

Paul's Gospel Commendation

Galatians 2:1-16

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The book of Galatians could really be summarized in one basic statement: It is a defense of the gospel of God's grace. The book of Romans is a theological delineation or explanation of the gospel of God's grace. Someone said, "Paul the Apostle went into the Arabian desert with the Old Testament, the law and the prophets, and came back with the books of Galatians and Romans." I love that. I'm gaining a new appreciation for Paul, for his ministry, his apostolic preaching of the gospel, and the stand for truth that is uncompromising. I'm also gaining a new appreciation for this letter that Paul penned to the churches of Galatia.

Now, Paul is writing to a group of churches that were in a region or area, like we would call a county, of Galatia. Today it would be modern Turkey. It's North Asia. They were established by Paul on his second missionary journey and were revisited by Paul on his third missionary journey.

The reason Paul is writing, very simply (I know I'm repeating myself, but it's good to remember the background; and if you don't understand this, you won't understand the letter) is because false teachers had come into the churches of Galatia and were teaching a false gospel—another gospel than what Paul had first given to them. They are commonly called Judaizers because they are Jews who were telling Gentile Christians, "You cannot be a Christian, thus you cannot be saved, unless you become a Jew," so they're called Judaizers.

Christianity was in grave danger of becoming just a Jewish sect or at least it would have been a split between the Pauline gospel and the church of Paul, or the Petrine gospel, the church of Peter, or maybe even the Judaizers that would split off a different direction; so it was so important that Paul took a stand for the truth of the gospel. They were teaching that in order to become a Christian, to these Gentile believers, that you had to become a Jew; and the primary way that would take place was the rite of circumcision and by obeying all of the Jewish rites, rituals, laws, sabbath days, and dietary laws. You basically had to become Jewish. They were in danger of telling these Christians that you are saved not by grace through faith in Christ, but by believing in Jesus, but by working, by the rite of circumcision, by keeping the Mosaic law, by practicing rites, rituals, worshiping on certain days, sabbath day, worshiping certain festivals, and all the dietary laws of the Jews in order to be saved. They were bringing them back into bondage.

We're going to see Paul say, later in this epistle, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you," so they were being influenced or bewitched by these false teachers. Paul does this in Galatians 1 and 2, we're going to come to the end of it in Galatians 2 tonight, and he actually gives his personal argument, he gives his personal vindication of his apostleship, and then in Galatians 3 and 4 he gives the doctrinal teaching or defense of his gospel. In Galatians 5 and 6, Paul gives the practical application of living by grace, those that have been saved by grace. Galatians 1 and 2 are personal, Galatians 3 and 4 are doctrinal, and Galatians 5 and 6 are practical—how

we live in the doctrine of God's marvelous grace.

Already in Galatians 1 Paul has argued that the gospel which he preached...and the Judaizers were actually attacking Paul because they were trying to undermine his message by undermining the messenger. They were saying of Paul that Paul wasn't preaching the true gospel, so Paul basically argued in Galatians 1 that the gospel he preached came directly to him by revelation of Jesus Christ, that it wasn't man's idea, it wasn't communicated by man, and it wasn't taught him by man. Paul's understanding of the gospel was completely independent of the apostles that were in Jerusalem and that were the apostles of the Lord before him. Paul had established that very clearly in Galatians 1.

What happens in Galatians 2, as we start tonight, is no doubt the false teachers were actually saying another thing about Paul, "He's preaching a different gospel than that which the apostles of our Lord and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem were preaching," so he's not in league with them, not in step with them, not in harmony with them. "Not only does he have a different gospel, but it's not the same gospel that Peter, James, or John is preaching, and that he's out of sync or out of tune or out of fellowship with the apostles who were in Jerusalem." In Galatians 2, Paul, very simply, is arguing that he went to Jerusalem, met with a few of the apostles, and that they commended him, his ministry, and endorsed his preaching. We are going to see that he took a Gentile with him as exhibit A of the gospel of God's grace. His name was Titus, and they did not compel Titus in Jerusalem to become a Jew in order to be saved. We're going to look at Paul's commending by the Jewish leaders in the church of Jerusalem.

