



A Study of  
*Galatians 2*  
Defending the gospel  
Part 1 Gal 2:1-14a

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## *The Epistle of Galatians 2 Covers:*

### The Gospel of Grace presented to the Leaders in Jerusalem:

1. Paul's trip to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-2)
2. The issue over the circumcision of Titus (Galatians 2:3-5)
3. The gospel doesn't depend on the approval of men (Galatians 2:6)
4. Jerusalem leaders approve Paul's gospel (Galatians 2:7-10)

For more information, see Blue Letter Study Guide

[https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik\\_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-2.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Gal/Gal-2.cfm)

## *The Epistle of Galatians 2 Covers:*

### Paul's confrontation with Peter:

1. The reason Paul confronts Peter  
(Galatians 2:11-13)
2. Paul confronts Peter publicly (Galatians 2:14a)

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## Galatians 2

1 Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.

2 And I went up by 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.

3 But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:

4 And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

## Paul's trip to Jerusalem:

*Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem:* In Galatians 1:18-19, Paul described a trip he made to Jerusalem three years after Jesus met him on the road to Damascus. Here he describes a second trip to Jerusalem, fourteen years later. The purpose of Paul reminding his readers about this is to demonstrate that his gospel came by direct revelation and not man – in 14 years he visited Jerusalem only twice. He obviously did not learn the gospel from anyone in Jerusalem.

*with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also:* Traveling with Paul to Jerusalem were both Barnabas (who was well respected among the leadership in Jerusalem according to Acts 4:36-37 and 11:22) and Titus (who was a Gentile convert).

*And I went up by revelation:* The idea is that Paul went to Jerusalem by the express direction of God. He did not go because any man called him to come; it was because God told him to go. This trip to Jerusalem is most likely the one mentioned in Acts 11:27-30.

# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

At this time, there was a contention rising over the place of Gentiles in the church. God used Peter to welcome Gentiles into the church in Acts 10. But some Christians from a Jewish background said that Gentiles could indeed be saved, if they made themselves Jews first and brought themselves under the Law of Moses. Their idea was that salvation in Jesus was only for the Jewish people, and Gentiles had to become Jews before they could become Christians. So Paul presented to them the gospel he preached to the Gentiles.

*"The believing Jews, however, could not get it through their heads that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. They were encouraged in their wrong attitude by the false apostles. The result was that the people were up in arms against Paul and his doctrine." (Luther)*



# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

## Paul's trip to Jerusalem:

*But privately to those who were of reputation:* Paul knew he had the true gospel; but he didn't know how everyone of reputation in Jerusalem would receive it. Perhaps some of the apostles themselves were wrong on this point, and needed to be corrected! But if there was any confrontation to be done, Paul did it privately to those who were of reputation. He did the best he could to not publicly embarrass those who were of reputation in Jerusalem.

This exhibited remarkable love and sensitivity on Paul's part. It would have been easy for him to say, "I'm right and anyone who disagrees with me is wrong, and I can't wait to confront them publicly." But he didn't. *He knew that being right doesn't give you the privilege of being rude.*



# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

## The issue over the circumcision of Titus:

*But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised:* Paul's point is that the leadership in Jerusalem accepted Titus (a Gentile convert) even though he was not circumcised in accord with the Mosaic Law. This shows that the Jerusalem leadership accepted the gospel of grace as Paul understood it.

The circumcision of Titus was a potential issue because was the sign of initiation into the Jewish faith and the Mosaic covenant. If a Gentile man wanted to become a Jew, he would have to be circumcised as an adult. Jewish men were circumcised as babies. Since all Jewish men were circumcised and most all Gentile men were not, it was an easy way to refer to "those who are part of the covenant" and to "those who are outside of the covenant of Moses."

*"Paul did not condemn circumcision as if it were a sin to receive it. But he insisted, and the conference upheld him, that circumcision had no bearing upon salvation and was therefore not to be forced upon the Gentiles." (Luther)*

# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

## The issue over the circumcision of Titus:

*And that because of false brethren unawares brought in:* Yet, the lack of circumcision in Titus became an issue because of false brethren who attempted to bring Paul and other Christians into bondage

It is significant that Paul calls these men false brethren – a severe title. Of course, they did not think of themselves as false brethren. They thought of themselves as true brethren. But because they opposed and contradicted the gospel revealed to Paul by Jesus Christ, they really were false brethren, according to the standard of Galatians 1:6-9 (If any man bring another gospel let him be accursed).

It is significant that Paul says these men might bring us into bondage. This wasn't just an issue between the false brethren and Gentiles. It might be easy for Paul to say, "This doesn't affect me. After all, I am a Jew and have been circumcised under the Law of Moses. I'll let Titus or other Gentiles deal with this problem, because these false brethren have a problem with them, not me." Paul realized that if the message of the gospel was compromised, it wasn't just bondage for the Gentiles, but it was bondage for everyone who named the name of Jesus.

