

Successful outcome of Paul's second Jerusalem visit

- 'False brothers' putting pressure on Christian leaders

- Taking the gentile Christian Titus forces the Jerusalem leaders to take a decision

1. The Gospel was clarified

- Gentiles not required to keep the Jewish law – faith in Jesus is enough

- Circumcision simply predicts the gospel

When Paul went to Jerusalem in AD 47 he received guidance from God telling him that he should take the opportunity of getting the Jerusalem leaders to state the gospel with exceptional clarity. Paul knew that there were 'false brothers' in Jerusalem – people who did not really believe in the Lord Jesus Christ at all, but who were unsaved 'Christianized' Jews. They were people who came from the popular Pharisaism in Jerusalem but now claimed to believe in Jesus as their Saviour. Paul was 100% certain they were not true Christians at all. They were trusting their Jewish culture and Mosaic morality and they had a high regard for Jesus, but none of that is true Christian salvation and Paul knew it. These people were putting pressure even on the Christian leaders in Jerusalem, who were not as clear as they should have been that Jewish culture was not essential to salvation. Paul was led to do something about it. He went to Jerusalem with Barnabas taking some money from the Antioch church that had been collected to assist needy Christians in the 'mother church'. At the same time he took a *gentile* Christian, Titus. This would force the Jerusalem leaders to take a decision. They would have to make up their minds: is circumcision and Mosaic law-keeping necessary to salvation (and therefore to Christian fellowship) or not? The case of Titus would force them into making a decision one way or another. They would have to either agree with the 'false brothers' or take a stand against them. There is a difference between a *muddled* Christians and a Pharisaical imitation-Christian. Peter and James and John were not as clear as they ought to be, but they were not imitation-Christians. They were true apostles whose spiritual knowledge was not as great and clear as that of Paul (note 2 Peter 3:16). But the 'false brothers' were exactly that – false brothers, imitation-Christians and nothing more.

Paul's visit to Jerusalem in AD 47 was a success! He says, '*However even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, although he was a Greek*' ^{□1}.

1. **The gospel was clarified.** It is good when Christians are united in rejecting a false gospel. When Paul, Barnabas and Titus arrived, and Paul laid his gospel before the Jerusalem-leaders, they all agreed that salvation was by grace without the need of Jewish culture. Faith in Jesus – they said – is enough for salvation, for sanctification, for glorification. This was exactly what Paul wanted them to say! Titus was fully accepted as a Christian and a godly man, without his having to be circumcised or keep the Jewish law, in the Jewish manner. Before the events of AD 45 when hundreds of gentiles had been saved, all Christian men had been circumcised. The Judaizers were arguing that Paul's teaching was breaking away from 'the tradition of the church', and that gentile Christian men should be circumcised like all other Christian men. But did **gentiles** need the Mosaic law? The case of Titus made the Jerusalem-leaders face the matter and the answer was: no! Salvation is by grace. The circumcision of Jewish men does not **contribute** to their salvation. It is simply a Jewish ceremony **predicting** the gospel. Gentiles certainly do not need it.

□1 2:3

2. The 'false brothers' were rightly evaluated

• Exposed – the imitation Christians who were pressurising the Jerusalem Church leaders

2. The 'false brothers' were rightly evaluated. The gospel of salvation by law is no gospel at all. The beginning of the next verse is literally translated: 'And on account of secretly brought-in false brothers ...', but the sense is not complete. Paul is writing in a clipped and abbreviated manner. The sense is: 'And this matter arose on account of the false brothers who infiltrated the meeting, the ones who slipped in to spy upon our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus. Their purpose was to bring us into bondage'¹. Paul is referring to the pressure for Titus and other gentiles to be circumcised as the sign of allegiance to the Mosaic law. Paul's point is that the question of circumcision would not even have come up at all if it were not for the imitation-Christians who were bringing pressure upon their leaders in the Jerusalem-church. This pressure is quite visible in the Book of Acts. The Judaizers pressurised even James and claimed to have his support ². Peter feared them ³. Paul says, 'This pressure to have Titus and other gentiles circumcised did not come from the leaders themselves; it came from the false brothers.' But when Paul went there with Titus the matter came out into the open and the Jerusalem-leaders took a clear stand against the legalism of the 'Judaizers' in Jerusalem – at least for the moment!

¹ 2:4

² see 2:12

³ again, see 2:12

• Recognised - Laws that bring fearful submission – bondage and slavery

The senior leaders recognized the Pharisaised imitation- Christians for what they were. They realized imitation- Christians had infiltrated the Jerusalem congregation, but did not really belong among the Christians. The Judaizers hated the freedom of the Christians. They disliked the assurance of salvation that the gospel brings. They preferred a more 'fear-full' kind of religion where there were plenty of Mosaic rulings and extra 'Christian' laws that they laid upon anyone who would listen to them. They wanted to bring all the Christians into this kind of fearful 'submission'. But Paul calls it 'bondage' and 'slavery'. Through his visit, the leaders at Jerusalem all saw what he meant.

3. Total agreement

• The true gospel clarified

3. There was total agreement among all the apostles concerning the nature of the gospel. None of the leaders at Jerusalem would let the Judaizers have their way. Paul says, 'But we did not submissively yield to these men, not even for an hour. We intend that the truth of the gospel should remain with you'.¹

¹ 2:5



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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