

Unity Affirmed

Intro: In the last paragraph Paul emphasized his independence from the other apostles, in that he received his call, and his commission, his gospel message and his ministry, directly from Jesus Himself. That said, he now demonstrates that there was unity between the other apostles and himself as to the content of the gospel and as to his ministry to the Gentiles. This is the famine relief funds visit, Paul's second visit to Jerusalem since his conversion. In the Book of Galatians, Paul does not mention the Jerusalem Council, nor does he mention any of its directives (official church leader decisions) regarding the Gentiles Christians.

I. Paul wanted to protect the continued effectiveness of his ministry. (2:1-3)

A. Paul went to Jerusalem because of a revelation from God.

1. Paul may be referring to the prophecy of Agabus in Acts 11:27-30, or to some other revelation he received from God but which is not recorded in Scripture.

FFB Paul Apostle of Heart Set Free, page 150 – during the 40's there was a succession of droughts and poor harvests one of which was particularly severe in Judea. Josephus comments that Helena (queen mother of Adiabene and convert to Judaism) brought grain and figs to Judea in 46AD. So the famine was in full swing before she arrived. If the Agabus prophecy in Acts 11:27-29 was in 43AD or 44AD, around the time of Herod Agrippa I death 44AD (Acts (Acts 12:20-23), then the famine relief funds visit from Paul and Barnabas was likely in 45AD or 46AD.

2. Acts 11:30 says that Paul and Barnabas took the famine relief fund [offering](#) to Jerusalem, and Acts 12:25 notes their return to Antioch.
3. Paul went to Jerusalem, [not](#) because the Jerusalem apostles had summoned him or called him on the carpet regarding his gospel or his preaching to the Gentiles.
4. While in Jerusalem delivering the famine relief funds, Paul met [privately](#) with the leaders to discuss the gospel he has been proclaiming and the problem he has been having. (Which he describes in vs 4-5)

So this visit to Jerusalem described here in Gal. 2:1-10 is the famine relief visit recorded in Acts 11:30 (and 12:25) not the Jerusalem Council visit recorded in Acts 15.

Fearing because if the Jerusalem apostles did not see it Paul's way, that would greatly hinder his past, present and future work. If they disagreed with him, they would be wrong, and he would need to show them that in private.

Paul does not fear that his gospel may be inadequate. His certainty about the content of the gospel was not threatened, his fruitfulness was. If the Jerusalem apostles did not confirm his message and renounce the false teachers, ... but rather, allow their own cultural prejudices to entice them to let these teachers continue to make such damaging claims, that would hurt the mission to the Gentiles. Would their vision be big enough to see the gospel as not just a reform movement within Judaism, but as god news for the whole world.

B. Paul shared with the church leaders in Jerusalem the gospel he proclaimed to the Gentiles.

1. Paul feared that the continued effectiveness of his ministry was in jeopardy.

Paul's fear that he should prove to have run in vain was that if he did not contact the Jerusalem apostles (Peter, James and John) then his evangelistic work might be undermined by the false teachers who were suggesting that he had no fellowship with the Jerusalem apostles due to different gospels.

Paul sought a private conference with the leaders of the Jerusalem church, not concerned about the validity of the gospel he preached, but concerned about how effectively he could preach it. Apart from harmony with, agreement with, and fellowship with the Jerusalem apostles, the false

teachers' errors would be hard to counter. Paul's ministry could be hampered by the Jerusalem church's disagreement or Paul's ministry could be greatly helped by the Jerusalem church's agreement, partnership and blessing.

2. He did not fear that the content of his gospel was in error.

(Gal. 2:3) Paul's fear was not that he had been preaching an erroneous gospel, but that his work would be undercut by false teachers who were saying that Gentile converts had to become Jewish before they could be saved.

3. His fears were relieved when the Jerusalem leaders agreed with him, and did not require Titus convert to Judaism.

James, Peter, and John agreed with Paul, the proof of which was their willingness to let Titus remain uncircumcised.

II. It turned out to be the [infiltrators](#), and not the Jerusalem apostles, who insisted that Gentile Christians had to convert to Judaism. (2:4-5)

A. This is a parenthetical statement referring back to the false Christians who infiltrated the Gentile churches in Antioch where Paul and Barnabas had been preaching and teaching. (during 42-43AD). (Acts 11:19-26)

(Gal. 2:4-5) False teachers had entered into Paul's arena of ministry and opposed what he taught. ...imposing circumcision as a condition for salvation.

B. The false brothers were spies, traitors. This is a [military](#) term for those who infiltrate the ranks. See only other use of term in 2 Cor. 11:26 of those pretending to be Christians but who are in fact not.

When did the false brothers infiltrate?

Opt. #1 during the Jerusalem visit described in vs. 2:1-10. While Paul and Barnabas were engaged in discussions with the "men of repute" in the Jerusalem church, intruders wormed their way into the private discussions and demanded that Gentile converts, in particular Titus, who was present, be circumcised.

Opt #2 false brothers infiltrated the headquarters of the Gentile mission, the church in Antioch. They were from the Jerusalem church, but came without any mandate from the mother church or its leaders.

C. Their motive was to bring the Gentile Christians under the authority of the Jewish [religion](#) and [culture](#).

Paul did not view these guys as Christians. The false Christians wanted to spy on the freedom from the Law of Moses (and the mountainous pile of man made regulations and requirements that the Pharisees insisted went along with it) that the Gentile Christians enjoyed. They were simply self-righteous people who wanted to make Gentiles into slaves to the Mosaic Law.

