



**LESSON 4:** “The Work of the Gospel”    **Date:** Sept 14/Sept 28, 2014  
**TEXT:** Galatians 2:1-10

## INTRODUCTION

**Illustration:** Lt. Hiroo Onoda (Hee-roh Oh-no-da) was groomed by the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII to go behind enemy lines, engage in guerilla warfare, and gather intelligence. On December 26, 1944, he was sent to an island in the Philippines, where he began his operation with these instructions: “You are absolutely forbidden to die by your own hand. It may take three years, it may take five, but whatever happens, we’ll come back for you. Under no circumstances are you to give up your life voluntarily.” Two months later, the island was captured and he (along with three others) was driven into the jungle, from which he continued his raids. When the war ended on August 15, 1945, only eight months after he was commissioned, he didn’t get the news, and even when it did come in October, he disregarded it as a trick. Over the next 29 years, Onoda would continue to convince himself that the war had never ended, and in the meantime, he killed 30 Filipinos and injured over 100 others.

Onoda was finally tracked down by a college student, Nario Suzuki, who had decided to travel the world. In fact, his expedition had three goals: “to find Onoda, a panda, and the Abominable Snowman.” Where dozens had failed, Suzuki succeeded and found Onoda’s hiding place. However, even he was unable to convince Onoda of the war’s end and had to travel back to Japan to solicit the help of Onoda’s former major, Major Taniguchi. When Taniguchi returned to the Philippines and convinced Onoda that the war had indeed ended almost three decades earlier, Onoda was 52 years old. On March 10, 1975, he marched out of the jungle and into the freedom that he could have enjoyed almost 30 years earlier.

Today, many people are just like Hiroo Onoda, but in a spiritual sense—they haven’t heard, or they don’t believe, that the war is over and that peace has come. The “good news” that true freedom can be theirs hasn’t reached their ears or needs to be heard by them again. And the dissemination of that message is up to us. We, too, like Suzuki, ought to have a burning passion to find those who are still warring and share with them this gospel. Yes, brothers and sisters, for those who are still in lost in war, devoid of peace and ignorant of freedom, we have work

to do! We must tell them that in Christ the war is won and freedom is found—we must proclaim to them the gospel!

In Galatians 2:1-10, Paul continues his autobiography and talks about this work, and as he does so, he illustrates another practical application as we seek to prioritize the gospel.

- Because of the nature of the gospel, I should prioritize the gospel by praising God (1:1-5).
- Because of the source of the gospel, I should prioritize the gospel by proclaiming it (1:6-12).
- Because of the goal of the gospel, I should prioritize the gospel by producing fruit (1:13-24).
- ***Because of the work of the gospel, I should prioritize the gospel by partnering with others (2:1-10).***

Paul starts by listing his closest coworkers in verse 1 and ends by talking about new ministry partners in verses 6-10. Throughout this passage, we are challenged concerning two aspects of partnership in gospel-work.

## ENCOURAGEMENT IN PARTNERSHIP (vv. 1-5)

While Paul shares verses 1-10 to continue to defend his apostolic authority, we’re going to look at these verses more personally. In this autobiographical passage, Paul shows that partnership in gospel-work offers encouragement in three different ways.

### 1. Personal companionship (v. 1)

Contrary to popular opinion, Paul was not the lonely apostle or maverick missionary. He constantly surrounded himself with people (cf. Romans 16). While it’s true that his difficult ministry enterprises sometimes forced him to be by himself, whenever he could he was enjoying Christian companionship.

His first ministry partner was Ananias (Acts 9:10-19), who ministered to Paul immediately after his conversion when most people were extremely afraid of him. Ananias is an example to us of how God can use us to be a needed companion to those who are new in the faith. These new believers desperate need a friend and guide, and we can be that for them.

