

## Recap of Last Week:

- **This is a letter**, not an essay or a chapter in a book. We don't have the original copy of the letter but versions that have been passed down through the ages.
  - The "powers that be" **divided all the books of the Bible into chapters**, sometimes at awkward places. We just need to remember those were not Paul's decisions. Nor did he provide the handy **headings** you see in some bibles.
  - Also, because it's a letter, there's **a context we don't fully understand**. It's likely there were previous interactions, and at least one of those has made Paul feel defensive; he seems to have felt they questioned his authority and messing with his ministry. Paul is writing to a **group of churches** Galatia.
- Written to a **group of churches** in Galatia (not sure whether a group of northern churches or a group of southern churches—affects timeline).
- We're not sure when the letter was written, but the **best guess is late 40's to some time in the 50's** — 10-20 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus
- **Paul is angry**. How do we know this?
  - Right up front we see that he has left off the Thanksgiving in the first part of the letter. For instance, Romans he writes things like "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. **9** For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel[b] of his Son, is my witness that without ceasing I remember you always in my prayers"; "I long to see you...that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith", etc.
  - Paul's anger is especially relevant to Chapter 2. One commentary writes: "Parts of the passage are difficult to follow, for Paul is so agitated that he has written convoluted and incomplete sentences. We can vitally hear him spluttering with anger as he writes: his butchered syntax reflects the strong passions that still swirl around the controversy." (New Interpreters, pp. 221)
  - Just a note that, in Ch. 1, Paul has not yet said what has made him so angry.
- Paul finds it important to make the **case for his own authority**. We left Ch. 1 with Paul making the case for his apostleship, his authority: How he at first persecuted the church, met Jesus (thought he doesn't tell the Road to Damascus story), went off to Arabia and then Damascus. After 3 years, he went to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, who is Peter. He then went to Syria and Cilicia. He explained that he was "still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea" but they had heard of his work and "glorified God" because of him.

Now we're ready for Chapter 2. He is continuing his case, proving that he is worthy of speaking on Christ's behalf.

Main characters:

- Paul
- Barnabas, a teacher and leader of the early Jerusalem church, recruited Paul to Antioch, traveled a good deal with Paul, seen as a conciliator
- Titus, a gentile Christian
- James, brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem church
- Cephas, same as Peter
- John - probably one of the disciples of Jesus

As we read, make note of what stands out to you in this passage: Either what seems **important**, what seems **interesting**, or what's **confusing**.

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## 1. Paul and the Other Apostles

**1** Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. **2** I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running, or had not run, in vain. **3** But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. **4** But because of false brothers and sisters secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us— **5** we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. **6** And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those leaders contributed nothing to me. **7** On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised **8** (for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the gentiles), **9** and when James and Cephas and John, who were acknowledged pillars, recognized the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, agreeing that we should go to the gentiles and they to the circumcised. **10** They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was[a] eager to do.

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We wove in some discussion about this passage last week, but what stands out to you about this passage?

- This meeting may or may not have been the same as the **Jerusalem Council** that we read about in Acts 15. There are long explanations about why it may or may not be. We can act as if it is, for ease, but just know that we don't really know.
  - The differences in depictions of the agreement reached in Jerusalem could be due to Luke writing in a later church agreement [Luke wrote a generation after Galatians letter.]
- What is the issue again? **Circumcision**. "Sign of the covenant", showed they belonged to the chosen people of God. Some Jewish Christians believed that salvation was only for the Jews—so one had to become Jewish before they could become Christian. They should be circumscribed and follow the law of Torah.
- What's up with the "**acknowledged pillars**?" Appears 4 times: He doesn't care. They may be pillars but they can still be wrong. He is very clear here that he is right and the next section shares a little bit about his confidence, by taking on Peter himself. Apparently Peter (called Cephas here) has come to Antioch, Paul's home base. [pillars probably evokes use with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but Paul is skeptical - NI, p. 227]
  - Paul emphasizes that 1) he received his understanding of the gospel from God, not the apostles but 2) his understanding does not differ substantially from theirs. (2:6)
  - "This text, therefore, might provoke reflection on the ways we become intimidated by or inappropriately deferential to authority figures, even within the church. The gospel tells us to stand up, as Paul and Barnabas did, and bear witness clearly to what God is doing in the world." (NI, pp. 229)
- "**I was not running, or had not run, in vain**": mission was for unity in the church, "to bring Jew and Gentile together in Christ", but that would be a harder lift if they couldn't agree on the truth of Paul's understanding of the gospel (NI, p. 223)
- "**Spying on us**" - maybe those reporting back to the Jerusalem church about what's going on in his ministry
- **Freedom vs. slavery** - 2:4 - first time this theme is introduced; will become a major theme.
  - The NI commentary notes that of course, the Jewish Christians would not have thought they were enslaving gentiles. They saw circumcision and following the Torah as "a sign of freedom from the passions of the flesh" (p. 225)

