

The Church of the Servant King

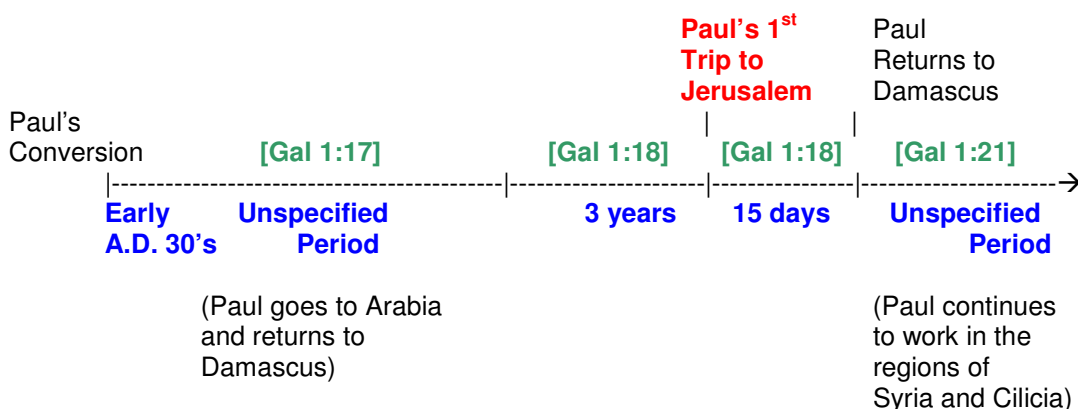
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Survey of the Bible Series – Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

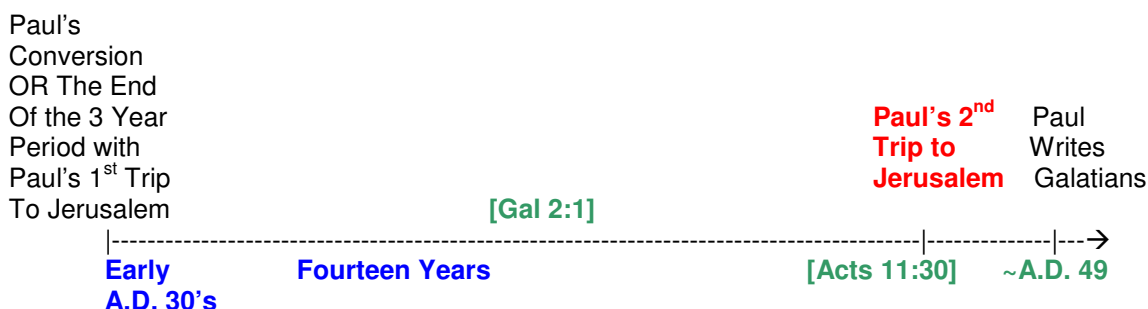
(SB_Galatians_Lsn4_Chapter 2B)

In our previous session, we reviewed key highlights from chapter 1 and examined the first 10 verses of chapter 2. Chapters 1 and 2 mention different periods of time after Paul’s conversion. When combined with the information that Luke provides in Acts, there are at least two different, credible views of the chronology of events during the first two decades of Paul’s post-conversion life. I include an analysis of that chronology of events again in order to facilitate a review in preparation for the current study of the remainder of chapter 2.

Approximate chronology presented in Galatians 1:



Approximate chronology presented in Galatians 2:



The two major views regarding when the fourteen year period began: 1) from the date of Paul’s conversion in the early A.D. 30’s; or 2) a period which is dated based upon his first trip to Jerusalem that is mentioned in Galatians 1:18, i.e. at the end of the three year period that he was in Damascus. As we’ve seen, the Expositor’s Bible Commentary has suggested that the following dates are possible and they reflect a view compatible with the 2nd option.

- A.D. 32 – Paul’s conversion (makes assumptions about the year of Christ’s death)
- A.D. 35 – Paul’s trip to Jerusalem from Damascus (Acts 9:23-30 cf. Gal 1:18-20)
- A.D. 49 – Paul’s 2nd trip to Jerusalem that is the subject of Galatians 2

I think either view is possible, but the dating scheme proffered by the Expositor's Bible Commentary is helpful and consistent with the number of years mentioned by Paul in Galatians for certain periods of time.