## Galatians 2

6 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 in conference added nothing to me:

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;

8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

## Galatians 2

10 Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

11 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 likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter 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?

# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

## The gospel doesn't depend on the approval of men:

*they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:* Paul knew that in his day, there were leaders of high reputation – "famous" Christians, if you will. But they did not overly impress or intimidate Paul; whatever they were, it made no difference to him; Paul knew that God shows personal favoritism to no man.

Even though Paul met with influential and famous Christians a few times, they were not the ones who gave him the gospel he preached. The leaders in Jerusalem added nothing to the gospel Paul preached or to the apostolic authority he possessed.

*Paul didn't wait for someone else to make him a great Christian. He knew that it came down to a personal relationship between himself and Jesus. This isn't to say that Paul received nothing from others or that no one else could ever bless him; but his Christian life was not built upon what other people thought about him or did for him.*

# Paul presents gospel to Jerusalem leaders

## The Jerusalem leaders approved Paul's gospel:

*when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me:* The leaders of the Jerusalem church (James, the brother of Jesus; Cephas, also known as Peter, and John) accepted Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles. They approved Paul's ministry, knowing that Paul did not require the Gentiles to come under the Mosaic Law to find favor with God.

*as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;* Paul's main ministry was to Gentiles, and Peter's main ministry was to Jews. These distinctions were not absolute; each did minister to the other groups.

*They desired only that we should remember the poor:* The only caution from the leaders in Jerusalem was that Paul should remember the poor. In this case, these were probably the poor saints in Jerusalem, whom Gentile believers should not forget.

Paul certainly did remember the poor in Jerusalem. He put a lot of effort towards gathering a contribution among the Gentile churches for the sake of the saints in Jerusalem.

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## The Reason for Paul's public rebuke of Apostle Peter:

*But when Peter was come to Antioch:* Peter approved of Paul's gospel and ministry when Paul came to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:9), and God used Peter himself to welcome Gentiles into Christianity without the precondition of becoming Jews (Acts 11:1-18).

*he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision:* Though Peter was previously in agreement with welcoming Gentiles into the church without bringing them under the Law of Moses, when Peter came to Antioch (Paul's home church), it was another story. He refused to associate with Gentile Christians once certain Jewish believers from Jerusalem came.

These men were Christians of Jewish background. Paul called them "certain men from James" and "those who were of the circumcision". Knowing their background, Peter knew they would be offended at his fellowship with Gentiles who had not come under the Law of Moses. In their eyes, these uncircumcised Gentiles were not really Christians at all. Therefore, to please them and to avoid a conflict, Peter treated these Gentile Christians as if they were not Christians at all.

## Paul's confrontation with Peter

### The Reason for Paul's public rebuke of Apostle Peter (Peter Knew Better!):

Peter had known that God did not require Gentiles to come under the Law of Moses for salvation:

He learned this from the vision God gave him in [Acts 10:10-16](#) where God declared all foods to be clean.

Peter had witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Gentiles who believed (apart from being circumcised) in [Acts 10:44-48](#).

He was fully aware of the agreement of the other leaders of the church in [Acts 11:1-18](#).

But now, Peter turned back on all that he had known about the place of Gentiles in the church, and he treated uncircumcised Gentiles as if they were not saved at all. Sadly others, like Barnabas, would follow his lead.

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## The Reason for Paul's public rebuke of Apostle Peter:

***I said unto Peter before them all:*** This shows how serious the matter was to Paul. He had a public confrontation with Peter over the issue

*This was also serious because it involved the issue of eating together. Before the certain men came from James, Peter would eat with the Gentiles. Yet once they came, Peter withdrew and separated himself. This separation was probably at the church potluck dinner, which they called "the agape banquet" or the "love feast." They would also remember the Lord's death at this dinner and take communion together. Therefore, it is possible that Peter turned these Gentile Christians away from the communion table.*

***Fearing those who were of the circumcision:*** This explains why Peter did this, even when he knew that God welcomed Gentiles into the church without placing them under the Law of Moses. Out of fear, Peter acted against what he knew was right. "Peter perhaps felt that if the members of the embassy went back and told the Jerusalem church that he was eating with Gentiles it would compromise his position with the leading church." (Morris)

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## The Reason for Paul's public rebuke of Apostle Peter:

It is easy to criticize Peter; but every person knows what it means to do something that you know is wrong. Everyone knows what it feels like to go against what you know very well is right. Everyone knows what it feels like when social pressure pushes you towards compromise in some way.

