

## **GALATIANS CHAPTER 2**

### **Defending the Gospel (vs. 1-10)**

A main idea being conveyed in Galatians chapter 2 provides us two main ideas: In **vs. 1-10** - When our identity as disciples of Jesus the Christ is defined by the gospel and not culture, we find common ground for living and serving in unity. In **vs. 11-21** – When we accept and receive the gospel transforms our social relationships, leading us to accept all the people who God accepts.

**Vs. 1-2** - In **1:18-19**, Paul described a trip he made to Jerusalem three years after Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Here he describes a second trip to Jerusalem, fourteen years later. Again Paul is pointing out his gospel came by a revelation from Jesus and not from man, not even from the 11 apostles in Jerusalem. Two visits to Jerusalem over 14 years demonstrated that Paul did not sit at the feet of the disciples of Jesus to learn the gospel. Traveling with Paul to Jerusalem were both Barnabas (who was well respected among the leadership in Jerusalem according to **Acts 4:36-37** and **11:22**) and Titus (who was a Gentile convert). These two men represent two types of people every disciple of Jesus need in their life – a Barnabus – his name mean son of consolation or son of encouragement – when the Gospel came to the Gentiles in Antioch it was Barnabus who was sent to encourage them in their faith **Acts 11:27-30**. We need someone in our life who is a spiritually mature disciple of

Jesus to encourage us) and a Titus (someone who we are discipling). The phrase “*And I went up by revelation*” - the idea is that Paul went to Jerusalem by the express direction of God. He did not go because any man called him to come; it was because God told him to go. The phrase in [vs. 2](#) “*And communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles*” - This trip to Jerusalem is most likely the one mentioned in [Acts 11:27-30](#), when Paul brought a gift from Christians in other cities to the Christians in Jerusalem who suffered under famine. When Paul was in Jerusalem at this time he assured the leaders there that he was obedient to God in his presentation of the gospel to the Gentiles. The essence of Paul’s message to both Jews and Gentiles was that God’s salvation is offered to all people regardless of race, sex, nationality, wealth. The phrase, “*But privately to those who were of reputation*”- Paul knew he had the true gospel; but he didn’t know how everyone of reputation in Jerusalem would receive it. Perhaps some of the apostles themselves were wrong on this point, and needed to be corrected! **But if there was any confrontation to be done, Paul did it privately to those who were of reputation.** He did the best he could to not publicly embarrass those who were of reputation in Jerusalem. This demonstrated remarkable love and sensitivity on Paul’s part. It would have been easy for him to say, “I’m right and anyone who disagrees with me is wrong, I studied at the feet of

**Gamaliel for years...you guys are just uneducated fishermen.” But he didn’t.**

**He knew that being right didn’t give you the privilege of being rude.**

**Regarding the phrase, “*Lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain*” -**

**this probably did not come from the fear that he himself would fall away.**

**Probably it was the fear that an unnecessary conflict with the leaders of the**

**church in Jerusalem leaders might damage his reputation and ministry in**

**some way. Also, the danger was that false teachers – if encouraged in some**

**way by the leaders in Jerusalem – might undo Paul’s work in planting**

**churches and raising disciples for Jesus, and therefore would make Paul’s**

**work in vain.**

**Vs. 3 - we discover the leadership in Jerusalem accepted Titus (a Gentile convert) even though he was not circumcised in accord with the Mosaic Law.**

**This shows that the Jerusalem leadership accepted the gospel of grace as Paul**

**understood it. The fact Titus was not circumcised was a potential issue**

**because circumcision was the sign of initiation into the Jewish faith and the**

**Mosaic covenant. Since all Jewish men were circumcised and most all Gentile**

**men were not, it was an easy way to refer to “those who are part of the**

**covenant” and to “those who are outside of the covenant of Moses.”**

**Circumcision had no bearing upon salvation and was therefore, not to be**

**forced upon the Gentiles.**

**Vs. 4-5** – These false Christians were most likely from the party of the Pharisees based on ***Acts 15:5***. These were the strictest religious leaders of Judaism, some of whom had been converted. We don't know if these were representatives of well-meaning converts or of those trying to pervert Christianity. It is significant that Paul says these men ***secretly brought in*** and came in by stealth. They did not come in with name badges that said, "False Brother." They did not come in with a purpose statement that said, "We have come to spy out your liberty in Jesus, and to bring you into bondage." These men probably had the best of intentions, but they were still dangerous men who had to be confronted because they contradicted the revelation given to Paul by Jesus (***Psalm 119:11***). Regarding ***vs. 5*** when it says, "*We did not yield submission even for an hour*" - in response, Paul remained steadfast. Some might react this way out of pride or just plain stubbornness. But Paul did it so that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (the Gentile Christians like those in Galatia). We normally think of taking a stand against those who might lead us into immoral behavior, but Paul had to take a hard line against the most "moral" of people. We must not give in to those who make keeping man-made standards a condition for salvation, even when such people are morally upright or in respected positions. There are many people "unsaved" who are more morally sound and respected by the world than Christians...but

