

GALATIANS

Chapter 2

Paul Accepted by the Apostles

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. 2 I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 4 Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— 5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. 6 And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. 7 On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised 8 (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), 9 and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

In 2:1–10 Paul offers yet another proof of the divine origin of his apostolic message: his reception at Jerusalem by the pillars of the church. This encounter represented a delicate balancing act for Paul. He gained the recognition of the Jerusalem apostles, and without compromising the integrity of his circumcision-free mission to the gentiles. In a bold maneuver Paul deliberately brought along the uncircumcised Titus as a decisive test case. By the end of the day, Paul had held his ground against the sneaky and determined false brothers even as he holds the line now against the rival missionaries at Galatia. Luther put his finger on what was at stake: “The basic issue was this: Is the Law necessary for justification, or is it not?... Circumcision was not necessary for justification” (AE 26:85). (CC)

As the first serious test of his message, Paul wants to be clear on what happened. The challenge posed by the false brothers right in front of the pillars of the early church apparently created a tense situation for Paul—so tense that he finds it hard to narrate without a series of parenthetical comments for the sake of absolute clarity. His agitation expresses itself, whether intended or unintended, in a butchered syntax of convoluted and incomplete sentences.³⁰ Sometimes Paul leaves out verbs or other words that the reader must then supply, a phenomenon called ellipsis. What may have been clearer for Paul’s initial hearers is not always so clear now as the interpreter must reconstruct the missing or elided verb or phrase. At other times, Paul’s agitation expresses itself in what are called anacolutha, broken sequences that do not seem to correspond to what immediately precedes. One could skip from 2:1–2 to 2:6–10 “without breaking stride.” Gal 2:3–5 is a parenthesis in the narrative, and some have even contended that 2:4–5 is an embedded parenthesis within the parenthesis. Then 2:6–10 is one long complicated sentence describing the response of the Jerusalem leadership. All but the first verse in that single long sentence are missing a necessary element to complete the thought. Even more demanding, some interpreters are convinced that Paul’s narrative in 2:7–9 draws on the language of an agreement at Jerusalem, while others have thought that Paul interposes into his narration of the Jerusalem Council events that took place at Antioch or Galatia. This may be the most difficult passage in the letter from a translator’s standpoint. The thorny grammatical and interpretive issues that meet the modern reader at almost every step through 2:1–10 require patience.

The section may be outlined as follows:

- 2:1–2 Paul’s Second Jerusalem Visit: The Occasion, Purpose, and Participants
- 2:3–5 The First Result: Titus as a Test Case
- 2:6–10 The Second Result: A Division of Labor between Jewish and Gentile Missions (CC)

Paul’s Second Jerusalem Visit: The Occasion, Purpose, and Participants (2:1–2)

2:1–2a *Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking along Titus as well. I went up in accord with a revelation.* Paul begins with “then” (ἔπειτα) in order to convey that he is not omitting anything of significance in the chronology since his first Jerusalem visit in 1:18. The second Jerusalem visit took place “after fourteen years.” Since the ancients counted time inclusively, the time elapsed could be anywhere from twelve to fourteen years. The real question is whether Paul’s twelve to fourteen years number from his conversion or from his last visit to Jerusalem (that took place “three years” after his conversion; see 1:18). Despite occasional dogmatic claims among commentators, this question cannot be answered with certainty on the basis of what Paul writes. His purpose is simply to express that he was too busy with his Gospel labors to have any further contact with Jerusalem. Whether one dates the “fourteen years” from his last visit (three plus fourteen years) or from his conversion (fourteen years total) *does*, however, bear implications for reconstructions of the chronology of Paul and his letters. Chronological considerations have led some scholars to date the “fourteen years” from the point of Paul’s conversion:³⁵

- Paul’s conversion
- First visit to Jerusalem, three years after conversion (and during the “fourteen years”)
- Second visit to Jerusalem “fourteen years” after his conversion (cf. Acts 11–12)
- Galatian ministry (three years, based on the details in Acts 13–14)
- Letter to the Galatians (not long after leaving Galatia and shortly before the Acts 15 conference)
- Third visit to Jerusalem, in Acts 15 (AD 48) (CC)

To review this scenario: Paul’s second visit to Jerusalem took place twelve to fourteen years after his conversion, after which ensued an approximately three year period of ministry in Galatia, a return to Antioch, the writing of the letter, and the third visit to Jerusalem in AD 48. In other words, Paul’s conversion would have taken place fifteen to seventeen years prior to AD 48 and within one to three years after the birth of the church in AD 30. (CC)

In a different scenario, were Paul dating the fourteen years from his previous (first) Jerusalem visit (1:18), the time elapsed since his conversion would be eighteen to twenty years. If the church era began in AD 30, with Paul’s conversion a few years later, then eighteen to twenty more years would place the Jerusalem conference of Acts 15 well after AD 48. For chronologies based on the book of Acts, a later conference visit would conflict with Paul’s appearance before Gallio (Acts 18) in the summer of AD 51. Despite the potential chronological conflict with the book of Acts, several considerations have led many scholars to count the fourteen years from Paul’s prior visit to Jerusalem (1:18). They have contended that Paul’s primary concern is to stress the lack of contact with Jerusalem. “Again” (πάλιν) in 2:1 appears to point back to the first Jerusalem visit (1:18), even as the “then” (ἔπειτα) in 2:1 matches the “then” (ἔπειτα) in the narration of the first Jerusalem visit (1:18; cf. 1:21). (CC)

The critical factor for deciding between these two interpretive options is whether Paul’s purpose is primarily negative, a lack of contact with Jerusalem, or positive, the Gospel’s power demonstrated in his life. Scholars have often assumed that Paul was defending himself against his rivals and therefore had to demonstrate a lack of contact with Jerusalem. This assumption overlooks the dominant emphasis in Galatians 1 and 2 on the power of God at work in the world and in Paul’s life. In such a context as this,

the apostle is reckoning time from before and after his encounter with Jesus Christ—thus fourteen years after that life-changing moment! (CC)

Even as a “revelation” changed Paul’s life (ἀποκάλυψις, 1:12), it took a “revelation” to get him to go back again to Jerusalem (ἀποκάλυψις, 2:1). He says: “I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking along Titus as well” (ἀνέβην εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα μετὰ Βαρναβᾶ συμπαραλαβὼν καὶ Τίτον, 2:1). Paul assumes that the Galatians are already familiar with Barnabas and Titus. Such a familiarity may favor a south Galatian audience since Barnabas had been active there (Acts 13–14). Barnabas may well have been the leader of the group at that point; note the priority of Barnabas in Acts 11:30 and 12:25. Paul does not appear to want to emphasize Barnabas’ leadership of the group, had that been the case. Paul places himself as the grammatical subject of all but one of the eight finite verbs and participles in 2:1–2. He himself went to Jerusalem “with Barnabas.” Since Paul took Titus along with himself (note the singular participle συμπαραλαβὼν, “taking along,” in 2:1 and σὺν ἐμοί, “with me,” in 2:3), one might conclude that the journey took place under *Paul’s* leadership. Barnabas may not have had a say in the matter. Regardless of who led the visit and the exact details, Paul is wary of any challenge to his Gospel message, a message he personally represents. (CC)

