

Galatians 2 – Chapter Study

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Let's recap, since we pick it up tonight in v. 1 of ch. 2 in the middle of a thought.

Galatia was a region, not a city.

This letter was sent not to one but several churches Paul had been instrumental in starting.

As happened in many of the churches he planted, after he left, false teachers known as Judaizers arrived claiming to have been sent from the main church headquarters at Jerusalem.

They claimed to be delegates of the apostles, sent by them on an official mission of cleaning up after Paul. The Judaizers' goal was to get both Jewish & Gentile followers of Christ to keep the Law of Moses; that's why they're called "Judaizers."

They were ultra-strict legalists, who said the only way to salvation was by keeping the law.

For Gentiles that meant circumcision, keeping kosher, and observing the sabbath, as well as a whole host of other rules.

Paul proclaimed the Good News of God's salvation by grace, through faith in Jesus.

The condition for salvation was repentance from sin & faith in Christ – NOT keeping the law.

In fact, Paul had been vehement in preaching the Gospel: Salvation was not from works; it was from faith alone!

It was this Gospel of Grace God had blessed so astoundingly and saved the Galatians several years before.

But after Paul left, the Judaizers snuck in and started in with their campaign of turning the Galatians back to the Law & a legalistic, works-based relationship with God.

Their first tactic was to undermine Paul's reputation & credibility so that the Galatians would distrust him & abandon the Gospel of Grace he'd brought them.

The Judaizers said Paul was a fraud; that he wasn't endorsed by headquarters, like they were.

Paul got a report that the Judaizers had shown up in Galatia & were at it again as they'd been in other places.

The report related that the Galatians were beginning to fall for the error.

So Paul fired off this letter to refute the lies of the Judaizers & to challenge the Galatians.

Now – as I mentioned last week – Paul got pretty harsh in this letter.

There's good reason for that – the Galatians weren't exactly the most delicate or intellectually keen bunch.

Galatia was a colony of Gauls who were known for their stubbornness & industry.

This was a tough, tough region to live in – but they thrived there because they were can-do kind of folk.

But they weren't exactly bright folk. They were rough, not refined.

The reason the message of the Judaizers appealed to them was because of their can-do, take charge bent.

What surprised Paul was how quickly the usually stubborn Galatians were being so quickly seduced by the lies of the false teachers.

So when he writes, he doesn't pull any punches.

Knowing his calling as an apostle would be attacked by the Judaizers, Paul writes about his conversion and how

Jesus Himself appeared to Paul & called him to be his ambassador to the Gentiles.
Knowing the Gospel of Grace would be called his own invention, Paul tells the Galatians how he learned it.
He didn't make it up or learn it at the feet of any man. Jesus taught him directly.
Paul had begun as the lead persecutor of the church. But Jesus appeared to him & revealed Himself as Messiah & Savior.
Immediately following his conversion, Paul retired to a secluded place for a while to think through the implications of Jesus as Messiah.
The Holy Spirit tutored him & making the Gospel clear.
Paul then returned & began to build the church he had not long before tried to destroy.
Now- the Judaizers made a big deal about their relationship to the apostles & church in Jerusalem.
They denied Paul's connection to headquarters.
So he writes at the end of ch. 1 & the first part of ch 2 about his relationship to the leadership at Jerusalem.
It wasn't until 3 years after his conversion that Paul went to Jerusalem.
He only stayed for a couple weeks & the only leaders he met were Peter & James, Jesus' brother who'd become the leader of the Jerusalem church.
Paul's point in sharing this was to show how Peter & James both recognized Paul as an *equal*.
They *affirmed* his call as an apostle to the Gentiles.
So, if the apostles at headquarters esteemed Paul as an apostle, who were the Judaizers to deny it?

2:1 Then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

This trip to Jerusalem is recounted for us in Acts 15.

Paul mentions it here because it goes right to the heart of the controversy with the Judaizers.
Here's the sitch . . .
After his first short trip to Jerusalem mentioned at the end of ch. 1, Paul returned to Syria & landed in Antioch, a large & important city that had a thriving, dynamic church.
Paul became an important part of the leadership there.
Together, he & his buddy Barnabas went on their first missionary journey where they saw several new churches planted.
Much to their surprise, they discovered that Gentiles were more attracted to Christ than Jews.
Thousands were being saved and churches popping up all over.
This created a huge dilemma & question for the leadership back in Jerusalem.
That dilemma was this → What do pagan Gentiles need to do in order to be saved?
What's their relationship to the Law?