the standard for everyone is Jesus and His word...we are to follow the word of God and not the words of men.

**Vs. 6** – The phrase *“But from those who seemed to be something”*- Paul knew that in his day, there were leaders of high reputation – “famous” Christians, if you will. In our day and age we have the same thing going on...You know it’s easy to rate people on the basis of their official status, the membership size of the church – the fact someone may be a religious TV personality. Paul was not intimidated by these “great leaders.” And that is because God shows personal favoritism to no man. God does not rate us according to our self-perceived status but on our attitude of heart when we serve (*read 1 Samuel 16:7*). Paul also wrote *1 Corinthians 15:10* which says, *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*

**Vs. 7-9** – All Paul wanted the assembly to recognize was the “*grace of God*” at work in his life and ministry and they did. Not only did the assembly approve Paul’s gospel and oppose Paul’s enemies, but they encouraged Paul’s ministry and recognized publicly that God had committed the Gentile aspect of His work into Paul’s hands. They could not add nothing to Paul’s message or ministry, and they dared not take anything away. There was agreement and unity; one Gospel would be preached to Jews and to Gentiles. Regarding the

phrase in **vs. 7** “*The gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter*” - Paul had been called to the Gentiles (uncircumcised) and the apostles Peter, James, and John to the Jewish people (circumcised). This text suggests that God has a lane for all of us to minister in...and that lane is predicated on the spiritual gifts He gives us.

**Vs. 10** – There is something about remembering those who are less fortunate; the **least of these** that God constantly reminds us to do in Scriptures. When we do evil, when we forget the **least of these** we are doing that to God also.

The apostles were referring specifically to the poor of Jerusalem in **vs. 10** but of course, this is applicable everywhere. While many Gentile converts were financially comfortable, the Jerusalem church had suffered from the effects of a severe famine in Palestine and were struggling. So on his journeys Paul had gathered funds for the Jewish Christians. The need for believers to care for the poor is a constant theme in Scripture. Also, Jesus said in the Beatitudes blessed are the “poor” in spirit. When Jesus said **Matthew 5:3** “*Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,*” He is declaring that, before we can enter God’s kingdom, we must recognize the utter worthlessness of our own spiritual currency and the inability of our own works to save us.

***Spiritual Vigilance (vs. 11-14)***

*Paul had risked his life to carry the Gospel of God's grace to the utmost parts of the regions beyond Jerusalem, and he was not willing for the enemy to rob him or the churches God used him to plant of their liberty in Christ. It was this "spiritual vigilance" that led Paul into another dramatic encounter, this time with the Apostle Peter, Barnabus, and some of the friends of James.*

**Vs. 11-12 - Peter approved of Paul's gospel and ministry (although it was not necessary because Paul was called by God; not by Peter). When Paul came to Jerusalem in vs. 9 and God used Peter himself to welcome Gentiles into Christianity without the precondition of becoming Jews (*Acts 11:1-18*). Peter had enjoyed the fellowship with "all" believers Jews and Gentiles on the same level as one family in Christ. Although Peter was previously in agreement with welcoming Gentiles into the church without bringing them under the Law of Moses, when Peter came to Antioch (Paul's home church), it was another story. He refused to associate with Gentile Christians once certain Jewish believers from Jerusalem came. These men were Christians of Jewish background. Paul called them *certain men* in vs. 12 *from James and those who were of the circumcision*. Knowing their background, Peter knew they would be offended at his fellowship with Gentiles who had not come under the Law of Moses. In their eyes, these uncircumcised Gentiles were not really Christians at all. Therefore, to please them and to avoid a conflict, Peter**

