

Galatians— Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

 **828 7580 6094 ►** **Thursday April 9, 2026**

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Galatians 2:19-20 (ESV) ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Chapter 2

The Apostles Accept Paul

Galatians 2:1–5 (NLT)

Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too. ² I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there, I met privately with those considered to be leaders of the church and shared with them the message I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure that we were in agreement, for fear that all my efforts had been wasted and I was running the race for nothing. ³ And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile. ⁴ Even that question came up only because of some so-called believers there—false ones, really—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations. ⁵ But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the gospel message for you.

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Galatians 2:1–5 (NASB95)

- 1 Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.
- 2 It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.
- 3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.
- 4 But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.
- 5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

POINT 1 - PAUL’S COMING

Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. (2:1–2)

Paul had already established that his contact with the other apostles was almost zero during the first years after his conversion. He did not see any of them until three years after his Damascus Road encounter with the Lord, and then only briefly. He had stayed with Peter for fifteen days in Jerusalem and had met James, Jesus’ half-brother (1:18–19; cf. Acts 9:26–28). He later went to Jerusalem a second time for probably an even briefer period, which he does not refer to in this text since it had no direct bearing on the issue of apostleship.

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During that brief second visit he helped Barnabas take the collection to Jerusalem from the church at Antioch for relief of famine-stricken believers in Judea (Acts 11:27–30; 12:24–25).

Then after an interval of fourteen years from the first visit when he met Peter and James, he **went up again to Jerusalem**. During the previous seventeen years he had preached the gospel without any human instruction, his message having been given to him entirely by God’s direct revelation (**Gal. 1:11–12, 16–17**).

Paul and Barnabas had completed their first missionary tour (Acts 13:1–14:28) and returned to Antioch to report the miracles of Gentile conversion by grace through faith. Jewish *legalists* in Judea were upset when they heard the report and went to Antioch to teach that a Gentile had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian.

According to Acts 15, those professing Jewish Christians from Judea went to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were ministering, “and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue” (**Acts 15:1–2**). The whole debate was to be resolved in **Jerusalem**.

In addition to the leader Paul and his intimate Jewish friend and companion **Barnabas, ... Titus**, a spiritual child of Paul and his co-worker (Titus 1:4–5), went **along also**, being among the “certain others” mentioned by Luke. Titus, as an uncircumcised Gentile and a product of the very ministry the Judaizers were

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attacking, was a fitting attendee to take along to the council. Consistent with their deceitful, self-serving methods of operation, the Judaizers likely claimed they sent the delegation from Antioch to Jerusalem to have Paul's and Barnabas's doctrine corrected. But both Luke and Paul make clear that such was not the case. Luke states that they were "sent on their way by the church" at Antioch (v. 3). Though there may have been some reluctance on the part of Paul in accepting the assignment to go to Jerusalem, a direct **revelation** by God affirmed his obligation.

Paul says more specifically that **it was because of a revelation that I went up**. It is possible that the Holy Spirit spoke to the leaders of the Antioch church, along with Paul, just as He had done when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for their first missionary venture (Acts 13:2). In any case, the matter was resolved when Paul, divinely commanded to go to Jerusalem, was obedient, and the Antioch church affirmed that command by giving their blessing.

When Paul reached Jerusalem, he simply **submitted to them the gospel which** he had always preached **among the Gentiles**, the gospel of salvation by God's sovereign grace through man's genuine repentance—a gospel utterly contrary to the works-righteous belief of the Judaizers that "unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" (**Acts 15:1**).

