

CHAPTER 2

The apostle, in this chapter, continues the relation of his past life and conduct, which he had begun in the former; and, by some further instances of what had passed between him and the other apostles, makes it appear that he was not beholden to them either for his knowledge of the gospel or his authority as an apostle, as his adversaries would insinuate; but, on the contrary, that he was owned and approved even by them, as having an equal commission with them to this office.

I. He particularly informs them of another journey which he took to Jerusalem many years after the former, and how he behaved himself at that time (v. 110). And,

II. Gives them an account of another interview he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch, and how he was obliged to behave himself towards him there. From the subject-matter of that conversation, he proceeds to discourse on the great doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law, which it was the main design of this epistle to establish, and which he enlarges more upon in the two following chapters.

✠ GALATIANS 2:1-10

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

It should seem, by the account Paul gives of himself in this chapter, that, from the very first preaching and planting of Christianity, there was a difference of apprehension between those Christians who had first been Jews and those who had first been Gentiles. Many of those who had first been Jews retained a regard to the ceremonial law, and strove to keep up the reputation of that; but those who had first been Gentiles had no regard to the law of Moses, but took pure Christianity as perfective of natural religion, and resolved to adhere to that. Peter was the apostle to them; and the ceremonial law, though dead with Christ, yet not being as yet buried, he connived at the respect kept up for it. But Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles; and, though he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, yet he adhered to

pure Christianity. Now in this chapter he tells us what passed between him and the other apostles, and particularly between him and Peter hereupon.

In these verses he informs us of another journey which he took to Jerusalem, and of what passed between him and the other apostles there, v. 110. Here he acquaints us,

I. With some circumstances relating to this his journey thither. As particularly,

1. With the time of it: that it was not till *fourteen years* after the former (mentioned ⁴⁰¹⁸Galatians 1:18), or, as others choose to understand it, from his conversion, or from the death of Christ. It was an instance of the great goodness of God that so useful a person was for so many years preserved in his work. And it was some evidence that he had no dependence upon the other apostles, but had an equal authority with them, that he had been so long absent from them, and was all the while employed in preaching and propagating pure Christianity, without being called into question by them for it, which it may be thought he would have been, had he been inferior to them, and his doctrine disapproved by them.

2. With his companions in it: *he went up with Barnabas, and took with him Titus also.* If the journey here spoken of was the same with that recorded Acts 15 (as many think), then we have a plain reason why Barnabas went along with him; for he was chosen by the Christians at Antioch to be his companion and associate in the affair he went about. But, as it does not appear that Titus was put into the same commission with him, so the chief reason of his taking him along with him seems to have been to let those at Jerusalem see that he was neither ashamed nor afraid to own the doctrine which he had constantly preached; for though Titus had now become not only a convert to the Christian faith, but a preacher of it too, yet he was by birth a Gentile and uncircumcised, and therefore, by making him his companion, it appeared that their doctrine and practice were of a piece, and that as he had preached the non-necessity of circumcision, and observing the law of Moses, so he was ready to own and converse with those who were uncircumcised.

3. With the reason of it, which was a divine revelation he had concerning it: *he went up be revelation;* not of his own head, much less as being summoned to appear there, but by special order and direction from Heaven. It was a privilege with which this apostle was often favoured to

be under a special divine direction in his motions and undertakings; and, though this is what we have no reason to expect, yet it should teach us, in every thing of moment we go about, to endeavour, as far as we are capable, to see our way made plain before us, and to commit ourselves to the guidance of Providence.

II. He gives us an account of his behaviour while he was at Jerusalem, which was such as made it appear that he was not in the least inferior to the other apostles, but that both his authority and qualifications were every way equal to theirs. He particularly acquaints us,

1. That *he there communicated the gospel to them, which he preached among the Gentiles, but privately*, etc. Here we may observe both the faithfulness and prudence of our great apostle.

