

Trust the Gospel – Gal 2:1-10

Gal 2; We're working our way through the book of Galatians under a new theme for the year, and finding some truths that are absolutely foundational for our lives
Gospel truths

And having discovered in chapter 1 that we can *trust* the gospel, the Apostle Paul continues with the *same* line of thinking in chapter 2
Laying out even *more* reasons; With a whole bunch of detail thrown in; Detail that gives us great insight into the situation and setting (**Intro**)

➤ So let's retrace his flow of thought, and pick it up back in 1:6; That's where it starts
[6] *I am astonished* [Paul says] *that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel*
And then, after some parenthetical thoughts in v7-10, he says in v11 . . .
[11] *For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. [12] For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*

That's the flow of thought; He was astonished b/c they were turning to a *different* gospel, and rejecting the one worthy of our trust
And then goes on to support that in the following verses

The point being, we can and should . . .

Trust the gospel

That's what we found last week, and that's the drum he continues to beat this week
Trust the gospel to save you, keep you, and sanctify you; B/c . . .

- **It came from God**
- **It comes with grace**
- **It changes lives**

That's what we found in chapter 1

➤ And chapter 2 is more of the same; And we're going to take a few weeks to cover it, b/c it's *full* of gospel truth; Starting in v1-2
[1] *Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. [2] I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.*

As with *any* retelling of events, there are a bunch of details that *beg* to be explained; And this one is no different; Starting with the very first word – *then*
Indicating that he's in the *middle* of his testimony
That's what this is; Recounting his life before Christ, how he came to Christ, and what his life is like *in* Christ; The very format we use in baptisms; It's his testimony

Which began in chapter 1, when he was a zealous Jew who persecuted *Christians*
Until he saw Jesus in a blinding epiphany on his way to Damascus
And after confessing him as Lord and Savior, he went away into Arabia it says (17); Presumably to preach and prepare
After that, he returned to Damascus (**Map**)

And *then after three years* he says in 1:18, he went to Jerusalem for 15 days – to meet with Peter and James

And from there, according to the book of Acts, he went to Syria and Cilicia
Which brings us to 2, where he says – *Then after fourteen years* [he] went to Jerusalem again

➤ Now, I want to take a few minutes to sort all this out*****
B/c the details show just how much the gospel is open to scrutiny
Which is the next reason we can trust it

Trust the gospel, b/c . . .

• **It's open to scrutiny (v1a)**

Generally speaking, things that are open to scrutiny are trustworthy, and things that aren't, aren't; There are exceptions of course; And factors that often *supersede* openness
Like the secrecy necessary for national security, and business patents, and medical patients; But generally speaking, openness breeds trust
And the *gospel* is marked by both

Far from a secret that's *off* limits, like some religions; Or a black box that's inscrutable;
Or an ideology that needs protecting b/c it's too weak to stand on its own . . .
The gospel is open; Open to investigation, open to inspection, and open to scrutiny

➤ *Including*, the circumstances surrounding it
Like the details and implications of Paul's statement regarding *14 years*

What does he mean when he says *then after fourteen years*?

Is it 14 years after the 3 years of v18? Which was 3 years after his conversion? For a total of 17 years?

Or 14 years after his conversion? *Including* the 3 years

Grammatically speaking, it could be either

And though some people say it's the former, most likely it's the latter; That the visit to which he refers, happened 14 years after his conversion . . .
And 11 years after his *first* visit to Jerusalem

And I want you to understand why, to show that the details are not only *open* to scrutiny, but bear up *under* such scrutiny; Increasing our trust in the gospel, all the more

➤ So here it goes; You might think of this as an historical jigsaw puzzle
The book of Acts, which is the history of the early church and the travels of Paul, mentions 4 visits that he made to Jerusalem

The 1st, shortly after his conversion (Acts 9:26-30), I'll call the **Brief Visit**; Described in Acts 9 (v26-30), and referred to here in 1:18; They're one and the same
Brief, b/c the believers were afraid of him, even though it had been 3 years since his conversion, and the Hellenists, Greek-speaking Jews, were trying to kill him
So he got out of town after only 15 days