Titus, an uncircumcised gentile, was Paul’s convert (Titus 1:4) and assisted Paul in his ministry among the gentiles, especially the Corinthians (2 Cor 2:13; 7:6, 13–14; 8:6, 16, 23; 2 Tim 4:10). Somewhat surprisingly, Luke does not mention Titus in the book of Acts. Some have speculated that Luke may have confused Titus with John Mark. Paul and Barnabas “took along” John Mark (Acts 12:25; 15:37–38) even as Paul “took along” Titus (Gal 2:1). On the other hand, Luke downplays the Jerusalem collection, which is only briefly mentioned in Acts 24:17. Since Titus is closely associated with that collection (2 Cor 8:6, 23–24; Gal 2:10), Luke would not have any need to mention him. Paul’s decision to take along the gentile Titus reflected his conviction that the Gospel creates a new community in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcised nor uncircumcised (Gal 3:28; 5:6; 6:15; Luther, AE 27:200). With the presence of the uncircumcised Titus, Paul forces the Jerusalem apostles and leadership to face the practical implications of a Gospel message that places Christ first. Bringing Titus along was a provocative move, and the situation soon became more complicated than Paul had anticipated thanks to the intrusion of the “false brothers” (Gal 2:4). (CC)

Paul adds (δέ; left untranslated) that he went up to Jerusalem “in accord with a revelation” (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν, 2:2). Elsewhere Paul explains that “revelation” can come through visions (2 Cor 12:1–7; Gal 1:12; cf. Acts 16:9–10; 18:9) and through prophecy (cf. 1 Cor 14:6, 26, 30). He does not say that he personally received this revelation; he does not say that it was “given to me.” That omission may be evidence to link the revelation with Agabus’ prophecy and the famine relief visit of Acts 11:27–30 (cf. remembering the poor in Gal 2:10). The main point is that *God* sent Paul to Jerusalem; he was not sent or summoned by a human authority, whether in Antioch or Jerusalem. This was not Paul’s idea, even if he hoped to take advantage of the occasion. “Paul was not outward-directed, pushed and shoved by the changing whims of public opinion. Nor was he only inward-directed, driven by his own needs and ambitions. He was God-directed, led by the Spirit of God (see 5:18).” (CC)

2:2b *And I laid before them the Gospel that I preach among the gentiles—but privately to the ones who are recognized, lest somehow I was running or had run in vain.* Paul continues (“and” [καί]): he set before “them” the Gospel he preached “among the gentiles” in predominantly gentile regions. The referent of the pronoun “them” (αὐτοῖς) is unclear and could refer to the Jerusalem Christians in general. Nevertheless, by the end of the verse after the conjunction δέ (“but”), “the ones who are recognized” (τοῖς δοκοῦσιν) matches the earlier “them” (αὐτοῖς) in gender, number, and case. He is laying his Gospel before “them,” “the ones who are recognized.” Later in 2:9 Paul clarifies still further that “the ones who are recognized” are Peter, James, and John (“the ones recognized to be ‘pillars,’” οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι). Paul is only gradually revealing the identity of “them,” and in so doing he reserves their full

identity and status until later. The highly “recognized” Peter, James, and John could easily distract the Galatian hearers from the focus on Paul’s Gospel message. After the initial delay in identifying Peter, James, and John, Paul eventually identifies the three not as authoritative figures in early Christianity as a whole but rather as leaders of the Jerusalem community. Paul does not want their status and authority to overshadow his own lest the Gospel he is preaching should suffer. (CC)

After explaining that God’s revelation had directed him to Jerusalem, Paul continues that he “laid before” (ἀνεθέμην, aorist middle indicative of ἀνατίθημι) “them” “the Gospel that I preach among the gentiles” (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ὃ κηρύσσω ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Revelation has orchestrated this discussion regarding the Gospel. “Lay before” (ἀνατίθημι) in the middle voice means to “present,” “set out for consideration,” “ask for an opinion,” or “communicate *with a view to consultation*.” In Acts 25:14 Festus refers Paul to King Agrippa for a judicial opinion. Such “laying before” may be made to a social superior (cf. 2 Macc 3:9), or it may be made without any implication of social superiority (LXX Micah 7:5; Plutarch, *Mor.* 772D; Alciiphron 3.23.2 [iii.59]). Paul expresses no harbored doubts about the Gospel he had been preaching up to this point (note the first person present tense *singular* κηρύσσω, “I preach,” in 2:2). This is the Gospel that he *continues* (present tense) to preach. He did not need Jerusalem to judge his Gospel’s validity, but rather he wanted to make sure he was not laboring in vain. Paul simply placed his Gospel preaching on the table before them, saying in effect, “There it is.” He was not about to stop doing what he had been divinely commissioned to do, but the church must ultimately remain of Jew *and* gentile (3:28; 6:15). The church must remain united! The need for unity rendered this presentation necessary, and, in view of the virulent opposition Paul ultimately encountered, so necessary that God had intervened by “revelation” to initiate the meeting. (CC)

Some have theorized that Paul was referring to *two* meetings: one with a larger group in public (αὐτοῖς, “I laid before *them*”) and a subsequent, private meeting with the “recognized ones” (δοκοῦσιν) mentioned later in 2:2. Perhaps the larger group referred the matter to a smaller one, or vice versa. Such a scenario is unlikely. Even as Paul dealt privately with the leaders in his prior visit to Jerusalem (1:18–19), so also was the case this time. The matter of gentile circumcision was too volatile for a public meeting and needed to be resolved first among the key players. Ultimately, only the leaders could really stand in Paul’s way. The best approach to 2:2 is simply to take Paul as amplifying his initial statement: “I laid before them the Gospel” by clarifying (an explanatory δέ, “but”) that it was a private meeting with those of repute. Eventually, in 2:6–10, he describes the results of the meeting. Had Paul wanted to describe two separate meetings, one private and the other public, he would have more clearly differentiated the first meeting as “to all of them” (as he does in 2:14) in contrast to the second meeting, which took place “privately.” He would also have labeled the meeting with the larger group as having taken place “publicly.”⁶² In the absence of such contextual cues, Paul is describing only a single meeting. (CC)

Does Paul intend the “recognized ones” (δοκοῦσιν) as an honorific term? Or does he use the “recognized ones” in a dismissive fashion?⁶⁴ “Recognized” (δοκοῦσιν) in the realm of political rhetoric could refer to those *reputed* to be important. Paul does not say *who* recognized these individuals, but the admirers would certainly include the “false brothers” (ψευδαδέλφους, 2:4), the men from James (τινας ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου, 2:12), as well as Paul’s Galatian rivals, who would surely trumpet the authority of the Jerusalem leadership. Perhaps “the recognized ones” had become a sort of title for Peter, James, and John, in which case Paul could use the title in 2:2 and 2:6 without any qualifiers and expect to be understood. On the other hand, the increasing descriptive expansions on the “recognized ones,” first in 2:6 and then more fully in 2:9 with outright naming, suggests a rhetorical strategy on Paul’s part rather than an established title. Again, he is deliberately delaying the overt identification of the Jerusalem apostles lest their identity detract attention from his point. When Paul explicitly identifies the three leaders in 2:9, the label “recognized” appears to be genuinely honorary and not pejorative. He even boasts that the “recognized” ones supported his Gospel preaching. The title “recognized” does, however, suggest a

human system of honor that may be trumped by God’s own revelation should human beings stand against the Gospel. God is the ultimate arbiter of the truth. (CC)