Now, first of all, verses 1-2, we see Paul coming to Jerusalem after 14 years from his conversion. Paul says, "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 And I went up by," and it's interesting, he says, "revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." Again, as I say, this is kind of autobiographical and kind of historical. A lot of people read Galatians and kind of skip over Galatians 1 and 2. They like to get to the good doctrinal and practical stuff, but it's an argument that's very important and the understanding that Paul got his message from the Lord and his message was in harmony with Peter, James, John, and the other apostles.

Paul says, "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem." At the end of Galatians 1, he made it clear that after his conversion in the desert of Arabia, hearing the gospel taught him by direct revelation, that he went up to Jerusalem but only spent 15 days there. It wasn't enough time for him to be indoctrinated or be taught by any of the apostles, that he just met with Peter, and that was all the contact he had with them. Now, we see, "Then fourteen years after," this, so Paul has already been traveling. He's already in Antioch. He's already preaching the gospel. He's already been saved for 14 years.

There are two questions that Bible students have that I cannot answer, but I want to mention; that is, when he went up to Jerusalem and took Barnabas and Titus with him, was he going up to Jerusalem for what was called the famine relief fund, talked about in Acts 11:26-27? There

was a prophet there in Antioch named Agabus who had come from Jerusalem. He talked about this famine that was going to come in Judea, where Jerusalem was, and that the believers there in Jerusalem were going to need help and assistance. It could be that this, “I went by revelation,” in verse 2, is a reference to what the prophet Agabus (you can read about it in Acts 11) prophesied and said that there’s a need, there’s famine in Judea, and that they went up by way of taking this relief offering (they collected money) and took it to the believers there in the church in Jerusalem. One of the things that this did, and Paul talks about this in Corinthians, is knit together the Gentile churches of Galatia and Syria with the Jewish believers in Judea or Jerusalem.

The second option is that Paul was going up to Jerusalem for what was taking place as recorded in Acts 15. The issue there was they were having an official formal counsel of all the leaders of the church in Jerusalem and from other places, and Paul and Barnabas were invited to go from their church in Antioch up to Jerusalem to discuss this question: What should the Gentiles’ relationship to the law of Moses be? What should the relationship of the Gentiles to the law of Moses be? Do they have to keep the law in order to be Christians? In Acts 15, they had this big counsel meeting where they basically were discussing and trying to determine if the Gentiles needed to become Jews or did they have to keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. Some feel that this visit to Jerusalem, fourteen years after Paul’s conversion or maybe it was after Paul’s first visit, we don’t really know, that maybe it was going up to the Jewish counsel. If you know your Bible and you know Acts 15 (if you haven’t read that and you’re not familiar with what I’m talking about, make a note and before you tuck your little self into bed tonight, look at Acts 15 and read that chapter), you’ll get the background and what I’m talking about.

After much discussion in Jerusalem, with all the “leaders of the church,” they came to this conclusion (I’m just quickly summarizing it for you): It’s not necessary for Gentiles to become Jews to be Christians. It’s not necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised or to keep the law of Moses to be saved but concluded that they basically abstain from things strangled, from animals that hadn’t been bled, and that they also abstain from sexual immorality—well, that’s a given—so those are the only two restrictions that were placed on Gentiles in their walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul, no doubt, was there in part of that meeting, and he shared his testimony.

The question lies as to whether or not that meeting in Acts 15 had taken place before Paul wrote these words in Galatians, and there are a lot of technical arguments back and forth. Either way you look at it, whether it was the relief fund visit or the counsel on the Gentiles’ relationship to the law, Paul still went to Jerusalem, it was around fourteen years after he’d gone the first time, and Paul still came to the same conclusion that his gospel was the same gospel that was preached by Peter, James, John, and the other apostles. They didn’t add to his gospel or correct his gospel. They didn’t instruct him to teach other things. They gave him, and we’re going to read in our text tonight (verse 9), “the right hands of fellowship” by the leaders in the church of Jerusalem. They were on the same team, as far as the gospel message they were preaching, so nothing is different.

