

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 4
Galatians 2: 1 - 10, Acts 15

Lessons In Leadership

Each time a new—members' class is formed by a group of people who are joining a church, you may find many different backgrounds represented in the individuals. There will be cultural differences, social standards that are totally unrelated and many denominations and non-denominations. Some will have attended church for many years without joining, while others are transferring their membership. The thing you will notice is there will be an amazing unity in such a group. We can suspect the difficulties that arise later in various ministries and areas of church life are not caused by the variety of teaching or the social or cultural backgrounds but by personalities, arrogance of leadership, selfishness, jealousy and other things. But even these are not the real causes. The real issue is almost always caused by the individuals' inability to keep a focus upon Jesus Christ and to be humble before one another.

In Galatians 2:1 - 10 Paul tells us about a potential split, a division in the church or group of churches in that area, which today is known as Turkey. I was a large area with many Christians who had come to know Christ through Paul's teaching less than 20 years before. However, later there was the danger of a grievous division. When Paul wrote this letter he was referring to an incident recorded in the 15th. Chapter of Acts. It happened between the first and second of Paul's missionary journeys.

Paul was on the defensive as he faced the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He repelled their attack by taking his stand on Christian freedom versus bondage to the law. The ultimate of his defense for his ministry was the fact that the Lord Jesus had commissioned him personally. He was to go to all the world with the message of salvation, to both Gentiles and Jews.

The Galatians seemed to be unable to keep their spiritual life in balance. They were known for their fickle inability to stay with anything very long. They decided the converts had to be circumcised, and then taught all the complicated rules and regulations which were a part of Jewish worship. After that they would be acceptable to God! Oh! How foolish of the Galatians. Now they needed Paul's teaching of the truth, straight and without error.

It is not hard for Christians today to understand that being a Christian has nothing to do with keeping the Jewish laws and ceremonies, that only faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross for the forgiveness of sin is the true and acceptable answer. It really hadn't been hard for the Galatians in the beginning. They were so enthusiastic and joyful until the Judaizers had come in with their lies and untruths. These men were sincere, but they were wrong for they insisted that, while salvation was by Christ, works were also necessary. The Galatians were already yielding to such teachings, which meant they were returning to a bondage of observing days, month, years, rituals and ceremonies. So those who came teaching false doctrine were a thorn to Paul and to the early church. Paul took comfort in the knowledge that Jesus had foretold that those who followed Him would be persecuted, but there would be great blessings and joy was well for them (Matt. 5:11,12)>

After several years of suffering for their faith, the Galatians had begun to wonder if they might have been wrong. So they began to rationalize and reason, "Are we really following God's teachings or have we made some terrible mistake?" This is not hard to understand; we also have some of these uncertain thoughts. Part of maturity in the Lord is to understand the truth that God does not guarantee Christians a smooth track in their course of following Christ. Jesus warned us about persecution and said to be prepared for it. Paul's trip to Jerusalem was to check on the situation and see if the leaders had changed the message. The infant church was in grave danger because of this false teaching. Paul wasn't worried that his teaching

was wrong; he was concerned that the leaders in Jerusalem might have altered the gospel message, undercutting what he was seeking to do. It always causes problems for the people who work in Christian ministry if the leadership doesn't stay consistent with the truth. This is true today. Some main-line denominations are teaching contradictory beliefs. There are some in positions of authority who are making it impossible for pastors preaching the truth to remain in the denomination because of their conscience. It isn't because these pastors want to rebel against authority over them, but because that authority has added false teachings which they've made mandatory to be preached or rules they have made that must be kept. So the ministry becomes difficult when the message of the ordained pastor does not agree with the message that the higher leadership is giving out. There comes a time when it is necessary, for the sake of the purity of the Word of God and the purity of the teaching to stand for what is true, regardless of what it costs.