Recap of Chapter 2:1-10

This chapter provides us with interesting insight into Paul's relationship to the other Twelve Apostles who used Jerusalem as a base of operations. (Paul used Antioch to the north as his base of operations). You may recall that in Galatians 2, Paul documents his travel to Jerusalem with Barnabas to deliver the gift offering from the believers in Antioch to the believers in Jerusalem. Titus, a Gentile, accompanies Paul and Barnabas as well. As an uncircumcised Gentile, Titus The occasion of this gift offering was a famine that was prophesied by the prophet Agabus who traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch (see Acts 11:27-28).

The language in the rest of this section strongly implies that quite a discussion and controversy ensued over the issue of Gentile conversion. It is quite probable, and in fact most likely, that the trip to Jerusalem that is referenced by Paul in our passage occurred prior to his first missionary journey. As such, it constituted, at least in part, an attempt on Paul's part to gain some "buy-in" or acceptance by representatives of the Jerusalem leadership of his work among the Gentiles in Antioch prior to the launch of his first missionary effort (see Acts 12:25-13:3). His work among the Gentiles in Antioch effectively served as the platform used to test the prototype of his message there. The results had proved to be phenomenal in Antioch and they were endorsed by the Jerusalem leadership (see Gal 2:9). So, in a sense, Paul did seek and obtain the concurrence (vs. approval) of his gospel message to the Gentiles from the Jewish apostolic church leadership in Jerusalem.

"False brethren" (i.e. legalistic Jews) "sneaked" into the private conference that Paul and the Jewish leaders conducted. They wanted to force the Law upon Titus and force Paul to acknowledge their position as legitimate; however, note that Paul states that he did not yield for one second to their position. Knowing the historical context and understanding the nuanced references made by Paul leads to the conclusion that quite a discussion must have followed, although we are not given many details.

Paul was adamant about the fact that he never gave in to the argument of the legalistic Judaizers because he understood the danger that any inconsistency on his part posed to the veracity of his grace gospel message. Any precedent of compromise that he might set through his actions would be destructive to future efforts to communicate the Truth. Paul had the salvation of future untold numbers of Gentiles in mind. This is the jest of Paul's statements in 2:5.

In regard to the other Jewish Apostles, Paul really gained nothing new in the way of instruction or clarification from them. However, they at least validated Paul's gospel and message of salvation by grace that was being taken to the Gentiles. (See 2:6-10). This fact was helpful to Paul's argument that he had been consistent in his messaging from day one and that he had not received this message from any man of reputation – he only obtained their support.

...one must see Paul as torn between a desire to stress the basic unity that did exist between himself and the Twelve and the need to be honest in indicating that, so far as he was concerned, the apostles did not perform well in the crisis. Thus, his initial allusion to the apostles in v. 2 seems to him on second thought to be too vague. He breaks in with the Titus incident, but again not indicating clearly enough that it was the apostles who for the sake of harmony were urging that Titus be circumcised. Finally, Paul picks up the matter of the apostles again (v. 6)

and eventually names them (v. 9), this time indicating that those who were reported to be "pillars" almost failed to do the work of supporting the gospel.¹

The story of Peter's conduct at Antioch, which immediately follows this section, lends credence to the feeling that Paul's disappointment with the conduct of those who should have been leaders in this great crisis of faith and doctrine but who failed to take the lead is increasingly spilling over into the letter as he retells and (to some extent) relives the events of the council. According to this interpretation, Paul felt that the Jerusalem apostles did not perform on a level commensurate with the reputation they held, either at the council or (in Peter's case) after it. If they had been alert to the issue, the legalizers would not have succeeded even to the degree they did.²

Paul has done the following: (1) recognized the position and authority of the Jerusalem apostles without diminishing his own authority in the slightest; (2) indicated, in opposition to the exaggerated claims about them made by the legalizers, that the apostles were men after all and hence not always perfect in their initial reactions or conduct; (3) decisively separated the gospel and policies of the Twelve, for all their weaknesses, from the gospel and policies of the legalizers; and (4) taken note of the fact that he and the Twelve, rather than the legalizers and the Twelve, stood together. Eventually, he will even show that the agreement between himself and the Twelve was cordial both in relation to their respective spheres of ministry ("James, Peter and John ... gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship") and in regard to the special obligation of the Gentiles toward the Jerusalem poor ("the very thing I was eager to do").³

Chapter 2:11-21

Paul's Relationship with the Other Apostles – Continued (2:1-21)

Peter Comes to Antioch (2:11-14)

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"⁴

So, after Paul, Barnabas and Titus had returned from their 2nd trip to Jerusalem to deliver the famine relief offering from the Christians in Antioch to Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30), Peter went to Antioch evidently with some other Jewish brethren from Jerusalem (Gal 2:6-10).