(1.) His faithfulness in giving them a free and fair account of the doctrine which he had all along preached among the Gentiles, and was still resolved to preach that of pure Christianity, free from all mixtures of Judaism. This he knew was a doctrine that would be ungrateful to many there, and yet he was not afraid to own it, but in a free and friendly manner lays it open before them and leaves them to judge whether or no it was not the true gospel of Christ. And yet,

(2.) He uses prudence and caution herein, for fear of giving offence. He chooses rather to do it in a more private than in a public way, and *to those that were of reputation*, that is, to the apostles themselves, or to the chief among the Jewish Christians, rather than more openly and promiscuously to all, because, when he came to Jerusalem, *there were multitudes that believed, and yet continued zealous for the law*, ^{<401>}Acts 21:20. And the reason of this his caution was *lest he should run, or had run, in vain*, lest he should stir up opposition against himself and thereby either the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed; for nothing more hinders the progress of the gospel than differences of opinion about the doctrines of it, especially when they occasion quarrels and contentions among the professors of it, as they too usually do. It was enough to his purpose to have his doctrine owned by those who were of greatest authority, whether it was approved by others or not. And therefore, to avoid offence, he judges it safest to communicate it privately to them, and not in public to the whole church. This conduct of the apostle may teach all, and especially ministers, how much need they

have of prudence, and how careful they should be to use it upon all occasions, as far as is consistent with their faithfulness.

2. That in his practice he firmly adhered to the doctrine which he had preached. Paul was a man of resolution, and would adhere to his principles; and therefore, though he had Titus with him, who was a Greek, yet he would not suffer him to be circumcised, because he would not betray the doctrine of Christ, as he had preached it to the Gentiles. It does not appear that the apostles at all insisted upon this; for, though they connived at the use of circumcision among the Jewish converts, yet they were not for imposing it upon the Gentiles. But there were others who did, whom the apostle here calls *false brethren*, and concerning whom he informs us that they were *unawares brought in*, that is, into the church, or into their company, and that they came only to *spy out their liberty which they had in Christ Jesus*, or to see whether Paul would stand up in defence of that freedom from the ceremonial law which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the Christian religion. Their design herein was *to bring them into bondage*, which they would have effected could they have gained the point they aimed at; for, had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus, they would easily have imposed circumcision upon other Gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the law of Moses. But Paul, seeing their design, would by no means yield to them; he would not *give place by subjection, no, not for an hour*, not in this one single instance; and the reason of it was *that the truth of the gospel might continue with them* that the Gentile Christians, and particularly the Galatians, might have it preserved to them pure and entire, and not corrupted with the mixtures of Judaism, as it would have been had he yielded in this matter. Circumcision was at that time a thing indifferent, and what in some cases might be complied with without sin; and accordingly we find even Paul himself sometimes giving way to it, as in the case of Timothy, ~~Acts~~ Acts 16:3. But when it is insisted on as necessary, and his consenting to it, though only in a single instance, is likely to be improved as giving countenance to such an imposition, he has too great a concern for the purity and liberty of the gospel, to submit to it; he would not yield to those who were for the Mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, which conduct of his may give us occasion to observe that what under some circumstances may lawfully be complied with, yet, when that cannot be

done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty, of the gospel, it ought to be refused.

3. That, though he conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge or authority from them, v. 6. By *those who seemed to be somewhat* he means the other apostles, particularly James, Peter, and John, whom he afterwards mentions by name, v. 9. And concerning these he grants that they were deservedly had in reputation by all, that they were looked upon (and justly too) as pillars of the church, who were set not only for its ornament, but for its support, and that on some accounts they might seem to have the advantage of him, in that they had seen Christ in the flesh, which he had not, and were apostles before him, yea, even while he continued a persecutor. But yet, *whatever they were, it was no matter to him*. This was no prejudice to his being equally an apostle with them; for God does not accept the persons of men on the account of any such outward advantages. As he had called them to this office, so he was at liberty to qualify others for it, and to employ them in it. And it was evident in this case that he had done so; for *in conference they added nothing to him*, they told him nothing but what he before knew by revelation, nor could they except against the doctrine which he communicated to them, whence it appeared that he was not at all inferior to them, but was as much called and qualified to be an apostle as they themselves were.