You see, up till that moment – 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 and Redeemer.
He was the one the Law pointed to and was fulfilled in.
But with a flood of Gentiles coming to faith in Jesus as Savior, the question was – do they now have to become Jews? Do they have to keep the law?
Paul knew the answer to that; No, they didn't.
As he shared the Gospel of Grace & saw thousands of Gentiles converted, he watched the Holy Spirit transform them into a holy & loving people without any knowledge of the Mosaic regulations.
The presence & power of the Spirit of God among the Gentiles was all the confirmation needed to prove God accepted them on the basis of faith in Christ alone.
So he & Barnabas, along with one of their converts, went to Jerusalem to give testimony to the work of God among the Gentiles.

2 And I went up by revelation,

Paul wasn't summoned to Jerusalem by the apostles; he went there at the urging of the Spirit.
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.

This shows great wisdom & sensitivity on Paul's part.

You see, Acts tells us there was a serious controversy brewing in the church at Jerusalem & among the leaders 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 absolutely certain once he had a chance to explain, they'd see the proof & evidence of his position.

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

He knew 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.

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

To prove Paul **convinced** the leadership at Jerusalem Gentiles didn't have to become Jews, the Gentile convert Titus who was there 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 that's true, why hadn't they demanded Titus be circumcised when he was in Jerusalem??

The answer is simple = ***The Judaizers were lying!***

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.

Again, in Acts 15 we learn there was a major dispute in the church at Jerusalem over what relationship believers in Christ had to the Law of Moses.

One group said compliance with the law was still compulsory & that Gentiles would have to convert & become law-abiding Jews.

The other group, which included Peter, said Jesus fulfilled the law & that God had demonstrated His **acceptance** of Gentiles on the basis of their faith in Christ, by giving them the Holy Spirit.

Spies from the first group had infiltrated the mostly Gentile church at Antioch where Paul was a pastor.

Then they'd gone running back to their masters at Jerusalem with a report.

Paul's point here is that this whole issue with the Judaizers had already been dealt with much earlier, at Antioch & Jerusalem.

The Apostles had already decided against them! So they couldn't be sent out by them 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. 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), 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.

Paul is walking a tight balance here between honoring the leaders at Jerusalem while at the same time, **not** reinforcing the claim of the Judaizers.

Remember, they appealed to headquarters as the basis of their authority.

Paul honors the God-ordained leaders at Jerusalem while at the same time recognizing the limit of their authority.

No one was pope. Jesus alone was head of the Church and all the apostles, which included Paul, held equal authority.

The 3 men no one doubted the calling of were James, Peter & John.

And they'd already made quite clear their endorsement of Paul's calling as an apostle to the Gentiles, while they were primarily called to reach the Jews.

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

When it was decided Paul would take the Gospel to the Gentiles while the Jerusalem leaders would continue their efforts among the Jews, they asked that Paul *continue* to remind the churches he planted to not forget the need of their poor Jewish brethren.

Paul affirmed that their burden was his – as both the book of Acts & his letters make abundantly clear.

Helping to relieve the poor & persecuted believers in Jerusalem was a major part of his mission.

He urged his Gentile converts to Christ to help provide relief for their oppressed Jewish brothers.

It was this relief that helped to silence the residual grumbling among the Judaizers.

They realized the Gentiles must *indeed* be saved if they would demonstrate that kind of love.

5. Paul confronts Peter 2:11-14

Paul had gone to Jerusalem to deal with the Gentile issue.

Now we read about Peter's trip to Paul's home-turf.

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

Paul writes about this because it goes right to the heart of the controversy raised by the false teachers troubling the churches of Galatia.

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.

Well, this is enlightening!

Peter had been an advocate of Paul's when the whole Gentiles & the Law discussion had taken place in Jerusalem.

Peter told the story of how he'd been summoned by God to Cornelius' house and how the Holy Spirit had fallen on his entire household, showing God's acceptance of them on the basis of faith in Christ.

It was Peter's testimony that had swayed the day and resulted in the decision that Gentiles didn't have to become Jews in order to be saved.

It was decided then & there in what is called the *Jerusalem Council* that all Gentiles had to do was to *continue* to believe in & follow Jesus; which of course meant forsaking idolatry & immorality.

When Peter was hanging out at the church of Antioch, he sat & ate with Gentiles – a sign of fellowship & acceptance, something no strict Jew would dream of doing!

But Peter considered Gentiles brothers in Christ.

UNTIL – a delegation of Jews from James, the leader of the Jerusalem church, arrived.

Then Peter avoided fraternizing with Gentiles.

Paul says he did so because he feared what the Jews would think.

That Paul says these guys from Jerusalem were *from James*, means that even though the Gentile issue had already been decided, James *leaned* toward the camp that wanted Gentiles to become more Jewish.

The problem with Peter's behavior was that it 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,

Paul challenged Peter publicly; he had to.

Peter's behavior moved others to do the same.

Even the staunch & stalwart Barnabas became a hypocrite because of Peter's poor example.

