

Galatians 1:11-2:21

Chapter 1

Verses 11-17:

--(11-12) How could Paul claim an exclusive and true gospel? Only if it was from God. Paul did not receive the gospel he preached from “man”, from “the church”, from “tradition”, or from “school”. His good news about Jesus Christ came as **revelation** directly from Jesus Christ Himself.

--Notice Paul’s heart here. He claims these Galatians as his own, he calls them **brethren**.

--(13-14) Paul gives a bit of his testimony to show that he was not ignorant of the law or its implications. He knew the law was in direct conflict with Christianity better than most. He had been the head of the spear in that conflict for years! **(Acts 8:3; 26:5+10)**

--Judaism preached Moses—or the law—but Christianity preached Christ!

Acts 15:21: For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.

--(15-17) In 13-14 Paul was speaking about what “I” did in his unsaved state. Now he speaks about what God did before he was even born. (See **Isa. 49:1+5; Jer. 1:5; Rom. 9:10-13** for other Scriptures about God’s work in knowing men before they were born.)

--Paul sees God’s pleasure and grace as the means that transformed a former fanatic into a servant of what he once bitterly opposed **(Acts 26:15-18)**. He had all the religious pedigree and works but was only saved **through grace**.

--Paul’s salvation was found in the reality of God’s act **to reveal His Son in me**. In Paul’s very life and person—not just his expansive intellect. So the private revelation led to public ministry **(Acts 9:15; 22:6)** and the preaching of **Him among the Gentiles**—notice **Him** not Moses.

--Important for all of us to come to the place where we surrender to the fact that it is God’s pleasure and grace that has us where we are and who we are.

Acts 17:26-27: And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us.

--Paul makes it clear that it was years before he even met one of the other apostles and therefore had no chance to receive his gospel from the ministry of another man.

--Instead, he went into the area of Arabia for three years! He had his own three year period with Jesus Christ in isolation. *There is no substitute for preparation in the presence of God. No Bible school can teach this: Moses; David in the fields; Elijah praying; John the Baptist; Jesus’ 30 years in the home circle; the disciples + Paul; etc.*

Verses 18-24:

--(18-19) Paul was not long in Damascus or Jerusalem; being forced to flee from both places! He admits that he went to *see Peter*—the idea in the language is to be with him on an informal visit. The only other person he saw was James. The James mentioned here is not of the original 12 but the half-brother of Jesus as is mentioned in **Mt. 13:55-56; Mk. 6:3**.

--What we do know is that he was preaching already (**Acts 9:28-29**) not trying to figure out his gospel message. And even if he was, fifteen days wasn't a very long time.

--(21-24) From that point he went into Syria and Cilicia for 11-14 years (**2:1**) whether the timing is based on his conversion or this point in his account. Either way, he was not connected with the apostles or Jerusalem at all.

--Paul says believers in the area of Jerusalem didn't even know him by sight. He also makes the point that they were not suspicious of his gospel but rejoiced that God had turned their chief enemy into a fellow brother and servant.

--Anyone seeking to follow the Lord—just like the apostle Paul—will have their message, their motives, and their character slandered. Can we love, serve, and forgive like Paul?

Chapter 2

Verses 1-2:

--Here Paul is continuing his timeline in defense of his apostleship and gospel. These events he is referring to are found in **Acts 15**. If not, the question of the relation between the law and the gospel would have been answered *before Acts 15* and that council would have been redundant.

--Paul says he agreed to go back to Jerusalem because of direct revelation from God. There is no mention of this in **Acts 15** but that really doesn't matter. The point Paul is making is that God was making these issues clear for the Church—Jew and Gentile.

--Paul mentions that Barnabas and Titus came with him, likely because the Galatians were familiar with those two men, and also because Titus was to be "Example A" of their discussion as an uncircumcised Gentile believer.

--(Paul had Timothy circumcised because his mother was a Jew and he wanted to reach Jewish people without stumbling them. He didn't have Titus circumcised because he wanted to reach Gentile people without muddling the truth of the Gospel.)