4. That the issue of this conversation was that the other apostles were fully convinced of his divine mission and authority, and accordingly acknowledged him as their fellow-apostle, v. 7-10. They were not only satisfied with his doctrine, but they saw a divine power attending him, both in preaching it and in working miracles for the confirmation of it: *that he who wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in him towards the Gentiles*. And hence they justly concluded *that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as the gospel of the circumcision was to Peter*. And therefore, *perceiving the grace that was given to him* (that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves) *they gave unto him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship*, a symbol whereby they acknowledged their equality with them, and agreed that *these should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the circumcision*, as judging it most agreeable to the mind of Christ, and most conducive to the interest of Christianity, so to divide their work. And thus

this meeting ended in an entire harmony and agreement; they approved both Paul's doctrine and conduct, they were fully satisfied in him, heartily embraced him as an apostle of Christ, and had nothing further to add, *only that they would remember the poor*, which of his own accord *he was very forward to do*. The Christians of Judea were at that time labouring under great wants and difficulties; and the apostles, out of their compassion to them and concern for them, recommend their case to Paul, that he should use his interest with the Gentile churches to procure a supply for them. This was a reasonable request; *for, if the Gentiles were made partakers of their spiritual things, it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things*, as ~~Romans~~ Romans 15:27. And he very readily falls in with it, whereby he showed his charitable and catholic disposition, how ready he was to own the Jewish converts as brethren, though many of them could scarcely allow the like favour to the converted Gentiles, and that mere difference of opinion was no reason with him why he should not endeavour to relieve and help them. Herein he has given us an excellent pattern of Christian charity, and has taught us that we should by no means confine it to those who are just of the same sentiments with us, but be ready to extend it to all whom we have reason to look upon as the disciples of Christ.

~~Romans~~ GALATIANS 2:11-21

PETER REPROVED BY PAUL

I. From the account which Paul gives of what passed between him and the other apostles at Jerusalem, the Galatians might easily discern both the falseness of what his enemies had insinuated against him and their own folly and weakness in departing from that gospel which he had preached to them. But to give the greater weight to what he had already said, and more fully to fortify them against the insinuations of the judaizing teachers, he acquaints them with another interview which he had with the apostle Peter at Antioch, and what passed between them there, v. 11-14. Antioch was one of the chief churches of the Gentile Christians, as Jerusalem was of those Christians who turned from Judaism to the faith of Christ. There is no colour of reason for the supposition that Peter was bishop of Antioch. If he had, surely Paul would not have withstood him in his own church, as we here find he did; but, on the contrary, it is here spoken of as an occasional visit which he made thither. In their other meeting, there had

been good harmony and agreement. Peter and the other apostles had both acknowledged Paul's commission and approved his doctrine, and they parted very good friends. But in this Paul finds himself obliged to appose Peter, for *he was to be blamed*, a plain evidence that he was not inferior to him, and consequently of the weakness of the pope's pretence to supremacy and infallibility, as the successor of Peter. Here we may observe,

1. Peter's fault. When he came among the Gentile churches, he complied with them, and did eat with them, though they were not circumcised, agreeably to the instructions which were given in particular to him (Acts 10), when he was warned by the heavenly vision *to call nothing common or unclean*. But, when there came some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, he grew more shy of the Gentiles, only to humour those of the circumcision and for fear of giving them offence, which doubtless was to the great grief and discouragement of the Gentile churches. Then *he withdrew, and separated himself*. His fault herein had a bad influence upon others, for *the other Jews also dissembled with him*; though before they might be better disposed, yet now, from his example, they took on them to scruple eating with the Gentiles, and pretended they could not in conscience do it, because they were not circumcised. And (would you think it?) Barnabas himself, one of the apostles of the Gentiles, and one who had been instrumental in planting and watering the churches of the Gentiles, *was carried away with their dissimulation*. Here note,

(1.) The weakness and inconstancy of the best of men, when left to themselves, and how apt they are to falter in their duty to God, out of an undue regard to the pleasing of men. And,

(2.) The great force of bad examples, especially the examples of great men and good men, such as are in reputation for wisdom and honour.

