Note: This lesson includes 5 discussion questions in RED.

Galatians Chapter 2

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Introduction:

1. In this chapter, Paul continues his defense of his apostleship as being directly from the Lord and not dependent on the Twelve at Jerusalem.

2. Then Paul describes his encounter with Peter and the outcome of this encounter. It was a teachable moment and allowed others to see further that his message was not dependent on the Twelve.

3. The entire Roman Catholic religion is premised on the idea that Peter was the head of the church. Here is an affirmation directly from a leading Catholic site:

> "Catholics argue that because Jesus makes Peter, the first pope, the rock of his Church, his papal successors, as Peter, remain head of the Christian Church on earth. For wherever the foundation is, there is the true Church of Jesus." -- From the *Catholic Answers* website.

4. Paul is making it clear that he received the gospel *directly from the Lord* and <u>his message was not at all connected with Peter</u> -- but he found some years later that it was identical with what was preached by all of the Twelve.

PAUL RETURNED TO JERUSALEM AFTER FOURTEEN YEARS

(2:1) Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too.

- It must be clear that Paul was not dependent on the Twelve for any guidance, but operated independently. **Fourteen years** (after Galatians 1:18), partly consumed with preaching, he made a trip to **Jerusalem** and accompanied by **Barnabas**, his original Jewish mentor (Acts 13:1) and **Titus**, a Gentile preacher who is not mentioned in the Acts record. Paul spoke highly of **Titus** in several places. Here is one sample of many available:

  If anyone asks about Titus, say that he is my partner who works with me to help you. And the brothers with him have been sent by the churches, and they bring honor to Christ. (2 Corinthians 8:23 NLT)

- The three preachers stopped off at Antioch of Syria on the way: Here is a part of the story from Acts:

  While Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch of Syria, some men from Judea arrived and began to teach the believers: "Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas disagreed with them, arguing vehemently.

  Finally, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, accompanied by some local believers, to talk to the apostles and elders about this question. The church sent the delegates to Jerusalem, and they stopped along the way in Phoenicia and Samaria to visit the believers. They told them -- much to everyone's joy -- that the Gentiles, too, were being converted.

  When they arrived in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Paul were welcomed by the whole church, including the apostles

and elders. They reported everything God had done through them.

But then some of the believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and insisted, "The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses." (Acts 15:1-5 NLT)

(2) I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I met privately with those considered to be leaders of the church and shared with them the message I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure that we were in agreement, for fear that all my efforts had been wasted and I was running the race for nothing.

- In some unknown way, **God** told Paul to make the time-consuming trip to Jerusalem via Antioch of Syria. He met with the **leaders** in Jerusalem and compared his **message** with their **message**.
- **Barclay** states:

  . . . Paul has proved the independence of his gospel; here he is concerned to prove that this independence is not anarchy and that his gospel is not something schismatic and sectarian, but no other than the faith delivered to the Church.
- Whole churches changing from what they first believed was known in that time. Corinth was an example:

  You happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a <u>different</u> Jesus than the One we preach, or a <u>different</u> kind of Spirit than the One you received, or a <u>different</u> kind of gospel than the one you believed. (2 Corinthians 11:4 NLT)

The church at Colossae was another example:

Don't let anyone <u>capture you</u> with empty philosophies and <u>high-sounding nonsense</u> that come from human

thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.
(Colossians 2:8-9 NLT)

Can't God just stop the troublemakers?
Given O Blakely writes about this:

> A shallow thinker might imagine that God can and will stop such reports. But that is foolish thinking.
>
> God did not stop Satan from deceiving Eve, or Cain from killing Abel. He did not keep Joseph out of prison, or stop Herod from beheading John the Baptist.
>
> In the economy of salvation, things are being accomplished in a hostile environment in which truth and those who deliver it are often maligned. Men are to respond properly under such conditions, siding with the truth and those who deliver it.

- In America, a national sport is placing blame whenever something goes wrong. We must note that the heaven-led Apostle Paul had entire churches that fell away from their first love for the Lord. This was not Paul's fault. People must accept their own responsibility for getting off of the Lord's track.

(3) And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.

- There was agreement between Paul's group and the Jerusalem leaders. They even accepted **Titus** the Gentile without demanding **circumcision**.

(4) Even that question came up only because of some so-called Christians there -- false ones, really -- who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the

freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations.

