

Galatians Bible Study: Lesson 2

Galatians 1:11-2:21

Lesson Outline

Welcome/Prayer

Objectives of Lesson

By the end of the lesson, learners will be able to:

- Explain how Paul presented his new theology to existing church leaders.
- Describe ways to handle dissent in church settings.

Scripture Study (45 min.)

Application of Scripture (10 min.)

Closing Prayer

Scripture Study (from BibleGateway.com)

Galatians 1:11-2:21 New Living Translation (NLT)

Paul's Message Comes from Christ

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, I want you to understand that the gospel message I preach is not based on mere human reasoning. ¹² I received my message from no human source, and no one taught me. Instead, I received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.^[a]

¹³ You know what I was like when I followed the Jewish religion—how I violently persecuted God's church. I did my best to destroy it. ¹⁴ I was far ahead of my fellow Jews in my zeal for the traditions of my ancestors.

¹⁵ But even before I was born, God chose me and called me by his marvelous grace. Then it pleased him ¹⁶ to reveal his Son to me^[b] so that I would proclaim the Good News about Jesus to the Gentiles.

When this happened, I did not rush out to consult with any human being.^[c] ¹⁷ Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to consult with those who were apostles before I was. Instead, I went away into Arabia, and later I returned to the city of Damascus.

¹⁸ Then three years later I went to Jerusalem to get to know Peter,^[d] and I stayed with him for fifteen days. ¹⁹ The only other apostle I met at that time was James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰ I declare before God that what I am writing to you is not a lie.

²¹ After that visit I went north into the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And still the churches in Christ that are in Judea didn't know me personally. ²³ All they knew

was that people were saying, “The one who used to persecute us is now preaching the very faith he tried to destroy!”²⁴ And they praised God because of me.

Questions:

1. Why do you think Paul made such a big deal about not getting advice or help from any person after his conversion.
2. Why do people get so fanatical about religion? How can we tell when zeal and passion cross the line into fanaticism?
3. What features of the Christian faith indicate that humans did not fabricate it?
4. Scholars believe that Paul’s time in Arabia was a time to study, reflect, and prepare. Realistically, how can we find time for reflection in our busy schedules?
5. Paul emphasizes that his experience with the Lord was direct and not mediated second hand through other people. How much of your knowledge of God is based on first-hand experience?

The Apostles Accept Paul

2 Then fourteen years later I went back to Jerusalem again, this time with Barnabas; and Titus came along, too.² I went there because God revealed to me that I should go. While I was there I met privately with those considered to be leaders of the church and shared with them the message I had been preaching to the Gentiles. I wanted to make sure that we were in agreement, for fear that all my efforts had been wasted and I was running the race for nothing.³ And they supported me and did not even demand that my companion Titus be circumcised, though he was a Gentile.^[c]

⁴ Even that question came up only because of some so-called believers there—false ones, really^[f]—who were secretly brought in. They sneaked in to spy on us and take away the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to enslave us and force us to follow their Jewish regulations.⁵ But we refused to give in to them for a single moment. We wanted to preserve the truth of the gospel message for you.

⁶ And the leaders of the church had nothing to add to what I was preaching. (By the way, their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me, for God has no favorites.)⁷ Instead, they saw that God had given me the responsibility of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as he had given Peter the responsibility of preaching to the Jews.⁸ For the same God who worked through Peter as the apostle to the Jews also worked through me as the apostle to the Gentiles.

⁹ In fact, James, Peter,^[g] and John, who were known as pillars of the church, recognized the gift God had given me, and they accepted Barnabas and me as their co-workers. They encouraged us to keep preaching to the Gentiles, while they continued their work with the Jews.¹⁰ Their only suggestion was that we keep on helping the poor, which I have always been eager to do.

Questions:

1. Why was the conflict over keeping the Jewish law such a big issue for the early church?

2. Paul's theology represents a paradigm shift. Think about paradigm shifts you have observed or experienced. What things occurred to make you embrace the new (or radical) point of view?

Paul Confronts Peter

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?"

¹⁵ "You and I are Jews by birth, not 'sinners' like the Gentiles. ¹⁶ Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law."^[h]

¹⁷ But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. ¹⁹ For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. ²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ.^[i] It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

Questions:

1. What was Peter doing to warrant Paul's accusing him of hypocrisy?
2. There have always been those who feel that "too much emphasis on grace" encourages people to believe they can live any way they want. Is this a valid concern?
3. Under what circumstances would or should you stand up against an influential spiritual leader?
4. What are some ways you see modern believers living by rules rather than living by faith?

Application of Scripture - Confrontation

1. Confrontation can be awkward and sometimes harmful. What makes it difficult for Christians to honestly and lovingly confront others in their churches?

2. What would make it difficult for you to talk to others about their wrong behaviors or attitudes?
3. How would you prepare when you are going to talk to someone about a touchy situation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of your approach to preparation?
4. What can you do to improve the way you respond to others who confront you?

Closing Prayer

Footnotes:

1. [1:12](#) Or *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*.
2. [1:16a](#) Or *in me*.
3. [1:16b](#) Greek *with flesh and blood*.
4. [1:18](#) Greek *Cephas*.
5. [2:3](#) Greek *a Greek*.
6. [2:4](#) Greek *some falsebrothers*.
7. [2:9](#) Greek *Cephas*; also in [2:11](#), [14](#).
8. [2:16](#) Some translators hold that the quotation extends through verse 14; others through verse 16; and still others through verse 21.
9. [2:20](#) Some English translations put this sentence in verse 19.

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