

Galatians, Part 1

Galatians 1-2 | Acts 15 | No other gospel

SERIES QUESTION What problem is being addressed, and how does the gospel answer it?

BIG IDEA The gospel comes from God and declares sinners right with him through faith in Jesus Christ - not through works of the law or added requirements.

Follow the argument

PASSAGE	GOSPEL CLAIM	CHURCH IMPLICATION
Gal. 1:1-10	There is no other gospel.	Do not add entrance requirements to Christ's grace.
Gal. 1:11-24	The risen Christ revealed and entrusted the gospel.	The message is received from God, not tailored to please people.
Gal. 2:1-10; Acts 15	The church recognized the same grace at work among Jews and Gentiles.	Different ministries share one gospel and one fellowship.
Gal. 2:11-21	God justifies through faith in Christ, not works of the law.	Share one table without rebuilding old barriers.

Key terms

- Gospel - the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ, not a set of extra requirements we complete.
- Justification - God's declaration that sinners are right with him through faith in Christ.
- Works of the law - human obedience to the law, including the circumcision and food practices at the center of this dispute; such works cannot establish a right verdict before God.
- Grace - God's undeserved action in Christ. Obedience follows grace; it does not purchase or complete it.

Look closer

NO THANKSGIVING Paul usually thanks God for the church near the beginning of a letter. In Galatians he moves directly from the greeting to astonishment. The gospel crisis is visible in the letter's structure.

NO OTHER GOSPEL Paul calls the distorted message a 'different gospel' and then says it is really no gospel at all. A message of 'Christ plus another requirement' denies that Christ is enough.

The gospel at one table

Peter's withdrawal from Gentile meals communicated that faith in Christ was not enough for full fellowship. Paul confronted him because Christian conduct can deny in practice the gospel we confess with our mouths.

KEY VERSE 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.' - Galatians 2:20 (NIV)

The Gospel Then and Now

CHURCH REALITY THEN Gentile believers were pressured to add circumcision and Torah identity markers before being treated as full members of God's family.

CHURCH TEMPTATION NOW We can turn good theology, moral reform, political identity, cultural style, family background, or church tradition into unofficial entrance requirements.

GOSPEL-SHAPED CHURCH Because God justifies through faith in Christ, the church receives those Christ receives and teaches obedience as the fruit of grace, not the price of belonging.

Discuss

1. Why does Paul treat this disagreement as a gospel issue rather than a harmless difference in practice?
2. How do Galatians 1-2 hold together revelation from Christ and recognition by the wider church?
3. What doctrine did Peter's table withdrawal communicate in practice?
4. What good Christian practices can become unofficial entrance requirements today?
5. How can a church distinguish the fruit of grace from an addition to grace?

ECO CONNECTION Essential Tenets I: God's Word - The Authority for Our Confession; III.A: God's grace in Christ. eco-pres.org/constitution/

READ MORE ONLINE BibleProject, Book of Galatians Guide: bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-galatians/

BEFORE NEXT WEEK Read Galatians 3-6. Mark references to promise, law, faith, Spirit, flesh, freedom, and love. Ask how grace produces obedience without returning believers to slavery.



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