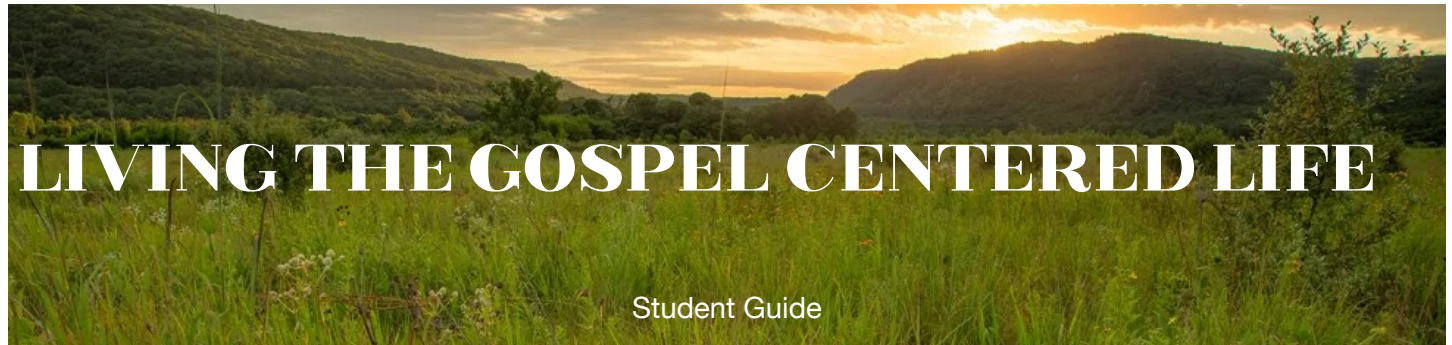


# Galatians 2



## LIVING THE GOSPEL CENTERED LIFE

Student Guide

### Daily Bible Reading

Day 1	Galatians 2: 1-10
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*There is much talk about “Gospel-centeredness” in many evangelical circles today. What does it mean to be “Gospel-centered”? Is there a difference between being “Gospel-centered” and being “Christ-centered”? One group says the core dynamic of Gospel-centered ministry is about worship and fervent prayer. While some may have distinct impressions about what being “Gospel-centered” is, the Apostle Paul remains clear about the centrality of the Gospel and its impact in our lives. Hence, Galatians 2 remains a classic passage to frame precisely what a “Gospel-centered” life looks like.*

### 1. Maintaining the Truth of the Gospel (vv. 1-10)

Early in the church’s history, a convention was held (Acts 15). The issues surrounded the evangelistic vision of the early church as it moved across the Roman Empire. Was Jesus the Savior of all men, or was He only Messiah to the Jewish people? It was the most significant question the expanding church faced. While we have Luke’s report of the council that met at Jerusalem (Acts 15), Paul gives us a behind-the-scenes view, so to speak, in Galatians 2.

First, he speaks of his *doctrinal presentation* (vv. 1-2). Paul spoke his doctrinal presentation *plainly*. He “communicated” the content of the Gospel he preached everywhere. He laid it out, point by point. Paul also made his presentation *privately*. In other words, Paul probably met in a “pre-conference” meeting with the church leaders. Why? He had no intentions of traveling so far without making sure his trip was not wasted; or as he put it, “lest he run in vain.” Had the church leaders rejected him, his ministry primarily to the Gentiles would have suffered greatly.

Second, Paul spoke of his *ceremonial confrontation* (vv. 3-5). The main meeting began. The council was assembled. Peter undoubtedly told how he himself had preached the Gospel to the Gentiles though his main ministry was to the Jews (cp. vv.7-8). Paul reported how he and Barnabas won souls all over Asia-Minor. Indeed he had one of his converts with him — Titus— who was the perfect “test case.” Titus was a Gentile, but never circumcised. What a testimony meeting they had! The meeting was beyond doubt going very well when Paul slipped into the presentation a confrontational phrase — “false brethren” (v.4). The false brethren forced themselves into the meeting “unawares.” Why? According to Paul, to “spy out” the liberty they had in Jesus Christ. The purpose of the false teachers was to make ceremonial slaves of the new believers, pushing them to adhere to the law of circumcision. In short, they told the new believers, “You’re not saved unless you receive circumcision according to Moses’ law.” Paul would not back down. No, not for a moment!

Third, Paul spoke of his *personal vindication* (vv. 6-10). According to him, his *message* was vindicated (vv. 6-7). We all stand on level ground when we stand before Jesus. Also, Paul’s *ministry* was vindicated (vv. 8-10). Paul preached the same Gospel, but to a different audience, an audience mostly made up of Gentiles. Paul’s ministry specifically to the Gentiles was vindicated in Jerusalem. Paul showed us what the Gospel-centered life is all about. The Gospel-centered life begins with a fundamental commitment to maintain the truth of the Gospel no matter the cost.

## 2. Living the Truth of the Gospel (vv. 11-21)

Paul moves us from maintaining the truth of the Gospel to living the truth of the Gospel. No matter how much the truth is defended, if it lacks living the truth, it lacks credibility. What we believe must be obeyed and applied to daily life.

*First, note Peter's failure (vv. 11-13).* Paul records his tragic but necessary confrontation with Peter. He said he "withstood" him. The term is vivid and quite strong, meaning he "set his face against him." Why? What was Paul's meaning? First, he meant Peter was *inconsistent* (v.12). Peter was comfortable, "eating with gentiles" in Antioch before any Jerusalem witnesses were around. However, when "certain came from James", he immediately dropped out of sight of the Gentile believers. Second, Paul meant Peter was *influential* (v.13). And, his influence was hypocritical. Peter "dissembled"; that means out and out hypocrisy.

*Next, we note the censure of Paul (vv.14-21).* What was Peter exactly doing? He was, in essence, putting pressure on Gentiles to behave as Jews. Paul's censure of Peter shows clearly what salvation is, and what Gospel-centered life is all about. First, it is about the *meaning* of salvation (vv. 15-18). Of all people, Jews ought to know what it is to attempt to work his or her way into heaven (v.15). Second, the Gospel-centered life is about the meaning of *sanctification* (vv.19-21). Paul says those who live "unto God" are "dead to the law." Paul does not mean he was dead to moral living or obedience to God. Instead, he meant he no longer depended on the law for his salvation. He depended on grace. Christ fulfilled the law. Finally, Paul reveals how the Christian should live his or her life (v. 20). When Jesus was nailed to the cross, we were, in God's providence, nailed there with Him. Some old writers used to speak of the "mystical union" with Christ. By that they had in mind this verse. Our old sinful lives died with Christ on the cross. In the resurrection, we rose with Him. Paul says elsewhere we are seated with Him in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2).

### Wrap Up

*In this study, we discovered the Gospel-centered life. The Gospel-centered life begins with maintaining the truth of the Gospel and continues with living the truth of the Gospel. It does not end, however, until Jesus comes for us in the rapture or we go to Him in death. May all of us seek to live the Gospel-centered life.*