

Should You Confront Other Christians?

Galatians 1 & 2

Have you ever confronted another Christian about something?

Should we ever confront other Christians? Isn't that judging?

If we are to confront other Christians, what should it be over?

Galatians is probably the first letter written by Paul in the New Testament.

Paul is personally attacked as an apostle in Galatia as he was in Corinth.

The early church was new, and there was no widespread doctrinal teaching. There was no New Testament for them to read.

Therefore, it was easy for doctrinal disputes to happen.

The Jerusalem Council happened to clear up doctrinal issues.

However, before that, Paul confronted Peter about the issue of racism.

What Does The Bible Say?

11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. 12 When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised.
(Galatians 2:11–12 NLT)

Peter ate with Gentiles because of a vision God gave him in Acts 10, dealing with a Gentile named Cornelius.

First-century Judaism's oral tradition had rules that prevented Jewish people from entering Gentiles' homes or eating with them. We learn this from John 18:28, Acts 10:28, Galatians 2:11, 15, and the Jewish Mishnah.

This Gentile exclusion was not biblical because there are no restrictions in the Torah of Moses—nor, for that matter, anywhere else in the Bible.

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. (Galatians 2:12 NLT)

James was Jesus' brother and was a leader of the church in Jerusalem. Therefore, these were Jews from Jerusalem that Peter wanted to impress.

Peter had cowardice tendencies and gave in to peer pressure. Just as he once disowned Jesus by lying to a serving maid, so he now betrayed his Gentile fellowship.

13 As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. (Galatians 2:13 NLT)

Bad examples are just as easy to follow as good examples.

How Can You Obey?

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? (Galatians 2:14 NLT)

Confront others when they distort the gospel.

15 "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you

have won that person back. 16 But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. 17 If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector. (Matthew 18:15–17 NLT)

It never hurts to go to someone privately at first.

So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 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. (Galatians 2:20–21 NLT)

We don't get to God through rules but through a relationship.

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

Where is Galatia?

Galatia is a Roman province in Asia Minor. The area splits north and south.

Northern Galatia is a mountainous area of Asia Minor, where Celts from Gaul settled in the 3rd century bc. It is called 'Galatia' after the Gauls.

Southern Galatia is a district added by the Romans, including the cities of Antioch (known locally as Pisidia, to distinguish it

from Antioch in Syria) and Iconium. These are places Paul and Barnabas visited in ad 47–48, on their first missionary journey (Acts 13 and 14). We don't know if Paul visited the north, nor to which part of Galatia he wrote this letter.

Explore:

Galatians exists for grace. We find grace at the beginning (1:3) and end (6:18) and in the middle (2:21). But the grace in Galatians is not cheap grace—it's costly. "It is costly, because it calls to discipleship; it is grace, because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly, because it costs people their lives; it is grace, because it thereby makes them live. It is costly, because it condemns sin; it is grace because it justifies the sinner."

Todd Wilson, *Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living*, ed. R. Kent Hughes, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 15.

Explore:

Paul is angry. The gospel in Galatia has been attacked and undermined by a damaging lie. And it is also being suggested that Paul himself isn't a true apostle.

The Christians in Galatia are mainly Gentiles, but probably include some Jews. Both Jews and Gentiles have simply believed the gospel of Jesus Christ and become Christians.

Now some strict Jews have visited the churches in Galatia. Their message has been that Gentile Christians must be circumcised and keep the Jewish law. In other words, they must become proper Jews before they can become proper Christians.

Paul writes this letter in frustration and rage. He calls the Galatian Christians 'foolish' for believing this nonsense. And he wishes that the teachers who insist on circumcision would go and mutilate themselves!

Andrew Knowles, The Bible Guide, 1st Augsburg books ed.
(Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 603.

Explore:

The Epistle to the Galatians was written by the apostle Paul to a group of churches in a region called Galatia. Galatians was written to defend the gospel from the attacks of false teachers.

The issue at hand: Is faith in Christ alone enough to bring salvation? Paul, having preached salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ alone, could not sit idly by and allow false teaching to influence his readers.

Explore:

**Believers Hold to the True Gospel Revealed by Christ
(Galatians 1:1-12)**

As was customary in his letters, Paul began with an introductory section, which typically included an opening greeting, a prayer of thanksgiving, and a brief mention of the apostle's concerns and reasons for writing (verses 1-3).