When Paul went to Jerusalem he found the apostles had stood firm. They had not given in to pressure from those people who no longer believed the true gospel. Paul purposely brought a Greek convert with him, one who had never been circumcised, named Titus. He wanted to see if the leadership would require Titus to be circumcised. Paul tells us they did not. Praise God, the leadership had kept their convictions strong, they had not wavered. When some of the people who had swung back to Judaism came privately to Paul and insisted Titus be circumcised, they were refused. He said that he would not yield for a moment to anything that would pervert the truth of the gospel (vv. 4,5). That was the true issue of what was going on! To his joy and gratitude the leaders had remained true to what they understood, that God had showed them Christ's total work at Calvary.

There is a principle here and it is important that we understand it. There will always be a struggle over the purity of the faith. It happened in the very beginning to those who had had the tremendous benefit of having been with Jesus and had heard His voice with their own ears. Then how much easier for each generation to be tempted to move away from the truth of the gospel by adding or subtracting from its message. Christian leadership has a grave responsibility. Their only hope of purity is in God's Word.

A healthy, strong leadership involves 3 important areas; they are: 1) No compromise in essentials. 2) Liberty in non-essentials. 3) Agreement over strategy (plans, or methods of action).

As we grow in the study of God's Word, we learn what the essentials are, the basics. We should also come to see what things are non-essential. All this we can agree on, and appropriate in our lives as we relate to others. Go to the Word, and pray for God's Spirit to give you wisdom and guidance; Whether leading or following.

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 4
Galatians 2: 1 - 10, Acts 15

SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“...you will be anxious to follow the example of those who receive all that God has promised them because of their strong faith and patience” (Hebrews 6:12b L.B.)

Study the above verse with a serious desire to understand what it is that the Spirit would teach you from it. How important is the example you set before others? You are either a leader or a follower. If you are a leader, then where are you leading those who follow you? If you are a follower, what kind of example are you following? Does this concern move you to strive to be a more Christ-like example to your family and friends?

THINK upon the Old Testament saints whose walk through life pleased God. They all walked by faith, and set an example for us. Take a moment and thank God for the great heroes of faith. Read Hebrews 11 as a reminder that their names are in the Book of Life.

QUESTIONS:

1. a. Review. How long was it from Paul's conversion until he went to Jerusalem the first time?
 v. ____
 b. What impressed you about his instructions from God to go to the Gentiles?
2. a. How much time elapsed before Paul went back to Jerusalem? v. ____
 b. Who went with Paul?
3. What authority did Paul say motivated him to go to Jerusalem?
4. Give the reason for Paul's trip to Jerusalem.
5. a. What happened in Jerusalem that proved Paul's teaching was correct
 b. Why was the Jerusalem elders' decision so important in establishing the truth of the Gospel?
6. Why does Paul refer to the meeting in Jerusalem when it was settled at that time?
7. a. What were the false leaders' intentions?
 b. Tell why Paul and Titus didn't budge in their position.

8. Read Acts 15:6 - 11 and give answers to the following questions and instructions:
 - a. Who was speaking to the elders?
 - b. What did he say about being chosen?
 - c. Who was to benefit from God's plan of salvation?
 - d. How did God show He had accepted both Jews and Gentiles?
 - e. How did God cleanse their lives?
 - f. Tell what v.10 says.
 - g. Verse 11 gives the main theme of Galatians. Write it out and what it means to you.
9. Tell how reading acts 15:6 - 12 helps us understand Gal. 2:7 - 9 better.
10. In Gal. 2:9 Paul mentions "the grace God has given me." Read 1 Cor. 15:9 - 11 and give as much important information about Paul as you can.
11. How was Paul's confidence as an apostle to the Gentiles rewarded? See Gal. 2:9.
12.
 - a. What was the brethren's final instructions?
 - b. Read Acts 11:28 - 30 and tell how those in Jerusalem were blessed by Paul's and Barnabas' response to the elders' instruction?
13.
 - a. What does Deuteronomy 15:11 tell us about responsibilities to the poor?
 - b. How can ministering to the poor aid in preaching the message of salvation to them?
 - c. Do you think it is harder to reach the rich with the gospel than those who are poor? Explain your answer.
 - d. What does 2 Peter 3:9 say God's will is for every person's life?
14.
 - a. From the notes give 3 important points of strong leadership.
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - b. How can you apply these important practices in your relationships with those you are in contact with each day?