

Galatians 1-2 • Chapter Study

INTRO

You could make a case for our being here tonight doing what we're doing because of Paul's letter to the churches of Galatia.

Let me explain ...

For hundreds of years, that era we call the Middle Ages, the Church was dominated by **Sacramentalism**.

Sacraments are religious rituals; Confession, Communion, Marriage, Baptism, & Last rites.

Sacraments can *only* be performed by the clergy FOR the laity;

That is by ordained priests for people, so they can obey God.

In Sacramentalism, people can't go directly to God on their own thru faith in Christ.

They come *through the mediation* of the Church & its priests.

Sacramentalism dominated Church life during the Middle Ages because common people were illiterate.

They couldn't read the Bible // And before the printing press, there weren't many Bibles to read.

In the late 15th C things began to change.

The Church became so corrupt, many sincere priests objected to what was going on.

Because they could read, they knew many Church practices conflicted with God's Word.

Reform was inevitable. It broke out in several places.

Most notably, in Germany & Switzerland with Martin Luther & John Calvin.

The 2 books of the Bible they found most helpful in reform were Romans & Galatians.

Background

The Apostle Paul most likely wrote this letter on his 3rd missionary journey to the churches of the region of Galatia he'd planted on his 1st missionary foray.

Galatia is located in the middle of modern day Turkey, what the Romans called "Asia Minor."

It got its name from the large number of people from *Gaul* who migrated there from the the area we know as France.

These *Celts*, as they were known, gave Rome a rough time.

Early in Roman history, the Celts stormed over the Alps and invaded deep into Italy, sacking Rome.

For ever after, they were the Roman bogeyman.

It wasn't till the time of Julius Caesar that Rome was strong enough to take them on.

Caesar's defeat of the Celtic capital of Alesia & its King Vercingetorix is one of the great stories of history.

A group of Celts migrated to Asia Minor in the 3rd C BC to settle the area known named after their origin in Gaul.

They were tremendously proud of their heritage and identity as Celts.

Being transplants from far away, the pressure was on to fit in to the surrounding cultures.

They instead clung tenaciously to their traditions.

That produced a *classic conservatism* that made them a *stubborn* lot.

Not the sharpest knife in the drawer, they made up for it in toughness & industry.

Though slow to change, once they latched on to an idea, they were all in.

When Paul arrived and preached the Gospel, the work of the Spirit was so evident, many were converted and several churches started.

Sometime later, false teachers arrived, claiming to have been sent by from the Church at Jerusalem.

They were *Judaizers*, Jewish Christians who said if Gentiles wanted to follow Jesus, they had to effectively become JEWS and keep the Law of Moses.

So, they had to get be circumcised, keep kosher, observe Sabbath, and all the rest.

Though the Galatians were stubborn & slow to change, the *legalism* of the Judaizers appealed to them because it played to their pride & can-do attitude.

Word reached Paul Judaizers had made inroads in the churches of Galatia.

So he sent off this letter, his by far most strongly worded, refuting the error of the Judaizers.

Ch1

¹ Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), ² and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: ³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

In contrast to the *self*-appointed Judaizers, Paul's apostleship came directly from God.

They claimed to be sent from HQs at Jrz while Paul wasn't.

That's a lie on **2** counts.

1st = The Judaizers **weren't** sent.

On the contrary. In Acts 15 the Church held its first council, specifically to decide if Gentiles *did* need to keep the Law of Moses to be followers of Jesus. >> The Apostles decided they *didn't*.

They just needed to believe The Gospel & follow Jesus.

Judaizers ignored that decision & pretended as though the Church had decided in their favor.

2nd = The Jrz church-leaders *recognized* Paul's call to take the Gospel to the Gentile world.

But Paul *didn't* find validation for his apostleship from that.

Jesus Himself appointed Paul that task when He appeared to Him outside of Damascus.

Paul had gone there to persecute the church, thinking it a dangerous heresy.

But everything changed when the Risen Jesus appeared to him and Paul realized what he been fighting was all true.

It was in that first encounter with Jesus, Paul was given his assignment as an Apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul includes his travelling companions in the greeting.