I will throw this out, I can't resist the temptation. My thought is that they had gone to Jerusalem for the relief fund, met privately with the leaders of the church, and that the Jerusalem counsel was after Paul penned his letter to the Galatians. One of the reasons (not the only) is it would seem likely that when Paul wrote to the Galatians, he would actually point out to them that the leaders in Judea had already met and resolved the whole issue and there would have been no need for him to write this lengthy letter to the Galatians if the Jerusalem counsel had already decided the matter before that. I think that Galatians is pre-Acts 15, and you probably are all thinking, This doesn't really concern me at all. I don't care. If you don't get started in the text, we'll never get through the study tonight. I just wanted to throw that out in case some of you thought I didn't know what was going on here. And, you probably still don't think I know what's going on.

Paul says, verse 1, "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem," you're always going up when you go to Jerusalem because it's on Mount Zion, so you're always ascending to Jerusalem, "with Barnabas," and it's important to note that he was a Jew. He became a traveling companion of Paul. He sometimes is called an apostle as well. "...and took Titus," Titus was a Gentile. We're going to see he is very important to this passage because he was not circumcised but was accepted as a true believer. He wasn't required to be circumcised by the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, so he's exhibit A for the gospel that Paul preached. Paul says, "...I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. 2 And I went up by revelation," he doesn't explain what revelation, how revelation, or anything about it. Evidently, his trip up to Jerusalem at this time was something that God had revealed for him to do. It was an important trip, and he was to go there to defend the gospel or to confirm his preaching.

Paul continues, verse 2, "...and communicated unto them," the word "communicated" means that he talked, reasoned, and discussed with, "that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles," this was the glorious gospel of God's grace—that we're saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, plus nothing. No works are necessary to be saved or to be a true Christian. So, I rehearsed this with them in Jerusalem, which was the lead church, and he says, "but privately to them which were of reputation," he's referring there, as we're going to see a little later, probably to James, who was the brother of our Lord Jesus who became a believer after Christ was risen from the dead. He was one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He was not one of the original twelve apostles or disciples but became a leader in the church. Then there was Peter, the apostle, and John; so there was Peter, James, and John. They were the ones "of reputation" or the pillars of the church.

When Paul says, "lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain," don't for a moment conclude from that statement that Paul was doubting as to whether his gospel was true or right. He wasn't saying, "I met with them privately and laid out my gospel and said, 'So what do you think? Is this right or have I got it wrong? Do I need to be corrected?'" Paul knew his gospel came from heaven. If anyone knew the gospel, Paul knew the gospel. What he was afraid of is that if they didn't concur with him, that it would hinder the ministry that he already had among the Gentiles and do horrible damage. Everything about Galatians, we see Paul's absolute

passion and commitment and stand for gospel truth—that it cannot be wavered from, it cannot be compromised, it cannot be changed.

The gospel today is the same gospel of Paul the apostle, and if the Lord tarries for another thousand years (I hope He doesn't), it'll be the same gospel. It will not change. It doesn't matter if you're preaching to Jews or Gentiles. It doesn't matter what nation, tribe, kindred, or tongue, the gospel does not change. Now, it may be that your method of preaching or communicating it changes, but the message never ever changes. At the end of verse 2, Paul wasn't doubting as to whether he was right on or he knew what he was preaching, but he was actually saying, "If these guys don't see this clearly, then there's going to be a horrible rift," and when you think of the consequences of what would happen if there was a rift between Paul and John, and we're going to see comes into focus in this passage, Peter...and a lot of people like to pit Peter against Paul and say that they preach two separate gospels or Paul against the book of James. They didn't. It's all one gospel. There's not many gospels, and remember Paul actually said in Galatians 1, "But though we, or an angel from heaven," or anyone, "preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," or anathema, which is cursed to the lowest hell or destroyed by God.

