

Galatians 2

A Translation with Interpretation by James Garriss

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Paul Defended his Apostleship

Galatians 2:1-10

Limits of the Text

In 1:11 Paul began a long autobiographical section of the book, one that lasts through chapter 2. He presented it as a defense of the assertion he made in 1:1, that he preached with the authority of Jesus. Once he established his authority, he could expound upon the message of faith in Jesus. In 1:11-24 Paul described the origin of his apostleship. In 2:1-10 Paul described the acceptance of his apostleship by three leaders of the early church.

Translation

2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along, too. 2 I went up in accordance with a revelation, and I myself explained privately to the leaders the gospel that I am preaching to the nations in order to make sure I was not running or had not run without purpose. 3 But not even Titus, a Greek, who was with me was compelled to be circumcised. 4 This attempted compulsion occurred because of the false brothers who joined us using false pretenses—they snuck in to spy out the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us— 5 to whom we did not yield in subjection for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 6 And from the important leaders—what kind of leaders they were at that time makes no difference to me; God shows no favoritism to man—these leaders submitted nothing to me for judgment. 7 Instead, having seen that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the Gentiles just as Peter had been of the Jews (8 for the one who worked in Peter as an apostle to the Jews also worked in me as an apostle to the nations) 9 and having perceived the grace given to me, James, Cephas, and John, the leaders who were the pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might preach to the nations, and they to the Jews. 10 They asked only that we might remember the poor, and I was eager to do the same thing.

Interpretation

The main point of the first paragraph is found in verse 6: “These leaders submitted nothing to me for judgment.” The pillars had no rebuke for Paul and no additions to the gospel he was preaching; in fact, they affirmed his unique calling from God.

1 Ἐπειτα διὰ δεκατεσσάρων ἐτῶν πάλιν ἀνέβην εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα μετὰ Βαρναβᾶ συμπαραλαβῶν καὶ Τίτον.¹

¹ The Greek text is the NA27.

1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along, too.

Using the word “then” Paul continued to remind his readers that he omitted nothing from his timeline of events;² there had never been a time when he had received training from the other apostles. After fourteen years, Paul went to Jerusalem again. It’s not certain if the fourteen years is dated from his conversion or from his previous visit to Peter; the grammar does not specify.

When Paul went back to Jerusalem, he went with Barnabas and took along Titus. Took along (συμπαραλαβῶν) is a compound verb that combines “I am taking” (λαμβάνω) with two prepositions, “together” and “beside,” to mean to take along with; it emphasizes the accompaniment.³ Paul’s main emphasis was that he wasn’t alone on this trip, but he may also be hinting that Barnabas went along as equal partner (suggested by the use of the main verb), while Titus was in a subordinate role (suggested by the use of a subordinate participle).

The exact reason for Titus’ presence on this trip is not known, and opinions vary widely. Bruce speculates that Paul was providing good experience in “responsible negotiations” for the future pastor.⁴ Longenecker suggests that Titus is mentioned in part because the church at Galatia knew him, perhaps because he accompanied Paul on his first missionary trip.⁵ George thinks Titus was a representative of the famine relief effort to the Jerusalem believers.⁶ Others, such as Luther, speculate that Titus was Paul’s test case for Gentiles and the Mosaic law.

2 ἀνέβην δὲ κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν· καὶ ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρῦσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, κατ’ ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν, μή πως εἰς κενὸν τρέχω ἢ ἔδραμον.

2 I went up in accordance with a revelation, and I myself explained privately to the leaders the gospel that I am preaching to the nations in order to make sure I was not running or had not run without purpose.

A revelation from God motivated Paul to go back to Jerusalem. Nothing is known about this revelation, which has, naturally, generated all sorts of speculation on its source and nature, but the revelation itself is not the point of the verse. Paul went up because God told him to, not because the pillars did; he was asserting his independence from the Jerusalem leaders.

What visit to Jerusalem is this? The two main positions are that this is either the famine

² This same word appears in 1:18 and 1:21.

³ Louw, 1:202.

⁴ Bruce, 107.

⁵ Longenecker, 47.

⁶ George, 141.

visit of Ac 11:30 or the Jerusalem council of Ac 15.⁷ In my judgment it is very unlikely that the visit in this text refers to the Jerusalem council of Ac 15, because if the council had taken place before Paul wrote this letter, then its verdict would be the centerpiece of Paul's letter to the Galatians; indeed, the verdict would have instantly ended all debate. Therefore, this visit in 2:2 more likely corresponds to Ac 11:30.

When he went to Jerusalem, Paul explained his gospel to the pillars. To explain (ἀνεθέμην) means to make something clear by presenting additional or different information.⁸ The emphasis of the middle voice is intensive; that is, Paul personally explained the matter. Apparently those in the church at Jerusalem didn't know everything Paul was doing, and to make matters worse it seems as if they were getting a lot of bad secondhand information. His explanation probably included everything that is discussed here in his letter to the Galatians and more. "With fourteen years' experience of Gentile evangelization, he could adduce solid evidence to the effectiveness of his preaching."⁹

The focus of Paul's explanation was the gospel he was preaching (κηρύσσω). Preaching is in the present tense; Paul asserted that he was currently continuing to preach to the Galatians the exact same gospel that he had previously presented to the leaders of the Jerusalem church. Apparently the Judaizers claimed he preached different gospels to different people, but Paul had only one gospel, the gospel he was preaching to the nations (ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). This same prepositional phrase was used in 1:16 to explain God's purpose for revealing his Son.

Paul explained his gospel privately to the leaders. The word leaders (δοκοῦσιν) comes from a verb which can mean "to choose," but when in participle form (as it is here) this verb can mean those who are in positions of leadership, influence, or prominence.¹⁰ Paul used this participle twice in verse 6 and once in verse 9, all referring to Peter, James, and John, as verse 9 makes clear. There is probably a bit of tension in Paul's use of the word leaders that does not show up in this English translation. On one hand, there is no doubt that they were genuine apostles chosen by God;¹¹ on the other hand, the Judaizers had overemphasized the importance of these three leaders in comparison to Paul.

Paul finished his sentence with a purpose clause, the reason why Paul met with the leaders. He explained his gospel in order to make sure (μή πως) of something; these two Greek words together act adverbially as a marker of negative purpose.¹² What

⁷ In his introduction, Longenecker has an excellent comparison and contrast of Ga 2 and Ac 15 (lxxvii).

⁸ Louw, 1:405.

⁹ Bruce, 110.

¹⁰ Louw, 1:737.

¹¹ The ESV's translation, "those who seemed influential," creates an unwarranted sense of doubt about their leadership and influence; these three pillars of the early church were leaders, and they were very influential.

