

# Galatians

## Lesson 3

### Chapter 2:1-10

## Leader Guide

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**Lesson 3**  
**Galatians 2:1-10**  
**The Council in Jerusalem**

*God made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. Acts 15:9*

**Prayers**

**Introduction**

The Council of Jerusalem was a pivotal meeting in early church history, determining if Christianity would be a sect of Judaism or a new covenant God established by his grace through faith in Jesus Christ and love for others. The need for the Council arose because Jewish Pharisees who converted to Christianity were teaching that new Gentile believers must first become Jewish and follow the law of Moses to follow Christ. Their teaching swept through the early church. Insights by Peter, James (the brother of Jesus), Paul, and Barnabas guided the Council's decision. Peter testified that God gave the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles in the same way he had given it to the Jews at Pentecost and purified their hearts by giving them faith in Christ. Since God saved them by grace and faith, they should continue in grace and faith. Paul and Barnabas then told the Council all of the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles during their journeys through Galatia and Asia Minor.

**Read Galatians 2:1-10**

Gal 2:1 Fourteen years later I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas [Acts 15:1-29, Council of Jerusalem]. I took Titus along also.

Gal 2:2 I went in response to a revelation and set before them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. But I did this privately to those who seemed to be leaders, for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.

Gal 2:3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

Gal 2:4 This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.

Gal 2:5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

Gal 2:6 As for those who seemed to be important —whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not judge by external appearance —those men added nothing to my message.

Gal 2:7 On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been to the Jews.

Gal 2:8 For God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.

Gal 2:9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be 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 [Second Missionary Journey, Acts 15-16], and they to the Jews.

Gal 2:10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

1. What issue prompted Paul's journey to Jerusalem (the Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15:1-29)?  
See Galatians 2:1-4, Acts 15:1-3, 5

Ac 15:1 Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Ac 15:2 This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Ac 15:3 The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the brothers very glad.

Ac 15:5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

**Some Pharisees became believers and taught that Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses in addition to believing in Christ. This false teaching swept through the early churches.**

2. In Galatians 2:1, Paul wrote that he returned to Jerusalem for a second visit fourteen years later (his first visit to Jerusalem was three years after his calling as an apostle) to meet with church leaders because false teachers came to Antioch teaching the Gentiles, "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." Read Peter's address to the Council in Acts and discuss how he refuted the false teachers (Acts 15:7-11).

Ac 15:7 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. [Peter is referring to the Holy Spirit coming on Gentiles in Caesarea, Acts 10:44-48]

Ac 15:8 God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us.

Ac 15:9 He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

Ac 15:10 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear?

Ac 15:11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

**Peter addressed the false teaching with brilliant insight. Peter was in Caesarea when the Holy Spirit came to the Gentiles; just as the Spirit came on the Jews gathered for Pentecost. The Spirit enabled them to place their faith in Christ. God saved both Jews and Gentiles through his grace by giving them the gift of faith.**

3. What proof did Paul and Barnabas offer that God was calling Gentiles to Christ, apart from Jewish law? Refer to Acts 15:12-21.

Ac 15:12 The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the miraculous signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them.

Ac 15:13 When they finished, James spoke up: “Brothers, listen to me.

Ac 15:14 Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself.

Ac 15:15 The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

Ac 15:16 “ ‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it,<sup>17</sup> that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’<sup>18</sup> that have been known for ages.

**God did miraculous signs and wonders among the Gentiles through Paul and Barnabas. God’s working was in accordance with scripture so that men of all nations would bear God’s name (Amos 9:11-12, Acts 15:16-18).**

4. What actions did the Council in Jerusalem take to address the confusion and false teaching of the Pharisees and Judaizers? See Acts 15:22-29

Ac 15:22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

Ac 15:23 With them they sent the following letter:

The apostles and elders, your brothers,

To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings.

Ac 15:24 We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said.

Ac 15:25 So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul—<sup>26</sup> men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ac 15:27 Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing.