Them refers first of all to the local church apostles and elders, including chiefly Peter, John, and James, our Lord's half-brother, and then to the whole assembled church at Jerusalem, composed of all the apostles and elders as well as other church members and possibly other visiting believers besides those sent by the Antioch church (Acts 15:4). Paul and Barnabas gave that group a general report on "all that God had done with them," after which "certain ones of the sect

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of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them [Gentiles], and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses’ ” **(vv. 4–5).**

At that point the “apostles and elders came together to look into this matter” more thoroughly. After much debate, Peter addressed the group, declaring that God makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, saving them both by faith and granting them both the gift of His indwelling Spirit. Concerning the supposed necessity of being circumcised and of following all the Mosaic law in order to be saved, he said, “Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” **(vv. 10–11).**

It seems reasonable to assume that this private meeting occurred first because Paul wanted to be sure of the theology of the Jerusalem leaders before he spoke publicly. Therefore, before any council appearance, Paul and Barnabas related **in private to those who were of reputation** “what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles” **(Acts 15:12)**. In complete accord with what Peter was to say, Paul and Barnabas declared, first privately and then publicly, that God had saved Gentiles wherever they had proclaimed the gospel and that their message and those conversions were attested by God himself through means of miraculous “signs and wonders.” That evidence was conclusive, because God does not confirm falsehood. When the Lord attested preaching and conversion with signs and wonders, there was no greater proof that the preaching was according to divine truth and the conversions were by the power of His Spirit.

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Paul's referring to the apostles with whom he spoke in private as **those who were of reputation** reflected the general attitude of the church toward those Christ-appointed leaders. The phrase describing them is used of authorities and implies a position of honor. But the fact that he refers to them in this way four times in eight verses (Gal. 2:2–9) suggests a tinge of sarcasm. It is not, however, directed at the apostles but at the Judaizers who had been claiming apostolic approval of their legalistic perversions of the gospel. In the letter sent out by the council the deceitful Judaizers are described as “some of our number to whom we gave no instruction” who had been disturbing the churches and “unsettling [their] souls” (**Acts 15:24**).

Although the Judaizers did not proclaim the same gospel taught by the Twelve, they knew they needed apostolic confirmation in order to be taken seriously. They therefore fabricated the lie that their message was approved by the apostles in Jerusalem and that they were among its acknowledged.

The fact that Paul probably wrote Galatians some years after the Jerusalem Council shows that the decision and proclamation of that council had not stopped the Judaizers either from preaching their false doctrines or from claiming approval by the apostles, **those who were of reputation**. Paul was obviously not of any **reputation**, they told the Galatian believers, because his gospel conflicted with theirs and the apostles'.

But when Paul took Titus to Jerusalem and presented his gospel before these men **of reputation**, he was vindicated and the Judaizers were denounced. He had not sought vindication because he doubted the validity of his preaching. He had just declared emphatically that his message was by direct revelation from

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God and that it did not have and did not need any human clarification or confirmation (Gal. 1:11–19). He went to Jerusalem to prove that the gospel he preached was identical to that preached by the other apostles, having been revealed to him directly, though separately, by the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul did not go to confirm the apostolicity of his message in his own mind but in the minds of Galatian believers who were being confused and deceived by the Judaizers. The Judaistic teachings were not simply misinterpretations or misapplications of the true gospel but the very opposition of it. It was **for fear** that they might compromise with the teaching of the Judaizers and their perverse gospel that Paul sought in private to be certain that the teachers in Jerusalem agreed with his revelation of the gospel and would not be soft on legalism.

Otherwise, he **might** discover he was like an athlete who was **running, or had run, in vain** by seeing that all the spiritual effort in his ministry past and present was in conflict with them and was futile. The apostles affirmed Paul's gospel and added nothing to it (Gal. 2:6). That private confirmation set the stage for the decision in the public council that followed. It was of the greatest importance that believers in Galatia, and everywhere else, understand that his gospel of grace was identical to that of the other apostles and that it was the Satanic message of the Judaizers that was the diviation of God's saving truth.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean that Paul went to Jerusalem because God directed him, yet his secondary motivation involved confronting those promoting a false gospel? How do these dual motivations work together?
2. How does Paul's example help us examine our own reasons for sharing the gospel and doing ministry? Why should our motivations align with God's will?

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3. Why was unity in the body of Christ so important to Paul? What would have happened if the Jerusalem apostles had sided with the Judaizers on the circumcision question?