- Judaizers got into the meeting, wanting Paul to enforce the **Jewish regulations**, making the **freedom in Christ** of no account. He labeled them **false Christians**.
- **Burton Coffman** writes:

> It was not freedom from Christ's commandments that Paul taught, but freedom from the forms and ceremonies of Judaism. Jesus himself declared that "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19).

Paul explained how he used his **freedom in Christ Jesus:**

> **When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law.**
> (1 Corinthians 9:20 NLT)

(5) But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the gospel message for you. (6) And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)

- Without hesitation Paul rejected the demands of the Judaizers. He did this on behalf of the hundreds or thousands among the Gentiles who were already in Christ. The legitimate Jerusalem **leaders** agreed with Paul's **message**.
- Paul observed that the **reputation** of the Jerusalem **leaders** did not make any **difference** to him, because **God** does not have **favorites**.

Q1. Paul stood firm when others tried to change the message of the gospel. Why do you think it can be difficult to stand up for what you believe when others disagree with you?

(7) Instead, they saw that God had given me the respon-sibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as He had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews.

- The Jerusalem leaders saw a new division of labors: **God** had given t**he responsibility of preaching to Gentiles** to Paul while He had **given the responsibility** of **preaching to the Jews** to **Peter**. Those assignments were not mutually exclusive. Paul preached to **Jews** and **Peter** worked with Gentiles sometimes (as in Acts 10).

(8) For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles.

- The evidence was that **God** had **worked** through both men to accomplish the task of evangelizing the world.

(9) In fact, James, Peter, and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews.

- The **pillars** of the Jerusalem **church** identified with Paul and **Barnabas** as their **co-workers**. They saw **God's gifts** at work in them rather than seeing them as competitors with a different message. They took an additional step and **encouraged** Paul and **Barnabas** rather than simply acknowledging them. **Encouraging** a leader is a rewarding activity still today. Every reader here is capable. See Question 2, below.

(10) Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.

- **Helping the poor** was and is controversial. It is easier to blame them for their condition and move to less messy tasks. It is helpful to have a personal or church policy to use when a need arises. Paul's policy included being **eager** to **help.** Perhaps a good policy was spoken by Paul later in Galatians:

Q2. The leaders in Jerusalem and Paul had different ministries but the same mission. How can Christians work together even when they have different personalities, backgrounds, or roles?

> **Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we <u>should do good to everyone</u> -- especially to those in the family of faith.** (Galatians 6:10 NLT)

PAUL CONFRONTS PETER

(11) But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong.

- Here is further evidence that Paul's authority came directly from the Lord and was not connected with Jerusalem is in this event. The story itself shows that Paul was not subservient to Peter and the rest of the Twelve. Paul calls **Peter's** actions **very wrong.**

(12) When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. See Question 3, below.

- **Peter** and Paul met at Antioch of Syria. When **Peter** first arrived, he **ate** meals with **uncircumcised Gentile Christians**. But when a group came from Jerusalem, **Peter** would no longer have meals **with the Gentile Christians**. He feared the Judaizers who claimed that circumcision (and therefore keeping all of the Law of Moses) was necessary.
- Peter knew better than distancing from the **Gentile** brethren. It was **Peter** who had opened the door of the kingdom for **Gentiles** in Acts 10 and then defended his actions before the Jerusalem brethren in Acts 11. Here are samples. When **Peter** entered the home of Cornelius the **Gentile** Roman Centurion:

> **Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. <u>But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean</u>.** (Acts 10:28 NLT)

Q3. Peter changed his behavior because he was worried about what certain people would think of him. How does society try to change our behaviors as Christians and what can we do about it?

Peter said clearly that accepting **Gentiles** was directly from **God.** When **Peter** returned to Jerusalem, he had to defend his actions of entering a **Gentile's** home and baptizing them into Christ:

> **And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift He gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?"** (Acts 11:17 NLT)

There is no way that Peter could misunderstand the place of **Gentiles** in the church. Now he distanced himself from the **Gentiles** at meal time in Antioch because of social pressure from Judaizers visiting from Jerusalem.

(13) As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

- **Peter's** choice affected **other Jewish Christians** including Paul's own traveling companion **Barnabas. Barnabas** had preached extensively among the Gentiles! Now he is distancing himself from them because of **Peter's** actions.
- Paul labeled this action as **hypocrisy.**



(14) When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?