- **“Remember the poor”** - means to provide financial support (NI). Basic obligation to support the poor and oppressed that was built into covenant obligations. In fact, Acts and several of Paul’s letter refer to a collection he is making among the gentiles to take to help the poor in Jerusalem.

- **Takeaways:**

- Even the church leaders agreed to this so the new folks are either **lying** or the Jerusalem leaders had **turned their back on the truth** [there was growing Jewish discontent and nationalism so they could have been trying to keep the peace]
  - The truth is found in God and Christ, not humans
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## 2. Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

**11** But when **Cephas** came to **Antioch**, I opposed him to his face because he stood self-condemned, **12** for until **certain people came from James**, he used to eat with the gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the **circumcision faction**. **13** And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even **Barnabas** was led astray by their hypocrisy. **14** But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to **Cephas** before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?”<sup>[b]</sup>

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- “He used to eat with gentiles” refers to table fellowship. James encouraged Jewish Christians to observe Jewish dietary laws and customs. Although the Torah didn’t forbid Jews to eat with Gentiles, other ancient texts (e.g., Book of Jubilees) did. It may have been a custom that came from trying to adhere to the strict dietary laws and maintaining a separate identity.
  - Powell suggests this may have been a “separate but equal” kind of thing. Let the Jews be Jews and the gentiles be gentiles. But Paul rejects that, calling it hypocrisy. Such an approach is making the gentiles act like Jews.
  - Apparently Peter doesn’t always follow the strict dietary code (Acts 11) but expects the gentiles to do so.
  - “Hypocrisy” in the text means more like playing out a certain role.

### 3. Jews and Gentiles Are Saved by Faith

- **Quotation marks** were not used in ancient Greek manuscripts to mark a speaker's words, so some commentaries act as if the rest of this chapter is separate from Paul's words above. However the NI treats them as the same speech, directed at Peter/Cephas—but also at the Galatians.
  - The word “justified” here means something like “made right with God”
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**15** We ourselves are Jews by birth and not gentile sinners, **16** yet we know that a person is justified<sup>[c]</sup> not by the works of the law but through the faith of Jesus Christ.<sup>[d]</sup> And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by the faith of Christ<sup>[e]</sup> and not by doing the works of the law, because no one will be justified by the works of the law. **17** But if, in our effort to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! **18** But if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor. **19** For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ, **20** and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God,<sup>[f]</sup> who loved me and gave himself for me. **21** I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness<sup>[g]</sup> comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

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- There are 3 rather significant ideas to discuss here: 1) whether we are justified by our faith in Christ or by Jesus's faithfulness; 2) what does “faith” even mean; and 3) the role of “works” in our salvation? Let's talk briefly about each of these in turn. These will be explored in much more depth throughout the letter to the Galatians, so let's just tip our toe in a bit.

1) whether we are justified by our faith in Christ or by Jesus's faithfulness.

- 2:16 = commentators say that the preposition after faith can be “in” or “of”: “faith of Jesus Christ” vs. “faith in Jesus Christ”. What's the difference?
- First of all, “Faith of” emphasizes that Jesus is extending grace; Jesus is in control. **How does that interpretation sit with you?**
- “Faith in” - difference between “belief” and “faith” - which leads us to...

2) the difference between “belief” and “faith”

- Every commentator discusses the difference between modern understandings of what **belief** means (at least one prominent definition as,

in this case, believing, say, that Jesus is the Son of God or that Jesus is my savior) and what **faith** means (which is tied very inextricably to **trust**).

- **How does that interpretation sit with you?**

3) the role of “works” in our salvation

- Paul was talking about the “works of the law”? But **what are modern ways that we think of “works”?**
- **How do you see the role of works relating to salvation?**
- **(If time)** show Justification vs. Sanctification chart