The 2nd visit, was his **Famine Visit**; Where he delivered a gift to the church in Jerusalem, from the church in Antioch; It's found in **Acts 11:27-30**

[27] Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. [28] And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius [the Roman ruler at the time]). [29] So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. [30] And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul [Paul's original name].
That was his 2nd visit; The Famine Visit*****

The 3rd, was the famous **Jerusalem Council**; Found in Acts 15; Where the apostles and elders officially declared that Gentile believers did not have to keep the Law
Very important; 35 verses dedicated to it in Acts 15; Settling a raging dispute in the early church

And then the 4th visit, following his last missionary journey, was **Paul's Arrest**; When he upset the Jewish leaders and crowds, and was sent to Rome; 4 visits

The question is, which one was Paul referring to, when he said *after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem?*

We know it's not the first, b/c that coincides with the description in chapter 1
And we know it's not the last, b/c that happened much later; After a whole slew of journeys found in Acts
So it has to be the 2nd or 3rd visit; The Famine Visit or the Jerusalem Council
And the circumstances seem to fit the **Famine Visit**; His *second* trip

➤ Now, about this time, you're probably thinking, "Do I really need to know this?"
And I would say, "Need? Maybe not. But beneficial? Absolutely."
B/c it increases your appreciation for what we *have* in the gospel, and fuels your confidence that it's true and good
Just like studying the events and people of the American Revolution; It increases your appreciation for their sacrifice, and fuels your trust in the documents they wrote
Like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of our country; According to which we still live

Understanding the details surrounding historical events, not only shows they're *open* to scrutiny, but bear up *under* such scrutiny; Increasing our trust all the more
And the gospel is no different

➤ So back to Paul's visits; The circumstances seem to fit the **Famine Visit** here in 2:1;
His *second* trip; Otherwise, he completely leaves that *out* of his testimony
Which would have been misleading on his part, and contrary to his objective
B/c he was trying to show that he didn't get the gospel from other apostles, even though he rubbed shoulders with them on occasion

Conveniently leave one of those visits out, and somebody could legitimately say . . .
"Hey, what about that one? You really *did* get the gospel from somebody else; You really are a sham; And so is the message you preach"
So it's not likely that he would have left out any mention of his 2nd visit, and skipped right over it to his 3rd

Not only that, but the *details* seem to line up with the Famine Visit; The details between

Gal 2 and Acts 11; Including the fact, that . . .
Paul made the trip with *Barnabas*; He did so in response to a *revelation*; The purpose was to help the poor (10); And it was conducive to a private *meeting*
They line up; All of which points to the Famine Visit

➤ But even more important, is the absence of any reference in Galatians, to the **Jerusalem Council**, the 3rd visit
Which is huge, b/c that council, that visit, solved the very debate Paul was addressing
That the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised and keep the Law, in order to be saved
They solved it, they ruled on it, and Paul was a part of it
They even distributed a *letter* about it, that Paul himself delivered; Including delivery to the churches in *Galatia*

All of which, would have made the *book* of Galatians, totally unnecessary; B/c that's what it's about; It's about salvation through faith, not works
Salvation through Jesus – first, last, and always – instead of the Law
Salvation for *every* tribe, tongue, and nation – not just the Jews

So if the Jerusalem Council had already met and ruled, all Paul had to do was appeal to their decision, and move on
But he didn't, which tells us that the Council hadn't yet met

Leading us to conclude, that Paul wrote Galatians *before* the council, and that the 14 years probably don't *follow* the 3, but *include* them*****
B/c if they followed the 3, making 17 years total after his conversion, that would put the Jerusalem Council much too late in the sequence of events . . .
As laid out in the book of Acts

➤ The point being: the details are *there*, they're open to *scrutiny*, and they bear up *under* such scrutiny; Increasing our trust in the gospel all the more

We may not have them *all*; Or be able to sort them *completely* out; But given the number and nature of details we *do* have . . .
And the fact that they bear up under scrutiny, and make sense when put together, fortifies our trust in the truth of God's Word

Which is a real issue; B/c just this week, one of our students mentioned to their leader, that they had a hard time believing the Bible . . .
B/c they weren't confident that the facts lined up
When the fact is, they do; And the more you scrutinize them, the more they reveal, and the more you can trust
Trust the gospel, b/c it's open to scrutiny

2nd, taking into account the *rest* of v1-2, we can trust the gospel b/c . . .