Paul's second great Christian companion was Barnabas, and we read of him in our passage. Barnabas, whose name means "Son of Encouragement" and whose character displayed such a quality, was Paul's Christian discipler or mentor (Acts 9:26-28; 11:19-26). He was the one who really came alongside Paul and involved him in ministry labor. Barnabas was the one who incorporated Paul into ministry in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-28) and Antioch (Acts 11:19-26), so that the Lord could use him in great ways. We all need Barnabases who can surround us with mentorship and encouragement.

The other companion we read about in Galatians 2:1 is Titus. Titus was one of Paul's disciples. Having been blessed by the strength and stability that comes through good Christian companions, Paul is now pouring himself into others. This is a principle that he understood to be the model and mandate of Christ, for he later wrote in 2 Timothy 2:2 to another one of his disciples/mentees/interns, "What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Consider also where Paul was finding these Christian companions—it was in the local church. Paul was writing this letter from his home church in Antioch, and it was within that local church family that he first began to enjoy such rich ministry partnerships. In the gracious wisdom of God, He places His followers in the context of a body, a family—we are all brothers and sisters, having been adopted together into God's family. We don't have to search out ministry partners; we need only look around us. Paul loved and enjoyed his local church family (cf. 1:2), and he found in it companions for life (cf. Ephesians 4:1-16).

**Illustration:** It's not uncommon for a Christian young man to look for a church that has a good singles ministry in order to find a Christian spouse. While this might strike some as awkward or inappropriate, the New Testament would encourage his logic. After all, the relationship enjoyed between a husband and wife is the closest and clearest form of Christian companionship that can be known, as their lifelong partnership exists to illustrate and proclaim the gospel (cf. Ephesians 5:22-33). Where else, other than the church, would you expect to find this kind of Christian companion? Our world seeks for its partners at the bar, the pool hall, the dance floor, etc.—that's where it goes to find BFFs and soul mates. But

those locations won't provide the Christian with an appropriate companion. Nonetheless, God has provided a place for Christians to cultivate meaningful and God-honoring partnerships—it's in the church. Christian companions can obviously be found outside the context of your local church family, but Paul knew that was the place to start, whether you're looking for a Christian spouse or just a ministry partner.

**Application:** Are you partnering with people and enjoying the encouragement of Christian companionship? Paul was a hard worker for the sake of the gospel, but he was also discerning enough to recognize that the gospel's work needed to be kept active and alive within his own heart first. Therefore, he surrounded himself with companions—older/younger, mentors/peers, disciplers/disciples—who would constantly encourage him in faithful Christian living (cf. Hebrews 3:13; 10:24-25). Do you?

Do you have a Barnabas—someone in your life who makes it his/her intention to encourage and challenge you? If not, will you humble yourself to seek the mentorship and guidance of a more mature believer? Will you open yourself up to be impacted, strengthened, and challenged by a godly peer? Will you plug into a small group of believers who prize transparency and accountability in order to know the richness of Christian companionship?

Do you have a Titus? Is there someone that you are "pouring yourself into," someone that you are activity seeking to build up in the faith? Are you anyone's Ananias, coming alongside them in their Christian infancy to provide them with a friend and guide?

As we can see from the involvement of Barnabas and Titus in Paul's life, the Christian companionship Paul has in mind is not mere fellowship with Christians on Sundays and Wednesdays at church, nor is it just socializing with other believers outside of those services. Instead, it is regular and intentional involvement in each other's lives in order to see the goal of the gospel (i.e., transformation) happening within us personally and the work of the gospel (i.e., evangelism/discipleship) happening through us mutually. Friend, look around you at your church family, and enjoy the rich personal companionships that God has provided.