2. The rebuke which Paul gave him for his fault. Notwithstanding Peter's character, yet, when he observes him thus behaving himself to the great prejudice both of the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, he is not afraid to reprove him for it. Paul adhered resolutely to his principles, when others faltered in theirs; he was as good a Jew as any of them (for he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews), but he would magnify his office as the apostle of the Gentiles, and therefore would not see them discouraged and trampled upon. *When he saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel* that they did not live up to that principle which the

gospel taught, and which they had professed to own and embrace, namely, that by the death of Christ the partition-wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and the observance of the law of Moses was no longer in force when he observed this, as Peter's offence was public, so he publicly reproved him for it: *He said unto him before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?* Herein one part of his conduct was a contradiction to the other; for if he, who was a Jew, could himself sometimes dispense with the use of the ceremonial law, and live after the manner of the Gentiles, this showed that he did not look upon the observance of it as still necessary, even for the Jews themselves; and therefore that he could not, consistently with his own practice, impose it upon the Gentile Christians. And yet Paul charges him with this, yea, represents him as compelling the Gentiles to live as did the Jews not by open force and violence, but this was the tendency of what he did; for it was in effect to signify this, that the Gentiles must comply with the Jews, or else not be admitted into Christian communion.

II. Paul having thus established his character and office, and sufficiently shown that he was not inferior to any of the apostles, no, not to Peter himself, from the account of the reproof he gave him he takes occasion to speak of that great fundamental doctrine of the gospel That justification is only by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law (though some think that all he says to the end of the chapter is what he said to Peter at Antioch), which doctrine condemned Peter for his symbolizing with the Jews. For, if it was the principle of his religion that the gospel is the instrument of our justification and not the law, then he did very ill in countenancing those who kept up the law, and were for mixing it with faith in the business of our justification. This was the doctrine which Paul had preached among the Galatians, to which he still adhered, and which it is his great business in this epistle to mention and confirm. Now concerning this Paul acquaints us,

1. With the practice of the Jewish Christians themselves: “*We,*” says he, “*who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles* (even we who have been born and bred in the Jewish religion, and not among the impure Gentiles), *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we ourselves have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law.* And, if we have thought it necessary to seek justification

by the faith of Christ, why then should we hamper ourselves with the law? What did we believe in Christ for? Was it not that we might be justified by the faith of Christ? And, if so, is it not folly to go back to the law, and to expect to be justified either by the merit of moral works or the influence of any ceremonial sacrifices or purifications? And if it would be wrong in us who are Jews by nature to return to the law, and expect justification by it, would it not be much more so to require this of the Gentiles, who were never subject to it, since *by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified?*” To give the greater weight to this he adds (v. 17), “*But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin?*” If, while we seek justification by Christ alone, and teach others to do so, we ourselves are found giving countenance or indulgence to sin, or rather are accounted sinners of the Gentiles, and such as it is not fit to have communion with, unless we also observe the law of Moses, *is Christ the minister of sin?* Will it not follow that he is so, if he engage us to receive a doctrine that gives liberty to sin, or by which we are so far from being justified that we remain impure sinners, and unfit to be conversed with?” This, he intimates, would be the consequence, but he rejects it with abhorrence: “*God forbid,*” says he, “that we should entertain such a thought of Christ, or of his doctrine, that thereby he should direct us into a way of justification that is defective and ineffectual, and leave those who embrace it still unjustified, or that would give the least encouragement to sin and sinners.” This would be very dishonourable to Christ, and it would be very injurious to them also. “*For,*” says he (v. 18), “*if I build again the things which I destroyed if I (or any other), who have taught that the observance of the Mosaic law is not necessary to justification, should now, by word or practice, teach or intimate that it is necessary I make myself a transgressor; I own myself to be still an impure sinner, and to remain under the guilt of sin, notwithstanding my faith in Christ; or I shall be liable to be charged with deceit and prevarication, and acting inconsistently with myself.*” Thus does the apostle argue for the great doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law from the principles and practice of the Jewish Christians themselves, and from the consequences that would attend their departure from it, whence it appeared that Peter and the other Jews were much in the wrong in refusing to communicate with the Gentile Christians, and endeavouring to bring them under the bondage of the law.