Notice Paul coming to Jerusalem and, secondly, we see Paul's companion. He focuses on Titus. This is the beginning (verse 3) of his argument of this trip to Jerusalem. He says, "...and took Titus with me also...But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek," or a Gentile, and here it is, "was compelled to be circumcised." This is a powerful masterful argument. If Paul were a defense lawyer today and I were in trouble, I would want him to be my lawyer. He brings out to the stand exhibit A, this man of his conversion, Titus. By the way, this is the same Titus in which Paul wrote an epistle, which is one of the pastoral letters of the New Testament. So, "...and took Titus with me also," as an exhibit and an example of a Gentile believer, and the leaders in Jerusalem did not compel or force him to be circumcised.

Verse 4, "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in," so "We were there talking to the leaders in Jerusalem, and no doubt these false brethren," notice they are false brethren. The word means pseudo-Christians—fake believers—probably a reference to the Judaizers, the false teachers. They came in at the same time to Jerusalem, "...who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." Paul was saying that the leaders of the church in Jerusalem didn't tell Titus, "You have to be circumcised," but the false pseudo-Judaizers, the false teachers, came in and were promulgating this doctrine of circumcision and keeping the law of Moses, were spying on us, verse 4. They were coming in spying on their liberties which they "have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage."

Notice Paul's response in verse 5. "To whom," that is, to these false brethren, these Judaizers, "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour," and here's the reason why, "that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." Paul didn't say, "Well, let's just all live in peace. Let's all be nice. Your truth is your truth; my truth is my truth," and "We ought to love one another," and "Let's not divide over doctrine. Let's not quibble over doctrine or theology," and "Let's just love

one another. Let's just hold hands and just get along. Let's just be the body of Christ." This is the mentality in a lot of Christendom today. Doctrine divides. There are actual churches, there are actual pastors, that will not preach some Bible doctrine because they're controversial and divisive.

I heard my friend, Skip Heitzig, on the radio yesterday talking about going to some churches of these new young millennial pastors saying that he was going to preach on prophecy or eschatology, which I'm doing right now on Sunday morning. They asked Pastor Skip what he was going to preach on, and he said, "Oh, I'm going to be preaching on prophecy." They said, "No, no, no. We don't teach that here in our church. You'll just confuse the people. There's division in the body. They'll argue and divide over it, so pick another subject." "Excuse me?" A very large portion of the Bible is eschatological—it deals with prophetic future events. We don't avoid those doctrines or topics because they may be controversial, we proclaim faithfully the truth of God's Word. Amen? I just don't understand. I can't relate. I'm not of that cloth, or I'm not made that way. I don't really understand a pastor that would say, "Well, it's in the Bible, a book of the Bible..." there are some pastors that won't teach the book of Revelation. The last time I looked it was in the Bible. There's promised blessing there. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." They won't teach on doctrinal issues that might cause people to be upset, bothered, freak out, or whatever it might be. That's not being a faithful steward of what God has entrusted to a man who is supposed to be preaching the Word.

I love Paul's heart and attitude in verse 5 when he says, "...we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour," in other words, he's says, "We didn't budge an inch. We contended with them. We stood up to them." Doesn't the book of Jude actually say in verse 3, "...earnestly contend for the faith...once delivered unto the saints?" Do you know, the words "earnestly contend" basically means fight. It means put on the boxing gloves, get ready to fight. Be in contention for the faith. Don't be contentious, but contend for the faith of the gospel. We need to stand and fight for the truth of the gospel even as Paul truly did.

Paul talks about his companion, Titus, who was not compelled to be circumcised. Again, I probably don't have to bring this up, I probably shouldn't bring it up, but I'm going to bring it up. Paul did have Timothy, who was also a young man convert of Paul's, a pastor he wrote to...two pastoral epistles, Timothy and Titus, my all time favorite books of the Bible because he was writing to pastors. Timothy had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father, but he wasn't circumcised. Timothy was going to have ministry among Jews as well as Gentiles, so Paul encouraged and had Timothy circumcised.

Now, this is not because Paul changed his mind on the truth of the gospel or that he was trying to waffle on the truth of the gospel. It was basically a matter of being more effective and more able to not stumble or hinder somebody in reaching them with the gospel. It wasn't a question of the doctrine of the gospel but a question of methods and being flexible in how we reach people. Paul said, "I become all things to all men that I might win the more. To the Jews, I became a Jew; to the Gentiles, I became a Gentile," but he wouldn't become sinful in order to reach sinful people. He was flexible in how he reached people with the one message that

doesn't change. Some people accuse Paul of being flip floppy or wishy washy, that Titus wasn't circumcised but Timothy was. It is interesting, Titus was a pure Gentile, and Timothy was both Jewish and Gentile as well.