## 2. *Private consideration (v. 2)*

In verse 2, Paul tells us that when he went up to Jerusalem with his two companions, he took advantage of additional partnerships that were afforded in that city—namely, the apostles (i.e., “those who seemed influential”<sup>1</sup>). With these new ministry partners, he enjoyed the encouragement of private consideration, as he was able to “pick their brain” and enjoy “coffee shop conversations” about theology and ministry. These considerations were focused on three concerns:

### a. *Doctrinal agreement — to help us be truthful*

Paul writes that he “set before [the apostles]...privately...the gospel that [he] proclaim[ed] among the Gentiles.” From our background studies in our first few lessons, we equated this Jerusalem visit with Paul’s famine visit in Acts 11:27-30. After the prophet Agabus predicted a great famine (i.e., the “revelation” of Galatians 2:2a), the church in Antioch decided to collect a love offering for the churches in Judea, and they commissioned Paul to take it to Jerusalem. Paul relates that he took advantage on that visit to meet privately with the apostles to discuss his gospel message.

Now, Paul had been preaching his gospel (i.e., salvation by grace alone through faith alone for the Gentiles as well as the Jews) for the last fourteen years (cf. v. 1), and he has assured us of the divine source of his gospel (cf. 1:6-12). So, Paul’s purpose was not to discover if he was being accurate—God had already given him that assurance. Instead, he was interested in affirming agreement with the leaders in Jerusalem.

See, even as early as this Jerusalem visit (i.e., before any of his missionary journeys, which were also focused on Gentiles [Acts 13:46-48; 14:1, 8-18, 27]), Paul’s ministry had taken on a uniquely Gentile flavor (cf. vv. 7-9)—his home church in Antioch had a large Gentile membership (Acts 11:20-21) and his intern on this trip to Jerusalem was a Gentile (i.e., Titus—2:1, 2). Like Peter’s earlier interaction with the Gentile house of the Cornelius (Acts 11:1-18), this non-Jewish ministry was apparently generating some discussions and questions (cf. Acts 11:1-18). So, when Paul had the opportunity to go to Jerusalem on a financial aid visit, he also took the opportunity to ensure

that there was complete agreement in the larger church as to the true nature and breadth of the gospel. Kent writes, “[Paul] wanted to be sure that the Jerusalem leaders understood his position, and that he could count on their support.”<sup>2</sup> And, as we find in verses 6-9, they did.

**Application:** Today, while our circumstances may be quite different from what Paul was facing in his ministry to the Galatians, as the Judaizers were attacking his authority and undermining his gospel, there is great wisdom in enjoying private considerations with biblically-grounded Christians in order to discover doctrinal accuracy and agreement. Like Paul, our authority rests in the divine source of God’s Word and its gospel message, but Spirit-directed conversations with Spirit-illuminated believers will help ensure that we are being truthful in our understanding and proclamation of God’s message. And, again, these conversations are provided to us in the context of our local church. Since the local church is “a pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), we must be identifying with in it in such a way that we are learning, understanding, and applying good doctrinal truth.

### b. *Missional activity — to help us be fruitful*

The reason Paul wanted to confirm doctrinal agreement was to ensure that he had not been ministering in vain (i.e., “in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain”). If the Jerusalem apostles disagreed with his divinely revealed gospel, then his ministry would have been destroyed by the Judaizers who would have claimed victory over churches already planted in Gentile areas. Yes, he was afraid that the Jerusalem leaders might undercut his authority and undermine his fruitfulness. Stott summarizes it dramatically:

*Paul tells his readers what happened at that epoch-making consultation. His Gentile companion Titus was not compelled to be circumcised (verses 3-5), and his Gentile gospel was not contradicted or even modified in any way (verses 6-10). On the contrary, Titus was accepted, and Paul’s gospel was accepted also. Thus a great and resounding victory was won for the truth of the gospel. The rift in the apostolic ranks was a myth; there was no substance to it.<sup>3</sup>*

The encouragement of that private consideration was that doctrinal agreement had been attested and missional activity had been affirmed.

