**KEY VERSE**

James, Cephas, and John, who are considered to be key leaders, shook hands with me and Barnabas as equals when they recognized the grace that was given to me. So it was agreed that we would go to the Gentiles, while they continue to go to the people who were circumcised. They asked only that we would remember the poor, which was certainly something I was willing to do. — Galatians 2:9-10 (CEB)

**BIBLE STUDY**

Galatians Chapter 2

**GATHERING PRAYER**

Consider using one of the Opening Prayers, the Prayer for Illumination, and/or the Statement of Faith from the Week 2 Worship Helps for this series.

**OVERVIEW**

Chapter 2 continues the autobiographical portion of this letter. Paul is advancing the message of the gospel of grace. In Chapter 1, Paul confirms his apostleship comes from Christ. The next question he must answer is, “What is your relationship to the twelve apostles and the Jerusalem church?”

*Chapter 2 answers these questions in two distinct sections:*

2:1-10 Grace is defended before the Jerusalem church

2:11-21 Grace is defended before Peter

Keep in mind the three groups of people who appear in this passage:

- Paul, Barnabas, and Titus
- The pillar apostles: Peter, James, and John
- The false teachers/missionaries: the people from the Jerusalem church demanding circumcision of Gentile converts
What is happening?

- Paul is defending himself as an apostle to the Gentiles. He confirms his connection to the Jerusalem church while remaining steadfast that his mission field is Gentile community. First, he establishes himself as an apostle sent by Jesus Christ. Then, he is confirmed by the pillars of the church. Finally, he goes on to distinguish himself from Peter to advance the gospel of grace.

Why is it important?

- Paul wants to remind the Galatians about the gospel of grace. But first he reminds them of his calling and authority.
- Paul reminds readers, Jesus Christ is the agent of change. Jesus Christ, by grace, met him and transformed his life.
- Caring for the poor is a response to the grace of God offered to Paul, not a condition of it.

An expanded understanding/exploration of Chapter 2 includes the following:

- In verses 2:1-5 Paul and Barnabas visit the Jerusalem church. They are accompanied by Titus, a Gentile. As they meet in private, so as to not cause more trouble, they are confronted by people who are seeking to challenge Paul's ministry with the Gentiles. Paul communicates they were undeterred by the presence of the “spies,” so they could remain faithful to the gospel.
- In verses 2:6-10 Paul is recognized by the pillars of the church. While he communicates their status doesn’t matter, why does he mention them if their importance doesn’t matter? Peter, James and John don’t add anything to the message Paul shares. Instead, they divide the mission field, affirm his ministry, and agree to care for the poor.
- As the chapter turns to Paul confronting Peter, he doesn’t mince words. He accuses Peter for play acting, literally, putting on a mask. Peter is pretending to be someone different than who he was previously. Peter has eaten with Gentiles, but now under pressure from the missionaries/false teachers, he has ceased to do so. Interestingly, the word Paul uses is the same word from which we get the word hypocrite. In Paul’s time, hypocrite meant actor. It didn’t have the negative connotation it does today.
- Paul’s emphatic statement that there is no distinction between Jewish converts and Gentile converts greets the reader in 2:15-16. The logic of Paul’s writing here is complex. In an attempt to distinguish between Mosaic Law and faith, Paul presents a logical, albeit complex argument.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it take to recognize the grace given to someone who thinks and acts differently than you?

2. If “extending the right hand of fellowship” means to “accept and shake hands on it,” who is God calling you to extend the right hand of fellowship to?

3. What does this passage teach us about our mission field and the purpose of the church?

4. In this passage two groups agree to remember the poor. What are the practical common threads of faith such as this that we can agree on even in the midst of other differences?

5. What is the gospel of Jesus Christ?
6. Is everyone who claims the name, “Christ follower” one family? Paul seems to desire this to be so. How is this true today? How is it untrue?

7. Paul offers his faith autobiography in abbreviated form. Why is it important for the Galatians to know Paul’s background? What is your faith story? How did you get where you are?

8. Where does Paul find his certainty and direction? What do we learn from Paul’s example?

9. Caring for people living in poverty is a response to God’s grace at work in Paul’s life and in the life of the Jewish converts. Wesley is known for speaking of “holiness in heart and life.” What evidence do you have that this is true in the local church?

10. Compare and contrast Acts 15 to Galatians 2. What is similar? What is different?

11. If the church is defined in relation to the gospel, finish the following statement. Because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we _________________.

**SENDING FORTH**

*Close with prayer.*

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