Notice we move in verses 6-10 to Paul's commission, or he was commended for his gospel and commissioned to preach the gospel by those in Jerusalem. He says, "But of these who seemed to be somewhat," now this is the repeated phrase. He earlier had talked about those who seem to be important in the church, but says, "But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat," again, "in conference added nothing to me." When Paul says, "...these who seemed to be somewhat," he's using that expression for the apostolic leaders of the church in Jerusalem. He's not diminishing them, their position, their importance, or speaking despairingly of them; but what he's actually doing is probably (and I think this is fascinating) quoting what the Judaizers were saying about them—that they were super saints, the heavy duties, the elite group, the true apostles. "Paul's not a part of or like them. Paul's preaching a different message. Paul needs to learn from them and get it together." They were probably saying that they were super elite and looking up to the apostles in Jerusalem. Paul is actually saying, "Well, they seem to be the bigwigs, but God accepts no man's persons." Paul is basically saying that God doesn't look at people as more important than anyone else or others.

Paul says, "But of these who seemed to be somewhat," these individuals, so claimed by the Judaizers, "...in conference added nothing to me." That statement at the end of verse 6 is the key to the whole passage of verses 1-15, the whole section, "...for they...added nothing to me." Paul's gospel was commended to him. They added nothing to his message. As far as his companion, they didn't compel him to be circumcised; as far as his message, they didn't correct, edit, or censor it. They just told him, "You are to be commended." They added nothing to it. But notice verse 7, "But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter," the gospel of the uncircumcision is just basically saying, preaching the gospel to the Gentiles; and the gospel of the circumcision is the gospel ministry of preaching to the Jews. That was Peter's focus. Actually, it's interesting that the book of Acts actually starts in the first half with the ministry of Peter, and in the second half, it switches to the ministry of Paul the Apostle—Peter reaching the Jews, and Paul reaching the Gentiles.

Verse 8, "(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles,)" so God used Peter wonderfully, powerfully, and mightily to reach the Jews; but God used Paul to reach the Gentiles. "And when James, Cephas, and John," now, here's those "who seem to be somewhat," they are the upper echelon—the leaders, the apostles—in the church in Jerusalem, "who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship," so they didn't give them the left foot of fellowship, they gave him, "the right hands of fellowship." They basically said, "We're with you. Preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Your message is right on, same message that we're preaching." He's proving to his critics, his Judaizing attackers, that, "My message was no different than what Peter, James, and John preached as they were

apostles in Jerusalem; so they commended me to preach the gospel to the uncircumcision, and Peter goes to the Jews, the circumcision." He says, "...perceived," I love it in verse 9, "the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we," that is, Paul and Barnabas, "should go unto the heathen," it's another term for the Gentiles, "and they unto the circumcision," a term for the Jewish people.

Verse 10, "Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." Paul says, "Not only did we preach the gospel, but we took food for those who were hungry." It was kind of the twofold ministry—the evangelistic outreach of preaching the gospel and feeding the poor. As believers, we should be concerned about both. We should be evangelizing and preaching the gospel as well as helping people who are in need and feeding the poor. The truth in this section is: There is only one gospel. There isn't the gospel that was preached by Paul to the Gentiles, which was an easy believing gospel, "Just trust Jesus Christ and you'll be saved," and then the real meaty true gospel of the apostles in Jerusalem that, "No, you must be a Jew. You must be circumcised. You must keep the law of Moses. You must be baptized. You must be following these rules and regulations." That was the "deeper life club." No, there aren't two gospels.