D. Paul explains that he and his ministry team did not submit to their demands at all even a little bit.

E. In fact, this is why Paul explained the situation to the Jerusalem leaders in this private meeting.

III. Paul's private meeting with the leaders of the Jerusalem church concluded with complete [agreement](#). (2:6-10)

A. Paul is not speaking [negatively](#) about the Jerusalem apostles.

1. By appealing to the status of the Jerusalem apostles as the real apostles, the false brothers diminished Paul's authority. They claim such that Paul's independence from the Jerusalem apostles indicates that his gospel and his ministry lack validity.

2. Their companionship with Jesus while He was here on earth (Peter and John), or their family relationship (James, Jesus' half-brother) gives them no superiority over Paul, for God shows no partiality.
 3. The private conference ended on a pleasant note, with a friendly outcome, and agreement on the content of the gospel and their different [fields](#) of ministry.
- B. James, Peter and John added nothing to the gospel [message](#) Paul had been proclaiming (2:6)

(Gal. 2:6) the other apostles added nothing to Paul's message, nor to his apostolic authority. They were not superior to him.

The false teachers made a big deal about their being from the Jerusalem church, and later claimed to be "from James" (Gal. 2:12) so they are name dropping in their attempt to get the Galatians Christians to distrust Paul's gospel and to question Paul's authority to preach. So Paul makes it clear that he was not intimidated by the apostles, not in awe of them. Indeed they endorsed his gospel message and mission and received him as an equal. They even shook hands with him on it!

- C. They recognized that God had entrusted to Paul the task of taking the gospel to the Gentiles (2:7)

(Gal. 2:7-9) They did not seek to change Paul's gospel message. They even shook hands in agreement over the gospel.

- D. They recognized that God had given His grace to Paul (2:9)
- E. They gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

The right hand of fellowship was a sign to all of the agreement and trust.

- F. They asked Paul to remember the poor as he did ministry.

The request that Paul remember the poor was in keeping with his mission. In fact it had been his concern for those in need during the famine that had brought him to Jerusalem on this famine relief visit. He raised funds again for the Jerusalem church on his third missionary journey (1 Cor. 16:1-3). These gifts would alleviate human suffering and would demonstrate Jew-Gentile unity in Christ.

1. The Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15 does not mention any directive concerning the poor.
2. The Jerusalem council recorded in Acts 15 does direct the Gentile churches to:
 - abstain from things contaminated by idols
 - abstain from fornication
 - abstain from things strangled
 - abstain from blood

JPT3 – In Gal. 2:10 the only thing the Jerusalem apostles asked of Paul is that he remember the poor. If Gal. 2:1-10 is a recounting of Acts 15, then Paul has spoken falsely. Listed in Acts 15:20 and repeated in Acts 15:29 the Jerusalem Council laid down four requests, requirements, stipulations, whatever you want to call them: "No greater burden than these essentials" (Acts 15:28) Nothing else is required of Gentiles who come to Christ, and nothing else is required of Paul who preaches to the Gentiles.

There is no mention in Acts 15 of remembering the poor, but Paul says in Gal. 2:10 that this was the only request they made of him in his ministry to the Gentiles. So if Paul is reporting on the Jerusalem council of Acts 15 in Gal. 2:1-10, he has badly misrepresented their concerns and directives to the Gentile churches.

IV. Why it still matters today

- A. The gospel leads to [spiritual](#) freedom, for it frees people from the penalty and power of sin.
1. Religious rituals, religious rituals, religious ceremonies, and religious laws/rules are still [ineffective](#) for removing the guilt and stain of sin.
 2. Human effort at earning God's grace and keeping God's grace [misunderstands](#) God's grace.
- B. The gospel leads to [cultural](#) freedom, for it fits into and transforms all cultures it touches, without requiring any of those cultures to become Jewish, or European, or American. (Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, pages 40-45)
1. Christianity has been more adaptive and less destructive of diverse cultures than secularism and many other worldviews (and religions).
 2. Christianity has spread into every culture on earth and its center has shifted around the globe, and includes people from every nation, race, language, and economic and social class.

The original lands of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are still the demographic centers of those religions today. Not so for Christianity. First centered in Jerusalem, the Mediterranean world, then Northern Europe, then North America. Today most Christians live in Africa and Asia.

Keller cites African scholar Lamin Sanneh from his book *Whose Religion is Christianity?*

"Christianity helped Africans to become renewed Africans, not re-made Europeans."

And explains, *"Christianity is not a Western religion that destroys local cultures. Rather it takes more culturally diverse forms than other faiths, all the while holding to a core set of beliefs."*

3. Biblical Christianity adapts so readily and fits so well wherever it is embraced because it is marked by charity, humility, gentleness, love for and service to others.

Here in Gal. 2:1-10 we see the apostles saying that Gentile Christians did not have to enter Jewish culture. They could Christianize their Hellenistic culture.
- C. The gospel leads to [emotional](#) freedom, freeing us from the guilt and insecurity that comes from having to earn our salvation or from having to be good enough to keep our salvation.

Message

Our unity in Christ is essential to our effectiveness for Christ.

Some things to think about and act upon:

- Do you understand the gospel well enough to discern error when it creeps in?
- What are you doing to extend the gospel to all nations, races, languages, and economic and social classes? (*Praying? Paying? Playing?*)
- When do you plan to tell your *My Story*?