Paul remains genuinely concerned “lest somehow” (μή πως, 2:2) his missionary labors end up “in vain” (εἰς κενόν). These concerns may have prompted Paul to seek a private meeting (κατ’ ἰδίαν, “privately”). After a divine revelation commissioning his ministry and fourteen years of labor in the field, what was so serious that it could render all those labors “in vain”? Had the Jerusalem apostles rejected his approach to evangelizing gentiles, he could have severed ties with Jerusalem, but in that case how seriously could the gentiles take a faith born among the Jews? They would be effectively rejecting Jerusalem’s Jewish-Christian leadership, the very ones who had walked with Jesus.⁷⁰ What would it say about a Gospel in which there is neither “neither Jew nor Greek” (3:28) if there were separate churches of Jews and Greeks? Paul’s strenuous efforts, his “running” for the sake of the Gospel, would indeed be “in vain” (cf. 4:11). That concern is precisely why he begins 2:3 with “*but* [ἀλλά] not even Titus ... was not compelled to be circumcised.” Titus embodied Paul’s Gospel message! The unity of the Gospel required the unity of the churches, and the unity of the churches depended on the acceptance of Titus. Paul does not place the authority of Jerusalem over his own, but the Jerusalem leaders’ reaction to his provocative move to bring along Titus could potentially jeopardize his labors. Despite these very serious concerns, the divine revelation that directed this visit (2:2) may have also assured Paul of the ultimate outcome. He may have recalled the promise in his favorite prophet that God’s people will not labor in vain (Is 65:23; cf. Phil 2:16). (CC)

2:1 διὰ (“after”)—On the temporal use of διὰ with the genitive, see BDAG, διὰ, 2 c; Mk 2:1; Acts 24:17.

συμπαλαβών (“taking along”)—The participle is aorist but coincides in time with the main verb, ἀνέβην (“I went up”). (CC)

Fourteen years later. Probably from the date of Paul’s conversion. (CSB)

Paul could mean 14 years after his conversion (1:15–16); after his first visit to Jerusalem (1:18); or after the time spent in Syria and Cilicia (1:21). In any case, the overall argument remains clear: during this long period, Paul had no direct contact with Jerusalem. (TLSB)

I went up again to Jerusalem.† The visit mentioned in Ac 11:30. (CSB)

I think Paul was a wise man and understood that there were going to be some tensions that were taking place in the Jerusalem church over this mission to the Gentiles. Even though Peter started it, there's a strong group of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem that would be opposed to this. Now, this is an important point. And if you don't understand this, I think it's very hard to read the epistle to the Galatians. The way in which the churches were made up is very significant. The Jerusalem church is made up of all Jews. That means there is no Gentile influence in Jerusalem at all. And therefore, they have a unique setting, obviously near the temple, led by James. And even though they confess the true faith, namely, that salvation comes by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ, as Jews, they lived a life that was consistent to Judaism. In other words, they kept the law. They followed circumcision. They followed the dietary laws. They followed probably the Jewish calendar. They still went to the temple to pray. They didn't do this as a matter of their sayings but because this is who they were and where they were. And the Jerusalem church is very, very Jewish in everything. (Just – V-8)

Within the Jerusalem church there was clearly a group that felt that it was important to keep the law as a matter of salvation. And this is a critical, critical point. That these are people like Paul, grew up probably like Pharisees. Maybe even went to school with Paul. And they were going around to places like Antioch and Galatia following behind Paul and Barnabas. And they were saying something like this: That Paul is

a great preacher of the Gospel. He's a great student of the Scripture. In fact, he was No. 1 in the class. There's nobody who was smarter or a better interpreter of Scripture than Paul. But he didn't tell you the whole truth. He didn't tell you that it's not simply by grace through faith. That is important. And with Paul we confess that Jesus died and rose again. But Paul didn't tell you that you have to do something. That it's the Gospel plus something. You have to do some works of the law in order to show that you're a true Christian. And in fact, the way to become a Christian is to first become a Jew. And the means that is most excellent in becoming a Jew is to submit yourself to circumcision, to keep the dietary laws and to keep the calendar. So we're here to tell you what Paul just simply didn't tell you. That in order to be a Christian, you first must become a Jew by being circumcised and living like a Jew. (Just – V-8)

Barnabas. Means “one who encourages.” His given name was Joseph, and he was a Levite from the island of Cyprus. He was Paul’s companion on the first missionary journey (Ac 13:1–14:28). (CSB)

Luther: “By presenting himself with both of them he intended to make it clear that he was at liberty to be a Gentile with Titus and a Jew with Barnabas ... [to prove] the freedom of the Gospel in each case” (AE 27:200). (TLSB)

Titus. A Gentile Christian who served as Paul’s delegate to Corinth and later was left in Crete to oversee the church there (see Tit 1:5). (CSB)

Paul associates himself with two witnesses, Barnabas and Titus. Barnabas was Paul’s companion in preaching to the Gentiles about freedom from the Law. He was also a witness of everything that Paul had done; he had seen that merely through the preaching of faith in Christ the Holy Spirit had been granted to Gentiles who were not circumcised or subject to the Law of Moses. He was the only one to support Paul in the insistence that it was not necessary to burden the Gentiles with the Law, but that it was enough for them to believe in Christ. Therefore he testifies for Paul and against the zealous and legalistic Jews on the basis of his own experience that the Gentiles became children of God and were saved solely by faith in Jesus Christ, without the Law or circumcision. (Luther)

2:2 κατ’ ἰδίαν (“privately”)—See Mt 17:19; Mk 4:34; 9:28; Ign. *Smyrn.* 7.2.

κηρύσσω (“I preach”)—The present tense conveys action contemporaneous with the main verb, ἀνεθέμην (“I laid before”). This is Paul’s ongoing preaching activity as he presented the Gospel to the others.

μή πως (“lest somehow”)—This construction in Paul always expresses a real and not merely a hypothetical possibility, thus genuine apprehension here. Paul does not want his missionary labors to be “in vain” (see the next textual note). μή πως can be used to introduce a final clause (“that I might not run in vain”), but that would require an indicative verb in a past tense (whereas τρέχω is present tense; see the sixth textual note on 2:2) and would follow a hypothetical contrary-to-fact statement.

εἰς κενόν (“in vain”)—In Paul this phrase is always adverbial for result (2 Cor 6:1; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5: for converts not remaining faithful and not persevering to the end). Paul is worried about running “for nothing” or “in vain.”