2. He acquaints us what his own judgment and practice were.

(1.) That he was dead to the law. Whatever account others might make of it, yet, for his part, he was dead to it. He knew that the moral law denounced a curse against all that continue not in all things written therein, to do them; and therefore he was dead to it, as to all hope of justification and salvation that way. And as for the ceremonial law, he also knew that it was now antiquated and superseded by the coming of Christ, and therefore, the substance having come, he had no longer any regard to the shadow. He was thus dead to the law, *through the law itself*; it discovered itself to be at an end. By considering the law itself, he saw that justification was not to be expected by the works of it (since none could perform a perfect obedience to it) and that there was now no further need of the sacrifices and purifications of it, since they were done away in Christ, and a period was put to them by his offering up himself a sacrifice for us; and therefore, the more he looked into it the more he saw that there was no occasion for keeping up that regard to it which the Jews pleaded for. But, though he was thus *dead to the law*, yet he did not look upon himself as *with law*. He had renounced all hopes of justification by the works of it, and was unwilling any longer to continue under the bondage of it; but he was far from thinking himself discharged from his duty to God; on the contrary, he was dead to the law, *that he might live unto God*. The doctrine of the gospel, which he had embraced, instead of weakening the bond of duty upon him, did but the more strengthen and confirm it; and therefore, though he was dead to the law, yet it was only in order to his living a new and better life to God (as ~~4174~~Romans 7:4, 6), such a life as would be more agreeable and acceptable to God than his observance of the Mosaic law could now be, that is, a life of faith in Christ, and, under the influence thereof, of holiness and righteousness towards God. Agreeably hereunto he acquaints us,

(2.) That, as he was dead to the law, so he was alive unto God through Jesus Christ (v. 20): *I am crucified with Christ*, etc. And here in his own person he gives us an excellent description of the mysterious life of a believer.

[1.] He is crucified, and yet he lives; the old man is crucified (~~4186~~Romans 6:6), but the new man is living; he is dead to the world, and dead to the law, and yet alive to God and Christ; sin is mortified, and grace quickened.

[2.] *He lives, and yet not he*. This is strange: *I live, and yet not I*; he lives in the exercise of grace; he has the comforts and the triumphs of grace;

and yet that grace is not from himself, but from another. Believers see themselves living in a state of dependence.

[3.] *He is crucified with Christ, and yet Christ lives in him;* this results from his mystical union with Christ, by means of which he is interested in the death of Christ, so as by virtue of that to die unto sin; and yet interested in the life of Christ, so as by virtue of that to live unto God.

[4.] *He lives in the flesh, and yet lives by faith;* to outward appearance he lives as other people do, his natural life is supported as others are; yet he has a higher and nobler principle that supports and actuates him, that of faith in Christ, and especially as eyeing the wonders of his love in giving himself for him. Hence it is that, though he lives in the flesh, yet he does not live after the flesh. Note, Those who have true faith live by that faith; and the great thing which faith fastens upon is Christ's loving us and giving himself for us. The great evidence of Christ's loving us is his giving himself for us; and this is that which we are chiefly concerned to mix faith with, in order to our living to him.

Lastly, The apostle concludes this discourse with acquainting us that by the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ, without the works of the law (which he asserted, and others opposed), he avoided two great difficulties, which the contrary opinion was loaded with:

1. *That he did not frustrate the grace of God, which the doctrine of the justification by the works of the law did; for, as he argues (Romans 11:6), If it be of works, it is no more of grace.*

2. *That he did not frustrate the death of Christ; whereas, if righteousness come by the law, then it must follow that Christ has died in vain; for, if we look for salvation by the law of Moses, then we render the death of Christ needless: for to what purpose should he be appointed to die, if we might have been saved without it?*