Unique to Galatians, however, is Paul's defense of his apostleship. He declared that his apostleship did not have a human origin, but instead was ordained by God. The fact that some were questioning the apostle's authority and the weight of the issues at hand made this defense necessary.

The salutation is concluded in verses 4 and 5 with a powerful statement and assessment regarding the work of Christ Jesus on the cross. In giving Himself for our sins, He delivered us or set us free from the present world system. Any return to the bondage of the Law would renounce the deliverance Christ wrought for humanity, an act that was accomplished according to the will of the Father.

After reminding the Galatians that Christ had given Himself for our sins, Paul responded passionately to news that the Galatians were in the process of abandoning the true gospel

for a different, false gospel (verse 6). The Greek word translated marvel or astonished spoke to Paul's deep disappointment in the actions of the Galatian believers. The word was often used by Greek orators indicating surprise at something reprehensible. Paul viewed this as the equivalent of a military desertion.

Not only were they deserting the truth about how to be justified, they were also deserting God, the One who had called them in the grace of Christ. The term for another or different spoke of another sort of gospel, one that was altogether different from the one true gospel. Paul was quick to inform the readers that he was not legitimizing this other gospel—it was not good news! The false teachers were troubling the Galatian believers and distorting the gospel of salvation by grace through faith in Christ (verse 7).

The Galatians were to cling to the true gospel even if Paul himself or an angel proclaimed a different gospel to them (verse 8). The Greek word for accursed carried the idea of being under the curse of God. For Paul, those who preach

false gospels deserve the curse of God, probably meaning eternal condemnation. We must reject all false gospels. In fact, this warning was so serious to the apostle that he repeated it in verse 9.

Because Paul's message was more inclusive (Gentiles as well as Jews) and was less restrictive (circumcised or uncircumcised), he was often accused of promoting these "changes" in order to seek the approval of man. What he was being accused of and what actually happened, however, were two totally different things. What he was teaching brought more persecution than it brought favor. Nonetheless, in verse 10, Paul could assert that what he was doing was not for the applause or approval of men, but was reflective of the fact that he was a servant of Christ.

Just as Paul had started the letter with a defense of his apostleship (it came from God, not from man), he offered the same defense for the gospel he preached. It was unique and reliable because it came directly from God; no human had conceived it. Furthermore, Paul had not learned this true

gospel from any man, including the other apostles. Although it was the same good news the other apostles preached, he had received it directly from Christ (verse 12). As foretold in the Old Testament, Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and rose from the dead, making forgiveness and salvation available to all who believe in Him. God had revealed this truth to Paul, who had proclaimed it to the Galatians.

The wording of verse 12 is vital for understanding Paul's point. The word revelation literally means, an unveiling. In the New Testament, it is generally used to describe a truth or concept which man can- not know until and unless God uncovers it. The word received was a technical term referring to the reception of knowledge as it was passed down by tradition. Further, the word taught spoke of truth learned through instruction or schooling. Each of these terms speak to the fact that the gospel received by Paul did not come through any human teachers or messages. Instead it came to Paul via revelation from Jesus Christ. (See Acts 9 for an account of Paul's conversion and his early preaching of the true gospel.)

While the false teachers of Paul's day could boast of getting their information elsewhere, be it an angel or prophet, none could boldly declare having received a message directly from the Lord. Paul could, however, and it was this fact that set both him and his message far above all the others. When it comes to the gospel, there can be complete confidence. We don't have to be intimidated by other teachings or fear that we may one day discover we were wrong.

Because this message came from the Lord and was delivered to us, then we can have ultimate confidence in the truth it delivers.

Explore:

The root word for the term accursed is the Greek word anathema. It is a term that literally means, something or someone set aside for divine wrath or devoted to destruction. It is a term Paul used sparingly to emphasize the seriousness of being cut off from Christ and being sentenced to eternal damnation. While he used it here specifically regarding the false teachers, it is a warning for all who would seek to gain

eternal life through any means other than Christ. It is also a term Paul used to illustrate his passion for the lost Jewish people, expressing his willingness to be cut off (anathema) for the sake of those he loved (Romans 9:3).