τρέχω (“I was running”)—This verb is often taken as a present subjunctive (“I should run”), but it could also be a present indicative (“I am running”). The temporal contrast with the following second aorist indicative ἔδραμον (“I had run”) may support futurity in the present tense verb; cf. Gal 4:11; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess 3:5. The subsequent aorist indicative ἔδραμον favors taking τρέχω as a present indicative expressing action contemporaneous with the main verb: “I laid before [ἀνεθέμην] ... lest somehow I was [at that time] running.” (CC)

went up because of a revelation – Otherwise Paul would have been stubborn and would not have gone up. But he went because God warned him by a special revelation and commanded him to go. He did this to restrain, or at least to appease, the Jews who were believers but continued to argue about the observance of the Law. His purpose was to promote and establish the truth of the Gospel. (Luther)

Paul went up to Jerusalem for no other reason than that God told him to go there (just as after his conversion, Ac 22:17–21). (TLSB)

set before them...the gospel – Here you are told that finally, after eighteen years, Paul went up to Jerusalem and argued with the apostles regarding his Gospel. (Luther)

that I proclaimed among the Gentles – Paul means that among the Jews he had permitted the Law and circumcision to stand for a while, as had the other apostles. “I have become all things to all men,” he says (1 Cor. 9:22). Yet he always maintained the true doctrine of his Gospel, which he elevated above the Law, above circumcision, above the apostles, yes, even above an angel from heaven (Gal. 1:8). For this is what he says to the Jews in Acts 13:38: “Through this Christ forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you.” And he adds very plainly (v. 39): “And by Him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the Law of Moses.” This is the reason he teaches and defends the doctrine of the Gospel so diligently everywhere and refuses to let it be endangered. Nevertheless, he did not make a radical break right away; but he took account of those who were weak. In order not to offend the weak he undoubtedly spoke to the Jews as follows: “The observance of the Law of Moses is superfluous and contributes nothing to righteousness. Still, if you like it so well, you may go on observing it for all I care—just so that the Gentiles, who are not bound by this worship, do not have it imposed upon them!” (Luther)

those who seemed influential. † Paul recognized their authority, and is referring to James, Peter and John (v. 9; cf. v. 6). (CSB)

Men of reputation, identified primarily as James, Cephas, and John (v 9). (TLSB)

That is: “I did not confer only with the brethren; I conferred with those among them who had the highest reputation.” (Luther)

had not run in vain. See 1Co 15:58; Php 2:16. (CSB)

For the sake of the Church’s unity and God’s mission to Jews and Gentiles, Paul desired to get a vote of confidence from the Jerusalem leadership. (TLSB)

This does not mean that Paul was in doubt whether or not he had been, or was, running in vain. For he had been preaching the Gospel for eighteen years now, and the text goes on to say immediately that he had stood firm and sure all this time and had prevailed. It means rather that there were many who supposed that Paul had preached the Gospel for so many years in vain because he had given the Gentiles freedom from the Law. In addition, the idea was continually gaining ground that the Law was necessary for justification. When he went up to Jerusalem by revelation, his purpose was to remedy this condition. This conference was to make it clear to everyone that his Gospel was not contrary in any way to the doctrine of the other apostles, so that in this way he could silence his opponents, who might otherwise be able to say that he was running, or had run, in vain. Note here in passing that man’s own righteousness or the righteousness of the Law has this power, that those who teach it run and live in vain. (Luther)

The First Result: Titus as a Test Case (2:3–5) (CC)

2:3 *But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.* Paul seems to blurt out these words! In fact, his text would make perfect sense if one went directly from 2:2 to 2:6 and left out 2:3–5. Even as intruders crashed the Jerusalem meeting in 2:4, 2:3–5 intrudes into its context and causes the syntax to begin to crash. No (ἀλλά), Paul had *not* run in vain. Titus is exhibit A for Paul’s gentile mission and the proof of his success at Jerusalem. “With me” (σὺν ἐμοί) is a little repetitious after 2:1’s “[my] taking along Titus.” The repetition serves as a reminder that Paul had brought Titus along to make a point. Titus was Greek, a non-Jew. There would be no way to avoid his uncircumcised status. The reception of Titus would have profound implications not only for the Galatians but also for *all* of Paul’s gentile converts. (CC)

Apparently some people applied pressure to get Titus circumcised. They wanted to “compel” Titus to be circumcised. Certainly they were not holding the knife to Titus, but harsh rhetoric and social pressure can be very effective instruments of coercion. The attempt to “compel” Titus’ circumcision corresponds to Paul’s rivals’ attempts to “compel” the Galatians’ circumcision (6:12)—the same verb (ἀναγκάζω) is used. In fact, the Jerusalem advocates of circumcision did not surrender but took their case on the road to Antioch, as Paul narrates in 2:14, and again, he uses the same verb, “compel” (ἀναγκάζω). Paul describes Titus as a “Greek” (Ἕλληνα). He uses “Greek” for the entire civilized world apart from the Jewish people. He is not likely the first to do so (see 2 Macc 4:36; 11:2; 4 Macc 18:20). Paul similarly divides the world into circumcised and uncircumcised (Gal 5:6; 6:15). The point is that Titus is not a Jew! (CC)

A handful of scholars have placed the stress on the word “compelled” (ἠναγκάσθη) in 2:3: Titus was not *compelled* to be circumcised. In other words, he did indeed submit to the rite, but voluntarily. After all, Paul boasted of being all things to all people (1 Cor 9:19–23). Such a reading of the verse should be rejected. The stress at the beginning of the verse is on “but not even” (ἀλλ’ οὐδέ). The stressed “not even” is followed by “(the one) who was with me”: thus “*not even the one who was with me!*” Paul is adamant in 2:5 that he did not give in “even for a moment” for the sake of the truth of the Gospel. Had the Greek Titus been circumcised, even voluntarily, Paul would be conceding his entire case to the advocates of gentile circumcision: “*yes, even Titus.*” The Jerusalem apostles would have indeed added something (cf. 2:6) and would thereby have rejected his circumcision-free gentile mission (2:7). The Galatians too are under intense pressure (6:12). If Paul yielded at Jerusalem, why should not the Galatians? Instead, Paul warns of falling away from grace if they yield to the pressure (5:2–4). To yield on Titus under these circumstances at Jerusalem would have given the false impression that circumcision was in fact necessary (Luther, AE 26:85–86, 91). With Luther: “Faith in its proper function has no other object than Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was put to death for the sins of the world” (AE 26:88). “If faith yields on this point, the death of the Son of God will be in vain” (Luther, AE 26:90; cf. Gal 2:21; 3:21). “In short, we can stand the loss of our possessions, our name, our life, and everything else; but we will not let ourselves be deprived of the Gospel, our faith, and Jesus Christ. And that is that” (Luther, AE 26:99). “We refuse to yield the least little bit, either to all the heavenly angels or to Peter or to Paul or to a hundred emperors or to a thousand popes or to the whole world!” (Luther, AE 26:99). Luther, like Paul, will “yield to no one” (AE 26:99). Since Titus was not circumcised, the gentile Galatians need not be either! (CC)

2:4 *[Now this happened] because of the smuggled false brothers, who sneaked in to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus in order that they might enslave us.* A small group of scholars has advocated a parenthesis *within* the parenthesis of 2:3–5: Even as Paul interrupted his description of the Jerusalem meeting in 2:1–2 to mention Titus, he abandons Jerusalem entirely in 2:4–5 to describe a situation that took place in Antioch or Galatia. The motivation for this proposal, in part, has been a perceived danger that Paul’s harsh rhetoric of “false brothers” might apply also to the Jerusalem apostles. That would not be the case if 2:4–5 were a parenthesis describing events that had taken place elsewhere, in Antioch or Galatia. (CC)

The main problem with this proposal is that the struggle for freedom in 2:4–5 responds directly to the attempt at compulsion mentioned at the end of 2:3. Furthermore, Paul has just described his meeting “privately” (κατ’ ἰδίαν) with the Jerusalem leadership (2:2), precisely the sort of occasion that would require some infiltration and spying as Paul describes it in 2:4. Had a delegation been sent by James to Antioch (or Galatia), they could hardly be described as infiltrating spies. Paul’s attention remains riveted on the tense, crucial meeting in Jerusalem. Something happened there that *should not* have happened! (CC)