Most likely that was Timothy, Titus, Luke, and a few others.

He then unites the Greek & Jewish greetings; Charis & Shalom = Grace & Peace.

Take note where grace & peace come from; God the Father **AND** the Lord Jesus Christ.

Most cults make a big to-do about Jesus **not** being God.

In the mind of a 1st C Jew, linking Jesus to God in this way was unthinkable—**UNLESS** Jesus *is* God.

And attributing the title "Lord" to anyone *but* God was equally unthinkable. // So ...

³ Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Not only did Jesus pay the **penalty** of our sin,

His resurrection means our deliverance from the **power** of sin.

Though we live in a fallen world, among fallen people, we don't have to continue that fallenness.

We've been redeemed & have the *potential* to live as new men & women by the power of the Spirit.

Missing from this greeting is Paul's *usual* giving of thanks & commendation of their faith.

The *reason* that's missing is because of the peril the Galatians were in.

Since we covered vs6-12 Sunday, we'll be brief with them tonight.

⁶ I marvel

Amazed, astonished ...

that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

It's about 5 or 6 yrs since Paul'd planted the churches there.

And precisely because they were so stubborn & change-averse, he's amazed they were so quickly tossing aside the Gospel THEY KNEW had saved them.

He says what they were into now was a *different* gospel; that is meaning different ***in kind***.

So much so, it's **no** gospel at all.

Then Paul launches into some of his strongest words ...

⁸ But even if we,

Paul & his assistants

or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.

The Gospel of Grace is not to be laid aside, no matter **who** speaks or how eloquent & convincing they are.

Even if an angel appears, giving a message contrary to the Good News of JC, they're not to put up with it.

This is *so important*, he says it again.

⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

If something is **cursed** by God, it's **off-limits** // So let's be clear on what Paul's saying.

False teachers & their false gospels are out of bounds.

Paul now defends his calling because he knew from long experience that was always something the Judaizers attacked.

We saw this in our studies in Corinthians.

To gain traction for their error, false teachers first have to undercut the credibility of God's witness.

¹⁰ For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ. ¹¹ But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. ¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel Paul proclaimed was not of human origin // He didn't make it up.

It was announced TO him by Jesus Himself and confirmed by the reality of the Resurrection.

The Gospel, our Faith isn't like other religions.

It isn't the product of *human reason*; the deductions of a *philosopher*.

It's not the visions of a *mystic*, the enlightened ideology of a guru.

It's the Good News that God became man in the person of Jesus, Who died for our sins and rose again for our justification and new life.

BECAUSE God saved him, the entire orientation of Paul's life changed so that all he cared for was to please God.

So he faithfully preached the Gospel of Grace; which got him into no end of trouble since the world doesn't want to hear it.

He dives into a little of his past now.

The Galatians need know the ideas behind what the Judaizers taught were not new to him.

They brought a message to Galatia Paul already knew >> & *vehemently* rejected.

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism,

He'd told them his story when he was first there -

how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and *tried to destroy it*. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

As a young man, Paul was a student of the famous rabbi & scholar *Gamaliel*.

Paul was something of a prodigy & had risen to a place of leadership in Jrz.

When the Sanhedrin condemned Stephen to death by stoning, it was Paul who presided at his execution.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

A lot of *practical theology* there.

Looking back over his life, Paul discerned the hand of God shaping him for his ministry as an Apostle.

Following his miraculous conversion at Damascus, Paul run back to Jrz, seeking to meet up with the Disciples.

He did what Jesus instructed him to do.

He stayed in Damascus, waiting for a church leader there named Ananias to come pray for him.

Then, he retreated to a solitary place to pray & think thru everything he'd learned in light of the reality-bending truth that Jesus is God the Son & Savior.

Acts 9 it says this lasted many days, then he returned to Damascus.

18 Then after 3 yrs I went up to Jrz to see Peter, and remained with him 15 days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Paul's point was that The Gospel he preached wasn't of human origin; it came straight from Christ.

It wasn't till 3 yrs after his conversion he met *some* of the leadership of the Jrz Church.

Peter, ostensible leader of the original disciples & James, brother of Jesus who'd become the main leader of the Church.

