

## Galatians 2

### Sustaining Freedom in an Enslaved World

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Paul ends chapter one with a flashback to some of the happenings after his conversion experience and recounts the way the people glorified God because of his transformation. When we are living a life marked by the Spirit, people around us *will* glorify God. This is the goal! I hope that last week, like Paul, you were able to take some time to reflect on the changes God's made in your life and how that may bring glory to Him from people in your sphere of influence.

Paul opens chapter two with a recollection of his second trip to Jerusalem - a good *fourteen years* after he had been following Jesus and proclaiming the good news of the cross to Jews (first) and then Gentiles. Galatians 1:18-19 tells us that Paul stayed with the apostle Peter during his first trip to Jerusalem (after he had been born again for only three years), and while he was there he met James (Jesus' brother). We know from Acts 9:29-30 that Paul experienced some intense opposition by Greek-speaking Jews during this particular visit. Despite the controversy stirred up and some years of experience letting the Spirit guide his life, Paul returns, with his friends (Barnabas and Titus), a second time to Jerusalem to make sure the elders and "those considered to be leaders of the church" (Galatians 2:2 NLT) agreed with his mission...

#### ***Paul's flashback to set up argument against Judaizers (Galatians 2:1-6)***

*"And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2:2 NKJV).*

1. Who was the "them" and the "those who were of reputation" that Paul communicated the gospel with? Are these two groups of people?
2. Why did Paul go back to Jerusalem to meet privately with the leaders of the Jerusalem church (Peter, James, John) about what he was doing (i.e. preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles)? What does the text tell us?
3. Circle the word "revelation". Where do you think his revelation might have come from?
4. Could Paul have kept going about his business of preaching to the Gentiles without conferring with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem? Do you think that would have been the *easier* thing to do? Explain.
5. What word(s) would you use to describe this action (conferring with other leaders) taken by Paul?

6. Describe how Paul's decision to confer with the other apostles about the gospel he'd been entrusted with paints a stark contrast to his earlier behavior (pre-conversion)?
7. Have you ever been confronted with a situation like Paul's - where you could have easily kept doing what you were doing but God wanted you to go a different route before you continued? Explain.
8. How did you respond? Did you obey God's prompting or did you continue in the route you were on? What was the outcome?
9. Sometimes we may avoid consulting with others because we are afraid of what they may think or how they may respond, or we may have a "my way or the highway" type attitude and forgo talking to anyone altogether. Why are both of these behaviors wrong when approaching Kingdom matters?
10. Using any prior biblical knowledge on the background/upbringing of Peter and the other leaders, why do you think Paul's meeting with them could have been a little controversial?

It's important to note that (at this time) there had been a long history of separation and division between the Jews and everyone else. From the Abrahamic covenant (which we'll study next week) until the veil was torn in the temple (after Jesus' finished work on the cross), the Jewish people were in fact set apart and called God's chosen people (Romans 9:4). It's not hard to imagine, then, why these same Jews (even leaders like Peter and James) might not be racing through the doors to preach to the Gentiles - the very people they had been separated from for so many years. The difference between Peter, Paul, and the other leaders to their congregations was that these men actually *saw* Jesus and they were Jews when they encountered Him. It was up to them to tell their Jewish brothers, and everyone else for that matter, the good news. But would Peter be on board with telling a people group they had long been at odds with that they, too, could be saved? The churches receiving this letter were about to find out. Not only was Paul set out on getting the elder's blessing for his "new" ministry of preaching to people they had long been disassociated with, but he was also there to make sure that he and Peter (as well as the other leaders commissioned by Jesus) were all on the same page with their message. We'll soon see how some were infiltrating their ranks who were *not*...

11. In Galatians 2:4 Paul talks about the “false brethren” that were *brought* in. Who do you think they were brought in by? Why were they brought in, and how were they brought in? Provide evidence from the text.
  
12. Were these “false brothers” amidst the church of Jerusalem that Paul was delivering his message to? How can we infer that?