- This is mealtime and not all food at the Gentile's table was kosher. There may have been pulled pork, pickled pig's feet, or even lobster, foods that were not allowed by the the dietary restrictions of the Law of Moses. **Peter** didn't want to be seen at this table by his friends from Jerusalem. But he knew the food was acceptable to God.
- Paul was not conciliatory. He publicly confronted **Peter** with a question because Peter's conduct had been very public:

(15) "You and I are Jews by birth, not 'sinners' like the Gentiles.

- **"Sinners"** here reflects the Jewish way of thinking, not the reality before God. Gentiles were **sinners** because they just naturally did so many things forbidden under the law. Paul and Peter both descended from the line of Abraham and seriously kept the Law of Moses.

(16) Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."

- Both men agreed that being **made right with God** comes through **faith in Jesus Christ** and not by **obeying the law**. There was no dispute here. Both men have personally been made **right with God** by this truth. **The law**, by contrast, has no way to save any **person**. See Question 4, below.

(17) But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not!

Q4. Galatians 2:16 says we are made right with God through faith in Jesus, not by following rules. Why is it sometimes easier to focus on rules rather than having a relationship with Jesus?

- A question to answer: If a person is **made right with God through faith in Jesus Christ**, are we guilty because we are no longer keeping **the law**, as for example, circumcision? Could we blame **Christ for leading us into sin?** No, in no way.

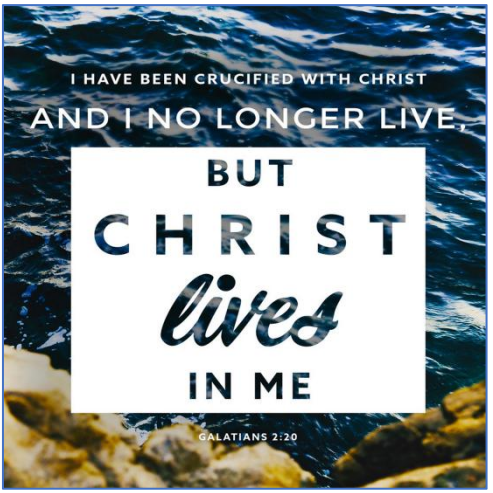
(18) Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down.

- Becoming a **sinner** comes when we require the **law** again after we have been released from it through Christ.

(19) For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law -- I stopped trying to meet all its require-ments -- so that I might live for God.

- The law **condemned** Paul -- and anyone else who tries to be saved by it. The **Law** given by Moses informs about the will of God, but when it is broken, there is no mechanism for *saving* the lawbreaker. This is restated in verse 21.

(20) My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

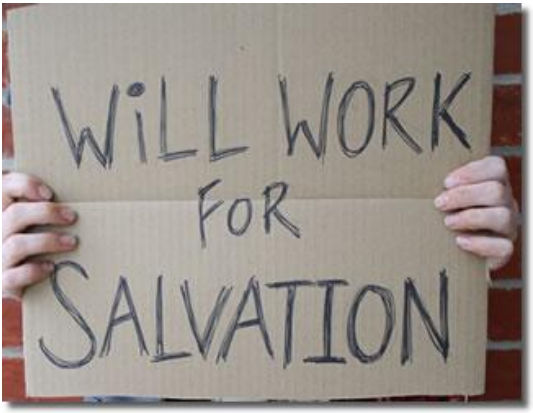


- Paul, the attempted law-keeper, has identified himself with the **crucified Christ** instead. **Christ lives** in him. Now **life** is by trusting in Jesus who has **loved** him and **given** Himself for Paul (and every one of us).

Q5. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says, "Christ lives in me." What do you think this looks like in the everyday life of a Christian?

(21) I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

- Every believer is made **right with God** by the **death of Christ.** No one is saved from sin by *earning* salvation -- keeping the law. Instead the wonderful salvation that we receive is because of the **grace of God**.



- For Peter to imply by distancing himself from Gentiles at dinner that believers must keep the **Law** of Moses to earn salvation is to treat the **grace of God** in sending **Christ to die** for us **as meaningless.**

Challenge Question:
• If Paul were writing to us today, what do you think he would say is the biggest challenge to living out your faith in today's world?