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Running the Race in Vain 2: 2b

Running the race in vain DIG: Why was Paul's salvation equals faith plus nothing so radical in Paul's day? How did Peter use his "keys to the Kingdom?" What did "binding and loosing" mean for the apostles? Why was Paul uneasy going up to Jerusalem? How did Paul show great wisdom in the way he dealt with the leaders of the Messianic community in Jerusalem? Why was it important that James, Peter and John endorse Paul's gospel?

REFLECT: Who are you accountable to in your ministry? Have you ever had to change what you were doing? How did you handle that discipline? What race have you run in vain in your life? What did you learn from that experience? How have you helped others not get off in the wrong direction in their life?

Paul went up to Jerusalem to submit his gospel of Gentile inclusion to the authority of the James, the other apostles and the Messianic community.

48 AD

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus with me. Because of a revelation, I went up and presented to them the Good News that I proclaim among the Gentiles (2:1-2a).

Paul's salvation equals faith, plus nothing **gospel** does not sound too controversial today, but **he** had a sinking feeling in **his** stomach as **he**, **Barnabas**, and **Titus** approached **Jerusalem**. **He** knew that **he** was teaching something outside the apostolic norm. Special revelations from heaven are good, but **Paul** had not yet cleared that teaching with the authority in **Jerusalem**. **He** had never submitted **his gospel (Romans 2:16** and **25; Second Timothy 2:8)** to **the apostles**. Up until then, **he** was the only one teaching salvation equals faith plus nothing. But **he** had been teaching on **his** own initiative, without authority and without sanction from

those to whom our **Master** gave the power to **bind** and **loose** and to govern the Body.

Yeshua had said to **Peter**: **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19).** Whenever the words **key** or **keys** is used symbolically in the Bible, it always symbolizes the authority to open or close doors **(Judges 3:25; First Chronicles 9:27; Isaiah 22:20-24; Matt 16:19a; Revelation 1:18, 3:7, 9:1** and **20:1)**. **Peter** will be responsible to open the doors of **the Church**. **He** will have a special role in the book of **Acts**. In the Dispensation of the Torah, humanity was divided into two groups, Jews and **Gentiles**. But in the Dispensation of Grace, because of what went on in the intertestamental period, there were three groups of people, Jews, **Gentiles** and Samaritans **(Matthew 10:5-6)**. **Peter** would be the **key** person (pun intended) in bringing in the Jews in **30 AD (Acts 2)**, the Samaritans in **34 AD (Acts 8)**, and the **Gentiles** in **38 AD (Acts 10)** into **the Church** by receiving **the Holy Spirit**. Once **he** opened the door it stayed open.

Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Mattityahu 16:19b). The perfect tense is used here, meaning that **whatever** is already **God's** decision **in heaven** will be revealed to **the apostles on earth**. It literally says: *Whatever you prohibit on earth will have already been prohibited in heaven.* **The terms binding and loosing were common in the rabbinic writing of that day. From the Jewish frame of reference, the terms *binding* and *loosing* were used by the rabbis in two ways: judicially and legislatively. Judicially, *to bind* meant to *punish*, and to *loose* meant *to release from punishment*. Legislatively, *to bind* meant to *forbid* something, and *to loose* meant to *permit* it.** In fact, the Pharisees claimed *binding* and *loosing* for themselves, but **God** really never gave it to them. At that time, **Yeshua** gave this special authority to **Peter** alone. After **His** resurrection **Messiah** gave the unique authority to **bind** and **loose** in legislative matters and in judicial punishment to the other **apostles**. Once the **talmidim** died, however, that authority died with **them**.

As **the apostle** to **the Gentiles**, **Paul's** three years (**35-37 AD**) in **Arabia** (**to see link click An – Arabia during the Time of Paul**) came after salvation to the Jews and the Samaritans, but before salvation came to **the Gentiles** in **38 AD** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Fx – On This Rock I Will Build My Church**). Therefore, **Paul** was preaching **his gospel** of salvation equals faith plus nothing before **Peter** opened **the keys to the Kingdom** to **the Gentiles**. But that also meant that for more than ten years **Paul** had been preaching **his gospel** without

the official approval of **the apostles** in **Jerusalem**.

That is why **Paul** probably felt uneasy as **he** went up to **Yerushalayim**, because **he** knew that **he** had not confirmed **his** calling, **his** ministry, or **his gospel** had not been confirmed by those in authority. So, **Paul** took advantage of the famine-relief trip to **Jerusalem** (see **Au – After Fourteen Years, Paul went up to Jerusalem, and took Titus and Barnabas with Him**) to seek a private audience with **James**, **Yeshua's** half-**brother**, **Peter**, the first of **the Twelve**, and **John**, the son of Zebedee, **the disciple** whom **Yeshua** loved. **He** sought confirmation of those three pillars, and whoever of **the** other **apostles** might be available. **He** said: **I did so privately to those who seemed to be influential, to make sure I would not run – or had not run – in vain (2:2b).** The private meeting set the stage for the public council that followed (see **Ax – False Brothers slipped in to Spy Out our Freedom in Messiah**). It was of the greatest importance that the believers in **Galatia**, and everywhere else, understand that **Paul's gospel** of grace was identical to that of **the** other **apostles** and that it was the Satanic message of the Judaizers that was the counterfeit of **God's** saving truth.[43]



What does **Paul** mean by, I might be **running**, or had **run**, **in vain**? **Paul** uses his favorite metaphor, borrowed from Greek athletics, the stadium foot race, in speaking of **his** missionary career. **He** had been taking his salvation of faith plus nothing to **God-**fearing **Gentiles** for more than ten years. Suppose **he** came to **Yerushalayim** and said, "Shalom, **I** have good news. Multitudes of **Gentiles** had embraced the faith, and **I** told them that **they** don't even have to become Jewish to enter the Kingdom of heaven, to merit the resurrection, the world to come, and a right standing within the people of **God**. In fact, **I've** been telling **them they** don't even need to be circumcised or follow the six-hundred-and-thirteen commandments

of Moshe. Isn't that great?" And suppose **James** and **the apostles** replied, "**Paul**, are you out of your mind? That's heretical and contradicts the teachings of **Messiah** entrusted to us. You cannot do that!"

If **they** said that, **Paul** would have been **running his race in vain**. It's like a runner in a footrace who takes off from the starting line, running as hard as he can to win the race. He runs for miles. He sees no one around and assumes he must be in the lead. But then someone tells him, "Hey, you are off the race route. You've been running in the wrong direction." It has happened to me before.

Paul did not want to **run his race in vain**. **He** once wrote to **the God**-fearing **Gentile** believers in the city of Philippi, beseeching **them** to prove **their** faith and commitment in **Yeshua so that I may boast in the day of Messiah that I did not run or labor in vain (Philippians 2:16). He** regarded **the Gentile** believers as proof that **he** had not **run,** or labored, **in vain**. **They** were the first-fruits of **his gospel** message.[44]