POINT 2 - PAUL'S COMPANION

But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (2:3–5)

Paul's meaning is obvious, and there is no difficulty in understanding precisely what he is saying. As specific evidence in a test case showing that the Jerusalem apostles were in complete accord with him, Paul states that **not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised** while at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:10, 19). **Titus**, a true Christian, was undeniable proof that circumcision and Mosaic regulations are not necessary for salvation. The Jerusalem Council refused the demands of the Judaizers to have Titus and all other Gentile believers circumcised, determining that they would “not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles” by compelling them **to be circumcised** (Acts 15:19, cf. v. 28).

Titus, however, was a full Gentile, and to have had him circumcised would have undercut the gospel of grace and made him a monument of victory for the Judaizers. Paul may have intentionally brought **Titus** to Jerusalem to confound

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the Judaizing **false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage**. Paul was perfectly confident in the outcome of the Jerusalem Council and knew that afterward he would have a companion who would be personal proof that his gospel of grace apart from law was valid. He was confident that **Titus** would be allowed to leave Jerusalem uncircumcised, just as he had entered, with the full blessing of the apostles and elders. And if Gentile believers were not compelled to be circumcised in Jerusalem, which was still home base for most of the apostles, how could they be required to be circumcised in their home countries? Henceforth **Titus** was a living verification that the Judaizers taught a distorted so called, gospel that was rejected by the rest of the church.

It is impossible to be a legalist and a Christian. “If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you,” Paul declares later in the letter. “Every man who receives circumcision ... is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (**Gal. 5:2–4**).

Some of the Judaizers no doubt sincerely believed their legalistic gospel was correct and that they were the only genuine Christians. But Paul refers to those **who had sneaked in to spy out the liberty** of true believers in terms that suggest enemies entering a camp with the objective of sabotage. Those men may not even have been honest Judaizers. In any case, Satan, as always, was the primary instigator.

Their specific purpose was to undermine the **liberty which** true believers **have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring them into the bondage** of legalism. The Judaizers could not tolerate a gospel that was not tied to Mosaic ritual and law,

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because their view of salvation was centered in what they could self-righteously perform to earn favor from God rather than in what God could do for them.

In Christ Jesus believers have **liberty** from the law as the way of salvation and **liberty** from its external ceremonies and regulations as the way of living.

Because Christ has borne that curse (3:13), they also have **liberty** from the curse for disobedience of the law, which God requires all men to obey but which no man is able to perfectly keep. Christians are under an entirely different kind of law, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [that sets them] free from the law of sin and of death” **(Rom. 8:2)**.

In Christ believers “have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” **(Rom. 7:6)**, because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). “If therefore the Son shall make you free,” Jesus said, “you shall be free indeed” **(John 8:36)**.

Christian freedom is not license. When we become free in Christ we lose our freedom to sin, of which we were once a slave. In Christ, “having been freed from sin, [we] become slaves of righteousness” **(Rom. 6:18)**. “For you were called to freedom, brethren,” Paul explains; “only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh” **(Gal. 5:13)**. Peter expresses the same truth in these words: “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God” **(1 Pet. 2:16)**.

Paul **did not yield in subjection to** the legalistic bondage of the Judaizers **for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you** Galatian believers. **Remain** emphasizes a permanent state. And the leaders of the church

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at Jerusalem were wholeheartedly in agreement with Paul's gospel, as their declarations in the council indicated (Acts 15:13–21).

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Why did Paul use Titus, a Gentile convert, as a test case during his meeting with Jerusalem's leaders? What did Titus's freedom from circumcision demonstrate?**
- 2. When Judaizers demanded that Titus be circumcised, Paul adamantly refused to give in to their demands. What does this tell us about the importance of maintaining doctrinal convictions, even under social or religious pressure?**
- 3. These false believers were likely from the party of the Pharisees, though we don't know if they were well-meaning or deliberately undermining the gospel, and neither Peter nor James had any part in their activity. How does this complexity help us understand opposition to the gospel?**
- 4. In what situation can you share the blessings of Christ with someone else this week?**

Closing Prayer