treated these Gentile Christians as if they were not Christians at all. Now before we nail Peter to the wall we must understand this about Peter: Peter was impulsive. He could show amazing faith and courage one minute then fail completely the next. He walked on waves to come to Jesus but yet, he denied Jesus 3 times...He cut off Malchus' ear while trying to defend Jesus before Jesus allowed the Judas led mob to capture Him in the Garden of Gethsemane but he also cursed out a servant girl in the courtyard where Jesus was crucified...*(Peter allowed fear of what the Jewish Christian leaders would say to him being with Gentiles not acting like Jews to cause him to separate from the new Gentile believers...how would you respond if some of your co-workers and friends saw you talking to and/or eating dinner with a person or people you witnessed to and they came to Christ yet, they were people with tattoos, colored hair, with multiple piercings...would you avoid them in the presence of your friends)?* To demonstrate how serious this matter was to Paul vs. 11 says “*I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.*” This shows how serious the matter was to Paul. He had a public confrontation with Peter over the issue. *Peter's sin was in public hence, Paul dealt with it publically.* This was also serious because it involved the issue of eating together. Before the *certain men* came from James, Peter would eat with the Gentiles. Yet once they came, Peter withdrew and separated himself. This separation was probably at the

church potluck dinner, which they called *“the agape banquet”* or the *“love feast.”* They would also remember the Lord’s death at this dinner and take communion together. Therefore, it is possible that Peter turned these Gentile Christians away from the communion table (the Lord’s Supper is one of the two ordinances Jesus left with all churches to engage in). One of the early church fathers Martin Luther said this about what happened to Peter as a warning to all Christians - *“No man’s standing is so secure that he may not fall. If Peter fell, I may fall. If he rose again, I may rise again. We have the same gifts that they had, the same Christ, the same baptism and the same Gospel, the same forgiveness of sins.”*

***Vs. 13*** – The root word for *hypocrisy* - *hypocrite* is derived from the *Greek* term for *“actor”*—literally, *“one who wears a mask”*—in other words, someone who pretends to be what he is not. Regarding the key phrase *“the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him”* - this shows that the matter was bigger than just Peter and Barnabas. Peter first made the compromise of acting as if the Gentile Christians were not Christians at all. Then Barnabas followed him. Barnabas had been one of the spiritual leaders of the church in Antioch (*Acts 11:10-26*) so his disobedience would have a tremendous influence on the others in the fellowship. Then the rest of the Jews at the church in Antioch followed Peter and Barnabas. Therefore, this chain of

events shows what a heavy responsibility it is to be a leader. When we go astray as spiritual leaders, it often times helps cause others to fall. Satan knew that if he could make Peter take the wrong path, then many others would follow him. When a Jew refused to eat with a Gentile, he did this in obedience to Jewish rituals. Peter had already learned that obedience to these rituals (such as keeping kosher) was not essential for salvation, for either Jews or Gentiles (*Acts 10 and 11*). Peter had stopped keeping these Jewish rituals for himself, but now he acted as if he did keep them, so as to accommodate the legalism of the *certain men* from James. Peter no longer kept a strict observance of the Law of Moses for himself, but by his actions, he implied that Gentiles believers must keep the law – when he himself did not.

*Vs. 14* – Peter was a Jew, but through his faith in Christ he had become a Christian, a disciple of Jesus therefore, he was a part of the church. In God’s church there are no racial distinctions and Peter should have known this based on his encounter with Cornelius from *Acts chapter 10 (key verses – 28 and 34-35)* and at the Jerusalem Council *Acts 15:9*. Pay close attention to what actually spurred Paul to stand up and be firm...when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel.” People have falling out over infant baptism or if there should be musical instruments played in the church or if tongues have ceased etc...none of those are doctrinal salvation

issues...you can agree to disagree on them...but not on how one is saved; eternity lies in the balance. *Now Paul's words must have stung Peter but they were needed.* We don't need "yes" only friends; we need some people who love God and love us enough to *say the truth boldly in love and respect.* God's people are one people, even though they may be divided into various groups living in various regions of the world. Any practice on our part that violates Scripture and separates brother from brother is a denial of the unity of the body of Christ.