Read Romans 8:15

13. According to this verse, what does bondage (slavery) to the law produce?
  
14. Why do you think the law would evoke such an emotion in the early church?
  
15. Have you ever heard, or had to use, the expression, *I’m walking on eggshells...* to describe a posture you maintained around a certain person or a situation that you had to handle delicately at the time? If so, describe the situation.

Typically when you’re “walking on eggshells” around someone, you’re fearful of saying or doing anything that would upset them. In an effort to “keep the peace” and avoid conflict, you may say/do things contrary to what you’d normally do. In an effort to please, the relationship can turn into an almost robotic exchange lacking any truth or substance. This was similar to the posture that the Jewish people carried in Paul’s day - except they weren’t walking on eggshells with each other...they were walking on eggshells with God. After *generations* of trying to earn God’s acceptance and favor by living up to a set of rules (the law) their flesh couldn’t live up to, their relationship with God had amounted up to a mechanical relationship complete with fear-based works, rituals, traditions, and practices with little to no heart behind them. The very real and personal relationship that their ancestors, like Abraham, had once experienced with God was gone and all that was left now was a shell of what once was. This mentality opened the Jewish people up to a lot more than just a voided personal relationship with God...

16. How could this fear lend itself as an opportunity to someone who might gain something by taking advantage of it?
  
17. In which ways do you think *control* and *fear* relate? Explain.

18. Can you think of an example throughout the history of our world, or even now, where fear has been used to control a group of people? List all the examples you can think of below:
  
19. Have you ever been so afraid of something that you went against your better judgement and acted on fear? What happens when we let fear drive our decisions?
  
20. Explain the fear that being enslaved might produce. How is it different from the fear of God? Using what you've learned above, why do you think these recently converted Christians were so easily led back into bondage by these men proclaiming a false gospel?

Just like the churches surrounding Galatia were being infiltrated by counterfeit apostles, so was the church of Jerusalem. It's likely that these men saw the attention that Peter, Paul, and the rest of the apostles were getting and they wanted a piece of the action too. Cunningly, these con-men knew exactly what strings to play with the early Jewish converts in order to appeal to their flesh and strike fear into their hearts; all the while gaining for themselves power and prestige. In persuading these adolescent Christ followers to continue obeying the traditional practice of circumcision despite what Jesus did on the cross, these guys were not only disturbing the peace (Galatians 1:7) that salvation offers, but they were also gaining a following and control over that following in the process.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are naive to assume that this same type of deception only targeted the early church and it isn't still lurking in our churches and communities today. Although it sneaks into our churches under a different guise - one that's more compliant with our culture - the temptation to follow a different gospel is the same. In our American christianity culture where ministry looks more like platforms, spotlights, and glamour than truly denying ourselves, picking up our heavy wooden crosses and following Jesus, we can become a follower of everything *but* Him if we're not on guard.

21. There are a lot of "gospels" out there that may *sound* good and enticing, but they are a far cry from it. Can you think of anything, in today's culture, that may entice new Christ followers to get off track?
  
22. Has there ever been a time when you fell for a deceptive teaching? What made you realize the teacher was faulty?

23. What are some ways we can stand guard and be on the alert so we are not led into deception?

*I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit - just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1 John 2:26-27 NIV).*

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24. Did Paul or the other apostles fall for the false teaching that was being preached? Provide evidence from the text to support your answer.

25. Do you imagine it was hard for Titus (who was a Greek and wouldn't have been circumcised at this time) to stand his ground amidst the false gospel being delivered in the church of Jerusalem?

26. Has there ever been a time in your life where you gave into peer pressure and did something against your better judgement? Describe.

27. Now think about a time when you, or someone around you, stood up for truth despite what the crowd was doing. What was the result?

Read Matthew 7:13-14.

28. In the chart below, fill out what walking through the "narrow gate" might look like opposed to the "wide gate". Use examples from the world around you today.

**narrow gate**

**wide gate**

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29. Jesus says that walking through the narrow leads to \_\_\_\_\_ and only a \_\_\_\_\_ find it.