¹ Frank E. Gabelein, general editor, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989-1998), electronic version.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from *The New American Standard Bible* (LaHabra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1977).

Peter's Perspective of Gentiles on His Trip to Antioch – By this point in time, Peter had already experienced the vision documented in Acts 10:9ff followed by the conversion of the Roman Centurion, Cornelius, and his household. Peter had even defended the conversion of Gentiles to “those of the circumcision” (Acts 11:2), i.e. Jewish believers who still practiced the Jewish traditions, with the result that “those of the circumcision” ultimately glorified the Lord regarding the conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 11:18).

11:1 NOW the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. 2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, 3 saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” 4 But Peter began *speaking* and *proceeded* to explain to them in orderly sequence. (Acts 11:1-4)

15 “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as *He did* upon us at the beginning. 16 “And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ 17 “If God therefore 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?” 18 And when they heard this, they quieted down, and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life.” (Acts 11:15-18)

Hypocrisy and Compromise Threatens the Veracity of Paul's Message and the Future of Christianity – Peter of all of the Twelve Jewish apostles, had been most prepared to accept Gentile believers on an equal standing with the Jewish believer; however, when he arrived at Antioch after the meeting in Jerusalem that took place between Paul, Barnabas, Titus on the one side and James, Cephas (Peter), and John on the other, Peter demonstrated hypocrisy that compromised the principles to which all had previously consented (see Gal 2:6-10).

6 But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised 8 (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 *They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.* (Gal 2:6-10)

Such a compromise by such a prominent Jewish leader would have been tremendous ammunition for Paul’s opponents – the legalistic Judaizers. At this point in time, there were Jewish believers who still practiced Jewish traditions and who were still subject to persuasion by the legalists or by the grace message of Paul. In addition, there were Jewish unbelievers who still practiced the Jewish traditions and who were convinced that observance of the Law and becoming a Jewish proselyte was the only way to salvation. Paul immediately recognized the very real and present danger posed by such compromises. The Truth could be distorted, muddled and blurred for the remainder of human history if a strong stance was not taken.

The Result of Paul's Reprimand of His Brother Peter – Assuming that the meeting in Jerusalem was a separate trip from the subsequent Jerusalem Council as I have presented in this study, then Peter’s defense of Paul at the subsequent Jerusalem Council meeting (Acts 15) reconciles very well with this chronology of events. Peter would have been more solidly aligned with Paul’s message and would have better understood its full ramifications. The issue was much greater than the raging debate over whether Gentiles should be circumcised and effectively

become Jewish in order to be saved. The issue of grace versus legalism extended to other facets of life as well. The practical application of this principle extended to many areas of activity that Peter had not previously considered. Evidently, he had yet to internalize the principle of grace vs. legalism to the point that it permeated his consciousness and changed his norms and standards so that he could see its application clearly in such areas as: 1) the eating of food; 2) daily social interactions; and 3) the liberty of the Jewish person in regard to Jewish traditions was really the same as the liberty of the Gentile believer – a point that Paul will later clarify (see 1 Cor 10:23-33; Gal 5:1-6; Col 2:11-23).

23 All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. **24** Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor. **25** Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience' sake; **26** FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS. **27** If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you wish to go, eat anything that is set before you, without asking questions for conscience' sake. **28** But if anyone should say to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat *it*, for the sake of the one who informed *you*, and for conscience' sake; **29** I mean not your own conscience, but the other *man's*; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? **30** If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks? **31** Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. **32** Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; **33** just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of the many, that they may be saved. (1 Cor 10:23-33)

5:1 IT was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. **3** And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. **4** You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. **5** For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. (Gal 5:1-6)

11 and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; **12** having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. **13** And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, **14** having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us *and* which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. **15** When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

16 Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— **17** things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ. **18** Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on *visions* he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, **19** and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. **20** If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, **21** "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" **22** (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with the using)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? **23** These are

matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence. (Col 2:11-23)

Observation: Peter's conduct implied that there could be a superiority or class structure among believers on the basis of race or tradition.

Observation: Peter, like us, needed to have his spiritual eyes opened to see the greater application of principles he had already learned.