**Application:** Sometimes, we need Christian companions to help us be sure that our missional energies are not “in vain.” And while making sure our doctrine is accurate and agreed upon is a big part of that (the primary application of this passage), we can make further application to our own ministry contexts. Sometimes, we can “run in vain” by investing our ministry energy in the wrong place or in the wrong way. It is easy to be blinded to the fruitlessness of that endeavor until a Christian partner provides us with his perspective and counsel. Those private considerations can be wonderful safeguards against ineffective ministry.

**c. Personal integrity — to help us be moral**

While this point isn’t discovered in our passage, I believe the argument can be made that Paul enjoyed private conversations with Christian partners about his own personal integrity. This was obviously a concern of Paul’s, for he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:27, “I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified,” and his many ministry companions could have provided him with spiritual accountability that would have beautifully complemented his own moral disciplines.

**Application:** “Lone rangers are dead rangers” (Joshua Harris). Are you “loning” it in your Christian life, or are you surrounding yourself with those who can help you avoid the “deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13) and “stir [you] to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24)? And, once again we see the necessity of the local church, for the writer of Hebrews, knowing that moral accountability can be naturally and powerfully afforded through the local assembly, continues his exhortation, saying, “Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:25).

**Illustration:** Pastor Phelps has been a partner and mentor in ministry to me for many years. Prior to my ordination, I enjoyed private consideration with him about Bible doctrines in able to

ensure accurate understanding and good wording. Throughout the last three years I’ve benefitted from personal conversations with him about the Single Focus ministry so that in my labor for people there would be fruitfulness and not frustration. And, he has been a private counselor and accountability partner for me in regards to personal integrity. Just recently, in striving to minister to a particular person who was resisting spiritual growth, my spirit was encouraged and my ministry direction was refocused during a conversation with Chris Cavanaugh in which he shared something that I needed to hear in order to not “run in vain.” Like Paul, I have learned the wonderful encouragement that comes from private consideration with ministry partners.

**Application:** Do you know the encouragement of partnership? Do you intentionally seek out and schedule opportunities where you can enjoy private consideration with likeminded, Word-centered Christians? In light of the benefit of such personal relationships—doctrinal agreement, missional fruitfulness, and personal integrity—we are wise to take advantage of the community of the local church and enjoy ministry partnerships. Will you humble yourself and slow down enough to enjoy such intimate fellowship?

**3. Protective combat (vv. 3-5)**

Regarding these three verses, MacArthur writes,

*Although the Greek text of these verses may have been perfectly intelligible to the Galatians, it is almost impossible for modern scholars to translate. The noted biblical scholar J. B. Lightfoot called the passage “a shipwreck of Greek grammar.” Perhaps Paul became so emotional while defending the very heart of the gospel and was so afraid that his beloved flocks would be corrupted by the Judaistic heresy that he used complex grammar and failed to complete his sentences. But Paul’s meaning is obvious, and there is no difficulty in understanding precisely what he is saying.<sup>4</sup>*

Paul uses a specific test case to further demonstrate the gospel-agreement he shared with Jerusalem apostles. In these verses, their passive agreement takes an active dimension as they actually stand in opposition against the “false brothers.” Paul partners with Titus and the Jerusalem leaders to combat these heretics in order to protect the true gospel. We can observe this combat under three headings.

**a. Paul's practice (v. 3)**

Paul affirms that his Gentile partner, Titus, “was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.” This practical decision matched his preaching that salvation was by grace alone through faith alone. To circumcise Titus would have contradicted his message and played into the hands of the “false brothers” (cf. Acts 15:1). So, Paul practiced what he preached, and illustrated in his refusal to circumcise Titus exactly what he had been declaring, that is, that “neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation” (Galatians 6:15).

