

Galatians 1-2:10 • Accountability

Introduction

There's an interesting parallel in the way that Paul conveys his personal **independence** as an apostle called and commissioned by God to his **solidarity** as he ministered with other apostles. Paul provides us with an example of being personally devoted and committed to our faith and ministry while still being able to work in unity with the church and its members. It should be noted, however, that Paul's problems were not with other apostles but with false teachers and Judaizers who sought to drive a wedge between Paul and the apostles in order to gain influence for themselves.

¹Paul, an apostle (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead), ²and all the brethren who are with me,
To the churches of Galatia:

^{2:1}Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.

¹⁰For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

²It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.

[Read 1:1]

Q: By Whose authority was Paul sent? Was it given by earthly institutions or heavenly?

A: Paul goes out of his way to specifically state "not sent from men nor through the agency of man" and further contrasts it with "but through Jesus Christ and God the Father". One of the chief characteristics of Paul's independence was authority derived not from men but directly from God.

[Read 2:1]

Q: What is the chief contrast between Barnabas and Titus? What might they be labeled as or immediately identified with?

A: Barnabas was a Jew, Titus was a Greek.

Q: What is the chief similarity between Barnabas and Titus?

A: They were key leaders in Asia.

Q: So why would Paul enjoin them to accompany him to Jerusalem? What was being demonstrated?

A: Paul showed he was unified with the Christian community and that he could work with, and had the support of, the entire church of Asia, both those coming from Jewish and non-Jewish backgrounds.

Point: Paul's independence -- in terms of where his authority was derived -- was proven in the unity it produced.

[Read 1:10]

Q: What is Paul trying to communicate? To Whom is Paul stating that he is wholly and ultimately accountable?

A: Paul is personally accountable to God, not men.

[Read 2:2]

Q: How does this contrast with Paul's assertion in 1:10 that he is accountable to God? How are his actions in 2:2 evidence of his solidarity?

A: Paul "places his message on the table", so to speak, for the other apostles to examine.

Point: One has to be both personally and corporately accountable to God to be complete. Yes, one must stand up and "do the right thing" in personal circumstances, being held accountable to God for one's actions and decisions, but one must also be held accountable to God through the church in regards to their ministry. It's the two-sided coin of personal accountability and public accountability.

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[Refer to 1:10 again]

Q: What was Paul's aim – Who was he trying to please?

A: God.

³But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. ⁵But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. ⁶But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. ⁷But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised

[Read 2:3-7]

Q: What is further evidence in this passage that Paul was seeking to please God rather than men?

A: In spite of pressure from Judaisers seeking to divide them over the issue of making a Gentile (Titus) conform to the Jewish law (circumcision), Paul held his moral ground in order to please God rather than man.

Q: Why is it significant that the other apostles, in Paul's words, "contributed nothing to me"? Was this pride speaking?

A: It's actually the first confirmation of Paul doing 100% of the right thing because there was nothing needing correction, nothing to be taught. If Paul had **NOT** been pleasing God as was his aim, some kind of instruction or admonition from the other apostles would have been warranted.

Q: According to v.7, what is the second and final proof of Paul's ministry and life being rightly rooted in Christ?

A: The apostles recognized Paul had been entrusted with Gospel, the same message they themselves were entrusted with by Christ. They saw Paul as an equal in terms of ministry not deprived of anything they themselves did not have.

Q: But how does this fit with Paul's example of independence that works in solidarity with others?

A: All true bearers of the Gospel have as their priority to please God over men. Paul's desire fit with their desire. If he'd been a false teacher or someone more intent on promoting himself than pleasing God, he would have been truly and completely independent and shown to be working in contrast to the goals of all ministries: To please God.

¹¹For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

[Read 1:11]

Q: If Paul's message was not derived from human institutions or ideas, what was its source?

A: Divine revelation from Christ.

⁷But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised ⁸(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles),

[Read 2:7-8]

Q: If Paul's message was derived directly from God, from whence came Peter's message?

A: Divine revelation from Christ.

Q: But what is the principle difference between the two according to these Scriptures?

A: Peter was called to the Jews, Paul to the Gentiles.

Q: Yet what was the same about Peter and Paul according to v.8?

A: The same Christ was working through both of them.

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Point: Different callings working toward a unified purpose. Jesus was working through them both.

¹⁵But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

[Read 1:15-17]

Q: Paul's conversion and subsequent ministry – did it come about as the result of consultations with anyone?

A: No one human. As with all of us, our decision to come to Christ and heed His call in our life is independent of others' input or feedback.

⁹and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

[Read 2:9]

Q: After so many years of ministry, why would Paul seem to seek consultation with the other apostles now?

A: Going back to what was said at the beginning, the apostles' problems weren't with each other but with the Judaisers and false teachers that sought to divide them. Paul sought unity of the church, not self-validation.

Q: What was decided by the apostles in Acts 15 & 16 regarding obedience to the Mosaic Law?

A: Obedience should continue for Jews but not for Gentiles. This seeming contradiction of a dual standard was used by the Judaisers and false teachers. The common enemy of **ALL** apostles – whether in Jerusalem or Asia – were these harbingers of division.

Q: How did the apostles in Jerusalem treat Paul and the other apostles?

A: They demonstrated their unity by publicly accepting them as co-workers, adding their endorsement to Christ's commission, not to any man's commission. [Isn't it interesting that it worked both ways – Paul didn't examine them either and, in effect, **returned** the endorsement.]

Point: We are all independently saved and called, yet are unified by Christ in building up His kingdom through the same Gospel. There is only one body in Christ, therefore we are all working towards the same goal.

[Summary]

Q: What is the one word that might summarize the situations discussed here that embraces both independence and solidarity?

A: Accountability.

Point: Do you see the church, your church family, or your ministry partners/peers as an equal part of accountability to God? We have been called to be accountable to God both through our personal actions carrying out our ministry independently **AND** in concert with the church.