Unless you're thinking, This is all dry history from New Testament times and has no application for us today, Judaizers are not dead. It's interesting. Even today there's a trend going on in Christian circles to not just be Christian but to follow Mosaic laws, rites, rituals, be more spiritual by worshiping on just the right day of the week, following some of the dietary laws, worshiping on new moons and sabbath days, following the Jewish festivals, speaking Hebrew or whatever it might be, being more Jewish in your faith. We're going to see Paul was a Jew of all Jews. Read Philippians 3. As far as his religious pedigree goes, if anyone could get to heaven by being Jewish, it would have been Paul the Apostle. But he says, "Those things that were gain to me, my Jewish pedigree, I count it but refuse," a pile of manure is literally what he said, "that I might be found in Christ, not having my own righteousness, which is by the law, but the righteousness which is the faith of Jesus Christ," so be careful for those that come along and say, "Well, you can worship on Sunday, if you want; but if you really want to be super Christian, Saturday is the sabbath," and "If you really want to be a super, super-duper Christian, then you ought to worship these festival days, these Jewish feasts, and follow these rites and rituals." They kind of put a trip on you. Or, today, which is not too uncommon, "If you really want to be a Christian, you have to be baptized in water."

Baptism is important and should be done as an act of obedience, but it isn't necessary or a requirement in order to be saved and go to heaven. They'll put that trip on you. Or maybe they'll say, "You have to wear certain clothes," or "You have to not eat certain foods," or "You have to not drink certain things or watch certain things on tv," or "You have to follow certain rules," or "You have to have a certain translation of the Bible," or "You have to wear your hair a certain way." They want to put you under bondage or legalism. The Bible, in Galatians, is telling us we're free in Christ. We're not saved by law, and don't let anyone put you under bondage to these rules and regulations. There's only one gospel.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who's been called the prince of preachers, a great British preacher, said concerning Whitfield and Wesley, "They may preach the gospel better than I do, but they can't preach a better gospel." I love that. I'm sure there are a lot of people that can preach the gospel better than I can, but they can't preach a better gospel. There is no better gospel. There is no improving the gospel: New and improved, the gospel! No, no, no, no, no. If it's new, it's not true; and if it's true, it's not new. Amen? It's the good ol' gospel of Jesus Christ that we're saved by grace through faith and not of ourselves. It's a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

I think it's interesting, too, before I leave this section, that God's ways are not our ways. God's ways are beyond our ways, past our finding out in so many areas. In this case, whom He calls to do a certain work. I would think that Paul would have been better suited to go to the Jews. He was highly intellectual, highly schooled and trained in Judaism, a Pharisee of all Pharisees, that he should have been the refined, polished man of the Word, the Old Testament. If anyone knew the Bible, Paul knew the Bible, even as Saul of Tarsus. "Lord, what are You thinking? Send him to the Jews, and if You want somebody that's suited for the Gentiles, you got Peter. He was from Galilee." Do you know that orthodox Jews just thought, Galilee, oh my goodness! Nazareth was in Galilee. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Galilee was just the land of the Gentiles, land of...I better just stop with my descriptive titles but just a bad area. (I was going to relate it to some areas around California. I may get in trouble.) He was a fisherman. He was uneducated. He was just a big, brawny, Galilean fisherman with calluses on his hands. He uses Peter to go to the Jews and sends Paul to the Gentiles. "What's up? You should've consulted me, Lord. I could've told You, 'This is not a good idea.'"

It's amazing to me (we saw the movie Sunday night. If you missed it, you can watch that movie on Billy Graham on the YouTube channel) that God would take a country boy from South Carolina and raise him up to be God's spokesman to the nations. What an amazing story that is. Certainly, God uses "...the foolish things of the world to confound the wise," so, "Paul, you go to the Gentiles; Peter, you go to the Jews."

In verses 11-16, if I just read these and try to wrap it up real quickly, we'll go back over it next week. I didn't want to cut this section in half. Paul now talks about his confrontation with Peter, not in Jerusalem so switch gears here. The stage now is not Jerusalem, that visit of Paul to Jerusalem, but it's back in Paul's home church in Antioch of Syria. He says, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled," or stumbled or went astray, "likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation," or their hypocrisy. "But when I saw," here goes Paul again, "that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel," that's Paul's favorite statement in this passage, "the truth of the gospel," "I said unto Peter," now, here you have Paul publicly rebuking Peter, which is such an amazing story, "before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Good question. "If you are a Jew, and you're living like a Gentile, why are

you telling Gentiles now to live like the Jews?”