Some of the impetus for the parenthesis-within-a-parenthesis proposal is the admittedly difficult syntax in 2:4. The verse begins with a causal clause, “(but) because of (on account of) the ... false brethren,” and then continues through 2:5, but the thought is never completed. So *what happened* “because of the ... false brethren”? A subject and a verb are missing. A minimal translation would add “now this happened”: “[Now this happened] because certain false brothers infiltrated our ranks.” “Not even Titus ... was compelled to be circumcised,” writes Paul in 2:3 in a comment that begs explanation—thus 2:4’s description of the intruders and 2:5’s description of their ultimate failure. “[Now this happened (i.e., pressure for Titus’ circumcision)] because certain false brothers infiltrated our ranks.”⁸⁶ The ellipsis might also read: “Titus was not compelled to be circumcised; but because of the false brethren he was being urged to do so.” Luther commented: “Anyone who is inflamed while speaking cannot at the same time observe the grammatical rules.”⁸⁸ Paul’s emotions in recounting the incident may have caused him syntactically to jump ahead of himself. (CC)

On the other hand, the broken syntax may have been a rhetorical ploy. By leaving words in his sentence unexpressed, the truncated opening of 2:4 places the hearer on edge and attentive to what immediately follows. “This may have been by design: allusions to unsavoury activities, dark hints of skullduggery, implication of dishonourable motives and things left unsaid (leaving the readership to fill out the unfinished sentence) would serve Paul’s polemic better than explicit details which could be the more directly challenged and refuted; Paul shows himself at this point to be the master of political propaganda.” (CC)

People whom Paul describes as “false brothers” (2:4) appear to have been putting pressure on the Jerusalem apostles, in turn, to force Titus to be circumcised. The first-century AD Jewish historian Josephus narrates a story in which a man shared with the gentile king Izates the Jewish faith. Later, the king came into contact with pious Eleazar, who corrected his predecessor by explaining to the king the necessity of circumcision and Law observance:

In your ignorance, O king, you are guilty of the greatest offence against the law and thereby against God. For you ought not merely to read the law but also, and even more, to do what is commanded in it. How long will you continue to be uncircumcised? If you have not yet read the law concerning this matter, read it now, so that you may know what an impiety it is that you commit. (CC)

Most Jews in Paul’s day considered Law observance and circumcision absolutely essential to honoring the true God. The “false brothers” appear to have shared that perspective. (CC)

The label “false brothers” implies that some in the Jerusalem church viewed these people as “brothers.” Perhaps the Jerusalem church, if not also the Jerusalem leadership, had a rather positive view of them. Paul is disputing the label of “brothers” as a sham. He continues his description of the false brothers with metaphorical language about intruding spies. Paul is not using the language of “sneaking/slipping in” and “spying” objectively but as a means of further disparaging the “false brothers.” These terms are often used in military contexts, and Paul *does* envision a spiritual war taking place (Rom 6:12–14; 2 Cor 10:3–6; Phil 1:27–30; cf. Eph 6:10–17). The notion of “spiritual warfare” may be alien in some modern

Christian circles, but the battle wages on, nevertheless. Even as the Law intruded into history by “slipping in” (παρεισῆλθεν, Rom 5:20; cf. Gal 3:15–18), the false brothers “sneaked/slipped in” on what was a private meeting. They infiltrated.⁹⁶ They came “to spy on” (κατασκοπήσαι) the proceedings. The language of infiltration should not be pressed so far as to exclude the possibility that they may have been permitted into the meeting by Peter, James, or John, even if hesitantly. (CC)

As Paul describes their “spying,” he leaves unanswered what information, if any, they were seeking to glean. He writes that they infiltrated to spy on “our freedom,” and yet they appear rather to be *advocating* a position. The spies’ ultimate aim, according to Paul, was to “bring into bondage” or “enslave” (καταδουλώω). They wanted to see the gentile Titus circumcised as a properly Law-observant Jewish convert. The Torah, God’s gift to Israel in the wilderness, had been the symbol of Israel’s freedom from slavery in Egypt. In the Maccabean Revolt, the Jews subsequently fought and died two hundred years before Paul’s day to maintain their people’s freedom to practice the Law in the face of Greek intolerance. Now Paul the Jew claims that in the hands of the infiltrators the Torah itself has ironically proved to be an enslaving agent. As guardians of an esteemed heritage, the “brothers” would, of course, have thought otherwise, but Paul clearly distinguishes these “false brothers” (2:4) from the “recognized ones” (2:2, 6, 9). (CC)

Paul’s estimation of the “false brothers” could not be more emphatically negative: they had been “smuggled (in)” and “sneaked in” to “spy on our freedom” in order “that they might *enslave us*” (2:4). This is no mere polemic. Paul is at the same time beginning to develop the key elements of his message in this letter. This is the first time in the letter that Paul draws on the vocabulary of freedom. He uses the noun “freedom” (ἐλευθερία) four times in the letter (here; 5:1, 13 [twice]). He uses the adjective “free” (ἐλεύθερος) six times (3:28; 4:22, 23, 26, 30, 31). He uses the verb “to free” (ἐλευθερώω) once (5:1) as well as a synonymous verb, “redeem” (ἐξαγοράζω), in 3:13 and 4:5. The Galatians would not have missed the emotive chord of such language.¹⁰⁰ The false brothers at Jerusalem want to take away the gentiles’ freedom. Whereas Paul is a slave *of Christ* (1:10), they are demanding a slavery to a different master. With the first person plural pronoun “enslave *us*,” Paul implies that even Jewish Christians will find themselves enslaved. Furthermore, this is the freedom that “we have in Christ Jesus.” That would include Paul, Titus, and his companions at the meeting, but the apostle is surely drawing his Galatian readership into the conversation. The “for you” at the end of 2:5 will not surprise them after the “we” in this verse. The apostle surely intends the scathing indictment of the Jerusalem intruders to speak volumes about the intruders in the Galatians’ own midst who are making the very same attempt to enslave! (CC)

2:5 *To them not even for a moment did we yield in submission, in order that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you.* In this verse Paul loses his grammatical thread altogether. He barely mentions the intruders before immediately launching into his response “to them” (οἷς) for the sake of the Galatians (“for you,” πρὸς ὑμᾶς): “to them”—“not even for a moment did we yield in submission.” They wanted to “enslave us” (2:4), but “we did not yield.” Paul refused to surrender his freedom in order that “the truth of the Gospel” might remain. The “we” signals that in Jerusalem Barnabas was standing firm with Paul. (CC)

Some specialists have thought that 2:5 begins with an instance of anacoluthon with missing words perhaps to be supplied from the beginning of 2:4: “because of the smuggled false brothers” (διὰ ... τοῦς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους). “To them” (οἷς) would signal the resumption of the thought. In this view, “because of the false brothers” would not be linked with what preceded in 2:3 but with what follows in 2:4–5: “Because of the false brothers ... not even for a moment did we yield in submission.” This construal would suggest that had it not been for the presence of the false brothers, Paul would have yielded on Titus’ circumcision. In their presence he had become intransigent. Such a notion, however, is at odds with Paul’s otherwise stubbornly circumcision-free approach. (CC)

