

Galatians 2:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

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. The triumvirate—Iakōbos kai Kēphas kai Iōannēs (Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης)—represents the Jerusalem church leadership. The appositional phrase *hoi dokountes styloi einai* (οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, "those reputed to be pillars") uses architectural metaphor; *styloi* (στῦλοι) are load-bearing columns supporting a structure. These men upheld the church's foundation, yet even they needed to recognize God's work in others.

The verb *gnontes* (γνόντες, "having known/perceived") indicates discernment beyond superficial observation—they recognized *tēn charin tēn dotheisan moi* (τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσαν μοι, "the grace having been given to me"). *Charis* (χάρις) here means not just favor but the gifting and calling God bestowed. Their response: *dexias edōkan emoi kai Barnaba koinōnias* (δεξιάς ἔδωκαν ἐμοὶ καὶ Βαρνάβα κοινωνίας, "they gave right hands of fellowship/partnership")—a formal gesture signifying covenant relationship and mutual recognition.

This handshake ratified the division of mission fields and validated Paul's apostleship. The term *koinōnia* (κοινωνία, "fellowship/partnership") implies shared purpose and mutual support despite different spheres of ministry. Unity doesn't

require uniformity; genuine fellowship celebrates diverse callings within one gospel.

Historical Context

James was Jesus's half-brother and leader of the Jerusalem church; Peter (Cephas) was the spokesman of the Twelve; John was the beloved disciple. Their recognition of Paul's apostleship was politically and theologically crucial—it prevented a schism between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. This "right hand of fellowship" likely occurred at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), where the leaders officially endorsed Gentile freedom from circumcision.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does the pillar apostles' willingness to recognize Paul's distinct calling teach about mature Christian leadership?
2. How can the church today maintain gospel unity while celebrating diverse callings and ministry approaches?
3. In what relationships do you need to extend the "right hand of fellowship" to those with different ministry styles but the same gospel?

Interlinear Text

καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν ἔδωκαν μοι Ἰάκωβος
And perceived who the grace who that was given unto me when James
G2532 G1097 G3588 G5485 G3588 G1325 G3427 G2385

καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης τὴν δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι
And Cephas And John who seemed pillars to be
G2532 G2786 G2532 G2491 G3588 G1380 G4769 G1511

δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἐμοὶ καὶ Βαρναβᾶ κοινωνίας ἵνα
the right hands that was given to me And Barnabas of fellowship that
G1188 G1325 G1698 G2532 G921 G2842 G2443

ἡμεῖς εἰς τὴν ἔθνη αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν
we should go unto who the heathen and should go unto who
G2249 G1519 G3588 G1484 G846 G1161 G1519 G3588

περιτομήν·
the circumcision
G4061

Additional Cross-References

Romans 12:3 (Grace): For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Revelation 3:12 (Parallel theme): Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Romans 1:5 (Grace): By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Galatians 2:2 (Parallel theme): And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

1 John 1:3 (Parallel theme): That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:8 (Grace): Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

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