• **It was thoroughly vetted (v1-2)**
Trust the gospel b/c it was thoroughly *vetted*; Examined; Evaluated; V1 again . . .
[1] Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

➤ *Barnabas* you should know, was the guy who first *introduced* Paul to the apostles . . .

On his *first* visit to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18; Acts 9:27)

And the guy, who before that, sold some land and gave it to the church in Acts 4 (36)

He was *a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith* the Bible says (Acts 11:24)

Eventually bringing Paul to Antioch where they *ministered* together, before setting off on Paul's first *missionary* journey together

And then went to Jerusalem with him on *this* visit, the Famine Visit, and later on to the Jerusalem Council together

The bottom line being, they were *partners* in ministry

Not that they stayed together *forever*, but that God used them mightily while they were

Especially as a source of mutual encouragement

Don't do ministry without a partner; Whether it's serving in Harvest Kids, involvement in a compassion ministry, leading a Discipleship Group, or going overseas

Find a Barnabas

➤ And then there's *Titus*; *I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas* [Paul says], *taking Titus along with me*.

Titus was another partner in ministry, and a fellow worker for the gospel he says in 2

Cor 8 (v23)

In fact, he was Paul's *representative* in Corinth, and carried some of his letters to them

Eventually going on to become a missionary to Crete, where Paul wrote him a letter that bears his *name* in the New Testament

But here, *early* in Paul's ministry, he served as a crucial example; A test case if you will, for what God *requires* of Gentile believers, and what he doesn't

B/c Titus was a Gentile himself – a Greek it says in v3; A non-Jew, like most of us, who believed in Jesus

So here's Paul and Barnabas, waltzing in to Jerusalem – the center of Judaism, the center of the church at that time, and the center of controversy . . .

With someone who was clearly a believer, but wasn't keeping the Law; Which made him the point of the spear

You might think Paul was looking for trouble

But what he was *really* looking for, was confirmation

➤ [2] *I went up* [to Jerusalem] *because of a revelation* [a message, an insight, a thought from the Lord]

Which could be referring to the revelation from *Agabus* in Acts 11, or a revelation to

Paul regarding the nature of *this* meeting

Whatever the case, he was there at the prompting of God, looking for confirmation

I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential)

Probably referring to James, the half-brother of Jesus, and Peter, and John

B/c they were the influential *pillars* of the church; Naming them explicitly in v9

I went up because of a revelation and set before them . . . the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

➤ Paul wanted and needed confirmation, that the message he was preaching, was *right*

That the gospel and how he was applying it, was correct

He didn't want to misrepresent it; He didn't want to lead people astray; And he didn't want to be a lone ranger

Setting up a separate, but false religion, just b/c he had a following

Or perpetuating a movement that was full of adherents, but void of disciples

He didn't want any part of that; That would have been running *in vain*

He wanted to preach the gospel, and preach it right

He wanted to be a part of something bigger than himself, based on truth

So he laid it out before those who had gone before him; Those who had *also* been commissioned by Jesus

And told them what he had been saying, in order to *thoroughly* vet it; In order to break it down, pick it apart, scrutinize the pieces, and assess the results

Something that bolstered *his* trust in the gospel, and should bolster ours as well (**Summ**)

B/c men like Peter, James, and John – who walked with Jesus, and talked with Jesus – *thoroughly* vetted it

And thousands more have submitted it to intense scrutiny

Under which it has held up, like the truth always does

Trust the gospel

Prayer – Lord, would you open our eyes, remove our doubts, and bolster our trust? We're in awe of your Word, and love your way

So receive our tithes and offerings now as an act of worship, for your glory and our joy