30. Do you think it's easier to be influenced or be the *influencer*? Explain.

31. Explain how Paul and Titus' resistance (v. 5) to the teachings of the false brothers might have been a good representation of this directive from Jesus (in Matthew 7:13-14).

32. How do you think standing up for truth affects those around you?

33. If Paul and Titus would have given in to the false teachers, how might that behavior have affected those around them and possibly those they hadn't reached yet?

*As for those who were held in high esteem - whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism - they added nothing to my message. (Galatians 2:6 NIV).*

34. Did Paul change his stance based on who his audience was?

35. Do you ever change your stance based on who your audience is? If so, why?

Write Romans 2:11 here:

God doesn't play favorites. If he did, then we *might* have something to work for. Since God shows no partiality, we shouldn't either. Paul makes this point abundantly clear in Galatians 2:6. Whether we're talking to the CEO of a fortune 500 company or the garbage man down the street we should treat everyone with love and respect, but furthermore, we should learn from Paul's example and never yield our message.

***Paul gets the green light and confronts Peter (Galatians 2:7-21)***

36. Paul continues to make a point to include his past experiences in this letter and the permission he was given by the other apostles to continue preaching to the Gentiles. Why do you think he chose to include this information in this letter?
  
37. Last week, you wrote your testimony. When talking to a non-believer, or maybe even a friend that's gotten off track in their walk with God, why might it be important to include your personal struggles (i.e. your testimony) like Paul has done? (Remember the struggles the church of Galatia was enduring).
  
38. According to Galatians 2:8, who was at work in Peter and Paul?
  
39. What qualities or characteristics do you think James, Peter, and John saw in Paul that gave them confidence to send him out amongst the Gentiles?
  
40. Do these qualities align with the characteristics of God? Provide references from scripture to support your answer.
  
41. According to Galatians 2:11-12, what was Peter to be blamed for?
  
42. What word(s) could you use to best describe Peter's actions? Use words from the text to support your answer.
  
43. Flip back to chapter 1:10 in your bible. How do Peter's actions justify Paul's need to have included this verse?

44. Have you ever been in a situation like the one Peter found himself in? What was your response? If you know, how did your response impact those around you? Explain.

45. According to Galatians 2:13, how did Peter's actions affect Barnabas' behavior?

What Peter did here is something we all do to one extent or another. We tend to focus more on the feelings and moods of others, and how they will react to our actions more than considering what God might have us do. Sometimes, we may even know what God would have us do, yet we cater to the opinions of those around us. In chapter 1, we studied why it was important to please God instead of people. Paul strategically exemplifies, through this confrontation with Peter and the others in which he led astray, the need to include Galatians 1:10. He also, brilliantly, paints a picture (through the actions of Barnabas) of what can happen to those in our immediate sphere of influence when we fear people rather than God. We live in a world that aspires to be politically correct and agreeable. We've all likely seen or heard through social-media, mainstream news, etc. what one move in opposition to a social or cultural narrative could do. As not to set off a firestorm of backlash and criticism, Christians often settle into a mode of compliance with the world subtly allowing the truth to be compromised.

46. Evaluate where you are today. Is there something in your life that you've been doing that may be compromising the truth of God's word and, as a result, having an effect on those closest to you? Prayerfully, ask God to reveal what it might be and ask for courage and grace to relinquish it to Him and ask for forgiveness.

In Galatians 2:14-21, Paul tells us how and why he reprimanded Peter in front of the Jewish Christians and Gentiles as a result of Peter's hypocrisy. We know from Paul's background that he is very bold and unafraid to speak his mind.

47. Do you agree with how Paul handled the situation? Why or why not?

48. Why do you think he chose to call Peter out in front of everyone?

49. Can you think of a situation in your life that might elicit the same response Paul had?



*...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified. (Galatians 2:16 NASB).*

50. Paul uses the word “justified” to explain the status of man according to \_\_\_\_\_. Write the definition for justified below.

51. Who are we justified to and what justifies us?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

52. According to this passage of scripture, why is there a need for us to be justified? Include keywords from text to support your answer.

