

# READ THROUGH GALATIANS: WEEK 2

GROUNDED  
 IN THE  
 GOSPEL

## Paul Accepted by the Apostles

1 Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.

- **Why did Paul go to Jerusalem? What do you think he means when he says “I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain?”**

3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. 4 This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. 5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

- **Some Jewish Christians had decided to make circumcision a requirement for all Christians. How does Paul respond to them? Why was this decision so important for the preservation of gospel message?**

6 As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. 8 For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

BY  
MIRIAM  
RYAN

# READ THROUGH GALATIANS: WEEK 2

GROUNDED  
IN THE  
GOSPEL

BY  
MIRIAM  
RYAN

- **The issue of circumcision was a divisive one in the early Christian community. Paul stood his ground to make it clear that circumcision should not be required for any believer, but the early apostles also allowed for cultural freedom on this issue. Where do you see unity between the two groups in this passage despite their different views on this issue? Can you think of an issue in our day/time that has the potential to cause division amongst believers? What can we learn from their approach in how to preserve unity?**
- **Both groups deemed remembering the poor as an essential to the gospel message and to their ministries. As you think of your own life, how does this statement challenge you?**

## Paul Opposes Cephas

11 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. 14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

**Note that Cephas is another name for Peter. Yes, this is the same Peter who was Jesus' disciple, who walked on water and denied Jesus three times. We love Peter because he is so like us. He is sincere in his desire to follow Jesus, but he makes a lot of mistakes. You may also want to take a quick look at Peter's story in Acts 10:1-35, where God earlier gave him a vision about eating with Gentiles. It seems that Paul is reminding him of his hypocrisy in abandoning a lesson the Lord had already taught him in a dramatic way.**

# READ THROUGH GALATIANS: WEEK 2

GROUNDED  
IN THE  
GOSPEL

BY  
MIRIAM  
RYAN

- **While respecting people's differences, Paul also had the ability to rebuke people when he felt like their beliefs or actions were contrary to the gospel message. How do you typically respond in similar situations—are you more likely to “speak up” or “sit back”? Why do you think this is the case?**

15 “We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

**The word justified means to be made right with God. Galatians was a favorite book of Martin Luther, who helped start the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers made a distinction between justification, which is by faith alone, and sanctification, which means growing in our faith to become more like Christ. Our “good works” (growth in sanctification) are done out of love for God, but do not earn our salvation.**

- **What “works of the law” or additional requirements do some people put on others today? Another way to think about this--when do we judge others for the things they do (or fail to do)? Why is it easy to fall into a legalistic mindset?**

17 “But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! 18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

**This is some helpful commentary to help interpret the meaning of verse 17:**

***Christ does not promote sin, and God's forgiveness does not condone sin. To suggest otherwise is a colossal mistake (Romans 6:1; 6:15; Galatians 3:21).***

# READ THROUGH GALATIANS: WEEK 2

GROUNDED  
IN THE  
GOSPEL

BY  
MIRIAM  
RYAN

***Now Paul shows there is much greater danger of increased sinfulness by building a new law than by living freely in God's grace. He says that if he rebuilds (the law) after tearing down (the law), he makes himself to be an even greater sinner. It's law that reveals and promotes our sinfulness, Paul will say, not the free grace of God through faith in Christ.***

<https://www.bibleref.com/Galatians/2/Galatians-2-18.html>

19 “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

- **Paul is saying that through Christ’s death, we not only die to the law, but we die to our sinful nature. We now have Christ’s life living through us to empower us to live the life he is calling us to live. How does this understanding of Christ living in you enable you to live more freely?**

***When Paul was obeying God without knowing he was accepted, he was obeying to get a reward—for what he could get from God, not out of sheer love for God Himself. Now that he is justified and accepted, Paul has a new motive for obedience that is far more wholesome and powerful. He wants simply to live for the one “who loved me and gave himself for me” (v 20)...***

***Paul wants us to understand that our acceptance gives us a new and stronger motive or obeying God than justification by works ever could.***

**Tim Keller, *Galatians for You*, 61.**

- **How does focusing on Christ’s acceptance motivate you to obey God?**
- **What is one step you would like to take this week to apply something you have learned from this study?**