

PETER AND PAUL'S AGREEMENT IN GALATIANS TWO

"But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."

(Gal. 2:6 - 9)

If the agreement arrived at in these verses was merely that Peter was to preach to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles:

-- Why was Paul told by God "You will be a witness for Him [Christ] to all men of what you have seen and heard"?

-- Why did Paul not abide by the agreement? Until the end of the book of Acts he continued to preach to the Jews! He preached to:

- * Timothy's mother, who was a Jewess (Acts 16:1);
- * the synagogue in Thessalonica, as was his custom (Acts 17:1 - 3);
- * the Jews in Berea (Acts 17:10);
- * the Jews in the synagogue in Athens (Acts 17:17);
- * Aquilla, a Jew (Acts 18:2);
- * the synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:4 - 6);
- * the synagogue in Ephesus (Acts 18:19; 19:8);
- * the Jews (by implication) throughout all the region of Judea (Acts 28:17);
- * and the unsaved Jewish leaders in Rome (Acts 28:17).

-- Why did Paul go to Jerusalem long after Acts 15? This was headquarters for Peter and the twelve, and they were having a fruitful ministry there (Acts 21:20). They had heard that Paul has been teaching "all the Jews who are among the Gentiles" (Acts 21:21).

-- Why should the recipients of the message be the heart of the agreement when the whole purpose of the meeting was the message? (Acts 15:1, 2, 5, 6).

-- Why, immediately following this agreement, did Judas and Silas (leading Jewish believers) preach lengthy messages to these Gentiles? (Acts 15:32).

If there is no difference between the message of Peter and that of Paul:

-- Why did Paul already know what Peter had been preaching while Peter had to be instructed about Paul's message? (Gal. 2:6, 7).

-- Why, years after Paul had completed his ministry and Peter had read all of his epistles, did Peter find some of Paul's message hard to understand? (2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

-- Why did Peter never mention the Body of Christ, the Rapture, or the teaching that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile? (Acts 10:34, 35 and 15:9 do not indicate that there was no difference between Jew and Gentile, but there was no difference in respect to salvation -- it was now being offered to both)

-- Why were those under Peter's ministry all zealous of the Law (Acts 21:20) when Paul had been telling us that we are not under the Law (Rom. 6:15); that the Law written and engraven on

stones has been done away (2 Cor. 3:7 - 11); and that neither salvation (Gal. 2:16), sanctification (Gal. 3:2, 3) nor power in ministry (Gal. 3:5) are by the Law?

-- Why were those under Peter's ministry still practicing circumcision -- and defending the practice as in contrast to those under Paul's ministry (Acts 21:21) -- when Paul had been teaching "If you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2)?

It seems clear to me that the agreement arrived at in Galatians two could be summed up as follows: "We agree that, while Peter has been entrusted with the gospel as adapted to the Jews who were saved before the Body of Christ began [living mostly in Jerusalem], and Paul with that gospel as adapted to the largely Gentile Body of Christ, both messages -- in their proper sphere -- are of God."¹

Once those kingdom saints had passed from the scene the only message -- to all men -- was Paul's gospel of the grace of God, and there was no need for the designations "gospel of the circumcision" and "gospel of the uncircumcision." In keeping with this, they are never again used in Scripture.

---- William P Heath Bible Study # 65.

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¹See the introduction to First Peter in Class Notes on First Peter -- by W. P. Heath