Sisters, let this sink in for a minute. Because of our disobedience, we were destined for God’s wrath. The same God who completely annihilated the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by raining fire from Heaven (Genesis 19:14), the same God who wiped out an entire Egyptian army by hurling them into the sea (Exodus 15:4), the same God who commanded the earth to swallow up disobedient Israelites (Numbers 16:32) - that’s the God whose wrath was coming for us! Like a ship headed out to sea in the midst of a hurricane, we were headed for destruction and an eternity separated from our Creator. Can you imagine?

*But God.*

Because He is so rich in mercy and loves us so much (Ephesians 2:4), He rescued us from this fate. He sent Jesus in our place. He literally redeemed us back to Himself through...*Himself*. How loved and special you are that the God who decides if you take your next breath or not, looked at you and thought to Himself, *you know what...I love her too much to watch her die...I’m going to die for her*. Now looking at you, through the precious blood of Jesus, He calls you by name and says you are His (Isaiah 43:1). Wow. Spend the next minute or two just sitting in silence really taking this in. If you have a journal close, write some words that come to your mind as you think about the price He paid to get you back.

Now that you’ve had a minute to process what’s been done for you, read Hebrews chapter 11.

53. According to Hebrews 11:1, what is the definition of faith?

54. Can acts of service, good deeds, charitable giving, or any other effort be a substitute for faith? Why or why not?

55. What do you think makes it hard for humans to accept a free gift?

56. In Galatians 2:20, Paul says he's been *crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; 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*. What do you think Paul means by this? Taking into consideration what you know about Paul's life and ministry, how does this statement reflect his life?

We're going to skip ahead for a second as we close. Read Galatians 5:24.

57. After reading this passage of scripture, did your above answer change?

58. Do you think it's possible to live by the flesh and by the Spirit?

If this was possible, and we could accomplish a set of tasks to earn salvation and a relationship with God, then why did Jesus have to go to the cross? Why all the torment and blood shed if we could earn it ourselves? Seems a tad unnecessary, don't you think? This is essentially what Paul is screaming in Galatians 2:21. His audience was chocked full of members who had been striving to earn God's grace by a set of rules and conditions their entire life, and the good news was they didn't have to do that anymore! Someone took their place. It's kind of like someone (who is mega wealthy) coming to you and saying, "Look, I know you save up for Christmas presents every year and sometimes it's hard to fulfill every wish on your kid's wishlist, but now you don't have to save anymore..."; then simultaneously hands you a \$10,000 wad of cash. How amazing would that be?! Except this gift was incredibly more valuable and

harder to accept because this audience was accustomed to striving in their flesh, and they didn't fully realize there was a whole other way to live.

Do we realize there's another way to live than the way we're currently living? Living *by* the flesh and living *by* the Spirit is like being a free slave. It's impossible. If you are a slave, you are not free and likewise, if you are free, you are certainly no longer a slave. Through the gift of God's grace in Jesus, we've been given an opportunity to live a completely different way - no longer by our own way, but by the way of the Holy Spirit. Surrendering our way, and "the way we've always done things" - the fleshly way - for His way. This way will surely catch weird glances and snickers from a fallen world and those that are walking through a wide gate. It will certainly feel countercultural and take a supernatural amount of courage that you can't possibly muster up on your own. But this is the way of abundant life and true freedom. This is the way of adventure and faith. Are you willing to take the hard, but necessary steps to receiving and truly believing the free gift that's been given to you? Are you ready to let the Holy Spirit guide your life and take control of your plans, *all of them*, while you watch people praise God as He gets the glory through your life?

***Some reflection and action as we close this chapter's study...***

What parts of your life have you yet to surrender to God? Prayerfully ask God to show you the areas in which you need to surrender to Him. Spend the next week praying and thinking about ways, through the Holy Spirit's power, that you can circumnavigate the flesh and its sinful patterns. Ask God to show you how you can be led more by His Holy Spirit which is available to those who place faith in Jesus Christ. Pray that He'll give you the grace to carry it out and the boldness you'll need as you put these applications into practice.