

Galatians 2:1-10

Have you ever had an argument that went nowhere?

Advancing not just Fighting

Advancing the Mission not Just Fighting a Battle

Think Strategic Not Emotional

A little look behind the scenes of Paul's ministry and a few things to learn about dealing with conflict...

Last week we saw how God had prepared Paul for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles.

- He was separated before he was born,
- He was given a specific personal make up
- He had a specific set of life experiences

These all helped him fulfill his specific purpose.

Jesus appears and literally knocks him off his horse.

There was prep time, desert time, and God's time...

...Today we pick up with a hard time...

2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

The details are important in understanding this passage...

Paul comes back to Jerusalem with two ministry partners.

Barnabas: the son of encouragement,

He was one of the first Jewish Christians to reach out to Paul.

And he went with him preaching the gospel and planting churches

In conflict a loyal encourager is priceless!

Titus: a Gentile, greek believer. He was a newer convert

He would become a prominent pastor.

In Corinthians, Paul had many positive things to say about Titus.

He called Titus my brother, he was comforted by the coming of Titus.

Paul trusted Titus to receive a collection from the Corinthians.

Titus, is my partner and fellow worker.

Paul called Titus a true son in our common faith.

What a blessing to have people like this to do ministry with!

Ministry is not a hypothetical conversation.

It isn't a philosophical debate or an investigation of theology.

Ministry is about real people and real life...

What makes the gospel worth fighting for is it is about people's lives and salvation.

So Paul brings Titus...and...

...When you take an abstract idea and give it a concrete reality, it can become a powerful lesson.

When we talk about pursuing real and right relationships we talked about the two peaks of Saddleback and the street we are on.

When we talked about the purity of the gospel, we looked at pure water contaminated by red dye.

When we talked about hope, we saw the rope of hope that we can hold.

When the young lady that wants an abortion, hears the heartbeat or sees the unborn child...it can change everything.

To actually see Titus made it real.

We should never get so wrapped up in our own head theologically that we forget ministry is about people.

In ministry, we need to be theologically sound, but we should always understand how it will effect people.

But this was not just about Titus...this was a mission from God.

2 And I went up by revelation, ...by God's direction Paul went to Jerusalem. They didn't ask him to come, they didn't call him down, He came by divine appointment.

...and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.

What is he doing here?

He wasn't trying to make a scene or blow things up.

**This wasn't about grandstanding, it was about advancing.
It was about a *productive outcome*.**

So, Paul used discretion in sharing with "those of reputation" privately

And, there is wisdom in discretion.

We should think through how we approach delicate situations.

- **How could this be received?**
- **How could they feel? How do I feel?**
- **Is the timing right?**

A respectful, personal conversation is more productive than a social media rant, name calling, or going off on someone.

This is about people, not just about being heard.

Start small, conversational and respectful.

Then he says “lest he run or had run in vain”.

What is it he is worried about?

At first glance this looks like he is worried about the message.

...Like a kid who has to get his work checked by the teacher.

But we already know Paul says the gospel he preaches is from Jesus.

He is not worried about the gospel...

He is worried about division and damage to the ministry.

Paul has preached to thousands of people.

Paul planted churches and established ministries in multiple cities.

If there are Jews that come in and put his ministry in question or push a different agenda, it is going to damage what he has done and will be able to do.

There are small decisions we make today that can have serious implications for the big picture tomorrow.

Ministry and life is the long game.

Paul's mission was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and he didn't want to anything to happen that would put that in danger.

At this early stage in the church...

...the trajectory of the gospel was vital.

Paul didn't want anyone to mess up the work he had done or would be able to do in the future by adding legalistic requirements.

3 Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Circumcision is the cutting off of the male foreskin.

Nowadays many babies are circumcised at birth.

Back then, it was the sign of the covenant with God.

You couldn't be a Jew right with God without getting circumcised and following the laws. So Paul says, Titus was a Greek gentile and was not made to be circumcised.

This was a big deal.
Jews had been fulfilling this covenant for hundreds of years.
And now, it is unnecessary.

Jesus fulfilled all of the law, all of the sacrifices, all of the rituals and rites...it is finished.

The OT is an outdated operating system.

There are things we can learn from it, but we can't live in it.

4 *And this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), **5** to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Paul is saying that there was a push for Titus to be circumcised.
...But that push was not by church leaders, but “false brethren”.

These are not believers, they snuck in and are malicious in their desire to cause trouble and bring people into bondage.

They wanted to take away their liberty and freedom in Christ.

They came in secretly, they came in purposely, and they came in pushing for them to keep the law.

Stand strong when you do have to take a stand.

Paul didn't fight angry or loud with a big crowd...
...but he was not moving on this issue.

