

## Galatians 2

Good evening and thank you for joining us. We're in Galatians chapter 2 tonight if you would please turn in your bibles there. Last week we saw Paul begin to defend his apostolic authority, because legalism had crept into the churches and began leading others astray.

If you recall, Galatians isn't referring to a specific church, rather it's a specific area, today it's in modern day turkey. These were churches Paul had previously planted, but they had now begun to drift away from the doctrine of grace.

As chapter 2 begins, we'll see that Paul hadn't finished establishing his authority, which he would use to call the Galatians back to the freedom of the gospel.

The title of tonight's message is GREAT GRACE  
LET'S PRAY

**1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.** ” This was after Paul's first missionary journey. Paul took 2 people- Barnabas, his Jewish sidekick; and Titus, one of his Gentile converts, with him to Jerusalem.

This was a brilliant maneuver by Paul. See he was accompanied by a recognized leader (Barnabas) among the Christians in Jerusalem and accompanied by a living product of his ministry (Titus). Paul brought living credentials to endorse his ministry

Last week in chapter 1 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. Now there's some dispute-is this 14 years after his first trip, or 14 years after his conversion?

Now Paul opened his letter to the Galatians by emphasizing that the gospel he preached came by a revelation from Jesus and not from man, not even from the apostles in Jerusalem. Here in verse 1 we see that two visits to Jerusalem over 14 years proved that Paul did not sit at the feet of the disciples of Jesus to learn the gospel. He received it from Christ Himself.

Paul is conveying both his independence as an apostle, called and commissioned by God, as well as his solidarity as he ministered with the other apostles. Paul's problems were not with the other apostles, but with those false teachers who sought to drive a wedge between Paul and the apostles.

**2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.** At this time, there was a huge dispute regarding the place of Gentiles in the Christian church. God used Peter to welcome Gentiles into the church in Acts 10.

But some Christians from a Jewish background said that Gentiles could indeed be saved, if they made themselves Jews first and brought themselves under the Law of Moses. Their faulty thinking was that salvation in Jesus was only for the Jewish people, and

Gentiles had to first become Jews before they could become Christians.

Why did Paul meet with those of reputation privately? Well most scholars believe that it's referring to the apostles, and perhaps the 3-Peter James and John. By meeting alone with the leaders, Paul was seeking to avoid public confrontation in case there were any disagreements.

And there's a lesson here for us. Paul knew how to be bold, but at certain times, behind the scenes discretion was what was needed most

3 Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. Paul's fear was that the false teachers, who were saying that Gentile converts had to become Jews before they could be saved, might undercut the simplicity of the gospel. This was a huge issue that was running rampant through the Christian churches because of these false doctrines!

Acts 15:1 1 And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

3 So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the

apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. 5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

In Jerusalem, there were Jews who tried to force Titus, a Gentile, to conform to OT rituals. They wanted him to surrender his freedom in Christ and embrace Jewish tradition. But as we'll see, Paul refused to allow it.

But there's something interesting in the book of Acts because we see something similar **Acts 16 1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. 2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. 3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek**

Wait a minute!!! Why the different treatment of Titus and Timothy? Timmy gets clipped while Titus doesn't?

Remember Paul's strategy. Whenever he entered a city, scripture says he went first to the local Jewish synagogue, and then to the Gentiles. If Timothy, who was half-Jewish wasn't circumcised he wouldn't be able to accompany Paul into the synagogue.

Circumcising Timothy had nothing to do with righteousness, but with effectiveness for spreading the Gospel.

Next time you or I feel like we've given up a lot for the Lord, we should remember what Timothy did for the Gospel!

But Titus was 100% gentile, so Paul refuses to have him get circumcised.

All this points to the fact that the church had been infiltrated with legalism, and Paul tells us who brought in this false doctrine.

**4 And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),** The phrase "false brethren" is the Greek word, "pseudodelphos." It's a compound word, "pseudo" or "bogus" and "delphos" or "brother."