¹² Swanson, DBLG 3590.

negative purpose was Paul referring to? What result did he not want to hear? He wanted to make sure that he had not and was not running without purpose (κενὸν). “Without purpose” is from an adjective that has several possible meanings, including without result, without purpose, and untrue. In a sense, these are all true. If Paul had somehow made a mistake and was preaching the wrong gospel, then his ministry would have no lasting result, would have no purpose, and would not be the truth. Paul is using a race analogy in this verse (i.e., he was running), thus either of the first two meanings, without result or without purpose, would make more sense.

Why was it important to Paul to make sure that he was not running without purpose? Did he doubt the genuineness of his conversation, his calling, or his gospel? That seems unlikely, given his autobiographical assertions thus far. It seems more likely that Paul was here on a mission of unity. He wanted to make sure that the results of his efforts coincided with the results of the church leaders’ efforts so that one didn’t have a negative effect upon the other. If the Jewish leaders disapproved of his work, they couldn’t have stopped Paul, but they could have severely limited the effectiveness of his outreach.¹³

3 ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Τίτος ὁ σὺν ἐμοί, Ἕλλην ὢν, ἠναγκάσθη περιτμηθῆναι·

3 But not even Titus, a Greek, who was with me was compelled to be circumcised.

Bruce describes verses 3-5 as a digression from the main narrative, which will resume in verse 6.¹⁴ George agrees and also suggests that the digression parallels the literal, physical interruption in the meeting by the false brothers, which is mentioned in verse 4.¹⁵ The grammar in this section is both complex and bad; Lightfoot called it a “shipwreck of grammar.”

The verse begins with a strong contrast (ἀλλ’), but it is not clear what Paul is contrasting. The grammar seems to indicate that he was contrasting the lack of compulsion with his explanation to the leaders in the previous verse, but that doesn’t make sense. More likely he was contrasting the lack of compulsion with the claims the Judaizers had made to the Galatian churches. They claimed Gentile believers weren’t really believers unless they were circumcised, and that they had the authority and backing of the Jerusalem apostles on this matter. Paul contradicted their claims by noting that the leaders in Jerusalem did not compel Titus to be circumcised.

4 διὰ δὲ τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους, οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπήσαι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἡμῶν ἣν ἔχομεν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσουσιν,

4 This attempted compulsion occurred because of the false brothers who joined us using

¹³ Longenecker, 49.

¹⁴ Bruce, 111.

¹⁵ George, 141.

false pretenses—they snuck in to spy out the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us—

This verse begins with a grammatical anacoluthon, meaning it has broken syntax; specifically, this clause has no subject or verb. The clause begins with “because” (διὰ), but there is nothing explicit in this verse that “because” refers back to. Probably there is an omitted verb of being, which was common in Koine Greek; the translation could be “but it was because.” As this refers back to the attempted compulsion of verse 3, I made this compulsion explicit.¹⁶

Although the meeting was private (2:2), somehow those who were not true believers learned of it. When they did, Paul’s meeting with the leaders was interrupted by some false brothers (ψευδαδέλφους), a compound noun that has the idea of one who is a not a brother pretending to be a brother. “It is frequently necessary to make explicit the full implications of ‘false brother’ by translating ‘one who pretends to be a fellow believer in Christ but is not.’”¹⁷ Apparently those who were not really brothers—though they had fooled some into thinking they were brothers—attempted to convince those at the meeting that Titus must be circumcised. As verse 3 noted, their attempts were not successful. It is likely that these false brothers were Judaizers, the same group who tried this again later: “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’” (Ac 15:1).

In order to get into the meeting, the false brothers joined using false pretenses. “Joined using false pretenses” is actually one word in Greek (παρεισάκτους), an adjective that modifies false brothers.¹⁸ It has the idea of joining a group by illegal means¹⁹ and/or under false pretenses and motivations.²⁰

The rest of the sentence is parenthetical; it specifies the motivations behind the illicit activities of these false brothers. They snuck in (παρεισῆλθον),²¹ which means “to join surreptitiously with evil intent...to slip into a group unnoticed.”²² They did so to spy out (κατασκοπήσαι) their freedom. This is the only use of this infinitive in the New Testament, and it means “to watch or observe secretly and with presumed evil intent”²³ and “unwarranted spying out which includes an element of suspicion.”²⁴ This infinitive explains the motives of the false brothers; they wanted to learn what Paul was preaching, but they were not interested in exalting Christ and advancing the gospel.

¹⁶ The NET handles the problem by beginning the verse with “Now this matter arose because...”.

¹⁷ Louw, 1:126.

¹⁸ The thought here is too complex to capture in a single English word, which is why the adjective was converted into a clause.

¹⁹ Kittel, 5:825.

²⁰ Louw, 1:449.

²¹ Snuck in is related to joined using false pretenses; the first is an adjective, the second a verb.

²² Louw, 1:449.

²³ Louw, 1:281.

²⁴ Kittel, 7:417.

The verse finishes with a ἵνα clause, which reveals that the ultimate motivation of their spying was to enslave (καταδουλώσουσιν). This verb means to “to gain control over someone and thus make such an individual subservient to one’s own interests.”²⁵ It is unlikely that these Judaizers saw themselves as enslavers; they were probably just looking for more reasons to boast (6:13). Yet Paul knew if their position on justification was accepted, it would result in the slavery of believers.²⁶

These Judaizers were all sorts of wrong here. They pretended to be believers; snuck into meetings they were not invited to; and looked to enslave people (not to the law, but to themselves). It’s hard to see how God could have been working through them, which is no doubt Paul’s point.

5 οἷς οὐδὲ πρὸς ὥραν εἴξαμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ, ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου διαμείνη πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

5 but we did not yield in submission to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

This verse anticipates 5:1; it is a preview of the theme from the practical part of the book: Freedom. Requiring obedience to the Mosaic law is bondage; faith in Jesus alone is freedom.

To them (οἷς) refers back to the false brothers in 2:4. Paul and the pillars did not yield (εἴξαμεν) to them, meaning they did not give in to or surrender.²⁷ Specifically, they did not yield in submission (ὑποταγῇ), which means they were not subjected to or obedient²⁸ to the Judaizers’ attempts. Submission to circumcision (a reference back to the compulsion of Titus in 2:3) was the means used to get the apostles to yield to the Judaizers. George notes that this doctrine of subjection is alive and well today. Although it does not take the form of submitting to circumcision, it does appear in submitting to the mass, water baptism, good works, or a charismatic experience.²⁹

They did not yield for a moment (ὥραν); this noun refers to time and can be translated as hour, occasion, or a while.³⁰ Idiomatically we don’t say “I didn’t buy that lie for an hour,” but rather “I didn’t buy that lie for a moment;” hence the somewhat loose translation.

