the Gospel, they were *granted supernatural powers* to perform miraculous signs and wonders as well. They also had the *ability to discern God’s Presence* in each other as well as how God’s Grace operated in their respective ministries. Therefore, Apostle Paul declared that James, Peter and John extended “the right hand of fellowship” to Barnabas and him when they recognized God’s Grace was operating in them, too.

Apostle Paul mentions that “God does not judge by external appearance” to grant His Grace. In other words, it doesn’t matter what you look like and where you are from for God to use you. What matters is what goes on in your heart. Many in Jerusalem treated Paul as the “one” who betrayed the traditions and customs of the Jews and the Pharisees. What they were supposed to *see* was what God has done to Saul the Pharisee who became Apostle Paul! Because their *hearts were hardened*, they couldn’t *see and appreciate* the radical transformation in Paul! Therefore, they tried to discredit him and destroy what God was doing in his life! But, they didn’t succeed because God’s Grace was at work in his ministry!

III. Conclusion/Application

- 1. There are certain situations in Ministry that must be dealt with in private.**
- 2. Beware of False Teachers/Preachers who infiltrate our ranks to destroy our Unity in Christ.**
- 3. Don't trade your Freedom in Christ for anything! The enemy is always trying to rob you of your freedom!**
- 4. Extend the Right Hand of Fellowship to those in whom God's Grace is at work in the Ministry of Proclaiming the Gospel.**