He went to the leaders personally and respectfully...
...because of their place and reputation.

But when others wanted to force the issue...
...Paul wasn't having any of it.

Being peaceable doesn't mean being a push over.

You don't have to be soft or weak.

We need to stand up when it is time and having courage.
And this is so important in our society today where everything is being reframed and redefined.
Liberalism is a danger as much as legalism.

Julian Dobbs, “when doctrine goes bad, so to do hearts, minds, churches, nations and eternal destinies. That is why this matters.”

“Western Christianity’s tendency to accommodate unbiblical beliefs within churches has often been seen as a potential tool for evangelism. Fears of being anything less than winsome or nice have led Western churches, including evangelical churches, to soft-pedal what the Bible declares to be true about gender, sexuality, and the natural order. Speaking with anything less than clarity has not filled the church with converts but instead has led to discord and eventually unbiblical teaching taking over religious institutions.”

Liberalism and legalisms are extremes to avoid.

Legalism preaches well.
It sounds hard core.
It seems spiritually elite.

“Follow this law and you will have favor with God”...
“Do this spiritual discipline and your life will be anointed”,
“Fast this long and God will love you more!”

**Liberalism weakens the foundational strength of our faith
AND...Legalism sucks the life and joy out of our faith.**

...Paul says we didn’t yield for even an hour that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Now if you know or remember...

...Paul’s other companion Timothy did get circumcised.
Why was Paul willing to fight for freedom with Titus, but choose circumcision for Timothy?
It is actually quite simple...it comes down to motive.

In a difficult situation or conflict...
Always check your motive.
What are you really trying to advance?

1 Corinthians 9:20, To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.

Titus was a Greek gentile. For him to get circumcised was to say that he had to become a Jew IN ORDER TO BE SAVED.
For Timothy, it was not for salvation, **it was for ministry.**

For Titus it would be about becoming a Jew to be saved.
For Timothy, he was a Jew, it was about reaching unbelievers.

“just as Christian freedom caused Paul to resist Titus’ circumcision, this same freedom allowed him to remove the stumbling block of Timothy’s lack of circumcision.”

6 But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed *to be something* added nothing to me.

Paul went quietly to one group because of their reputation...

Because he didn't want to make a scene...

...BUT he doesn't elevate one person above another and become a "respector of persons"

Paul earlier told us, he serves God not men.

Pauls motto could be, Love all, serve One.

God doesn't have favorites and neither does Paul.

Don't play favorites or elevate people based on position.

Appreciate the people that add to you, but don't elevate someone because they are elevated on a platform, stage or position.

Playing favorites or any other inequitable behavior doesn't advance conflict it usually inflames it.

Every one of us are just regular people trying to serve the Lord with the gifts and calling He has given us.

Now Paul becomes a little more positive...

7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter **8** (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),

So although there was a push to get Titus circumcised from the people who had snuck in to cause division and bondage...

...the true leaders of the church saw that God was at work.

It does feel so good when you know what is right, when you know what must be done, when you see the danger that could happen...

...and then it all works out according to plan!

Notice how interesting it is that it was recognized that Paul was called to the Gentiles and Peter was to the Jews.

Peter was actually the first one to share with Gentiles after God gave him a vision, but it was Paul who had an effective door to the Gentiles

Effectiveness can be a key witness of God's work.

The gospel was the same, but the groups were different...

...so the messengers and methods were different.

You can have different approaches to accomplish similar goals

It is easy to think that the way that appeals to us is the way that ministry should be done, but ministry should be done in the way God calls which is effective.

- For one person you will advance the mission with strong words.
- For another you will advance the mission by waiting.
- For someone else you will advance the mission with love or logic.

What works for one, may not work for another...

...so feel free to change it up....

...just don't change up the truth or the gospel.

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that *we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.*

These three leaders could see and recognize the grace Paul had.

And they gave him the right hand of fellowship...

In other words this was their stamp of approval.

They sealed it with a handshake.

10 *They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.*

This comes all the way back around to where we started...

Ministry is about people.

The poor are people in need, so we demonstrate love by helping.

...There are poor people economically, socially, spiritually.

Ministry is not just about theology or theory....it is about people.

Serving God is about loving Him and loving people not arguing doctrine or competing in philosophical gymnastics.

It is not that we can't argue, debate or philosophize...

...BUT...We have to keep our eye on advancing the mission.

We can debate politics.

We can discuss scientific theories

We can dispute theological ideas.

We can dialogue hypothetical situations.

BUT -- No matter the emotions, feelings, or even the facts...

...Focus on advancing the mission.

Know where you are trying to go and focus on getting there.

As a church:

Pursuing real and right relationship with God and others in life.

Great commission/Great commandment...

Preach the gospel, make disciples, love God, love people.