Paul and the pillars did not yield so that the truth of the gospel might continue. The reason that they did not yield was to advocate the true gospel, as opposed to the false gospel advocated by the Judaizers, which is not really a gospel at all (1:6-7). Paul

²⁵ Louw, 1:474.

²⁶ Paul explained why this would be slavery in 4:1-11.

²⁷ Louw, 1:494.

²⁸ Zodhiates, G5292.

²⁹ George, 153.

³⁰ Swanson, DBLG 6052.

said that this truth might continue (διαμείνη). The use of the subjunctive (might continue) suggests that Paul believed that the Galatians, despite the current situation, were genuine believers.³¹ But if they had yielded, then the Galatians would no longer have been associated with the gospel. Since they did not yield, the gospel continued with the Galatians in two senses. One, the gospel was present; two, the gospel was active (changing them).

This verse reveals Paul's motivation, the gospel, and his "pastoral love and concern."³² Unlike the Judaizers, he was not out to build his own cult, but to spread the gospel and see it change believers.

6 Ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν δοκούντων εἶναί τι, - ὅποιοί ποτε ἦσαν οὐδὲν μοι διαφέρει· πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεοῦ ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει - ἐμοὶ γὰρ οἱ δοκοῦντες οὐδὲν προσανέθεντο,

6 And from the important leaders—what kind of leaders they were at that time makes no difference to me; God shows no favoritism to man—these leaders submitted **nothing to me** for judgment.

At this point Paul dropped the subject of the false brothers and returned to the main point of the narrative, his meeting with the pillars. The opening conjunction, and (δὲ), continues the thought of 2:2, his explanation of the gospel he was preaching. Verses 6 through 10 are one long, convoluted sentence in Greek whose main point is to disprove the Judaizers' claim that they operated with apostolic approval but Paul did not.

Paul explained the gospel he was preaching to the leaders (δοκούντων & δοκοῦντες), the same word used in 2:2. On the one hand, Paul acknowledged that these leaders were important (εἶναί τι) leaders. The Greek literally reads "to be someone" or "to be something," but because the participle is substantival, I translated this infinitive as the adjective "important." Some translations seem to imply that these leaders might not be important but only seemed to be important, but this is misleading. They were leaders, God chose them to be leaders, and the result is that they were important. Paul was not impugning their character or their influence here; in fact, he did the opposite. There is a marked difference between "false brothers" and "important leaders."

On the other hand, Paul didn't overemphasize their importance. Bruce sees "at that time" as a historical connection back to Jesus; Peter, and John were his disciples and James his brother.³³ Part of the pillars' status resulted from their long-time association with Jesus, an association Paul did not have. The Judaizers had probably given these leaders an extra-high exalted status but had accused Paul "of being a Johnny-come-lately to the Christian faith."³⁴ But whether the status the Judaizers gave the pillars was

³¹ Longenecker, 53.

³² George, 151.

³³ Bruce, 118.

³⁴ George, 155.

deserved or more than they deserved, it made no difference to Paul (οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει).³⁵

Why did the status of pillars make no difference to Paul? It didn't matter to Paul because he had received a revelation of Jesus (1:12). He knew the truth of the gospel he preached, and reputation and status were not more important than truth. Or as Paul stated it, "God shows no favoritism to man" (πρόσωπον [ὁ] θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει). This clause literally says, "God does not take the face of man;" taking or accepting the face is a New Testament idiom for showing favoritism or partiality. The pillars did not have truth because they were had status; they had truth because Jesus had given them the truth, and he had given it to Paul, too.

When they heard his explanation (2:2), the pillars submitted nothing to Paul for judgment (προσανέθεντο).³⁶ They had no improvements or additions to make. Paul was preaching the right gospel and the entire gospel, the same gospel they were preaching. This is the climax of the section and Paul's main point. With this verdict, he was vindicated and the Judaizers exposed as liars.

7 ἀλλὰ τούναντίον ἰδόντες ὅτι πεπίστευμαι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας καθὼς Πέτρος τῆς περιτομῆς,

7 Instead, having seen that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the Gentiles just as Peter had been of the Jews

This verse begins with two connectives (ἀλλὰ τούναντίον) that when used together give a very emphatic contrast. The pillars had nothing to submit, in fact, exactly the opposite. Instead of needing to alter Paul's gospel (as the Judaizers were doing), the leaders in Jerusalem gave him the right hand of fellowship (2:9).

The participle "having seen" (ἰδόντες) is linked with the participle "having perceived" in 2:9. The leaders gave the right hand of fellowship because they had seen and had perceived. So what they saw in this verse is one of the two reasons why they gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. What did they see? They saw that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel. Entrusted (πεπίστευμαι) is the verb from which we get "faith" and "trust." In this context it means to put something into the care of another,³⁷ where the emphasis is on the giving. Someone else, God, had entrusted Paul, and the effects of this entrusting continued into the present; that is, Paul was still entrusted with the gospel.³⁸

Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of the Gentiles (ἀκροβυστίας), and Peter with the gospel of the Jews (περιτομῆς). Paul did not actually use the Greek words for

³⁵ Literally "it is not being different to me."

³⁶ This is the same verb used in 1:16; see the discussion there for explanation of the word.

³⁷ Swanson, DBLG 4409.

³⁸ The participle is perfect tense and passive voice.

Gentiles and Jews here, but rather the words uncircumcised and circumcised. Although this distinction was clear in Greek and Jewish culture, it means very little in modern cultures; thus I translated them as Gentiles and Jews. These nouns are perhaps genitive of reference; that is, one is the gospel with reference to the Gentiles, and the other is the gospel with reference to the Jews. One potential problem with this understanding is that it may seem like there are two gospels in mind, one a Gentile gospel and the other a Jew gospel. But what Paul has in mind is not differences in type, but differences in sphere.³⁹ His focus was preaching the gospel to Gentiles, and theirs was to the Jews.

What was it that persuaded the leaders that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel of the Gentiles? Longenecker offers three options. One, Paul's account of his revelation (1:12). Two, the reports of Paul's preaching which brought glory to God (1:23-24). Three, Paul's explanation of his gospel in this meeting (2:2).⁴⁰ Perhaps it was all the above.