Verse 15, “We who are Jews by nature,” or by birth, “and not sinners of the Gentiles,” so, “We’re born Jewish, why would we want the Gentiles to act like Jews?” “Knowing that,” here it is, the wrap up, “a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” This section really doesn’t stop until the end of the chapter, but I wanted to stop tonight at verse 16.

Go back over, really quickly, with me. First of all, Paul stood up to Peter in verse 11. Now, try to imagine this. You were saved later. You weren’t one of the original twelve. You didn’t walk with Jesus as His disciple. You were taught by the Lord out in the Arabian desert. The gospel’s the same, but now you’re going to Jerusalem and see Peter do something that’s inconsistent with the truth of the gospel. Peter believed the gospel. Peter preached the same gospel, but he’s not behaving properly. The point now shifts from believing the truth of the gospel to how we behave, that our behavior must be consistent with our belief—that we should live the gospel as well as believe the gospel. Paul says, verse 11, “...I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” Would to God we had more Pauls in the church today. Paul would not be popular. People would be freaking out on Paul because Paul is standing up, publicly rebuking Peter.

Just a little footnote, too, there are those that believe the Peter was the first pope of the church, the leader of the church. If that’s the case, it’s pretty heavy duty here, pretty radical that Paul is actually going to be rebuking Peter and doing so in front of the whole church there in Antioch. Notice it says, verses 12-13, what Paul saw. “For,” this is the reason I withstood him to the face, “before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles,” in other words, Peter came to visit the church in Antioch and was just having a great time of fellowship with Gentile Christians. He was eating with them, and Jews wouldn’t normally eat with Gentiles.

Now, I want to remind you of something (and I won’t take long because I have to wrap this up). Peter, remember in Acts 10, had a vision of a sheet coming down from heaven with all these creepy crawlers on it, and the Lord told Peter to arise, kill, and eat. Peter said, “No, I don’t eat things that are common,” or unclean. God said, “What I have called clean, call not unclean.” Then, immediately, there was a knock on the door. He opened the door and there were these Gentiles from Caesarea, from the house of Cornelius, saying, “An angel appeared to our master and said, ‘Come to us and share the gospel with us,’” so Peter went to Cornelius’ house and told Cornelius and his household, “God has showed me that I’m not to call anything common,” or unclean, so Peter knew that God would save Gentiles. He knew the gospel was for Gentiles. He had already had that experience, but now Peter is being swept up, because of the fear of man, and separating from these Gentiles.

Verse 12, “For before that certain came from James,” now James is a reference to the Lord’s brother who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem, and those who came were no doubt some of the Judaizers, some of these false teachers, who were coming to Antioch to try to

preach their false gospel. Peter actually gets influenced and swept up by them. "...but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself," and here's why, "fearing them which were of the circumcision." The Bible says the fear of man brings a snare. Peter, who denied the Lord at the fire and now is freaking out because these Jews came and see him eating with Gentiles, which the Jews didn't like to do unless they were all believers in Christ, so he freaks out, pulls away, and is not fellowshiping with these Gentiles any longer.

Verse 13, "And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him," the other Jewish believers in the church at Antioch followed Peter's bad example, "insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away," the word is hypocrisy, with their hypocrisy. What Peter is doing is hypocritical. He believes one thing, but he's behaving a different way. This is what Paul said to Peter, verse 14, "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all," this is the principle: If a person sins in the church and their sin is open in public, then they rightfully can be rebuked publicly. If it's private, they should be rebuked and handled privately. We also see here, and it's a sad tragic thing, that even spiritual leaders are human beings and have feet of clay and can stumble and fall and error, and such is the case with even the great Simon Peter.

Peter is rebuked before the whole church in verse 14. Paul says, "...If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Peter's behavior wasn't consistent with his belief, and Paul says, "We who are Jews by nature," birth, "and not sinners of the Gentiles," why are you telling the Gentiles to live as though they were Jews? This is a fantastic episode where Paul is relating to the Galatian churches that there in his home church of Antioch even Peter had to be rebuked, who was swept up in the fervor of this Judaizing teaching and carried away, and others stumbled and fell with him.

