

# **GALATIANS: THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL**



## **WEEK 6 APOSTLE APPROVED: TWO MINISTRIES, ONE MESSAGE GALATIANS 2:6-10**

Van Nuys Bible Study  
Doulos Fellowship Group  
Grace Community Church

Prepared by Hans Kaufman  
2014

## Galatians 2:6-10 – Apostle Approved

---

### The Text

---

And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.

On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

---

### Introduction

---

- Paul has already reminded the Galatian churches that his apostolic authority comes from God and that there is only one true gospel.
  - False teachers have infiltrated these churches and replaced God's gospel with a lie.
  - There is no room in the church for a false gospel (which is no gospel at all).
  - Paul is now proving to the Galatians that the gospel he preaches is God's gospel.
  - He has supported this claim by reminding them of his pre-converted life, his conversion, and his obscurity (from the other apostles and Judean churches).
  - It's time to hit the Judaizers where it hurts...
- 

### Principal Proposition

---

While avoiding man-worship, Paul calls upon the affirmation of other apostles to strengthen his claim: that his gospel is the only gospel (God's gospel).

---

## Literary Context

---

- A. Paul's Gospel is God's Gospel (1:11-2:21)
    - 1. Revelation from God (1:11-12)
    - 2. Support for Paul's Claim (1:13-2:21)
      - a. His Pre-Converted Life (1:13-14)
      - b. His Conversion (1:15-17)
      - c. His Obscurity (1:18-24)
      - d. **His Approval by the Jerusalem Apostles (2:1-10)**
- 

## Literary Structure

---

The Setup	(v. 6)
The Settlement	(v. 7-9)
The Suggestion	(v. 10)

---

## Interpretive Comments

---

### The Setup

- v. 6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me.
- “And from those who seemed to be influential”
    - The phrase “those who seemed influential” appears four times in the Greek for this text (Galatians 2:2, 6 twice, 9) and refers to Peter, James, and John.
    - Paul’s intention is not to diminish their apostolic ministry, but to keep their influence in perspective.
    - *Paul does not reject the leadership of the three but warns against overestimating them. (Schreiner)*
  - “what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality”
    - Paul is not saying that he does not care for their ministry. Rather, he is confident that his apostolic calling is just as valid as theirs.

- God is not impressed by anyone’s reputation or status.
- When God’s negative attitude towards favoritism (or the elevation of man) appears in Scripture, it is intended to be an example for us to follow (Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34; 1 Corinthians 4:6; James 2:9).



- “those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me”
  - Paul did not need their approval to know he was right. His authority came from God, not men.
  - His desire to have both private and public audiences with the other apostles shows that he respected them and their ministries. He did not need their approval to confirm his message and calling, but he recognized their influence to help or hinder his efforts for the gospel (v2).

### The Settlement

v. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised

- “On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised”
  - Paul desired for any and all men to be saved (1 Corinthians 9:19-23). However, his calling to the ministry had a special emphasis towards Gentiles. In fact, Ananias had been told prophetically by Christ Himself that Paul’s mission was to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).
  - This reality became readily apparent to the other apostles during his visit.
- “just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised”
  - Similar to Paul’s Gentile calling, Peter’s calling came with a special ministry to preach the gospel to the Jews.
  - These are two distinct ministries, but one message (the gospel).

v. 8 (for He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles),

➤ “for He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles”

- Paul repeats the difference between his ministry and Peter’s, but this time emphasizes the source of their effectiveness.
- These are two distinct ministries, but one source (God).



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

➤ “and when James and Cephas and John,”

- Paul drops some serious names on the table.
- Until now, he has referred to the other apostles as “those who seemed influential.” Peter (Cephas) and James are the only other apostles who have been briefly mentioned by name thus far (Galatians 1:18-19).
- James was Jesus’ half-brother and early leader in the Jerusalem church (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3; Acts 12:17; 15:13-31; 21:18; 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; 2:9, 12; Jude 1). He served there until his death in AD 62.
- John was one of Jesus’ closest disciples who outlived the other twelve (John 21:20-24). This is the only time he is mentioned in any of Paul’s letters.

➤ “who seemed to be pillars”

- After revealing their identities, Paul is quick to add his final “those who seemed influential” statement.
- Even if one of them happened to read this letter, they would not have been offended by Paul’s emphasis. These men knew the truth and would have agreed with him (James 2:1-13).



➤ “perceived the grace that was given to me”

- Similar to verse 7, Peter, James, and John were able to recognize the validity of Paul’s apostolic ministry.

➤ “they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me”

- *In the Near East, to clasp the right hand of a person was to make a solemn vow of friendship and was a mark of fellowship, or partnership. (MacArthur)*
- The “pillars” saw Paul as a partner in ministry.
- This would have been a major blow against Paul’s opponents who accused him of being self-appointed, false, and lesser than the other apostles.

➤ “that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised”

- The other apostles did more than recognize Paul’s God-given authority and gospel message, they approved of his ministry and agreed with his mission.

### The Suggestion

v. 10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

➤ “Only, they asked us to remember the poor”

- Paul was a brilliant man who could amaze crowds with his understanding of the gospel (Acts 9:20-22). The “pillars” wanted to make sure that his ministry consisted of more than “head-knowledge.”

- Preaching without application is not enough, even for one of God’s apostles. *Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. – 1 John 3:18*
  - Looking after the needs of the poor has always been a central desire for the church (2 Corinthians 8-9; Romans 15:27; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17).
- “the very thing I was eager to do”
- Paul’s conversion and calling was genuine, so his desires were aligned with Christ’s (Matthew 11:4-5; 19:21; Luke 4:18; 14:13-14; John 13:29).
  - His heart for the poor has been well documented in Scripture (Acts 11:29-30; 24:17; Romans 15:25-26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:1-6; 9:1-5, 12).

---

### Discussion Questions

---

- What are some of the dangers of thinking too highly of influential church leaders?
- How can the legitimacy of a person’s ministry be determined today (without apostolic approval)?
- Is it important for our actions to justify (or validate) our faith? Why?

---

### Concise Prayers

---

- Lord, thank you for faithful men and women. Help us to honor them and their service without worshiping them or elevating them to a place of unhealthy influence. (v. 6)
- Thank you for sovereignly calling and directing men to the areas of ministry you have designed them for. Continue to keep them and use us to faithfully minister where you would have us. (v. 7-9)
- May we honor you in our service, remember those who are in need, and may our activities spring from the genuine overflow of a transformed heart. (v. 10)

**PAUL'S CONVERSION  
AND EARLY MINISTRY**

ACTS 9:1-30; 11:19-30; 12:24-25  
GAL. 1:11-24

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ⌋ Pass
- Paul sent to Damascus
- Paul spends time in Arabia
- Paul returns to Jerusalem
- Paul flees from Hellenists
- Paul and Barnabas travel to Antioch
- Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem
- Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch
- Kingdom of Agrippa I

118



5. Paul returns to his hometown of Tarsus

6. Paul and Barnabas establish a strong church where believers were first called Christians

7. Paul and Barnabas travel to Jerusalem with aid for famine

8. Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch

3. Paul baptized and preaches about his newfound faith

2. Paul has a vision of Jesus and converts

4. Paul flees to Arabia then returns to Jerusalem

1. Paul sanctioned to arrest followers in Damascus