8 ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας Πέτρῳ εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐμοὶ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη,

8 (for the one who worked in Peter as an apostle to the Jews also worked in me as an apostle to the nations)

Paul paused his own sentence and interjected a comment about the one who had entrusted the gospel to Peter and himself. The verb that Paul used to describe God as the one who worked (ἐνεργήσας and ἐνήργησεν) can emphasize the initiation of work or the results of the work. It could mean that God worked in Peter and Paul to make them apostles, or it could mean that God worked effectively in their ministries as apostles. The NASB95, for example, favors the former: "For He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles." The ISV, however, favors the latter: "For the one who worked through Peter by making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me by sending me to the Gentiles." From the context—Paul was entrusted with the gospel (1:7) and received God's grace (1:9)—it appears that the emphasis is on the initiation, even though my translation is neutral enough to be understood either way.

"While the strategic division of labor between the two apostles was the practical outcome of the conference, its theological basis was rooted in a more fundamental recognition: The same God who was at work in the ministry of Peter was also at work in the ministry of Paul. The two apostles proclaimed the same gospel because they worshiped the same God."⁴¹

9 καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ

³⁹ George, 161.

⁴⁰ Longenecker, 55.

⁴¹ George, 163.

δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἔμοι καὶ Βαρναβᾶ κοινωνίας, ἵνα ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περικομήν·

9 and having perceived the grace given to me, James, Cephas, and John, the leaders who were the pillars, gave **to me** and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that **we might preach** to the nations, and **they** to the Jews.

The participle “having perceived” is linked by the conjunction “and” (καὶ) to the participle “having seen” back in 2: 7. The leaders saw that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel and perceived the grace that had been given to him. Thus verse 9 gives the second of the two reasons why they gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand.

They perceived the grace given to Paul. Perceived (γνόντες) is the verbal form of the word for knowledge and has several semantic variations. The context suggests the idea of becoming aware of something, thus the word could be translated as realized.⁴² When Paul explained the gospel he preached (2:2), the pillars learned something new, and they perceived the grace God gave him. Grace is a reference back to the grace of 1:15-16, the grace through which God called Paul.

The leaders that Paul referred to in 2:2 and 2:6 are revealed in this verse to be James, Cephas,⁴³ and John, three of Jesus’ disciples; furthermore, they were not merely leaders by their reputation, they were also pillars. Pillar (στῦλοι) is an architectural term, meaning a column that supports a building, but it has the figurative meaning of a person with authority or influence who supports the church.⁴⁴ In a similar manner, the Talmud refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the pillars of Israel, upon whom the covenant community was established.⁴⁵ It seems that the early church perceived James, Cephas, and John to have a similar role, the establishers and supporters of the new church.

James, Cephas, and John gave Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Giving the right hand was “an idiom of the day for pledging friendship and acknowledging agreement.”⁴⁶ This idiom was not uniquely Jewish, and in some situations it meant an inferior surrendering or submitting to a superior. Since that was not the impression Paul wanted to give, he noted that it was the right hand of fellowship (κοινωνίας), which has the idea of a close relationship or communion.⁴⁷ So in summary they mutually agreed to work closely together in a spirit of friendship; this is Christian unity at its best.

The verse ends with a *hina* (ἵνα) clause, which gives the goal of giving the right hand.

⁴² Ardent, 200.

⁴³ Cephas is the Aramaic nickname of Simon Peter; it means rock.

⁴⁴ Zohiatis, G4769.

⁴⁵ Longenecker, 57.

⁴⁶ Longenecker, 58.

⁴⁷ Ardent, 552.

The difficulty in this clause is knowing the exact goal, because there is no verb in the Greek. The context, however, is very helpful. Paul had explained the gospel he was preaching to the nations (2:2), and the leaders saw that he had been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the Jews (2:7). So it seems that preaching the gospel to the nations was what Paul had in mind here. Whatever the exact verb, the meeting concluded in a spirit of friendship wherein everyone agreed that the pillars would focus their efforts on the Jews, and Paul on the Gentiles.

10 μόνον τῶν πτωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν, ὃ καὶ ἐσπούδασα αὐτὸ τοῦτο ποιῆσαι.

10 *They asked only that we might remember the poor, and I was eager to do the same thing.*

Although the leaders had agreed that Paul would focus his evangelistic efforts on the Gentile, they did make one request⁴⁸ of him: Remember the poor. This verse is also missing a verb.⁴⁹ Given that the leaders had nothing to add to his gospel, something like “they asked” or “they requested” must be supplied to make a complete sentence.

The leaders wanted Paul to keep on remembering⁵⁰ (μνημονεύωμεν) the poor. It’s probable that the poor in mind here were the Jewish churches in Jerusalem and Judea. They were in a period of chronic economic deprivation, due to poor irrigation, famine, and war, and so were known as “the poor.”⁵¹

Paul was eager to do this. “I was eager” (ἐσπούδασα) is an aorist tense verb, which has a completed action in mind. Paul had already adopted a mindset of remembering poor Jewish believers.⁵² If this visit to Jerusalem correlates to Acts 11:27-30 (as I think it does), then Paul had already brought a gift of money to the church. The pillars were essentially asking that he keep on doing this kind of activity, and Paul was more than happy to agree to this concession.

⁴⁸ “Only” signifies that the pillars had a concession they wanted, but it wasn’t one that would add to Paul’s gospel.

⁴⁹ The subject is in a previous verse; verses 6 through 10 are a single sentence in Greek.

⁵⁰ The verb is present tense.

⁵¹ George, 165.

⁵² Longenecker, 61.

Structural Diagram

(Paul went to the regions of Syria and Cilicia 1:21)

|

Then

I went up to Jerusalem

I went up in accordance with a revelation

and

I explained the gospel

But

not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised

This compulsion occurred

because of the false brothers

(I explained the gospel 2:2)

And

these leaders submitted **nothing to me** for judgment

|

Instead

| having seen that I had been entrusted

|

and

| having perceived the grace given to me

James, Cephas, and John gave **to me**

and

Barnabas the right hand of fellowship

so that

we might preach to the nations

and

they to the Jews

They asked only that we might remember the poor

and

I was eager to do the same thing

Tracing the Argument

External – Before Paul can defend the gospel itself, he must defend his apostleship. In the previous section (1:11-24), he explained the origin of his apostleship. In the current section, he explained how his apostleship was not subservient to the apostles nor was it defective in any way.

Internal – When Paul explained his gospel to the leadership in the church in Jerusalem, they found no fault in it, they agreed to work together in cooperation, and they did not yield to attempts to force circumcision upon a Greek brother. They accepted him as an apostle.

Textual Outline

1. Paul explained his gospel to the church leaders (2:1-2).
2. The church leaders accepted Greek believers (2:3-5).
3. The church leaders approved Paul's gospel (2:6).
4. The church leaders agreed to cooperate (2:7-10).

Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote 2:1-10 in order to confirm his apostleship because the pillars had recognized his ministry and saw no reason to change his ministry.