Observation: Peter was in a position to benefit from the wise-counsel of others because he was not isolated from the believer community. He could have stayed in his comfort-zone of Jerusalem. Instead, Peter took the initiative and traveled to Antioch and exposed himself to the issues of the day in the lives of believers, i.e. the phenomenon of uncircumcised Gentiles believing in Jesus in large numbers.

Principle: Unless the believer internalizes Truth, the believer simply desires to be rule-driven vs. a Spirit-led son of God having impact in life.

Principle: Rule-driven people's lives only have a life of constant failure and guilt to offer vs. life-giving rivers of refreshing water to thirsty souls.

Principle: Rule-driven believers' lives will gravitate toward isolation vs. authenticity in relationships with others.

Application: Are you isolating yourself from time alone with the Lord so that you can meditate and internalize principles from His word?

Application: Are you isolating yourself from the benefit of the wise counsel of others? Peter did not isolate himself, but was fully engaged – even though it exposed his failures on occasion.

Application: Until we are engaged in the lives of other believers in a community of mutual encouragement, we are missing untold opportunities to develop authentic relationships and develop lives with impact.

Principle: We will never know what we don't know until we engage and discover the spiritual perspective on struggles and battles we would not have been aware unless we are in authentic relationships.

Principle: Isolation is deadly to the spiritual life – and sometimes even the physical life.

Application: What are the issues of our day in believer's lives of which we need to be equipped with answers borne of experience? Addictions? Busyness? Dysfunctional families and the manifest effects upon believer's lives in terms of emotional baggage they might not see without the caring, wise counsel someone else provides? The isolation of our home lives due to the suburbanization of American cities? How to be a wife? How to be a husband? How to be a father or mother?

Justification by Faith Alone (2:15-21)

15 "We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles; 16 nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. 17 "But if, while seeking to be justified in

Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! 18 “For if I rebuild what I have *once* destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. 19 “For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. 20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me. 21 “I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.” (Gal 2:15-21)

In these verses, Paul explains his logic to the audience in Antioch who had witnessed his reprimand of Peter. The reprimand of Peter combined with Paul’s very clear and articulate defense of the grace gospel message would, among other things, elevate Paul in stature among all who lived and witnessed the development of doctrine unfold during this early period of the new era or dispensation. In the following paragraphs, we will unpack several phrases Paul uses in his argument in these verses.

The verses that conclude this chapter contain capsule or summary statements of some of the most significant truths of Christianity. In particular, Paul clearly states the doctrine of justification by grace through faith and defends it over against the traditional objection that justification by faith leads to lawlessness. The words “justify” and “justification” occur in these verses for the first time in Paul’s letters. Paul will develop more fully in chapters 3 and 4 the concepts he introduces in these verses.

In verse 15, Paul seems to be using a bit of a straw man with the purpose of highlighting the self-righteousness that permeated Judaism at this point in history. Jews did have certain advantages since they were the recipients of God’s revelation to man up to this point in history; however, Paul will argue that those advantages not only meant greater responsibility, they also did not give the Jew any special claim to the righteousness of God. All (both Jew and Gentile) were saved by the same means – faith alone in Christ alone.

Verse 16 is one of the most important verses in Scripture. Paul unequivocally states that “justification” (i.e. a judicial term used to declare one not guilty) is attained only through faith in Jesus Christ – not any human deeds. The unbeliever, either knowingly or unwittingly, depends upon his or her own goodness or righteousness to satisfy God. It is and has been a universal and timeless principle – true in Paul’s day just as it is in our day and just as it will be in the future – that the unbeliever is one who relies upon his or her own goodness to satisfy God’s righteous standards. (See Rev 20:11-15 where John presents the final analysis of the state of such individuals).

In verse 17, Paul anticipates and negates an objection to the gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. It is the same argument one frequently hears today. The argument is that such a simple gospel encourages lawlessness or antinomianism. If the Mosaic Law or any other code of moral responsibility is eliminated as a basis for salvation, then you have eliminated man’s motivation and responsibility to live properly.

On the contrary, returning to the Law actually detracts from a focus on what is necessary to satisfy God’s righteousness (verse 18). The case in point was Peter’s conduct that was the basis for Paul’s reprimand. If one believes that keeping the Law or doing good can save a person, then that person will never understand the true character of God – the essence of God – and will never be able to properly adjust to God’s righteousness. Understanding the essence of God is essential to accepting His gift.

This understanding permeates every area of our lives (verse 19 & 20). If we live by the Law and believe we can satisfy God’s righteousness through our own goodness or good works, then we have effectively negated the work of Christ on the Cross.