--Paul also tells us that he met privately with *those who were of reputation* before the larger council because he wanted to make sure they were on the same page. Otherwise he knew the false gospel of the Judaizers would undercut his ministry. What Paul presented was the same gospel he had been preaching for fourteen years!

--Paul's language of the apostles seems combative or even slanderous. He is not seeking to insult the apostles but is no doubt referring to the way the Judaizers spoke of them and leveraged (we say "name-dropped") these men. To actively discredit them would prove to be a detriment to the argument he makes in showing his gospel was the same as theirs.

Verses 3-5:

--It was a huge deal that Titus—standing there in Jerusalem among the apostles and religious Jews—was not compelled to be circumcised. He was not put under the law. Though there were some that argued for it—the apostolic leaders never wavered in their message.

--The conflict only came from **false brethren** (pseudo/not really in the brotherhood) who **came in by stealth** (wormed their way in as spies) to **bring us into bondage**.

Acts 15:1: And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised of Moses, you cannot be saved."

--The Bible tells us that when Paul and Barnabas heard that message they had **no small dissension and dispute with them!** I bet they did! Why? **That the truth of the gospel might continue with you.**

--Paul makes it clear that the fight which was current in these Galatian churches had already been fought and decided in Antioch and Jerusalem.

Verses 6-10:

--Again, in this portion it is important to see that Paul is recognizing status but not superiority. His apostleship and gospel came to him independently by Christ. This would be in direct contrast to how the false teachers were presenting themselves as emissaries of James or Jerusalem.

--Paul simply makes the point that when they finally brought the issue before Peter and James and John there was no contention between them or the gospel that Paul and Barnabas preached. In fact, Paul says they **added nothing to me**. That being they saw nothing deficient in the gospel he preached.

--Far from having a disagreement, these notable men agree to continue in the sphere of ministry God has already ratified through their lives.

--Peter as the leader of the original twelve (Peter's leadership among the twelve is clearly seen in the fact that his name is first in every list of the apostles: **Mt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Lk. 6:14-16; Acts 1:13**) in taking the gospel to the Jews, and Paul and Barnabas to the Gentiles.

--What interesting unity and diversity in these five men! ***Four of these guys end up writing 21 or 22 of the 27 NT books (Hebrews?!)***

--There will always be differences of style, emphasis, and callings in the plan of God. But there is no difference in the truth of God's Word or the message of the gospel. ***Stay in your lane!***

Verses 11-16:

--**(11-12)** We have a change of scenery here to Antioch. When an issue with the apostles did arise, it wasn't from Paul but from Peter! No doubt, Paul is not slamming Peter here. They were still brothers in ministry as Peter writes and acknowledges in **2 Peter 3:14-16**.

--Think of how this story would encourage the Galatians to stand strong, repent, and even understand that the very apostles felt and understood their struggle. The Holy Spirit knew this was important to share.

--Peter is sitting and eating with Gentile believers when religious Jews who falsely claimed James' authority arrived (**Acts 15:5+24**). Now, knowing the truth of the gospel better than most (**Acts 10+15**), we are told that Peter *separated himself*—Vines says the language was used for trimming or lowering sails.

--Paul says that Peter's problem, and those that followed Peter's example, was that they feared man—which we know always brings a snare. It seems likely that Peter just didn't want to get into things with these Jews—not the easiest crowd to get along with.

--**(13-14)** The problem is that he became a hypocrite. Peter didn't act according to his convictions. He was play-acting because of these Jews to appease them or protect himself. He believed the gospel but failed to practice its logical and necessary ends.

--If God accepts us into fellowship how can Jews break fellowship? If God calls Gentiles clean how can we call them unclean?

--Paul knew this moment was important because the truth of the gospel was at stake. If it was not okay for Peter to be eating with Gentiles because of Jewish ceremonial dietary laws then Christianity was no longer about the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit but just another way of becoming a religious Jew.

--And so Peter's public sin receives Paul's public reproof. *I said to Peter before them all!* *It is always best to speak the truth in love. To speak clearly and honestly with folks, even if you know they are not going to like what you say.*

--**(15-16)** Paul makes the point that as Jews they had turned to Jesus in faith. So how can they now turn back to Moses and the law and act as if that gave them some type of righteousness?