Teaching Outline

God confirms his calling in the lives of his people, and today I want you know how you can confirm God's calling in your life. From our text in Galatians, we are going to see 2 ways that God confirms his calling.

1. Confirm God's calling through Spirit-filled leaders (1:1-6).
2. Confirm God's calling through common purposes (1:7-10).

Galatians 2:11-21

Limits of the Text

This section concludes the autobiographical portion of Paul's letter. It gives his third and final defense of the authority of his apostleship, describing the influence that Paul had, even over Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles (2:11-14). It also serves as a transition to the next section. Paul's speech (2:15-21) not only explains why Peter's actions were hypocritical, it also looks ahead and previews the following section on justification by grace alone (3:1-4:31).

Translation

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he had been wrong. 12 For he was eating with Gentiles before the coming of some men from James; but when they came he began withdrawing and excluding himself, being fearful of the Jews. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not living right according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of everyone, "If you, a Jew, are being like Gentiles and not living like Jews, how are you compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

15 **We** *are* Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 16 but perceiving that a person is not declared righteous by works of law but through faith in Jesus Christ, we also believed in Jesus Christ, so that we might be declared righteous by faith in Christ and not by works of law, because no one will be declared righteous by works of law. 17 But if, while seeking to be declared righteous in Christ, we were also found to be sinners, is Christ a servant of sin? May it never be! 18 For if I am rebuilding the things which I destroyed, I am proving myself a **transgressor**. 19 For I myself died to the law through the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified **with Christ**; 20 so I myself am no longer living, but Christ is living in me; and that which I am now living in the body, I am living by means of faith to him, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I am not regarding the grace of God as invalid; for if righteousness *is* through the law, then Christ died without purpose.

Interpretation

Verse 11 begins a new paragraph and provides Paul's third and final proof that his apostleship was not derived from the Twelve. Paul confronted Peter publicly when Peter was not living consistently with the gospel.

11 Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν Κηφᾶς εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν, κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῷ ἀντέστην, ὅτι κατεγνωσμένος ἦν.

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he had been wrong.

When did Paul oppose Cephas (Peter) in Antioch? For the point that Paul wants to make, it's sufficient to know that this event took place sometime after the meeting described in the previous section, 2:1-10; nevertheless, by correlating with the book of Acts, it's possible to create a timeline of events. Antioch was a coastal town on the Mediterranean Sea north of Jerusalem, the third largest city in the Roman Empire.⁵³ Persecuted Jews who fled Jerusalem (Ac 8:4) evangelized the city, and both Jews and Gentiles were saved. When the Jerusalem church heard how the hand of the Lord was with them, they sent Barnabas, who in turn found Paul and brought him to Antioch to help disciple the new converts. The church in Antioch sent a famine relief offering to Jerusalem, which Paul and Barnabas carried (Ac 11:19-30), which is the meeting described in Ga 2:1-10. After this, Paul and Barnabas went on their first missionary journey (Ac 13:4-14:25). They returned and testified of all that God had done (Ac 14:26-28). Into this environment of a mixed Jew/Gentile church came Peter.

Paul opposed Peter because he was wrong. To be wrong (κατεγνωσμένος) has the idea of being condemned or convicted by one's own actions.⁵⁴ As MacArthur notes, this doesn't mean condemnation in a justification sense,⁵⁵ but in a his-actions-were-not-right, and so he-was-guilty sense.

12 πρὸ τοῦ γὰρ ἐλθεῖν τινὰς ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν συνήσθιεν· ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον, ὑπέστειλλον καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτὸν φοβούμενος τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς.

12 For he was eating with Gentiles before the coming of some men from James; but when they came, he began withdrawing and excluding himself, being fearful of the Jews.

This verse explains why Peter had been wrong. It seems that Jews and Gentiles were eating together despite the dietary law restrictions of Judaism. It is probable that these meals included the Lord's Supper. It should not surprise us that Peter regularly ate with them; he had received a vision on cleanness from God (Ac 10:9-16), went to Cornelius' house (Ac 10:24-29), led the household to the Lord (Ac 10:38-48), and defended his actions before Jewish believers (Ac 11:1-18). He concluded by saying, "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (Ac 11:17). One of the reasons why Paul describes his opposition to Peter was that Peter knew better than any of the other apostles that the dietary laws of Judaism were irrelevant within the kingdom of God.

⁵³ Longenecker, 65.

⁵⁴ Ardt, 515.

⁵⁵ MacArthur, 49.

But then some men from James came to Antioch. Exactly who these men were is not clear. They appeared to have been part of the church in Jerusalem and thus under the authority of James. But they also seemed to be very Judaistic in their thinking and lifestyle; perhaps they were not fully convinced that total obedience to the Mosaic law was not required to live right.

Peter began to change his habit of eating. The verb tense indicates that Peter began continually withdrawing and excluding; upon their arrival he slowly changed from one habit to another. Somehow these men applied pressure to Peter, because he feared them. Maybe they brought up his reputation among the Jews. (“What would the people back home in Jerusalem think, Peter, if they knew you were eating all this pork? Gasp!”) Maybe they explained the rising tide of Jewish nationalism, which threatened to persecute those who had Gentile sympathies.⁵⁶ Maybe they noted concerns of strained relations between the Jerusalem church, where Jewish dietary laws were still observed, and the Antioch church, where they were not. (“Isn’t unity important, Peter?”) Whatever their motivations and whatever they said, it caused Peter to fear them.

13 καὶ συνυπεκρίθησαν αὐτῷ [καὶ] οἱ λοιποὶ Ἰουδαῖοι, ὥστε καὶ Βαρναβᾶς συναπήχθη αὐτῶν τῇ ὑποκρίσει.

13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

It was not surprising that others followed his example; Peter was a man of influence among Jewish believers, chief of the Twelve and a pillar of the Jerusalem church. When he changed his habit, it’s easy to see how the other Jewish believers in Antioch capitulated and changed theirs as well. This must have thrown the church into confusion.

Paul said the Jews acted hypocritically. Acting hypocritically (συνυπεκρίθησαν) has the idea of putting on a mask or play-acting. It means to “create a public impression that is at odds with one’s real purposes or motivations.”⁵⁷ Peter and the rest of the Jews knew they were acting in a manner that was inconsistent with their beliefs.

The pinnacle result of these events was that even Barnabas was led astray. The verb “led astray” (συναπήχθη) means to lead or carry someone somewhere, but in this context it’s used figuratively and means “to cause someone else...to change from belief in what is true to belief in what is false.”⁵⁸ Given the important working relationship that Paul and Barnabas had together on the first missionary journey, Paul must have

⁵⁶ Longenecker, 74.

⁵⁷ Arndt, 1038.

