

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

Galatians 2:1-21

Someone once said, "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance." Paul found that out early in his ministry. Perhaps to his surprise, opposition came not only from his enemies outside, but also from those who were "insiders", even good friends. Yet he chose to take a stand at a crucial moment.

¹ Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. ² I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. ⁴ This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. ⁶ As for those who seemed to be important--whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance--those men added nothing to my message. ⁷ On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews. ⁸ For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. ⁹ James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews. ¹⁰ All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

¹¹ When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹² Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

¹⁵ "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

¹⁷ "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

2:1-10 THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP

Paraphrase: See if you can summarize this section in one or two sentences.

Describe briefly the history and significance of the rite of **circumcision**. (A Bible dictionary would be helpful here.)

Why do you think God chose to send Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles?

What one thing did the Jerusalem leaders ask Paul and Barnabas to remember? Why was that important to them?

Digging Deeper: How do you think Acts 15 fits into this, historically? Hint: scholars are divided as to whether Galatians was written just before or just after the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. Form your own opinion. (You can look this up in a Bible dictionary.)

2:11-14 THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY

What is happening in this section?

The word "*hypocrisy*" means "play-acting", "wearing a mask". What emotions do you think were behind Peter's actions?

We usually focus here on the apostles, but how do you think all this made the Gentiles feel?

We usually think of "taking a stand" for the stricter view, but here Paul is "taking a stand" for the side of freedom. Have you ever done that?

Why does he say, "*even Barnabas*"? What did Barnabas do that was "out-of-character" for him? (Do a brief **character study** of Barnabas by looking up his name in a concordance and reading each reference, or if your time is limited, look him up in a Bible dictionary.)

Application: Have you ever been peer-pressured into doing something you really didn't believe in, or not doing something you really did believe in?

In the chart below, make a list of things you've heard that would be examples of un-Biblical "rules"...

A real Christian does...
A real Christian doesn't...

In your group, pick two or three of these and think through them according to Scripture. Are they rules that are good for none, for some, or for everyone?

2:15-21 THE TWO ROADS TO GOD

Don't worry! This is one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. See if you can clarify it by paraphrasing it in a sentence or two.

Perhaps this chart from Larry Richards' Expository Dictionary of Bible Words will help you think through these issues.

	Grace	Religion
View of mankind	basically sinful, unable to please God	basically good, able to please God
Associated concepts	promise gift faith	law works obligation
Focus	Jesus	self
Result	forgiveness life righteousness	condemnation sin death
Definition	God's free action - based on Jesus' death and motivated by love - to redeem all who believe and to make them righteous.	Man's effort to do good and by his own works to merit salvation as a deserved reward for his behavior.

APPLICATION: Verse 20 is one of the key verses in the New Testament. What difference does it make in your life right now?