Yet, interestingly, Paul demonstrates that in his gospel-highlighting practice, he also used discernment. In Acts 16:1-3, Paul would later circumcise Timothy, which on the surface appears contradictory. However, in that passage we learn that whereas circumcising Titus would have undercut the true gospel, circumcising Timothy served to broaden the impact of the gospel. One commentator explains,

*It should be noted that some years after that occasion Paul circumcised Timothy “because of the Jews who were in those parts” (the region of Galatia), but he did so because Timothy was hail Jewish (Acts 16:1-3). He was not making a concession to the Judaizers, but rather was giving Timothy closer identity with Jews to whom they might witness. Timothy was circumcised as a Jew, not as a Christian. His circumcision had no relationship to his salvation but simply gave him entrance to Jewish synagogues, from which he would otherwise have been excluded.<sup>5</sup>*

**b. Paul's problem (v. 4)**

Paul's practice to not circumcise Titus was directly opposed to the powerful Judaizers who were infiltrating the new church plants. Paul describes the “false brothers” in verse 4.

- **Their character: insincere** — They were “false” or dishonest in their profession and motives. They lacked true spiritual life and a healthy spiritual intention. Their legalism proved that they had spurned the true gospel and were not true believers.

- **Their method: secret** — While some Judaizers were probably quite sincere in their legalistic belief, many were not. Paul describes them as being “secretly brought in.” While the word itself pictures an enemy stealthily entering a camp to sabotage it, it also suggests that these enemies were planted. “Some scholars believe they were planted in the churches by Pharisees or priests in order to corrupt this threat to traditional Judaism. In any case, Satan, as always, was the primary instigator of the subterfuge. The Judaizers were first of all the devil's agents, whatever their human associations and loyalties” (cf. Acts 20:28-30; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 2 Peter 2:1).<sup>6</sup>
- **Their purpose: spying** — Their spying had a specific goal as we will see in a moment (i.e., slavery), but we have to ask, “What were they looking for in order to enslave the Christians with legalistic bondage?” It seems likely that they were eagerly watching the Christians in order to document their abuses of grace. If they could show how some Christians professed grace alone and then lived inappropriately, they could claim that grace alone led to license and should be reigned in by a standard of works. They may also have been spying to discover where true-gospel Christians were themselves unwittingly applying a certain legalistic standard to their own Christian lives or to others. These false teachers could then use that inconsistency or the evident natural bent of man to work to qualify himself by a standard to draw those believers into a fully legalistic gospel.  
  
**Application:** People are watching you; legalists are spying on you. Don't abuse grace (cf. Romans 6:1-2), taking its lavish nature as an excuse to sin and giving fuel to the legalistic fires of false teachers who want to bind you with works. Instead, live a life that is “well-pleasing...showing all good faith, so that in everything [you] may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:9-10; cf. vv. 5, 8).
- **Their goal: slavery** — Gospel-believing Christians enjoy true freedom in Christ;<sup>7</sup> in contrast, “The Judaizers could not tolerate a gospel that was not tied to Mosaic ritual and law, because their view of salvation was centered in what they could self-righteously perform to earn favor from God rather than in what God could do for them.”<sup>8</sup>

### c. Paul's pattern (v. 5)

Paul refused to “yield in submission even for a moment.” He endured every onslaught against His gospel, because he had received it from Jesus Christ Himself and he had dedicated himself to protect it. He partnered in ministry with those who would do protective combat, “so that the truth of the gospel [or, the true gospel] might be preserved for you” (cf. 4:19; 5:1).

**Illustration:** “At the time of the Reformation the doctrine of justification was again at stake in the confessional struggles of that age. Like Paul, Luther and the other Reformers refused to ‘budge the least little bit’ on such an essential point of the Christian faith. Against those who urged concessions in the interest of an outward peace, Luther explained the reasons for what we might call his sanctified stubbornness: ‘For the issue before us is grave and vital; it involves the death of the Son of God, who, by the will and command of the Father, became flesh, was crucified, and died for the sins of the world. If faith yields on this point, the death of the Son of God will be in vain. Then it is only a fable that Christ is the Savior of the world. Then God is a liar, for he has not lived up to his promises. Therefore our stubbornness on this issue is pious and holy; for by it we are striving to preserve the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to keep the truth of the gospel. If we lose this, we lose God, Christ, all the promises, faith, righteousness, and eternal life.’”<sup>9</sup>

**Application:** It is hard to stand alone, and sometimes we don’t even fully comprehend all the issues involved or all the players participating. So, stand with someone! Grace continues to be attacked. Partner in ministry with those who will encourage and enable you to “preserve” the true gospel message.

