

Galatians– Embracing Grace and Truth

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

 **828 7580 6094** ▶ Thursday April 16, 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 (Continued)

POINT 3 - PAUL'S COMMISSION

But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, (2:6–9a)

Again, Paul refers to the other apostles as **those who were of high reputation**, apparently a favorite phrase of the Judaizers. In going on to say, **what they were makes no difference to me**, he was not depreciating those godly men. He respected them or he would not have sought a private audience with them, nor would he have sought their public confirmation so that people would know he was not running in vain. He rather was defending himself against the depreciation of the Judaizers, who accused him of not comparing with the

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Jerusalem apostles and of being a false, self-appointed, and inferior apostle. His point here was that, although those twelve men were personally appointed apostles by Jesus Christ, so was he. He did not need their approval for his own confidence, nor did he need to seek their confirmation to convince himself, and in that regard who or **what they were** made **no difference** to him and his ministry. He had no doubts about his calling and revelations.

It may be that the Judaizers put Paul down by reminding him that the Twelve had been with Jesus for the entire course of His earthly ministry, whereas he had not (cf. 1:19). The twelve were also leaders in the Jerusalem church, which understandably was held in high regard by Christians as the first and leading congregation. But Paul goes on to say, **God shows no partiality**, as Peter had learned with some difficulty (Acts 10:9–48). The unique privileges of the twelve therefore did not make their apostleship more legitimate or authoritative than Paul's.

Paul was not being proud or boastful but was simply stating a truth. He knew that all he was and had was entirely by God's grace (Gal. 2:9). He acknowledged himself as the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) and "the least of the apostles, who [was] not fit to be called an apostle, because [he had] persecuted the church of God" (**1 Cor. 15:9**). But under God's grace he was equal to all other believers, and in his calling, he was equal to all the other apostles. In 2 Corinthians 11:5 he affirmed, "I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles."

The Twelve had **contributed nothing** to Paul's knowledge or understanding of the gospel or to his authority to preach it. For seventeen years he had preached the gospel without their having had the least part in it. When he finally went to Jerusalem to testify to what he preached, it was not for approval or correction but

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simply for recognition-and that not for his own sake but for the sake of those who had been deceived by the false accusations against him being spread by the Judaizers.

But on the contrary, seeing that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised, the apostles in Jerusalem recognized he was entrusted with preaching the true gospel. At that point the Judaizers' contention that Paul was preaching a deviant message was refuted once and for all. As Luke explains, not only did the Jerusalem Council vindicate Paul's message of grace apart from law but they entrusted him with the primary responsibility of reporting their decision to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia—areas where his work had been severely criticized by the Judaizers (Acts 15:22–24).

For He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised, Paul continues, **effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles.** The same Holy Spirit (**He**) who energized (**worked**, to be at work, to produce results) and empowered **Peter** energized and empowered **Paul**, and the Spirit has but one gospel. When Paul returned to Jerusalem several years later, “the brethren received [him and those with him] gladly,” and when he “began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry,” James and the other elders “began glorifying God” (**Acts 21:17–20**). After the Jerusalem Council there was never a question about Paul's message or apostleship. In his second letter Peter highly commended Paul as a wise and beloved brother and ranked Paul's letters with “the rest of the Scriptures” (**2 Pet. 3:15–16**).

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Recognizing the grace that had been given to Paul, the other apostles and the church at large could only conclude that this man was a divinely commissioned and blessed instrument of God. Only God's **grace**—His free, sovereign, and undeserved blessing—could account for the mighty spreading of the gospel and building up of the church that the Lord had accomplished through this mortal.

