

## **November 21**

**Scriptures:** Read Galatians 2

**Key Verse:** “They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” (Galatians 2:10)

### **Overview**

The first ten verses of this chapter deal with Paul’s acceptance as an apostle by the leadership in Jerusalem. The discussion actually begins in chapter one, verse 11. In verses 15 and 16, he speaks of his conversion and then, three years later, going up to Jerusalem “to get acquainted with Peter” (v.18). The “fourteen years later” of 2:1 probably refers to fourteen years after that visit to Peter. He went up to Jerusalem again to “set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles” (v.2).

Paul’s ministry was under scrutiny for a few reasons. One was that the idea of preaching the gospel of the Jewish Messiah to Gentiles seemed irrelevant and out of context. Another reason was related to the belief of most of the early believers that before a Gentile could become a Christian he first of all had to become a Jew (and be circumcised). These “Judaizers” were also adamant about kosher law and other ritual and ceremonial concerns which Paul appeared to be flouting. The Jerusalem leadership therefore wanted to carefully check Paul’s credentials. And he passed the test.

The three key leaders, “James, Peter, and John”, gave Paul and Barnabas “the right hand of fellowship” and “agreed that [they] should go to the Gentiles” (v.9). But they had one key concern. It was not a doctrinal concern but social: “they asked that we should continue to remember the poor.” When you get right down to it, concern for the needs of the poor is the foundational material of a balanced ministry. Ivory towers, philosophizing, and preaching to the converted all are neutralized by a prior concern for the poor. Preach to the poor, love the poor, meet their needs. Do this, and the Gospel will come alive and achieve balance.

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for building Your church and for the leadership of the church who serve as “pillars”. Help us to be humble enough to recognize, as Paul did, YOUR pillars. Amen.