⁵⁸ Louw, 1:374.

found it difficult to believe that Barnabas had been led astray, yet he had been.⁵⁹ The Galatians, who were evangelized by Barnabas as well, should have realized by now that they were making the same mistake that Barnabas had made in Antioch.

14 ἀλλ' ὅτε εἶδον ὅτι οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, εἶπον τῷ Κηφᾶ ἔμπροσθεν πάντων· εἰ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων ἐθνικῶς καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς, πῶς τὰ ἔθνη ἀναγκάζεις ἰουδαΐζειν;

14 But when I saw that they were not living right according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of everyone, “If you, a Jew, are being like Gentiles and not living like Jews, how are you compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Paul saw that Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jews were not living right. To live right (ὀρθοποδοῦσιν) literally means to walk in a straight line, but it has the figurative meaning of acting as one should and living morally correct.⁶⁰ They were not living right according to the standard of truth contained in the gospel. The truth of the gospel is that salvation is by faith in Christ, thus eating kosher is immaterial. Compelling others to eat kosher and thus forcing them to obey Jewish traditions was hypocrisy.

George assumes that Paul first confronted Peter privately to no avail (see Mt 18:15-20), then he confronted him publicly.⁶¹ Given Paul’s instructions on restoration in 6:1, it’s probably safe to assume that he handled things in the right manner.

This is a summary of Peter’s actions: He lived like a Gentile believer (even if just temporarily) when there were only Gentile believers, but switched to living like a Jewish believer when other Jewish believers came around. Thus, in effect, he was “compelling” the Gentile believers to switch with him. Voluntary switching of eating habits is ok; compulsory switching is not. “Compelling” is the same word Paul used to describe the actions of the false brothers actions against Titus in 2:3.

The result of this rebuke is not given here or elsewhere in the Bible. Yet since Paul uses this as the crowning argument in the defense of his apostleship, it is assumed that Peter submitted to the rebuke, although complete fellowship may not have been restored among all the parties. It serves to show that Paul really was an apostle on the same level as the Twelve, thus his preaching on the gospel of Jesus was to be believed completely. In the verses that follow Paul described that gospel, thus introducing the main theme of the book.

15 Ἡμεῖς φύσει Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί·

15 We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

⁵⁹ Some commentators note that this may have been the start of the rift between Paul and Barnabas that led to their split before the second missionary journey (Ac 15:37ff) (MacArthur, 52).

⁶⁰ Louw, 1:507.

⁶¹ George, 179.

This verse starts a new paragraph that serves as Paul's explanation to Peter of why his actions were so wrong. Given its short length, it is probably not a direct quote but rather a summary of what Paul said to Peter. It is specific and general all at once; that is, it specifically addresses Peter's error, but it generally applies to all similar errors. Thus it serves to close out the autobiographical section (chapters 1-2) and introduce the main points of the theological section (chapter 3-4).

"Gentile sinners" (ἔθνῶν ἁμαρτωλοί) may have been a colloquial expression for Gentiles.⁶² It's not really a pejorative comment so much as a racial distinctive comment. It probably referred to the Gentile's lack of the Mosaic law, and thus their lack of any means of knowing how to please God.⁶³ The language of Galatians notwithstanding, the law was grace; it clearly showed people how to please God. Most pagan deities had no equivalent, and their worshippers never quite knew where they stood.

This Jew versus Gentile comparison indicates that Jewish people had an advantage over Gentile people. What were the advantages of being a Jew?

1. God chose the Jews to be his people.
2. God promised blessing to them (the Abrahamic covenant).
3. God revealed his character to them (the Mosaic law).
4. God became a man as one of them.
5. Jesus ministered (almost) exclusively to Jews.
6. Jesus' apostles were all Jews.
7. Christianity was birthed in Israel.

What were the disadvantages of being a Gentile?⁶⁴

1. They were separated from Christ.
2. They were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.
3. They were strangers to the covenant of promise.
4. They were without hope.
5. They were without God.

This verse is not pithy saying, but a statement of a monumental gap. The Jews had every spiritual advantage over the Gentiles.

16 εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

[16 but perceiving that a person is not declared righteous by works of law but through](#)

⁶² Longenecker, 83.

⁶³ MacArthur, 56.

⁶⁴ Ep 2:11-12.

faith in Jesus Christ, we also believed in Jesus Christ, so that we might be declared righteous by faith in Christ and not by works of law, because no one will be declared righteous by works of law.

This is the pinnacle of Paul's argument in the first two chapters, and indeed the key verse of the entire book. This is Paul's understanding of justification, which is by faith in Jesus alone.

The main thought of the verse is "we believed in Jesus Christ." Why did Peter and Paul, who were Jews, turn from Judaism and believe in Jesus alone? They believed because they perceived that a person is not declared righteous by works of law but through faith in Jesus Christ. Their desire and goal was to be declared righteous (δικαιοῦνται),⁶⁵ a word that can have multiple meanings. It can be a judicial declaration of innocence and thus mean to be acquitted, to be given a favorable verdict, and be free of all charges.⁶⁶ It can be a relational word and thus mean "to cause someone to be in a proper or right relation with someone else."⁶⁷ It can also mean act morally and thus refer to proper behavior. Faith in Jesus results in all of these, and all of these are pertinent in these verses. The believer is declared "not guilty," he is put into a right relationship with God, and he now has the capacity to act morally. It has past, present, and future implications; Peter and Paul had been put into a right relationship with God, they could live morally during their life, and they will be vindicated at the final judgment.

Although he desired to be declared righteous, Paul said that a person is not declared righteous by works of the law. Paul appears to be harsh in his attack on the law, which is strange, since God himself gave this law. But Paul was not attacking the Lawgiver or the usefulness of the law (which he defends in chapter 3); he was attacking it as a means of justification. Although the law itself was good and gracious, no person is capable of living it out, thus it was not a means of justification. The law could not do that; it was never meant to do that. Paul would later explain this further: "For what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh" (Ro 8:3, NASB95).

The underlying reason why the law is incapable of justifying is not due to any shortcomings in the law itself. As MacArthur notes, the fundamental problem is the sin nature of man. As people are sinners by nature, we will never be able to obey the law. No act of obedience is able to change our nature.⁶⁸ Although Paul had in mind here the Mosaic law specifically, the principle is equally applicable to any system of works in any era of time, as no system of works is capable of justifying a man.

⁶⁵ This word in various forms is used 5 times in this paragraph.

⁶⁶ Arndt, 249.

⁶⁷ Louw, 1:451.

⁶⁸ MacArthur, 56.