Paul did not yield even “for a moment,” literally, “for an hour” (πρὸς ὥραν, 2:5). Since the hour was the smallest unit of time in the Greco-Roman world, many translators have opted for “not even for a *moment*.” Paul does indeed use the phrase (πρὸς ὥραν) for a “very short time” that is less than an hour (e.g., 2 Cor 7:8). The literal translation “for an hour” has the advantage of suggesting “*sustained* pressure,” as is likely in this instance. The expression is therefore a flexible one (thus ὥρα, “hour,” in Mt 10:19; 26:40, 45, 55). “For a moment,” then, should not be taken too literally. The intruders did not likely desist from their pressure tactics. What happened in Jerusalem was just the beginning of an opposition that would continue in Antioch (2:11–14). Nevertheless, “we did not yield [οὐδὲ ... εἴξαμεν] *in submission* [τῆ ὑποταγῆ].” The expression is redundant since the verb “yield” or “give in” (εἴκω) already suggests an attempt to subjugate. Some have preferred to leave the word ὑποταγῆ, “*submission*,” effectively untranslated. The article (τῆ) with “*submission*” (ὑποταγῆ) indicates a *particular* obedience that is being demanded: circumcision. Whereas so many in the modern era would prefer the path of compromise for the sake of good relations, Paul recognizes that “the truth of the Gospel” does not permit compromise. No matter how esteemed or recognized the company, the Christian must recognize any compromise of the Gospel message for what it is, the introduction of error. Error never leads to a positive end (see 5:9). (CC)

The concluding “in order that” clause (ἵνα of purpose) explains why Paul considers his stand on this occasion so important: the results directly impacted the Galatians (“for you”). “The truth of the Gospel” has remained or been preserved to this point; may it *continue* to be preserved. Paul wants it to remain “for you [Galatians].” He sometimes employs the Greek πρὸς τινα with other “remain” (μένω) verbs (παρμένω and ἐπιμένω) to mean “with” (1 Cor 16:6, 7; Gal 1:18). The preposition πρὸς means “with” in Gal 1:18; 4:18, 20. On the other hand, the expression here (διαμένω πρὸς τινα) occurs nowhere else in the NT (cf. Lk 22:28; Acts 10:48); the translation “toward” or “for” would be possible. “*Remain with/for*” implies a prior commitment to the gentile mission (in general). The question, then, is whether Paul and Barnabas battled at Jerusalem because the Galatians had *already* received the Gospel and they wanted it to remain *with* the Galatians, or whether they did battle so that the Gospel might remain *for* the Galatians, whom the message would reach in due time. This question of translation bears implications for Pauline chronology. If the visit to Galatia *follows* the events in Jerusalem (2:1–10) and Antioch (2:11–14), and especially if 2:1–10 should be linked to Acts 11 and 12, then the purposive “for” would be more apt. (CC)

The phrase “the truth of the Gospel” appears only here (2:5), in 2:14, and in Col 1:5 (in a different syntactical construction), all within contexts of conflict. Paul is emphasizing that there can be no truth without the Gospel.¹¹⁹ That truth must be defended when it is challenged, whether directly by false brothers (2:5) or inadvertently by genuine apostles (2:14). Sometimes the desire for peaceful relations can be at the cost of the Gospel, and, in those instances, the truth of the Gospel must remain the foremost priority. Paul asks in 5:7: “Who hindered you so that you are not persuaded regarding the truth?” The truth of the Gospel in 2:5 and 2:14 has profoundly practical implications. Indeed, the practical implications of this “truth” may lie in the Jewish background to the word. 1 Esdras 4:39 describes God’s “truth” (ἀλήθεια, 1 Esdras 4:38): “With it there is no partiality or preference” (οὐκ ἔστιν παρ’ αὐτῆ λαμβάνειν πρόσωπα οὐδὲ διάφορα; NRSV). The combination of truth and divine impartiality corresponds to “the truth of the Gospel” in Gal 2:5 and to the language about God’s impartiality in 2:6; Sirach 4:22, 27 exhorts impartiality (μὴ λάβῃς πρόσωπον) while stressing devotion to the truth (Sirach 4:25, 28). 1QH VI (=XIV).19–20: “I do not lift my face to evil [עַל פְּנֵי רָעָא אֲלִי], or consider a wicked gift. I do not exchange your truth for wealth” (trans. F. García Martínez). Luke also connects God’s truth with an indifference to human opinion (Lk 20:21). God does not consider outward appearances (cf. 2 Cor 5:12). The impartial truth of the Gospel is incompatible with requiring outward circumcision or Jewish identity. The impartial truth of the Gospel even takes precedence over apostolic credentials (cf. Gal 1:8–9). (CC)

but even Titus was with me ...not forced to be circumcised – The term “was not compelled” makes it clear enough what the outcome of the conference was: that the Gentiles should not be forced to be circumcised; but that the Jews should be permitted to keep circumcision for a time, not as something necessary for righteousness but as an act of reverence toward their fathers and as a concession of charity toward the weak, lest they be offended before they matured in their faith. It might have seemed rude suddenly to forsake the Law and the liturgy of the fathers, which God had given to this nation in such a glorious way. (Luther)

Despite opposition from a circumcision group, the Jerusalem leaders had received uncircumcised Gentiles into the Church (cf Ac 11:2–18). (TLSB)

Paul did not condemn circumcision in the sense that it was sinful to accept or retain it, for this would have been deeply offensive to the Jews. But the decree stated that circumcision was not necessary for justification and that therefore it was not to be forced upon the Gentiles. Thus they found this moderation or ἐπιείκεια, that out of reverence toward the fathers and out of charity toward the weak in faith the Jews were to observe the Law and circumcision for a time but were not to try to be justified by this. In addition, the Gentiles were not to be burdened with the Law, both because it would have been something novel for them and because it would have been an unbearable burden, as Peter says in Acts 15:10. In other words, no one should be forced to be circumcised, and no one should be prevented from being circumcised. (Luther)

2:4 τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους (“the smuggled false brothers”)—The adjective παρεισάκτος, “smuggled in, secretly imported,” is a NT hapax legomenon.

οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον (“who sneaked/slipped in”)—Here οἵτινες, the nominative plural of ὅστις, replaces a form of the simple relative pronoun ὃς. The antecedent is ψευδαδέλφους, the “false brothers” just mentioned. The relative clause here amplifies in what sense they are “false brothers.”

κατασκοπῆσαι (“to spy on”)—The verb κατασκοπέω is another NT hapax legomenon. It appears in LXX 2 Sam 10:3; 1 Chr 19:3 (cf. Ex 2:4; 1 Macc 5:38).

ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσουσιν (“in order that they might enslave us”)—The future indicative active καταδουλώσουσιν is well attested textually. Although a subjunctive verb normally accompanies ἵνα in classical usage, by the NT period the indicative verb was common. Here the clause expresses purpose; Turner, *Syntax*, 100. (CC)

false brothers. Judaizers who held that Gentile converts should be circumcised and obey the law of Moses (cf. Ac 15:5; 2Co 11:26). (CSB)

Some Jewish Christians (commonly labeled Judaizers) within the Jerusalem Church demanded the circumcision of Gentile converts (Ac 15:1, 5). Their claim to be fellow believers was belied by their conduct. They adhered to a gospel that Paul regarded as false (1:6–9). (TLSB)

slipped in – In context, this expression suggests collusion between the interlopers who wormed their way into the church and those within who facilitated their spying operation. (TLSB)

to spy on. Used in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) in 2Sa 10:3 and 1Ch 19:3 of spying out a territory. (CSB)

freedom. See 5:1, 13; Ro 6:18, 20, 22; 8:2. “Free” and “freedom” are key words in Galatians, occurring 11 times (here; 3:28; 4:22–23, 26, 30–31; 5:1, 13). (CSB)

Gk *eleutheria*, a central term occurring also in 5:1 and 5:13, six more times as an adjective (3:28; 4:22, 23, 26, 30, 31), and once in verbal form (5:1). Our freedom in Christ, based on His atoning work, consists in freedom from bondage to the Law (“slavery”). (TLSB)

2:5 τι (“something special”)—This word is emphatic. Note the singular τι, and not the plural τινες, which would match the articular plural participle τῶν δοκούντων.