20 (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

ANYONE can say, "I'm not lying! Look-I swear on a stack of Bibles."

What made Paul's appeal to truth more likely with his readers is that = THEY KNEW HIM!

He'd led them to Faith in Christ // They KNEW the HS worked in & thru him.

As Paul has said to the Corinthians = If they needed proof of his calling, consider their own conversion.

The Judaizers claimed THEY were official reps of the Apostles & that Paul spun a yarn about his rel to HQ.

So Paul takes an oath he doesn't need to but put the Galatians in memory of his *most obvious* calling.

21 Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. 23 But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once *tried to destroy*." 24 And they glorified God in me.

Paul didn't stay in Jrz long. Certainly not long enough to make the rounds of the churches there.

All they heard is that the one who'd led the campaign to crush the Gospel had become a chief promoter of it.

When Paul left Jrz, he went to Antioch in Syria where there was a thriving Christian community.

He became a leader in the church there.

And eventually launched out with Barnabas on their 1st missionary venture, that brought them to Galatia.

Ch2

¹ Then after 14 yrs I went up again to Jrz with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

This return to Jrz is recounted in Acts 15.

Paul mentions it because it goes right to the heart of the controversy with the Judaizers.

Here's what happened ...

During their 1st church-planting foray, Barnabas & Paul discovered Gentiles were more attracted to Christ than Jews.

Hundreds were being saved with churches popping up all over.

This sparked a question for the leadership back in Jerusalem.

→ What do pagan Gentiles need to do in order to be saved?

What's their relationship to the Law?

Till then, The Faith had been almost entirely a Jewish-deal.

Jews didn't stop being Jews when they came to faith in Christ.

They simply understood that Jesus was their long-hoped-for Messiah.

The one Scripture pointed to and was fulfilled in.

But with a flood of Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus as Savior, the question was;

Do they have to become Jews? Do they have to keep the Law of Moses?

Paul *knew* the answer to that; No, they didn't.

As he shared the Gospel & saw many Gentiles converted, he watched the HS transform them into a holy & loving people *without any knowledge* of Mosaic regulations.

The presence & power of the Spirit of God was all the confirmation needed to prove God accepted them on the basis of faith in Christ alone.

So he & Barnabas, along with 1 of their converts, went to Jrz to give testimony to the work of God among the Gentiles.

² And I went up by revelation,

Paul wasn't summoned to Jrz by the Apostles. He went there at the urging of the Spirit.

The word Paul uses suggests this was a dream or vision in which Paul heard a clear word from God to go.

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.

Acts tells us there was a serious controversy brewing in the church at Jrz over the issue of what to do with Gentile believers.

Paul didn't know who held what position on the matter.

He didn't want to get into a public debate with any leaders who disagreed with him because he was certain once he had a chance to explain, they'd see the proof & evidence of his position.

But he also knew, once a person realizes they're wrong, they won't admit it *if they've taken a public stand for fear of losing face*.

The best place to confront the issue was in private where he could reason with those who disagreed and answer their objections without added complications.

Paul was quite wise in all this.

³ Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Paul convinced the leadership of the Jrz Church that Gentiles *didn't* have to become Jews.

Proof of that was that the Gentile-convert Titus was never required to be circumcised.

Don't miss the power of Paul's point here –

The Judaizers now at work in Galatia claimed they'd been sent by the Apostles to enforce rules like circumcision.

If true, why hadn't they commanded Titus be circumcised?

The Judaizers lied. They *weren't* sent.

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), ⁵ to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

In Acts 15 we read of a major dispute over what Christians had to the Law of Moses.

1 grp said compliance with the Law was compulsory & that Gentiles would have to become law-abiding Jews.

The other grp said Jesus *fulfilled* the Law & that God demonstrated His **acceptance** of Gentiles on the basis of their faith in Christ, by giving them the HS.

Lending a LOT of weight to that was the testimony of Peter [Tell story of Centurion Cornelius]

Well, Judaizer-spies infiltrated the *mostly*-Gentile church at Antioch where Paul was a pastor.

They then ran back to Jrz with a damning report of how the Christians there had "*forsaken God!!*"

How? >> They weren't circumcising, keeping Sabbath, eating bacon & cheeseburgers.