A person is, however, is declared righteous through faith in Jesus Christ, thus Peter and Paul believed in him. To believe (ἐπιστεύσαμεν) is “to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one’s trust” and then to trust that something in complete confidence and with total commitment⁶⁹ and reliance. Faith doesn’t save; Jesus’ atonement saves. But faith is the vehicle by which they appropriated what Jesus did; they were declared righteous *through* faith. This was equally true for Jews and Gentiles (Ac 15:8-11).

The second half of the verse is really a restatement of the first part. Paul is using chiasmic parallelism, a common Hebrew literary device. It serves to emphasize that faith in Jesus alone is the key point.

A - a person is not declared righteous by works of law

B – (a person is not declared righteous except) through faith in Jesus Christ

C - we believed in Jesus Christ

B’ - so that we might be declared righteous by faith in Christ

A’ - because no one will be declared righteous by works of law.

Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism asks, “How are thou righteous before God?” The answer is, “Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ; so that though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commandments of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ has accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart.”

17 εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν Χριστῷ εὐρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἁμαρτωλοὶ, ἄρα Χριστὸς ἁμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο.

17 But if, while seeking to be declared righteous in Christ, we were also found to be sinners, is Christ a servant of sin? May it never be!

It seems that, having given his main point, Paul wove into it answers to the charges of the Judaizers.⁷⁰ The first accusation is that faith in Jesus alone encourages sin. When God judges everyone at the end of time, he will declare righteous anyone who sought to be righteousness through faith in Jesus;⁷¹ thus the Judaizers advocated faith in Christ. But if, while waiting for this future declaration of our righteousness, Paul and Peter sinned by breaking the law, then that would mean Jesus is a servant of sin. Servant (διάκονος) was a common word that means “one who gets something done at the

⁶⁹ Arndt, 816.

⁷⁰ The difficulty is that the charges must be deduced from Paul’s words. Though commentators have given many suggestions, most of them ignore the context of Peter’s actions. The deduced accusations here attempt to keep this context in mind.

⁷¹ The verb “seeking” is present tense, which is where the moral aspects of being declared righteous comes into effect.

behest of a superior.”⁷² So the Judaizers asked, “Is Jesus an accomplice who helps sin?” Not wanting to help sin, they also advocated obedience to the Mosaic law.

Given the context, in what way might Jesus be a servant of sin? The accusation of the Judaizers might have been something like this: Jesus encouraged unity among his followers. One way of promoting unity is to eat together. Eating non-kosher foods with Gentiles is a violation of the law. Therefore, Jesus encouraged his followers to sin.⁷³ Paul knew the error in this accusation: Eating non-kosher isn’t sin. Jesus said as much (Mk 7:14-23). And of course Peter knew the error, too; he had received the vision (Ac 10:9-16). So Paul responded in the strongest of terms: May it never be! (μὴ γένοιτο!) Absolutely not! Of course not! It was through faith in Jesus that God declared them righteous, thus it was inconceivable that he should be encouraging sin.

18 εἰ γὰρ ἂ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ, παραβάτην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω.

18 For if I am rebuilding the things which I destroyed, I am proving myself a transgressor.

In this verse Paul gave the reason for his “may it never be!” in the previous verse, and he did so by setting up a hypothetical situation, which can be paraphrased like this: Let’s assume that I rebuild what I destroyed. If I do, then I sin.

What Paul had already destroyed was the law, figurative language that meant he had stopped trusting the law for justification (Php 3:4-9). If he was rebuilding it, that is, if he was beginning to trust in the law to make him righteous through his lifestyle, then he was demonstrating that he was a transgressor. A transgressor (παραβάτην) is one who violates the law and deviates from the truth;⁷⁴ it’s another way of saying “sinner.” If Paul was a transgressor, he was demonstrating that he had never been justified in the first place.

If he rebuilds that past, if Paul returns to obeying the law, then he proves that he is sinning now; that is, if turning back to obeying the law is right, then having faith in Jesus alone is sin. Paul is arguing that they can’t have it both ways; either salvation is by faith or by works of law, but not both. There is a subtle but important order here: Obedience results from righteousness, not the other way around.

Applying this to the context, Paul knew that Peter didn’t base his justification upon eating kosher, because that could not save him (2:16). Similarly, he should not be basing his sanctification upon eating kosher, because that couldn’t save him either. Thus Paul reminded Peter that obeying dietary laws has nothing to do with sinning or not sinning, and thus Paul also answered the Judaizers’ accusation in the previous

⁷² Arndt, 230.

⁷³ Thus the figurative language that sin was the master that Jesus was serving.

⁷⁴ Zodiates, G3848.

verse.

19 ἐγὼ γὰρ διὰ νόμου νόμῳ ἀπέθανον, ἵνα θεῶ ζήσω.

19 For I myself died to the law through the law, so that I might live to God.

The second accusation is that faith in Jesus alone makes it impossible to live a life pleasing to God. In verse 18 Paul said he did not return to obeying the law as a means of sanctification. In verse 19 he explained why.

To understand this verse, it is necessary understand how Paul used the words “died” and “live.” Here’s a helpful cross-reference:

“For a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of the marriage. So then, if she is joined to another man while her husband is alive, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she is joined to another man, she is not an adulteress. So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you could be joined to another, to the one who was raised from the dead, to bear fruit to God” (Ro 7:2-4, NET).

So when her husband is living, a woman has a relationship through the law with him. But when he dies, that relationship no longer exists. Similarly, a believer ceases to have a relationship with the law, but instead has a relationship with Christ. The words “died” and “live” refer to a relationship.

What is the reason that Paul did not rebuild his relationship with the law? Why is it that he does not trust the law as the basis for continuing in righteousness? Paul said that he ended his relationship with the law for the purpose of being able to live in a right relationship with God. Paul said he died to the law through the law. The law demonstrated to Paul that it was not capable of declaring him righteous (3:10-11). It pointed to a need for something better (actually, to someone better), so the law helped him realize his need for a Savior. In fact, Paul will explain this very thing in more detail in the next chapter.⁷⁵

Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι· 20 ζῶ δὲ οὐκέτι ἐγώ, ζῆ δὲ ἐν ἐμοὶ Χριστός· ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.

I have been crucified **with Christ**; 20 so I myself am no longer living, but Christ is living in me; and that which I am now living in the body, I am living by means of faith to him, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

Paul had been crucified with Christ.⁷⁶ This verb (συνεσταύρωμαι) literally means “to

⁷⁵ See 3:23-26.

⁷⁶ It would seem that this statement was less than perfectly clear to some of his readers, as he clarified this matter further when he wrote Ro 6:1-11.

crucify someone at the same time that another person is being crucified.”⁷⁷ Paul did not use this in a literal sense, but in a figurative sense. Somehow, when Christ was crucified, Paul was crucified with him. It’s passive voice, meaning someone else, God, did the crucifying. It’s in the perfect tense, meaning the effects of the crucifixion continued throughout his life.