Ac 15:28 It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements:<sup>29</sup> You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things.

**The Council wrote a brief letter addressing the false teaching and sent Paul and Barnabas, as well as two other disciples (Judas and Silas) from Jerusalem, probably to expand on the message and validate Paul and Barnabas' teaching.**

5. The Council of Jerusalem addressed their letter to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. How did this affect the believers in Galatia?

**The Council's letter didn't address the problem of the Judaizers in Galatia, probably because Paul and Barnabas had not yet returned after their first journey to be aware of the situation.**

6. What did Paul do after he delivered the letter to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia? See Galatians 2:9-10 and Acts 15:36.

Gal 2:9 James, Peter and John, those reputed to be 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 [Second Missionary Journey, Acts 15-16], and they to the Jews.

Ac 15:36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

**Following the meeting in Jerusalem and delivering the letter to the believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, Paul and Barnabas returned to Galatia and Asia to visit the churches they established on their first missionary journey.**

7. A sharp dispute arose between Paul and Barnabas over whether to take Mark to Galatia. Why did this dispute arise, and how did they settle the conflict? See Acts 15:37-41

Ac 15:37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them, <sup>38</sup> but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

Ac 15:39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus, <sup>40</sup> but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

Ac 15:41 He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

**Paul did not want to take Mark (Barnabas' cousin, Colossians 4:10) on his second missionary journey because Mark left him on his first journey. Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus, and Paul took Silas to Galatia.**

8. What do we know about the work of the other missionaries with Paul?
  - a. Barnabas

**Barnabas' trip to Cyprus is the last mention of him in scripture. Church tradition states that Barnabas was martyred in Cyprus, witnessed by John Mark.**

b. Mark

Ac 12:12 When this had dawned on him, he [Peter] went to the house of Mary, the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying [in Jerusalem].

Col 4:10 My fellow prisoner Aristarchus sends you his greetings, as does Mark, the cousin of Barnabas. (You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him.)

Phm 1:23 Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings.

Phm 1:24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.

2Ti 4:11 Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, because he is helpful to me in my ministry.

1Pe 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

**Mark (John-Mark) was a Jew from Jerusalem and the cousin of Barnabas. After turning back from Paul on the first missionary journey, Mark and Paul reconciled, and he attended to the needs of both Paul and Peter while they were in prison. Mark is probably the same Mark as the writer of the gospel of Mark.**

c. Silas

Ac 15:22 Then the apostles and elders [at the Council in Jerusalem], with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, two men who were leaders among the brothers.

Ac 15:32 Judas and Silas, who themselves were prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers.

Ac 16:6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

Ac 16:7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to.

Ac 16:8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

Ac 16:9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Ac 16:10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

<sup>1Pe 5:12</sup> With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly [1 Peter], encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

**Silas was a prophet chosen by the Council of Jerusalem to accompany Paul and Barnabas with a letter refuting the Judaizers. Silas also accompanied Paul and Timothy on the second missionary journey through Asia Minor (including Galatia) and Greece. Silas acted as Peter's secretary and helped Peter write his letter (1 Peter) to the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.**

9. Paul refers to the gospel he was preaching to the Galatians in verse 2:2. What points would you stress in a brief summary of his gospel message?
- God has loved us before creation and wants us to have a loving relationship with him.
  - God is holy, and we are not. We sin by doing and thinking in ways we shouldn't, and we do not acknowledge God's authority over us as our Creator.
  - God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life and die as a perfect sacrifice for our sins to close the divide between God's holiness and our sin. Christ's death was for all sin, for all time.
  - As proof Jesus was God's son and his death does take away our sins, God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus appeared to hundreds of witnesses and ascended into heaven.
  - God's gifts of forgiveness through Jesus, the gift of eternal life, and the Holy Spirit are given to all who believe in Jesus as God's Son and their Savior and are baptized.

### **Closing Prayer**