Bogus brothers had infiltrated the church. Now these guys may even have professed Christ and thought they were Christians, but they spewed a dangerous mixture of faith plus law. We know this group as the infamous "Judaizers." In Acts 13-14 these Jews followed Paul while he was in Galatia, now they've followed him to Jerusalem.

Always remember the most dangerous people to the Body of Christ aren't the defiant blasphemers or the outspoken hardcore atheists. Our most dangerous enemy is the bogus brother, the person who emphasizes legalism by mixing grace with grunt. It's a lethal thing when someone teaches that you can obtain God's favor by grace - but then, you have to maintain God's favor through doing this or that.

Whenever these folks infiltrate a church, be sure you'll have a divided church.

It's critical as a body of believers that we never forget that...

It's grace that creates an atmosphere of love, and a bond of unity.

It's grace that allows folks to grow at their own pace...

It's grace that keeps people open to God, rather than being stifled by their own failures...

There are lots of things we can theologically disagree on, but folks we CANNOT budge an inch when it comes to God's grace. We must be a place of grace.

Bob and men's retreat story.

So how did Paul respond to these bogus brothers?

**5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.** Put yourself in Paul's position for a moment, and you can instantly feel the pressure of the situation closing in on you.

To a Jew, they likely thought Titus getting circumcised was a minor concession - besides the church was facing a major rift.

You can hear the people saying "Paul, stop being divisive. You're threatening our unity. Just have Titus be circumcised and we'll be able to have deep fellowship again. Paul, we must put a stop to this division!"

Unity in the body of Christ of course is absolutely essential. But unity cannot come at all costs. See there is one thing that is more important than our unity, and that is the truth! **John 1:17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**

Paul understood at this critical moment that truth was more important than a truce!

**6 But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.** It's easy to rate folks on the basis of their official status and to be intimidated by powerful people. We can maybe bite our tongue when we're in the presence of perceived power, Paul wasn't intimidated or star struck at all because he knew that all believers are equal in Christ.

And here in verse 6 Paul reminds us that God has no favorites. This is shocking to contemplate because it cuts against the grain of our performance based society. God doesn't favor Billy Graham more than me or more than you!

**7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),** Here's the realization that saved Christianity from schism. God gives to different people different callings, to reach different people. God used Peter's

Jewish heritage to reach the Jews. He used Paul's familiarity with Gentile custom to reach Gentiles.

But one approach was no better than the other - both were used by God to reach people. And this is still how God works. Some churches are used to reach a family crowd. Other churches relate to a biker crowd. God calls each of us to our own niche

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, pause here...This was Jesus' inner circle. Peter, James, and John were there on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane when no one else was invited  
9-10

9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do. The only caution from the leaders in Jerusalem was that Paul should remember the poor. In this case, these were probably the poor saints in Jerusalem, whom Gentile believers should not forget.

Acts 15 22 Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas,[fn] and Silas, leading men among the brethren.  
23 They wrote this letter by them:



The apostles, the elders, and the brethren,

To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

Greetings.

24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”<sup>[fn]</sup>—to whom we gave no such commandment— 25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.<sup>[fn]</sup> If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.

Farewell.

Paul certainly did remember the poor in Jerusalem. He put a lot of effort towards gathering a contribution among the Gentile churches for the sake of the saints in Jerusalem.

And as Paul discovers, the battle for God’s grace is never over. And the next verses are warnings to you and I of how quickly we can become embroiled to legalism.

11 Now when Peter<sup>[fn]</sup> had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

Peter had known that God didn't require Gentiles to come under the Law of Moses for salvation. He was at the center of it all in Acts 10-remember God gave Pete the vision of the incredible inedible's saying 'rise Peter kill and eat'. After that, remember Peter was there when the outpouring of the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentiles who believed.

Yet shockingly, despite all of that, Peter turned his back on all that he had known about the place of Gentiles in the church.

Peter forgot the lessons God taught him when the Roman soldier, Cornelius, was saved by faith and faith alone. God no longer divides men along racial or religious lines - as clean or unclean. Today, the only distinction God makes among us is whether we're in Christ or not.