Paul's point is that when the Judaizers visited came to Antioch & tried to get the Gentiles to submit to the Law, he and the other church leaders there rejected their push.

Then, the whole issue had been dealt with at the council in Jrz.

The Apostles already decided **against** them. >> **So**, they ought to be rejected in Galatia, now.

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.

The Judaizers *claimed* to be duly authorized agents of the leaders of the Jrz Church.

Paul didn't see himself as such. No, His authority as an Apostle came from God.

⁷ But on the contrary, when they –

The leaders of the church -

saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me,

Unstated but implied is, "committed" by God -

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), ⁹ and when James, Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars,

Main leaders -

perceived the grace that had been given to me,

The grace Paul means is his call as an Apostle to the Gentiles -

they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Paul walks a tight balance between *honoring* the leaders at Jrz while not reinforcing the claim of the Judaizers.

He honors the God-ordained role of the leaders of the Jrz Church **AND** the *limit* of their authority.

No one was pope >> Jesus *alone* is Head of the Church w/**all** the Apostles holding *equal* authority.

While their authority was equal, the field they were to work in was different.

Peter, James, & John were called to minister primarily to the Jews, while Paul & Barnabas were called to plant churches among Gentiles.

¹⁰ They [the Jrz leaders] desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

They asked Paul to remind the churches he planted not to forget the need of their Jewish brethren suffering persecution.

Acts make abundantly clear Paul *didn't* forget.

Helping relieve poor believers in Jrz was a major part of his mission.

He urged his Gentile converts to provide relief for them.

That relief helped silence the grumbling of the Judaizers.

They realized the conversion of Gentiles *was real* when they saw their love in that way.

When the controversy about what to do with all the Gentiles coming to faith in Christ first spun up, Paul & Barnabas went to Jrz to resolve it, all recounted in Acts 15.

Sometime later, Peter made a trip to Paul's turf, Antioch in Syria.

¹¹ Now when Peter 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 backed up Paul during the Gentiles & the Law discussion in Jrz.

Later, while visiting Antioch, Peter sat & ate w/Gentiles.

That was a clear sign of fellowship & acceptance; something a strict-Jew would *never* do!

But Peter regarded Gentiles believers as brothers in Christ >>

UNTIL, a delegation of Jewish-Christians from James, leader of the Jrz church, arrived.

Then Peter *avoided* his Gentile-brothers.

He feared what the Jews would think & what kind of trouble it would create for him back home.

So, even though the Gentile-issue had already been decided, James leaned toward the camp that wanted Gentiles to become more Jewish.

Peter's behavior was hypocritical & lent support to the idea that if Gentiles **REALLY** wanted to be right with God, they needed to become Jews.

Paul would have NONE of that! So he *literally got in his face* with a rebuke.

¹³ And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. 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 compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

Paul challenged Peter publicly. He had to because his behavior influenced others.

Even Barnabas began withdrawing from fellowship with Gentiles.

Since Peter's actions were public, the proper place to confront him was public.

Imagine how the Gentiles believers *felt* when Peter & other Jewish brothers shunned them like this.

Before the delegation from James arrived, Peter hadn't been scrupulous in staying kosher.

He'd hung out & eaten with the Gentiles.

He'd skipped the elaborate hand-washing ritual every strict-Jew kept.

Why did he all of a sudden reverse course & suggest by his actions Gentiles need to keep the ritual Law?

If HE, *a Jew*, didn't have to *before* those guys came from Jrz, why do *Gentiles* have to?

This is an important challenge because there's a movement promoting the idea >>

For Gentiles to be *real* Christians, they must discover & reclaim the Jewish roots of the Faith.

This movement says God has **2 covenants** running side by side; one with Gentiles, another with Jews.

Faith in Jesus saves Gentiles, and empowers them to obey the Law.

But God still accepts faithful Jews who keep the Mosaic Law, *apart* from faith in Christ.

What we find here **nuke**s that idea.

Before the delegation from Jrz arrived, Peter *rightly* accommodated himself to his Gentile brothers.

Note that Paul didn't rebuke Peter for that.