The fear of man brings a snare. We shouldn't fear man, we should fear God. The others were stumbled by Peter's actions. Remember that, especially leaders and all of us as believers, we can stumble other people by our behavior. They were also acting in a hypocritical way, which was sad and tragic.

In closing, verse 16, and the reason I tacked on verse 16 is because from here to the end of the chapter these are still Paul's words to Peter in Antioch. Paul says, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified," or declared righteous, "by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Verse 16 is one of the greatest statements in the entire Bible on the doctrine of justification by faith. The word "justified" or doctrine of justification is the act of God where God declares the believing sinner to be righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross, not on their righteous deeds, works, rites or rituals they perform, or the keeping of the law, but by their faith in Jesus Christ and based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. It's a forensic term taken from the courtroom. It's where God declares you to be righteous—justified before a

holy God. It is based on the fact that Jesus paid our penalty on the cross, and it was Galatians 2:16 that set Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, free in understanding the doctrine of God's grace of justification by faith alone and which gave birth to so much of what we call the Protestant Reformation today standing, like Paul, for the truth of the gospel, which Paul delineates in great detail in Romans 3, especially Romans 4, and Romans 5.

I want to add something, and then I'm going to wrap it up. When he says, "...not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified," he's going to add in the book of Galatians, as he does in Romans, nor by the works of the law can you be sanctified. That's where a lot of people get tripped up. They might agree and say, "Yeah, okay, I understand that we're justified by faith in Jesus Christ, but if you want to be holy, spiritual, or a really strong Christian, then you have to keep these rules, regulations, do these certain things, and work really hard and meet these standards," rather than being sanctified by God's grace through the work of God's Spirit. It doesn't mean that we have license and are free to sin, but it means that we can't become holy by our own self efforts. We cannot be saved or justified by our works, and we can't be sanctified by gritting our teeth and clenching our fist and working really hard to live a holy life. It only comes through the work and to the power of God's Holy Spirit.

Now, let me wrap this up with some points that we've learned. In verses 1-10, we learn that the truth of the gospel is one and unchanging. There's not multiple gospels—there's not a Jewish gospel or a Gentile gospel or the gospel of Paul or Peter. There's one gospel, and that's the gospel of God's grace. We're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone; and we learn the truth of the gospel must be maintained. We must be committed and devoted to maintaining the purity and the doctrinal accuracy of what the gospel is. In verses 11-16, we learn that we must walk straight according to the gospel. We must believe it, preserve it, and actually live it. It's not enough just to say, "I believe," but it must be that we behave. The gospel of grace must be manifested in a life lived by the grace of God as well and lived in consistent with that message.

Lastly, we see that we must oppose those who deny the gospel. This is the overarching theme of this section, and we come to the end of Galatians 2. The chapter just wraps up with some doctrinal theological statements about justification by faith. But what Paul has basically done is earnestly contend for the gospel, "...for the faith which was once," and for all "delivered unto the saints." We cannot sacrifice purity for peace. We cannot say, "Oh, well let's not fight over doctrine. Let's not argue over doctrine. Let's just get along." Unity must be based on purity, whether it be the church or whether it be your own private life. If you're going to have harmony in your heart in relationship to God, you must have purity. You can't be living a lie and have communion and fellowship with God or with other believers.

In the church today, we can't deny the truth of God's Word because we don't want to upset or offend somebody or we don't want to divide the church. We must take a stand for truth. Speak the truth in love. Amen? It doesn't mean we go around gospel gestapos—sin sniffing, flesh finding, finding everything that's wrong with everybody else and criticizing everybody. We're not to be censorious, critical, or fault finding. Jesus said, "Judge not, lest you be judged." We are

to be discerning biblically and know the truth of God's Word. We've confused these lines, and the church has become politically correct. We've abandoned truth for politeness, for niceness, for basically wanting to get along with everybody, and we're not taking a stand on truth anymore. If we really love God and love people, we will stand for the truth of the gospel. Amen?