**Transition:** Paul’s priority on the work of the gospel—that people need to hear that the war had ended and freedom has been offered them in Christ alone—compelled him to form ministry partnerships. These partnerships afforded him tremendous encouragement—personal companionship, private consideration along doctrinal, missional, and moral themes, and protective combat to preserve the true gospel. In verses 6-10, Paul addresses a second aspect of ministry partnerships—the equality of all gospel-partners.

As Paul describes his interaction with “those who seemed to be influential” in Jerusalem (i.e., the apostolic leaders), he reveals four dimensions of equality that they shared.

#### 1. Equality in authority (v. 6)

Paul writes that the Jerusalem leaders “added nothing to me,” referencing either his message or authority. When it came down to what Paul preached and therefore the authority with which he proclaimed it, the “pillars” in Jerusalem were in complete agreement. Since the source of this gospel is divine, the authority of those who speak the gospel is equal, for “God shows no partiality.” These gospel-partners understood that the message was more important than any “influential” man—indeed, it is the message that gives man his influence and authority.

Jesus had promised in Matthew 28:18-20 that His authority would accompany all those who “go...and make disciples.” Whether you were one of His initial twelve disciples taking the gospel to “all nations” or are a high school student working to share the gospel with your peers, you are equal in divine authority for you are ambassadors of the one true gospel.

**Application:** You don’t have to have a gregarious personality or a glorified position to share the gospel with authority. No, every time you proclaim the “truth of the gospel”—whether you are an apostle or an adolescent—you do so with the authority of omnipotence behind you.

#### 2. Equality in audience (v. 7)

In the sovereign will of God (i.e., “they saw...”), Paul had been “entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised [i.e., the Gentiles],” while Peter was “entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised [i.e., the Jews].” The audience indicated nothing about one’s ability or faithfulness; instead, it simply revealed God’s wisdom in putting different servants in different settings so that many might hear.

**Illustration:** Thirty-two years ago, Nick Vujicic (pronounced Voi-chic)<sup>10</sup> was born with Tetra-Amelia Syndrome, a rare disorder that caused him to be born without any arms or legs. As you might

expect, his adolescence was filled with physical, emotional, and mental struggles, until Jesus saved him during his teenage years. Since then, Vujicic has addressed over three million people in over 44 countries on five continents. His unique life circumstances and physical challenges have provided him with massive audiences to which he has preached God's Word.

This passage reminds us that Vujicic has been entrusted with the gospel to his worldwide audience, just as you have been entrusted with the gospel to your own audience. Yours might only be one or two people at a time, but because that is God's "trust" to you, it is no less significant than Vujicic's audience of hundreds or thousands at a time. Besides, while vast multitudes have heard the gospel from Vujicic, he hasn't reached everyone, and God has called you to be the messenger to some that he will never reach. Every audience—whether it is global and comprised of hundreds or local and totals just one; whether it is the culturally elite or society's outcasts; whether it is an exalted ethnic group or a despised nation—every audience is equally important and necessary, for God is "not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9; cf. Ezekiel 18:32; Romans 10:13).

**Application:** Because the gospel brings about a new unity among those who receive it (cf. Ephesians 2:11ff), it assumes an equality among all those who hear it. No audience is "better" than any other, for all audiences are equally needy of the gospel-message, and all gospel-messengers can rest in the confidence of knowing that their current audience is the one God has importantly entrusted to them.