[ὁ] θεός (“God”)—The Greek article ὁ with “God” is attested by \mathfrak{B}^{46} \times A P Ψ 33 81 104, but it is omitted in B C D F G K L \mathfrak{m} . Paul rarely uses θεός without the article. Without the article, “God” would have a qualitative force over against humans and human partiality (cf. 1 Cor 2:5; 3:9, 16; 1 Thess 1:9; 2:4). A later scribe may have inserted the article to conform to Paul’s normal usage.

προσανέθεντο—The verb προσανατίθημι in the middle voice with an object (οὐδέν, “nothing”) has the active sense “to bestow something not possessed before,” “to add,” or “to set forth (or teach) in addition” (cf. 1:16, where it is used intransitively as “consult”). Although BDAG suggests the possibility of “lay before” or “submit,” the immediate context does not support the notion that the “recognized” ones might have submitted a matter to Paul for consideration. (CC)

we did not yield – Here Paul states why he went up to Jerusalem and conferred with the other apostles about his Gospel; he also states why he did not circumcise Titus. It was not to be confirmed by the apostles or to become more certain of his Gospel, for he had no doubts about this. It was rather that the truth of the Gospel might abide among the Galatians and in all the churches of the Gentiles. Thus you see that what was at stake for Paul was no joke and no trifle. (Luther)

Luther: “The truth of the Gospel is this, that our righteousness comes by faith alone, without the works of the Law. The falsification or corruption of the Gospel is this, that we are justified by faith but not without the works of the Law” (AE 26:88). “In such a case we have nothing to concede. We should plainly confess and endure what God sends because of that confession, and whatever He allows the enemies of His Word to inflict on us” (FC Ep X 6). (TLSB)

The Second Result: A Division of Labor between Jewish and Gentile Missions (2:6–10)

Gal 2:6–10 is actually a single, long, convoluted sentence in the Greek. The complexity reflects Paul’s care in composition regarding these rather sensitive matters. This difficult sentence may be outlined as follows:¹²⁵

- 2:6a–b An opening prepositional phrase in 2:6a that is qualified in 2:6b and then left hanging: 2:6a: “but from the ones recognized ...”; 2:6b: “what they once were makes no difference to me”
- 2:6c A parenthetical thought: “God does not show partiality”
- 2:6d The first main clause of the passage: “for to me the recognized ones added nothing”
- 2:7 “But on the contrary ...,” giving the first reason that prepares for the second main clause (in 2:9c): “but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the Gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter [had been entrusted with the Gospel] for the circumcised ...”
- 2:8 A parenthetical explanation about God’s working in both Peter and Paul
- 2:9a The second reason for the second main clause (in 2:9c): “and recognizing the grace that had been given to me,” with the subject specified in 2:9b as James, Peter, and John
- 2:9c The second main clause: “(they) gave to [us] the right hand of fellowship”
- 2:9d The concluding twofold purpose/result clause: “that we [should evangelize with respect] to the gentiles and they to the circumcised”
- 2:10 The final qualifying clause: “[they asked] that we [continue to] remember the poor” (CC)

2:3 ἀλλ’ οὐδέ (“but not even”)—The conjunction ἀλλά can introduce a point in an emphatic way: “not only this, but also”; BDF § 448 (6).

Ἐλλην ὢν (“even though he was a Greek”)—The participle is concessive. A causal participle would also be possible: “since he was a Greek”; Turner, *Syntax*, 157. “Greek” is often used as the equivalent of “gentile” or non-Jew. (CC)

2:6 *But from the ones recognized to be something special—what they once were makes no difference to me; God does not show partiality—for to me the recognized ones added nothing.*

2:6a *But from the ones recognized to be something special.* After the swipe at the “false brothers” in 2:4–5, with the contrasting “but” (δέ) Paul returns to and elaborates on “the ones who are recognized” (οἱ δοκοῦντες) of 2:2 as “the ones recognized to *be something special.*” Not only does Paul return to “the ones who are recognized” of 2:2, but he also offers further evidence that he did not compromise or yield in his Gospel message (2:3). In effect, he resumes afresh with “the recognized ones” in 2:6 as if nothing had intervened and as if the false brothers had had no effect: “*from* those esteemed as leaders.” Some interpreters have taken the description of the “recognized” as ironic: those *considered to be* influential, whereas Paul may think otherwise. Esteeming the Jerusalem leadership as “recognized,” however, lends rhetorical force to the mutual agreement reached in 2:7–10. The rivals surely “recognized” the authority of the Jerusalem leadership. If the Jerusalem leaders agreed to Paul’s mission, how much more should the rivals agree with Paul?¹³⁰

2:6b *What they once were makes no difference to me.* The Galatian rivals esteem the Jerusalem trio as well but at the expense of Paul’s non-Law-observant message. Paul therefore immediately qualifies “the recognized ones” with this parenthetical interruption he deems necessary.¹³² In the face of the Galatian rivals’ potential criticism and their appeal to Jerusalem’s authority figures, Paul questions human credentials when they potentially stand in the way of the Gospel message. The recognized ones’ authority cannot trump the divine message he has been called to convey. In that sense, Paul is walking a tightrope between acknowledgement of the Jerusalem apostles and a refusal to allow the Gospel message to be denigrated or compromised.¹³⁴ “God shows no partiality”!

The Greek particle ποτέ, “once,” after relative pronouns, such as ὅποιοι, “of what sort,” may have an indefinite sense: “It makes no difference to me *whatever* sort of people they were.” Whatever sort of people they were would be irrelevant. The Greek particle (ποτέ) after relative pronouns could also refer to past time: “It makes no difference what they *once* (or *formerly*) were.” Since the imperfect (past tense) verb ἦσαν, “were,” casts a decidedly backward glance, the second translation makes more sense: “once.” Adopting the second translation forces one to ask to *what* former time Paul refers. Some interpreters have speculated that 2:7–9 is an official report of the Jerusalem gathering and that Paul is referring in 2:6 by “what they once were” to the status of the Jerusalem apostles at that particular point. A shift of power subsequently took place. Whereas Peter was the most prominent in 1:18–19, by 2:9 James is in the lead. That power shift was in process at the time of the gathering narrated in 2:1–10, and James, it is contended, had become the chair of the trio by the time Paul writes Galatians. Perhaps Paul is alluding to the former state of affairs with what they “once were” as opposed to the present situation (with the present tense) when he writes “it makes no difference to me” (οὐδὲν μοι διαφέρει). On the other hand, had Paul intended to refer to the status of the Jerusalem trio at the time of the meeting, he would more likely have written “what they were *then* [τότε].”

