

Knowing Him

Lessons from Paul's Life and Ministry

Lesson 2 Galatians 2

Paul had established several churches in the region of Galatia on his first missionary journey. Now, fourteen years later, he learned that his work there was being undermined by a group of Jewish loyalists—Judaizers—who were violently loyal to the principles and practices of the Mosaic Law. In order to contend with their legalistic attacks on the gospel and at the same time protect the unity of the church, Paul vigorously defends his apostolic authority.

Read Galatians 2:1–21

Defending the Gospel



What do you determine about Paul's heart attitude in this second chapter of the letter?

Why do you think Paul would go to such trouble to defend his credentials to the church?

(Note: Pay attention to the way Paul refutes the Judaizers to understand more about their theological belief based on the law.)

1. Why did Paul return to Jerusalem and who accompanied him? vv. 1–2

Barnabas was Paul's spiritual mentor when Paul returned to Jerusalem following his conversion. Titus was a convert of Paul's preaching in Antioch, later working with Paul on the mission field.

- a. What did Paul do publicly?
- b. What was the concern that caused him to meet privately with church leaders?

Paul gave a *full exposition* (Phillips translation) of the gospel to the Gentiles. He also spoke privately with church leaders to ensure his preaching was sound. Paul wisely kept open dialogue with the leaders in Jerusalem, adding his respect to their authority.

The presence of Titus, a Greek, with Paul brought into clear focus the debate of whether Gentile Christians should be welcomed into the fellowship of the Jewish Christians without subjecting them to the rite of circumcision. Paul's answer to the debate (v. 3) was a resounding yes!—that God accepted Titus based on his faith, not on circumcision.

2. According to Genesis 17:9–14, what was the command for Jews regarding the rite of circumcision?
 - a. Based upon Old Testament scriptures, what were the Judaizers of Paul's day teaching the people? See Acts 15:1

Paul was not denying Jews the right to be circumcised; he was, rather, stating that Gentiles should not be forced to become Jews first (by being circumcised) before becoming Christians.

3. Who stirred up the matter initially; what was their goal? v 4

These Judaizers were considered *false brothers* by Paul. Elsewhere in 2 Corinthians 11:26, Paul speaks of being *in perils among false brethren*. In other words, they were dangerous, acting as spies, sneaking in among the ranks of true believers.

- a. How did Paul, Titus and Barnabas respond to them? v. 5
4. Are there false believers in the church today? What are some of the ways they may try to promote their own agenda?
 - Personal: How can you *guard your freedom* against those who would hinder the grace of God working in your life?

5. In your own words, summarize how the Jerusalem leaders validated the testimony and teaching of Paul. vv. 6–10

6. What did the leaders in Jerusalem exhort Paul and Barnabas to do? v. 10

The phrase *right hand of fellowship* (v. 9) means more than a friendly hand shake; it involves a partnership in the work of evangelism: Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles, and Peter, James and John would go to the Jews.

The *poor* in Jerusalem included those stricken by famine, the rising number of widows, and those being persecuted following Stephen’s martyrdom.

a. What was Paul’s response to the leaders? v. 10

b. What does this say to you about the perspective and priority of true leaders in the church?

Memory Verse: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 NIV

Viewpoint
Learn to view your circumstances through the lens of God’s truth rather than looking at God’s truth through the eyes of your circumstances. Practice this with the *In focus* word search below and then with the *Up close & personal* look to follow.

In focus: Write a definition for the following words, using the resources you have on hand (i.e., additional Bible translations, dictionary, Bible dictionary, concordance, etc.).

apostle (Galatians 2:8) _____

hypocrite (2:13) _____

Up close & personal: Identify a situation when your behavior is motivated by the desire to please other people around you. If your desire to please God becomes your perspective and priority, how will it help you to change that behavior?

Galatians 2:11–21

No Turning Back!

Paul is concerned to the point of alarm; sounding the warning bells as he mounts a defense of his own credentials and then urges the believers not to go back to their former belief in keeping the law to save them. Everything Paul represented and advocated pointed to what mattered most—the free grace of God which comes only through trusting in Christ.

The illustration he uses to drive home his point is none other than the pillar of the apostles—Peter himself. The occasion Paul writes about allows him to exercise his authority as an apostle through his correction.

1. What does Peter do that warrants Paul’s public correction? vv. 11–13
 - a. What term does Paul use to label Peter? How did his behavior affect those around him?

2. What, specifically, about their behavior made Paul so angry? v. 14a
 - a. Think about it: what does Peter’s behavior reveal about the reality of peer pressure—the power of its influence?

3. Summarize how Paul addressed the situation in verses 14–21.

In verse 16, for the first time in his letter to the Galatians, Paul uses the term *justified*, which means to *declare righteous*. It is the sovereign act of God in declaring a sinner righteous in Christ Jesus.

The Judaizers were arguing that if people weren't living under the law, they would freely sin against God; and if people could be righteous in Christ but continue to live as they wanted, their own sinful action would make Christ a advocate of sin. Paul's answer to them is an emphatic "No!" His point is that grace leads to freedom *from* the slavery of obeying sin and freedom *to obey God*. This is the reality of radical faith!

In verses 18–21, Paul transitions from the use of the pronoun "we" (vv. 15–17) to that of "I." The perspective here in the remaining verses of chapter two is a personal one, based on Paul's own experience of walking with the Lord.

4. Challenge: What does Paul say about his Christian walk in the following . . .
 - a. v. 18
 - b. v. 19
 - c. v. 20
 - d. v. 21

Be transparent Look at Paul's statements above in vv. 18–21 one more time. Based on your walk with the Lord, what does it mean to you to be "*crucified with Christ*"?

Are you able—like Paul—to say with all integrity of heart that it is absolutely *unthinkable* for you as a believer to set aside (or cast away) what God has graciously provided in Christ, and to return to your old way of doing things? There is no going back! Please share your thoughts.

"God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation!" Galatians 6:14–15

A Clear Perspective

“ . . . It pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me . . . ” Galatians 1:15-16a

As God writes your story, use this page to let Him highlight and clarify what He revealed to *you* this week. Revisit the points that stood out to you and note your findings below.

1. How has *His* perspective become *your* perspective?

2. What word of truth came into sharper focus for you?

3. In what way have you grown closer to the Lord?

4. What relevance is there between this week’s memory verse and your daily life?

Memory Verse: Write out this week’s verse from memory.