**Vs. 15-16** – If observing the Jewish laws cannot justify us then why should we still obey the 10 commandments and other Old Testament laws? We know that Paul was not saying the law is bad, because in ***Romans 7:12*** he said, ***"The law is holy and right and good."*** Instead Paul is saying the law can never make you acceptable to God in and of itself. *Part of the reason the law was given was to show man he cannot keep it on his own therefore, he needs a savior.* But, the law still has an important role to play in the life of a Christian in that ***(1) the law guards us from sin by giving us standards for behavior; (2) the law convicts of sin which should result in asking for forgiveness of sin; and (3) the law drives us to trust in the sufficiency of Christ and guide us to live as God requires.*** The phrase in **vs. 16** ***"justified by faith in Jesus Christ"*** can be traced back to the prophet Habakkuk when he wrote in **Habakkuk 2:4** – ***"The just shall live by***

*faith*” and this was the calling card of the Reformation Era especially, for Reformation Era theologian Martin Luther. So *justified by faith* is not *mental assent or intellectual conviction only*, but personal commitment. It is an act of committal, not just assenting or agreeing to the fact that Jesus lived and died, but running to Him for refuge and calling on Him for mercy.” Regarding the phrase “*no flesh shall be justified*” Paul emphasized no flesh – not Gentile, not Jewish, not anyone – will be considered right before God by the works of the law. Read [Romans 5:1](#) for more insight on justification which is an act, not a process. Justification means *saved from the penalty of sin*. Once you accept Jesus as Lord and Savior you are justified (it’s an act) the process is living holy or set apart is called sanctification; this is a process that means *being saved from the power of sin*.

[Vs. 17-18](#) – Through studying the Old Testament scriptures, Paul realized that he could not be saved by obeying God’s laws because all of humanity has been infected with sin since Adam. Fortunately, God has provided the way of salvation that rests in faith in Jesus the Christ’s perfect sacrifice on the cross at Calvary. Paul’s argument to Peter goes like this; “Peter you and I did not find salvation through the Law; we found it through faith in Jesus. But now after being saved, you go back into the law! This would mean that Christ alone did not save you; otherwise you would not have needed the Law. So

Christ would have made you a sinner if faith in Christ was not sufficient for salvation.

**Vs. 19** – If a man is justified by the works of the Law, then why did Jesus die on the Cross? His death, burial, and resurrection are the key truths of the Gospel (*1 Corinthians 15:1-8*). *We are saved by grace through faith in Christ Jesus plus or minus nothing else.* The Law in and of itself is not sinful and its purpose was to convince us of our individual spiritual deadness in sin outside of our faith in Christ Jesus. Paul made a bold statement, saying that he had died to the law. If he was dead to the law, then it was impossible for the law to be the way that he was accepted by God. The problem with the *“certain men”* with James was that they were not thinking and living as if they were dead to the law. For them, they were still alive under the law and they believed keeping the law would make them accepted by God. Not only were they living under the law, but they also wanted the Gentiles to live under the law.

**Vs. 20** – The phrase *“I have been crucified with Christ”* - again, Paul anticipated a question from those who disagreed with him - “Paul, when did you die to the law? You look alive to me!” Paul was happy to answer, “I have been crucified with Christ. I died *to the law* when Jesus *died on the cross*. He died in my place on the cross, so it is like it was me up on the cross. He died, and I died to the law when He died.” The phrase *“It is no longer I who live,*

*but Christ lives in me*” - since we died with Christ on the cross we have a different life. Our old life lived under the law is dead. Now we are alive to Jesus Christ and Jesus is alive in us (but Christ lives in me). While believers live on physically, Christ also lives within us spiritually. Believers have been raised to walk in the newness of life (*Romans 6:4*); and since we live by His resurrection power, we do not need the help of the law. *2 Corinthians 5:17* says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* The phrase *“who loved me”* Paul can confidently give himself to Jesus because of the love Jesus has demonstrated in the past – *read Romans 5:8*.

*Vs. 21* – The Judaizers wanted to mix Law and grace, but Paul tells us that is impossible (*it’s like trying to mix oil and water*). To go back to the Law means to “set aside” the grace of God. Peter had experienced God’s grace in his own salvation, and he had proclaimed God’s grace in his own ministry. But when he withdrew from the Gentile Christian fellowship, he openly denied the grace of God. Grace says there is no difference – all are sinners but all can be saved through faith in Christ by confessing with their mouth the Lord Jesus and believing in their heart God raised Jesus from the dead. The Law says DO; but Grace says DONE. It is finished was Jesus’ victory cry on the cross (*John 19:30*). Paul realized that on the cross, a great exchange occurred. He gave

**Jesus his old, try-to-be-right-before-God-by-the-law life, and it was crucified on the cross.**