Explore:

Salvation Is by Grace Through Faith in Christ, Not by Works (Galatians 2:15-21)

Verses 15-21 of chapter 2 come at the conclusion of a sharp disagreement between the apostles Paul and Peter regarding the necessity of circumcision for the Gentiles and the simplicity of the gospel. In response to that disagreement, and possibly as a summary of the conclusions Paul drew from that conversation, he penned these verses.

In verses 15-16, Paul pointed out that those who were Jews by birth but were believers in Christ (including Peter and himself) understood that salvation comes by faith and not by any works of

the Law they could perform. The term Gentile sinners mentioned in verse 15 is believed by many scholars to have been said with a hint of irony because of Paul's conversation with Peter and the fact that Gentiles were often considered "sinners" by the Jews of Paul's day. In verse 16, the word justified is found for the first time in Galatians. It is a legal term that literally means "to declare righteous." This verse makes it clear that a person cannot earn justification through any works of the law, but instead it comes as a result of faith in Jesus Christ. Paul and his team had trusted in Christ because they knew this to be true.

The true gospel is wonderful in its simplicity. It is based on trusting in what Christ did, not in anything we can do. Our God is too great and too perfect to be reached by the merits of sinful humanity. We must come by faith in Jesus, God's mediator between us and Him. Any plan or effort from man to get to God by working or reasoning is not the true gospel that came from God.

Knowing of Paul's abandonment of some Jewish observances, many accused him of sinful living. It might have looked to them as if a person with no restraints could merely believe in Christ and live any way he or she pleased. In verse 17, Paul asked and answered the rhetorical question, Is Christ the servant (minister or promoter) of sin? With the last phrase in the verse, Paul vehemently denied these charges. He then asserted in verse 18 that if he, or anyone else, were to return to that which he tore down (the Law), it would be a tragic mistake. Doing so would lead such a person into sin.

While verse 19 may appear at first glance to be an attack on the Law, what Paul was saying is that the Law played the very important role of bringing him face to face with his sins. It made him aware of his transgressions, yet fell short of providing a remedy for his sins. The only remedy available is through Christ, thus Paul had to leave (die to) the Law in order to experience life. Having then died to the Law, the Law could make no further

claims on him. Further, this death to the Law permitted him to live for God.

Verses 20 and 21 are pivotal verses in Galatians. When Paul said he had been crucified with Christ, he was speaking to the fact that at conversion, a person spiritually participates in the Lord's victory over sin. Specifically speaking, this occurred through the crucifixion. While Paul could boast of this participation, it was the effects that the reader must not miss. Just as Christ died, yet lives, in Christ the believer died to sin, the Law, and the world. Yet he lives! Even this living, however, is only accomplished by faith in Christ, the one who loved us and gave His life for us. This could not be done through keeping the Law. In fact, if the Law could deliver righteousness, then the death of Christ would not be necessary (verse 21). Those who insist they can accomplish their salvation by their good works and deeds misunderstand the foundation of Christianity, that which was deemed necessary before the foundation of the world.

(See 1 Peter 1:18-20 for one instance of the Bible pointing out that Jesus' death was part of God's eternal plan). The Scriptures are clear, the only means of gaining salvation and the status of being "right with God" is by faith alone in Christ alone.

Explore:

KEY TRUTHS: 1. Believers Hold to the True Gospel Revealed by Christ. 2. Salvation Is by Grace Through Faith in Christ, Not by Works.

BIBLE BASICS: Review the names and order of the first 17 books of the New Testament and the first 17 books of the Old Testament this week and to work with family members to do so as well.

HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the Bible Sometime after his trip to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 15 (Galatians 2:1) the apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Galatia while on his second or third missionary journey to take the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Explore:

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or

her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ- followers. When they do,

Heaven will rejoice!

Question 1 of 5

Why does evolution not explain the origins of complex organisms well?

Question 2 of 5

How can believers stand for biblical truth in a loving, tactful way?

Question 3 of 5

Why are good works not enough to make us right with God?

Question 4 of 5

How does depending on Christ's work on the cross rather than our good works assure us of salvation?

Question 5 of 5

How would you explain to someone that faith in Christ is the only way to Heaven?