Previously, Peter had lived by this truth. He hung out with the Gentile believers - until verse 12 tells us the James' gang arrived from Jerusalem. Now he ate only with Jews, not Gentiles. He was acting as if the Jews were seated in first class, and the Gentiles were stuck back in coach... as if Christianity had a first and second string.

This was the kind of behavior that dominated Peter's life before he was transformed by the power of God. This was like Peter telling Jesus not to go to the cross, or Peter taking his eyes off of Jesus and sinking when walking on the water, or like Peter cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest when soldiers came to arrest Jesus. We see that the flesh was still present in Peter. Salvation and the filling of the Holy Spirit did not make Peter perfect; the old Peter was still there, just seen less often.

We might be surprised that Peter compromised even though he knew better; but we are only surprised if we don't believe what God says about the weakness and corruption of our flesh. Paul himself knew this struggle, as he described it in **Romans 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. 19 For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. 20 Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.**

And in verse 11 what did Paul do? **I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed:** This shows how serious the matter was to Paul.

This was a big issue because it involved the issue of eating together. 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. Some speculate that it's possible that Peter turned these Gentile Christians away from the communion

table. But here's the shocker-it wasn't only Peter who succumbed to legalism.

13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

It wasn't just Peter. Barnabas was Paul's trusted friend and associate. Barnabas stood beside and stuck up for Paul when he first met the apostles in Acts 9. Barnabas sought out Paul and brought him to Antioch to help with the ministry there. Acts 11:24

For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Yet, Barnabas also failed at this critical test.

Realize, legalism has a definite appeal. The idea that I can do it - I can pull myself up by my own bootstraps flatters my pride.

And never forget legalists measure themselves against others, and point to their own self-righteousness.

But grace is humbling, because grace requires me to admit there's nothing I can do except to trust in the merits of someone else, and that someone else is Jesus.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you<sup>[fn]</sup> compel Gentiles to live as Jews?<sup>[fn]</sup> Paul calls out Peter for his hypocrisy. And this took guts! Realize, Paul is going toe-to-toe with Pentecost Pete.

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,  
16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but

by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

“Peter, why are you advocating the rebirth of religion?” asked Paul. “We Jews couldn’t even keep the rules. We know that a man is justified only by faith in Christ—not by works, but simply by believing.”

And we may scoff and say how could Peter and the others be so foolish. But hey legalism appears in many ways!

Are you trying to earn God’s favor through morning devotions or Wednesday night Bible study attendance, through memorizing verses or witnessing, through not going here or not doing that? It’s a big mistake. You are justified by faith and faith alone—not only when you were born again, not only when you were saved ten years ago—but today, right now.

Remember-what is justified? Just as if I’d never sinned.

17-18

17 “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin?

Certainly not! 18 For if I build again those things which I

destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. If a Christian puts themselves under the Mosaic Law, the Law will quickly show them they are sinners, because no one can keep God’s Law perfectly. These verses are a strong testimony that Christians are free from the requirements of the Mosaic Law.

19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

Paul is a widower to the Law. His relationship with the Law is over. Paul died to the rules. Like oil and water, honey and vinegar, hot summer days and chocolate bars, law and grace just don't mix. Paul is all about living by grace.

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Paul lived what's been called "the exchanged life." This is the life available to every Christian. I am crucified and resurrected with Christ. We die to sin in Christ, and then Christ lives His life in us.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Now remember, there's nothing wrong with God's law. God's law is perfect. The problem is us-we can't abide by it, because he who is guilty in 1 aspect is guilty of all the law. But faith in Christ demonstrates that our shortcomings were all placed on the cross of Christ, and when He died, so did all my sins.

Look at the end of verse 20-"who loved me and gave Himself for me." This is the love of Christ! The law doesn't motivate us, it's the love of Christ that causes me to want to be pleasing to Him!

21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. "If we could be good enough for God, if salvation could come any other way, don't you think God would have spared His only Son?"

To say that someone can be saved apart from the blood of Jesus is to diminish the sacrifice Jesus made for us. There are many issues on which Christians should take a stand, but none - and I mean none - are as important as God's matchless and amazing grace

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Brought Near by His Blood

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.