Discussion Questions

- 1. How does Paul's conviction that "God did not show partiality based on personal differences" shape his approach to the Jerusalem apostles? What does this reveal about his priorities?**
- 2. Can churches today "affirm the different ministries" of leaders without requiring uniformity in method? What are the limits of this principle?**
- 3. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?**

POINT 4 - PAUL'S COMMENDATION

James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do. (2:9b–10)

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Still again Paul refers to the reputation of **James and Cephas (Peter) and John**—those **who were reputed to be pillars** (a Jewish term used to refer to great teachers). As already mentioned, the somewhat sarcastic reference does not reflect against these men but against the Judaizers. Because those false teachers apparently used the term **pillars** (emphasizing their role in establishing and supporting the church) when referring to the three Jerusalem leaders, Paul throws the term back in their faces. He demonstrates to them and to the Galatian believers they were trying to turn against him that he was in perfect doctrinal harmony with those three **pillars** and with all the other apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

He not only was in doctrinal harmony with them but in personal harmony with them as well. There is only one gospel, and those five men (who wrote 21 of the 27 New Testament books) demonstrate that truth. They **gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship**, Paul says as he continues to confound the false claims of the Judaizers. In the Near East, to clasp **the right hand** of a person was to make a solemn vow of friendship and was a mark **of fellowship**, or partnership. The “pillars” at Jerusalem recognized Paul not only as a true preacher and teacher of the gospel but also as a beloved partner with them in Christ’s service. They had different fields of service—Paul and Barnabas ministered primarily **to the Gentiles** and the Jerusalem leaders primarily **to the circumcised**—but they proclaimed the same gospel and served the same Lord in the power of His Spirit. That act of affirmation both of Paul and of his message was a devastating blow to the Judaizers. In fact, Paul’s apostolate to the Gentiles was recognized as the equal of Peter’s apostolate to the Jews.

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The only request made of Paul and Barnabas at Jerusalem was that they **remember the poor**. The request was not doctrinal but practical, a reminder about the special needs of believers in Judea, especially Jerusalem. Even before the widespread famine (see Acts 11:28) for which Paul was called to bring relief, the Jerusalem church faced a serious problem of feeding and caring for its members. Its ranks were swelled by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of believers who had been converted while visiting the city and who then decided to stay there rather than return home. Many had little money, and they soon discovered that, because they were Christians, it was sometimes difficult to find employment. In the early days of the church those who had money and other possessions generously shared what they had “with all, as anyone might have need” (**Acts 2:45**). But those resources were rapidly depleted as the number of converts grew. For many years, therefore, the church at Jerusalem had been economically pressed.

To take care of the poor is not only a practical but a spiritual responsibility, because to forsake that responsibility is to disobey God’s Word. “Whoever has this world’s goods,” John declares, “and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (**1 John 3:17**). James says that it is a sham believer who says to “a brother or sister ... without clothing and in need of daily food, ... ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet [does] not give them what is necessary for their body” (**James 2:15–16**); cf. Ex. 23:10–11; 30:15; Lev. 19:10; Deut. 15:7–11; Jer. 22:16; Amos 2:6–7; Luke 6:36, 38; 2 Cor. 8–9).

Paul was therefore **eager to do** all he could to fulfill the request of James, Peter, and John, as his numerous and constant collections for the poverty-stricken saints in Judea attested. His command that “if anyone will not work, neither let

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him eat” (**2 Thess. 3:10**) pertained to the lazy, not the helpless and needy. He continually encouraged believers who were more prosperous to give financial aid to fellow believers who were in need; and he heartily commended those who were generous (Acts 11:29–30; 24:17; Rom. 15:25–26; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–6; 9:1–5, 12). “For if the Gentiles have shared in their [the Jerusalem saints’] spiritual things,” Paul explained to the Roman church, “they are indebted to minister to them also in material things” (**Rom. 15:27**).

Discussion Questions

- 1. What does the “right hand of fellowship” signify beyond simple friendship? How does understanding it as “a sharing in, and a sharing of, what God has given to us” reshape how we think about fellowship partnership ?**
- 2. Does remembering the poor represent a work necessary for salvation, or something distinct from salvation itself? How do we balance spiritual freedom from works-righteousness with genuine obligation to the poor?**
- 3. What was most meaningful to you in this lesson? How can you apply it to yourself?**

Closing Prayer