When Paul placed his faith in Jesus alone, God then applied the benefits of Christ’s crucifixion to him. What are those benefits?

- Paul was declared righteous.
- The penalty for Paul’s sin was paid.
- Paul was no long a slave to sin (Ro 6:6).

When Paul was crucified with Christ, it changed how he lived. He no longer lived, but Christ lived in him. This is figurative language; Paul wasn’t claiming to have literally stopped living.

There’s a parallel here with the previous verse: He died to the law (by turning away from it as a means of justification), and he died to himself (by being co-crucified with Christ). This is an issue of control. When Paul was co-crucified, he stopped controlling his own life and let Jesus control it instead. Being in a right relationship with God means not only that Jesus is Savior, but he is also Lord. The idea here is expressed in other places in the New Testament; for example in Ep 5:18 the believer is to be full of the Spirit, and in Jn 15:4-5 he is to abide in the vine.

How is life different when Christ is living in me? Paul said that the life he was living was lived by means of faith to him. Salvation began in faith (2:16), and salvation continues in faith. Faith (πίστει) is the “state of believing on the basis of the reliability of the one trusted.”⁷⁸ Paul lived his life in continual, complete trust and confidence in Jesus.

Paul had this kind of trust because Jesus is worthy of such trust; he is the Son of God who loved Paul and gave himself for him. Jesus loved Paul. This verb (ἀγαπήσαντός) is the verbal form of the familiar word “agape” and means to esteem or have a high regard for someone else. It means to willfully take an interest in them and find joy in them. It involves doing what is best for someone, even when that’s not what he wants.⁷⁹ Jesus loved Paul, so he did what was best for Paul, he gave himself; Jesus chose to die in order to atone for sins.

“Amazing love!
How can it be,

⁷⁷ Louw, 1:236.

⁷⁸ Arndt, 818.

⁷⁹ Arndt, 5; Zodhiates, G25.

That Thou, my God,
shouldst die for me?"⁸⁰

Notice the nature of genuine love: It results in an action. Jesus loved, and so he gave. And notice why he died: Because he gave his life to his father, who allowed him to be crucified. Trying to blame the Romans or hate the Jews for Jesus' death is rather foolish. They couldn't have done anything to him on their own. Jesus died because he chose to, because there was no other way to atone for sin.

21 Οὐκ ἄθετῶ τὴν χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ· εἰ γὰρ διὰ νόμου δικαιοσύνη, ἄρα Χριστὸς δωρεὰν ἀπέθανεν.

21 I am not regarding the grace of God as invalid; for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died without purpose.

The third accusation is that faith in Jesus alone invalidates God's grace. The thinking of the Judaizers apparently was this: God graced Israel with the law of Moses. Paul did not always obey that law; for example, he ate non-kosher food with unclean Gentiles; therefore, Paul did not trust in God's grace.

Paul replied that he was not regarding the grace of God as invalid. Invalid (ἀθετῶ) has a legal feel; it means "to believe that something or someone cannot be trusted or relied on and hence to reject"⁸¹ or to "refuse to recognize the validity of something."⁸² Paul asserted that he did not consider God's grace to be invalid; to say it positively, he was completely trusting in God's grace.

Paul and Peter and the Judaizers all believed that God was gracious, but they differed on God's plan for dispensing grace. The Judaizers said it was through faith in Jesus and through obeying the law, but Paul reminded Peter that it was only through faith. Since people cannot obey the law, then righteousness could not come through the law. If it could, then there was no reason for the Messiah to die. Thus Paul trapped the Judaizers in their own words and returned to his main point on righteousness. This ends Paul's rebuke of Peter.

⁸⁰ "And can it be?" by Charles Wesley.

⁸¹ Louw, 1:683.

⁸² Swanson, DBLG 119.

Structural Diagram

But

when Cephas came to Antioch
I opposed him to his face

For

he was eating with Gentiles

but

he began withdrawing and excluding himself

And

the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically with him
so that

even Barnabas was lead astray by their hypocrisy

But

I said to Cephas

how are you compelling the Gentiles to live like Jews?

We are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners

but

perceiving that a person is not declared righteous
| by works of law but through faith in Jesus

we believed in Jesus Christ

so that

we might be declared righteous

by faith in Christ and not by works of law

because

no one will be declared righteous by works of law.

But

if we were also found to be sinners

is Christ a servant of sin?

May it never be!

For

if I am rebuilding the things which I destroyed

I am proving myself a **transgressor**

For

I myself died to the law through the law

so that

I might live to God.

I have been crucified **with Christ**

so

I myself am no longer living

but

Christ is living in me

and

that which I am now living in the body

I am living by means of faith to him

I am not regarding the grace of God as invalid

for

if righteousness is through the law

then Christ died without purpose.

Tracing the Argument

External – This is the final section in Paul’s defense of his apostleship, a prerequisite for his defense of the gospel. First, he explained the origin of his apostleship (1:11-24).

Then, he explained how his apostleship was not subservient to the apostles nor was it defective in any way (2:1-10). Finally, Paul explained the influence of his apostleship, where he was even able to rebuke Peter.

Internal – The first part of this section recounts the events that led to Paul’s rebuke of Peter. The second part gives Paul’s argument of why Peter’s actions were wrong. Paul reminded Peter that they were declared righteous by faith in Jesus alone. Then he corrected three false arguments: Ignoring Jewish dietary laws did not make Jesus a servant of sin, did not please God, and did not invalidate God’s grace.

Textual Outline

1. Paul rebuked Peter.
 - a. Paul confronted Peter (2:11).
 - b. Peter stopped eating with Gentiles (2:12-14).
2. Paul explained his rebuke.
 - a. Peter had forgotten his faith in Jesus alone (2:15-16).
 - b. Peter had acted as if Jesus was encouraging him to sin (2:17-18).
 - c. Peter was not living in a way to please God (2:19-20).
 - d. Peter had invalidated the grace of God (2:21).

Central Truth of the Text

Paul wrote Galatians 2:11-21 in order to confirm his apostleship by recounting his rebuke of Peter for failing to trust in Christ alone.

Teaching Outline

God’s people have faith in Jesus alone, and today I want you to trust Christ alone. From our text in Galatians 2, we are going to see 4 reasons why you should have faith in Jesus alone.

1. Trust Jesus alone and be declared righteous (2:15-16).
2. Trust Jesus alone and be obedient (2:17-18).
3. Trust Jesus alone and live to please God (2:19-20).
4. Trust Jesus alone and fully trust God’s grace (2:21).

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