### 3. **Equality in enablement (v. 8)**

Building upon his previous point, Paul adds, "he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles." Now, Paul is talking about equality of enablement. Just as the Holy Spirit had equipped Peter for His God-ordained ministry to the Jews, so God had also empowered Paul for His God-ordained ministry to the Gentiles. Both were experiencing equally-divine enablement in order to effectively minister to equally-important audiences with equally-given authority.

Jesus has promised to us, too, the same enablement that Peter and Paul enjoyed. To the band of 120 believers gathered in the Upper Room in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension, God declared, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As we engage in ministry partnerships for the work of the gospel, we enjoy unifying equality together, knowing that we have been mutually enabled by God for the work He has called us to.

**Illustration:** It is easy to consider Vujicic's ministry and see how he has been sovereignly enabled to reach his audiences. I look at some of our singles and clearly discover that they have been wonderfully gifted to minister to their audiences (e.g., Havelah Miller, Brittany Sherrill). This passage reminds me that God is also equipping and enabling *me* to reach the audiences He entrusts to me.

**Application:** The key in the work of the gospel is not to covet other people's audiences and abilities but to humbly recognize what audience God has already entrusted to you and then to obediently depend on His authority and enablement in order to see fruit there. Are you overlooking your current opportunities, because you wish they were somewhere else? Or, are you ignoring current opportunities because you don't feel qualified or sufficient? Friend, independent of all those factors that we put so much emphasis on (i.e., outgoing personality, ability to think on your feet, being eloquent in speech, having a prominent position, etc.), God has promised to enable you by His Spirit, and you can be sure that where God sends (i.e., the audience He entrusts to you), He will accompany and empower (cf. Matthew 28:18-20).

### 4. **Equality in standing (vv. 9-10)**

The final dimension of equality that Paul enjoyed with these new "influential" ministry partners in Jerusalem was in standing. This is evident in two ways: (1) they gave this relative "newcomer" the "right hand of fellowship" in the work of the gospel (v. 9); (2) even though they were reputed as "pillars" (v. 9), they were "eagerly" concerned for the "least of these" in their churches, the "poor" (v. 10). Just like their God, they "showed no partiality" (cf. v. 6), but treated all believers alike in the household of God.

**Application:** And so, the final challenge from our passage is to strive for unity in the work of the gospel. And that exhortation, illustrated here and declared elsewhere, comes to each of us directly, not just to the guy next to us. Each of us must do our part to practice our equality in Christ, so that encouraging partnerships may be forged for the work of the gospel.

## CONCLUSION

Dear Christian, we have work to do—there are multitudes of people warring within spiritually, who like Hiroo Onoda, haven't heard or don't believe that the war is over and that peace has come. We must tell them, but we don't have to do it alone. Paul's autobiography in Part 1 of this epistle to the Galatians has given us a final practical application—***because of the work of the gospel, I should prioritize the gospel by partnering with others.*** In those blessed bonds, rich encouragement is discovered and real equality is enjoyed, so that the work may go on and the freedom of grace may rescue others.

## FOOTNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Paul's use of the phrases "seemed to be influential" (vv. 2, 6 [2x]) and "seemed to be pillars" (v. 9) is probably a sarcastic response to false teachers who were undermining Paul's apostolic authority by contrasting him with the "real" apostle in Jerusalem, whom they deceitfully claimed had approved their message (cf. Acts 15:24 where the church recognizes the existence of these troubling Judaizers: "we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions").

<sup>2</sup> Homer Kent, *The Freedom of God's Sons* (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1976), p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 41–42.

<sup>4</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Galatians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 38.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>7</sup> "In Christ Jesus believers have liberty from the law as the way of salvation and liberty from its external ceremonies and regulations as the way of living. Because Christ has borne that curse (3:13), they also have liberty from the curse for disobedience of the law, which God requires all men to obey but which no man is able to perfectly keep. Christians are under an entirely different kind of law, 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [that sets them] free from the law of sin and of death' (Rom. 8:2)" (Ibid.).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 152–153.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lifewithoutlimbs.org>