Philippians 3:7-9: *But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*

--Paul makes it clear that justification (the pardoning of sin) happens *by faith in Jesus Christ* and not by *the works of the law*. He makes it clear that *even we* (Jews) *have believed in Christ Jesus*.

--He also makes it clear that *no flesh*—Jew or Gentile; all of humanity—can be justified—pronounced legally righteous before God—by works. The gospel is not the good news of what *we must do* to be declared just in God's sight. The gospel is the good news of what Jesus Christ has done so that God justly declares us justified in His sight.

Verses 17-21:

--In verses **17-18** we see Peter's position. IN verses **19-21** we see Paul's position.

--**(17-18)** Paul simply makes the point that if Jesus led you out of Moses law, then going back to it is saying that Jesus is a minister of sin. That He led you astray! Could this be true? **Certainly not!**

--We cannot build again what was destroyed or done away with. To add to Christ is to claim deficiency in His offering. And, I become a transgressor because I should not have done away with it to begin with.

--**(19)** This is really a one sentence summary of **Romans 6-7**. The law condemns all sin and demands death as the penalty. The law caused Paul to die to all hope in himself and his own works—it demanded the penalty of death. It still does!

--Why do some before and even after salvation never have peace? Why, they ask, does it seem like God is so severe? Why do they never have rest? Why doesn't God just change me?

--I can tell you why: *Because there is still a false hope in self that needs to be put to death by the law.* The law is still perfect for this purpose!

--So how can the law save me when it must kill me? How does one die to the law and live to God? Only in Christ!

--**(20) I have been crucified with Christ.** . . All that was Paul/Saul that should have been justly killed in the law died on the cross with the death of Jesus Christ. There is no middle ground between our death and Christ's life. Self, the *I* that was Saul, in all its forms—wicked, socially acceptable, refined sin, etc.—had to be crucified in Christ.

--Jesus died to put an end to our sinful selfish nature. To kill it, not cultivate it or adjust it.

--But what now? Paul still lived! Not that old life that was cursed and killed in Christ. Now there was new life: **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.** Christianity is new birth, new life, new creation in Christ Jesus.

Winslow (The Inner Life): "Thus the true Christian is one who can adopt the expressive and emphatic language of Paul, 'I live.' Amplifying the words, he can exclaim, 'I live—as a quickened soul. I live—as a regenerate soul. I live—as a pardoned sinner. I live—as a justified sinner. I live—as an adopted child. I live—as an heir of glory. I live, and I never lived before! My whole existence until now has been but as a blank. I never truly, really lived, until I died! I lived, if life it may be called, to the world, to sin, to the creature, to myself; but I never lived by Christ, and I never lived to God.'"

--This declaration needs to be more than a memory verse. It needs to be real, practical, personal life testimony. We mentally understand that justification means being declared righteous and that sanctification should mean us being made righteous. We must experientially know the life of God that makes our justification (a matter of imputation) bloom into sanctification (a matter of transformation). Do you know that life in you? Christ in you?

--How does Christ live in us? By His Holy Spirit!

Romans 8:10-11: *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

--Jesus promised that His life would be in us (**John 17:23+26**) and Paul recognized that life of God in all of his ministry—it was really Christ’s ministry (**Acts 21:19; Rom. 15:18; Col. 1:28-29**).

--This life that Paul was living was one of personal gratitude to Jesus Christ. ***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.***

--Paul now lived—not by good works and the law of Moses—but by trusting the One who is the very Son of God! The One who loved by giving Himself up for Paul. This is why Paul cannot—will not—set aside the grace of God. It is to set aside the very central message of life and love in Christ.

--**(21)** We cannot set aside the grace of God for works. Works cannot be the basis of our relationship with Him because they will fail but God’s grace will never fail!

Hebrews 13:9: *For it is good that the heart be established by grace...*

--If righteousness could come through our own works then Christ had no reason to die. No reason to love us by giving Himself for us.

--That was why Paul’s great aim in ministry was to see everyone alive in Christ!

Colossians 1:28: *Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.*