"Their withdrawal from table-fellowship with Gentile believers was not prompted by any theological principle, but by craven fear of a small pressure group... He still believed the gospel, but he failed to practice it." (*"The Message of Galatians"* – John R.W. Stott)

This was the kind of behavior that dominated Peter's life *before* he was transformed by the power of God. This was like Peter telling Jesus not to go to the cross, or Peter taking his eyes off of Jesus and sinking when walking on the water, or like Peter cutting off the ear of the servant of the High Priest when soldiers came to arrest Jesus. We see that the flesh was still present in Peter. Salvation and the filling of the Holy Spirit did not made Peter perfect; the old Peter was still there, just seen less often. As so it is with all of us.

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## The Reason for Paul's public rebuke of Apostle Peter:

*Fearing those who were of the circumcision:* We don't know what it was about these certain men from James that made Peter afraid. Perhaps they were men of strong personality. Perhaps they were men of great prestige and influence. Perhaps they made threats of one kind or another. Whatever it was, the desire to cater to these legalistic Jewish Christians was so strong that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. When these men from James came, even Barnabas treated the Gentile Christians as if they were not Christians at all.

Barnabas was Paul's trusted friend and associate. Barnabas stood beside Paul when he first met the apostles ([Acts 9:27](#)). Barnabas sought out Paul and brought him to Antioch to help with the ministry there ([Acts 11:25](#)). [Acts 11:24](#) says of Barnabas, he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. Yet, Barnabas also failed at this critical test.

"It is not impossible that this incident, by producing a temporary feeling of distrust, may have prepared the way for the dissension between Paul and Barnabas which shortly afterwards led to their separation: [Acts 15:39](#)." ([Galatians 2](#) Lightfoot NT Commentary)

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## The Reason for Paul's public rebuke of Apostle Peter:

*And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him;* Peter first made the compromise of acting as if the Gentile Christians were not Christians at all. Then Barnabas followed him. Then the rest of the Jews followed Peter and Barnabas.

This shows what a heavy responsibility it is to be a leader. When we go astray, others will often follow. Satan knew that if he could make Peter take the wrong path, then many others would follow him.

The word hypocrite means "one who puts on a mask". In this case Peter, Barnabas, and the rest of the Jewish Christians in Antioch knew the Gentile believers were really Christians. Yet, because of the pressure from the certain men from James, they acted like they were not Christians at all.

Peter used to eat with them often but now refused to eat with Gentile believers. Jews did not eat with Gentiles in obedience to Jewish rituals. Peter knew that obedience to these rituals (such as keeping kosher) was not essential for salvation, for either Jews or Gentiles (Acts 10 and Acts 11). He had stopped keeping these Jewish rituals for himself, but now he acted as if he did keep them, so as to accommodate the legalism of the certain men from James. Peter no longer kept a strict observance of the law for himself, but by his actions, he implied that Gentiles believers must keep the law – when he himself did not.

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## Paul confronts Peter publicly:

*But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel:* At the foundation, this wasn't an issue of seating arrangements at the church potluck. It wasn't about table manners and being a good host. It wasn't even about being sensitive to another brother's conscience. Paul saw the issue for what it was; it was about the truth of the gospel.



When the certain men from James, and Peter, and Barnabas, and the rest of the Jews of the church in Antioch would not eat with Gentile Christians, they declared those Gentiles unsaved unbelievers. They said loud and clear, "You can only be right with God if you put yourself under the demands of the Law of Moses. You must be circumcised. You must eat a kosher diet. You must observe the feasts and rituals. You must do nothing that would imply partnership with someone who is not under the Law of Moses. This is the only way to receive the salvation of Jesus."

# Paul's confrontation with Peter

## Paul confronts Peter publicly:

*I said to Peter before them all:* What a scene this must have been! There they were, at the Antioch Christian potluck. The Gentile Christians had just been asked to leave, or were told to sit in their own section away from the real Christians. They also weren't allowed to share the same food that the real Christians ate. Peter – the honored guest – went along with all this. Barnabas – the man who led many of the Gentiles to Jesus – went along with all this. The rest of the Jews in the church at Antioch went along with all this. But Paul would not stand for it. Because this was a public affront to the Gentile Christians and because it was a public denial of the truth of the gospel, Paul confronted Peter in a public way.

It must have been hard for Paul, *knowing who Peter was*. Peter was the most prominent of all the disciples of Jesus. Peter was the spokesman for the apostles, and probably the most prominent Christian in the whole world at the time. It also must have been hard *knowing who was in agreement with Peter*. First, Paul had to contend with the strong, domineering personalities of the *certain men from James*. Then, Paul had to go against *Barnabas*, who was probably his best friend. Finally, Paul had to go against *the rest of the Jewish Christians*. Paul was in the minority on this issue – it was him and all the Gentile Christians against all the Jewish Christians.

## Paul's confrontation with Peter

### Paul confronts Peter publicly:



As hard as this was, Paul did it because he knew what was at stake. This wasn't a matter of personal conduct or just personal sin on Peter's part. If that were the case it is unlikely that Paul would have first used such a public approach. This was a matter about the truth of the gospel; proclaiming, "This is how a man is right before God."

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