

GRACE IS GREATER

For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human source and I was not taught it, but it came by a revelation of Jesus Christ.

For you have heard about my former way of life in Judaism: I intensely persecuted God's church and tried to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many contemporaries among my people, because I was extremely zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone. I did not go up to Jerusalem to those who had become apostles before me; instead I went to Arabia and came back to Damascus.

Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days. But I didn't see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. I declare in the sight of God: I am not lying in what I write to you.

Afterward, I went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia. I remained personally unknown to the Judean churches that are in Christ. They simply kept hearing, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith he once tried to destroy." And they glorified God because of me.

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain. But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus in order to enslave us. But we did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you.

Now from those recognized as important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism)—they added nothing to me. On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised, since the one at work in Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised was also at work in me for the Gentiles. When James, Cephas, and John—those recognized as pillars—acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do. (Galatians 1:11-2:10)

But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus in order to enslave us. But we did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you. (Galatians 2:3-5)

This is my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you, which you are to keep: Every one of your males must be circumcised. (Genesis 17:10)

"A Church united across the traditional boundaries of ethnic, class and gender distinctions was central for Paul. This is how Jesus defeated in his death the powers of darkness that divide and corrupt the human race...the very existence of the single messianic family, cutting across all human divisions, and together celebrating God's new creation, was the sign to the powers of the world that God was God, and that all human powers and empires in the world could not touch it." (N.T. Wright)

And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. (Luke 22:19-20)

Reflection Question:

What is a "requirement" that you've added to the finished work of Jesus that keeps you from experiencing the freedom of His grace?

Scripture from the CSB unless noted.