He rebuked him for swinging back to a legalistic lifestyle.

There's only 1 covenant; not 2.

At the Last Supper Jesus held the cup & said, "This is THE new covenant in My blood," not A new covenant.

And He said that to a table round which sat all Jews.

Peter of ALL people knew there's only 1 covenant.

So much so he would stand before the Jewish Supreme Court and boldly declare, "There is no other name under heaven whereby we may be saved, but the name of Jesus!" [Acts 4:12]

In some English versions of the text, Paul's rebuke of Peter goes all the way to v21.

But there's no punctuation in Greek. So editors put it where they think it fits.

V14 is likely Paul's summary of the rebuke leveled at Peter.

Vs15-21 are his follow-up & application to the Galatians.

Paul begins to dismantle the argument of the Judaizers.

He make his case for salvation being by grace rather than works.

He begins by *contrasting* Jews & Gentiles.

God delivered the Law to the Jews.

If anyone **ought** to have been justified by it, it would be those to whom it given.

But justification isn't **by** the law, as Jews believers had come to realize.

¹⁵ We who are Jews by nature [birth], and not sinners of the Gentiles, [without the knowledge of God or His ways]

¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we [Jews] have believed in Christ Jesus, that we [Jews] might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law;

Then he spells it out in the clearest possible way =

for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

NO flesh; Jewish or Gentile // **No one** is made right before God on the basis of works, keeping the Law.

Justification comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul uses a *preposition* we need to unpack >> "... that we might be justified by faith **IN** Christ. "

"In" is the Grk word "eis" = "into." // We are justified by faith **INTO** Christ.

The faith meant is one that puts us INTO Christ.

One that **trusts** Him; that it is HE who saves us, not we who obtain it by our efforts.

This faith into Jesus isn't agreement with a set of facts.

It isn't enough to regard Jesus as a real historical figure Who walked around ancient Israel, said some crazy stuff then was executed as a revolutionary.

Faith **into** Jesus means **trusting Him** to make you right with God >>

That His death & resurrection are the means of your salvation.

Justification means to be **made right** with God.

The Greek word is a technical term with a dual meaning.

Negatively, it meant **innocence**.

Someone had NOT committed a crime justice required be punished.

Positively it meant **a reward**.

Someone had met the criteria to receive an asset, a boon, blessing, favor.

Justification with God means we're declared ...

- **Innocent** of all sins demanding judgment, &
- **Qualified** to receive the benefits & blessings of eternal life.

These don't come to us because we merit them but because Jesus won them **for us**.

Paul says *if Jews who were given the Law are saved by faith in Christ, how much are Gentiles who didn't have the Law?*

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!

Paul knows the objection Judaizers raise to the Gospel of Grace.

They always run back to the argument >>

Without rules telling people how to obey God, they'll get spiritually lazy & morally sloppy.

Judaizers protested that preaching grace would end up promoting sin.

Paul voices their objection for them so he can refute it.

"If someone who believes in justification by faith in Christ sins, does that discredit Jesus?"

"Of course not? Perish the thought! Don't be absurd! That's ridiculous!"

To say grace is a license to sin, which Judaizers claimed, was an absurd mis-characterization of grace.

18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Before his conversion, Paul was *fanatical* in his devotion to the Law as a means of attaining righteousness.

But once saved, he realized the Law makes no one right with God.

On the contrary, it's by the Law we realize **how wrong we are** & how desperately we need a Savior.

All the Law does is increase our guilt, not righteousness.

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

In dying to his own efforts to please God thru the law, Paul realized the life he was looking for was In Christ, in whom the law is fulfilled.

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.

[Sunday]

21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain."

You can't mix grace & law. You can't have a some of one and some of the other.

They don't mix; mutually-exclusive.

Either God declares us righteous on the basis of what we do, or what Christ has done.

If there was a way to be righteous, to be saved, apart from Jesus **would** God have sent His Son in the first place?

That Jesus came and went thru all He did proves → **There's no other way.**

So if we're saved by grace, apart from works, where's room for the Law?

Nowhere!

We're ***saved*** by grace, we ***grow*** by grace, & we'll be ***completed*** in glory → All by grace.