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

Imagine how the Gentiles felt when Peter & their other Jewish brothers & leaders shunned them like this?

“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?”

Ooo! This is good.

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

He'd hung out & eaten with the Gentiles.

He'd dropped a lot of the empty traditions about cleanliness and the Sabbath.

So why all of a sudden does he do a reversal & insinuate by his actions that Gentiles need to start doing all that stuff?

If as a Jew, HE didn't have to do it; why now do Gentiles have to?

Listen – what Paul says here is of vital importance to us today because there's a movement afoot that promotes the idea that in order for Gentiles to be real Christians, they need to discover & reclaim the Jewish roots of the Faith.

Not only that, these people say that 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 law of Moses, apart from faith in Christ.

But what we find here nukes that idea.

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

Paul doesn't rebuke Peter for that; he rebukes him for swinging back to a legalistic lifestyle.

And it was Peter himself who many years before boldly declared to the Sanhedrin that there was only one name by which men & women can be saved – Jesus! (Acts 4:12)

Now, in many English versions, it looks like Paul's rebuke of Peter goes on in v. 15-21.

There's no punctuation in Greek, so the translators have to put it where they think it fits.

It's really only v. 14 that ought to be understood as Paul's rebuke.

Vs. 15-21 are a follow-up & application to the Galatians.

C. The Gospel of Grace 2:15-4:7

1. Justification by faith, not works 2:15-21

The next 2 verses are packed, so we'll go slow -

¹⁵ We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

Paul is going to make his case now for justification being by grace rather than works.

He begins by contrasting Jews & Gentiles.

The Jews were the ones God delivered the Law to.

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.

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 way possible =

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

No flesh – whether it's Jewish flesh or Gentile flesh makes no difference.

No one is made right before God on the basis of works, or keeping the Law.

Justification comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Actually, Paul uses a preposition here we need to unpack.

“In” is the Greek word “eis” and means “into.”

We are justified by faith INTO Christ.

The idea is that we *trust* in Him; that His death & resurrection make us right with God.

The faith in Jesus that brings justification isn't agreement with a set of facts.

It isn't enough to believe Jesus was a real historical figure who walked around ancient Israel, said some

crazy stuff then was executed as a revolutionary.

Faith *into* Jesus means believing His death is the sufficient payment for our sins & His resurrection means the power to live a new life.

That kind of faith results in an active dependence on Him that brings an actual change away from sin, and toward God.

By justification, Paul means to be *made right* with God.

The Greek word was a technical term that carried a dual meaning.

Negatively, it referred to *innocence*. It meant that someone had NOT committed a crime for which there would have been punishment.

Positively it meant that someone qualified for a reward; they met the criteria to receive some asset the court had the power to bestow.

Justification before God means that we're declared innocent of any sins that would demand judgment, and we're qualified to receive the benefits & blessings of eternal life.

These things don't come because we merit them by keeping the law.

They are ours because Christ secured & gave them to us.

Paul's point in vs. 15-16 is that if Jews who received the law aren't saved by it but are saved by faith in Christ, how much more true is that for Gentiles who did receive 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 objections the Judaizers raise to the Gospel of grace.

They always run back to the argument that if you don't apply rules and tell people what they have to do to please God, they'll live spiritually lazy & morally sloppy lives.

They claimed teaching justification by grace would make Jesus a *promoter* of sin.

So Paul asks – if someone who believes in justification by grace sins, does that somehow discredit Jesus?

Of course not! Literally = Perish the thought! Don't be absurd! That's ridiculous!

To say that grace gives people a license to sin, which is what the 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 had been *fanatical* in his devotion to the Law as a means of attaining righteousness.

But once he was saved, he realized the law can make no one right with God.

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

Paul couldn't go back to the law since now he knew it could do nothing but increase his guilt, not righteousness.

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

The penalty for sin, for breaking the law, is death.

When Paul finally realized the law could do nothing but result in death, he died to it & instead rested in the work of Christ.

By 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 was fulfilled!

Then he delivers the great truth that lies at the heart of the Gospel & the successful Christian life -

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.

[You're a dead man]

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

Peter's stepping away from grace to appease legalistic Jews wasn't just sad; it was dangerous.

Really, it was a momentary denial of the Gospel itself.

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

They simply don't mix. They're mutually exclusive.

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

One or the other.

Now – think about this: If there was a way for someone to be righteous, to be saved, apart from Jesus coming and going through what He endured, would God have sent His Son in the first place?

NO! That Jesus came and went thru all that proves there's no other way.

So if we're saved by grace, apart from works, where is there room for the law afterward?

No where! We're saved by grace, we grow by grace, and we'll be brought safely into the heaven by grace.

It's all of grace!

Feed My Sheep