The simplest and least encumbered interpretation of what the three “once were” would be a reference to the Jerusalem trio’s privileged witness of Jesus’ earthly ministry (cf. Paul’s devaluation of such experience in 2 Cor 5:16). Paul’s point is that the Jerusalem apostles’ status as those who had experienced

Jesus' earthly ministry cannot be wielded against the Gospel message. God does not care about human credentials.¹⁴¹

2:6c *God does not show partiality.* Literally, “God does not accept the face of a person” (πρόσωπον ὁ θεὸς ἀνθρώπου οὐ λαμβάνει). This Greek idiom (λαμβάνειν πρόσωπον) is a rendering of the Hebrew נָשָׂא פָּנַי, where an authority figure would “lift up the face” of a suppliant to grant him favor or a request. Paul is echoing the frequent statements in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple literature about the impartial God's indifference to human honor conventions. Paul is simply following the example of his God when he confronts the potential abuse of human honor rating systems.¹⁴⁴

Paul is battling a whole way of thinking in his day. The Mediterranean world suffered a dire shortage of necessities. Not enough was being produced to provide for people's needs. People were forced to trade in other forms of currency, especially honor, the opposite of which was shame. The ancients thought that honor must be like the money and goods in their society: limited. They eagerly sought it, often at the expense of other people. Honor could derive from being born into a noble family or from newly acquired wealth. Even the relatively poor could find honor by rising to positions of leadership in their local associations, guilds, or other social organizations. Paul's affirmation that God shows no partiality is a frontal challenge to the cultural conventions of honor and shame. Paul wants to subvert and replace those conventions with a value system centered on Christ and his cross. Paul therefore places “God” in an emphatic position. This subversion is all the more urgent as the rivals appealed to revered human sources of authority. In Gal 2:6 Paul is not discrediting Jerusalem's leadership. Rather he is challenging a reliance on human honor conventions when those conventions conflict with the Gospel. Paul is discrediting the touters rather than the ones being touted. Even as “false brothers” (2:4) have sneaked into the Jerusalem meeting, so also does arrogance sneak into the hearts of believers and their leaders. As Luther rightly recognized: “It is certain that the praising of their persons did not please the apostles themselves, since they knew that one should glory in the Lord (1 Cor. 1:31), not oneself or in one's apparent power or saintliness” (AE 27:207). Humility becomes a forgotten virtue as people incessantly jockey for attention. Church leaders must model an otherworldly humility.

2:6d *For to me the recognized ones added nothing.* Gal 2:6 begins with the prepositional phrase “from the ones recognized to be something special.” After the parenthetical comments expressing his unfazed attitude with respect to their credentials, Paul returns at the end of the verse to “the recognized ones.” Note the resumptive “for” (γάρ): “For to me the recognized ones added nothing.” One would have expected Paul to have dictated: “But from the recognized ones I received (or was taught) nothing.” The end of 2:6 is effectively its own new sentence—an instance of anacoluthon following on the heels of the anacoluthon in 2:4. “Because of the ... false brothers” is not brought to proper grammatical completion in 2:4, and in 2:6 Paul does not complete his initial thought about “the recognized ones” (“but from the ones recognized ...”). “The reader's attention is thus focused on the subject-matter (in these two cases on τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους [‘the smuggled false brothers’] (2:4) and on οἱ δοκοῦντες [‘the recognized ones’] (2:6)).” Paul's rhetoric intensifies as he draws attention to and contrasts these two groups: one is legitimate (2:6) and the other not (2:4).

Paul also emphasizes the word translated as “to me” (ἐμοί), which is shifted forward in the Greek sentence: “For *to me* the recognized ones added nothing.” “The leaders may have imposed their authority on others, but that certainly was not true in my case.” They did not add anything to Paul's Gospel message or to him personally.¹⁵² This denial comes shortly after the denial in 2:4 that Paul and Barnabas yielded even for a moment to the false brothers. By denying that the apostles added anything to him, Paul is not answering some charge being leveled about the nature of his apostleship or his message. His comment is occasioned by his recollection of the pressure brought to bear by the “false brothers” (2:4) at Jerusalem. In contrast to the attempt to compel Titus and other gentiles to be circumcised (2:3), Jerusalem's legitimately “recognized” ones imposed nothing with respect to Paul's Gospel. Paul is not content to stop there. In 2:7–10 he adds that not only did they make no demand of Paul, but “on the contrary” (τοῦναντίον, 2:7), unlike the “false brothers,” they extended to Barnabas and him the right hand of fellowship.

The modern Christian may not appreciate how significant the Jerusalem leadership's decision not to add anything would be for the history of Jewish-Christian relations. Judaism had always been recognizable by its practice of the rite of circumcision. The apostles could no longer ignore the question of whether the followers of the Jewish Messiah should themselves *be* Jewish. In the case of the gentiles, that would require circumcision and observance of Moses' Law. When the apostles permitted gentiles to adhere to the Jewish Messiah apart from circumcision, the foundation had been laid for an inevitable break. Instead of a people defined by their observance of Moses' Law and circumcision, the people of God would be solely defined by their faith in Jesus Christ. Even if one dates the final schism between Jews and Christ-believers to a later point in time, the apostles' decision "substantively increased the rent in the seam which still bonded the new movement to second-Temple Judaism."

2:7 *But on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the Gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter [had been entrusted with the Gospel] for the circumcised.* The opening contrast could not be stronger: "but on the contrary" (ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον). The second Greek word (τοῦναντίον) is used only three times in the NT, and two of those instances are in Paul (also 2 Cor 2:7). τοῦναντίον is a crasis, that is, a contraction of the two words τὸ ἐναντίον by omitting an unstressed vowel. The Greek article τό, "the," is thereby incorporated into the adverb ἐναντίον, "oppositely," heightening the contrast still further (as if the accompanying ἀλλά, "but," were not enough alone). Therefore 2:7 offers a potent contrast with the immediately preceding clause: not only did the Jerusalem leaders add nothing (2:6d), but they also "saw" (ιδόντες) what God had already done in entrusting to Paul the Gospel for the uncircumcised.

The apostles "saw" what God had been doing through Paul as a result of his report (2:2). There were other reports as well (1:23). They realized that he had been "entrusted the Gospel for the uncircumcised." The verb "I had been entrusted" (πεπίστευμαι) is in the perfect tense, which indicates a matter of continuing significance. The active agent behind the entrusting is God. Paul's custom in the letter is to leave God assumed: "the one who called you" (1:6); "the one who had separated me" (1:15); "[the one] who had called me" (1:15); "the one working" (2:8); "the one who grants you the Spirit" (3:5); "the one who ... works powerful deeds" (3:5); "the one who called you" (5:8). Paul expects his hearers to recognize behind the passive formulations the activity of one who remains otherwise hidden from ordinary sight. God's activity with his "new creation" (6:14–15) is not visible to the ordinary view. God has been invisibly calling and enabling, "working" (2:8) or, more literally, "energizing" the apostles for their respective fields of ministry. The Jerusalem apostles were therefore recognizing what was a divinely ordered state of affairs. Even today, Christians should recognize God's hidden activity in their midst. The Spirit is bearing fruit.

Paul was entrusted with "the Gospel for the uncircumcised" even as Peter was entrusted the Gospel "for the circumcised." This division of labor could be on the basis of ethnicity, geography, or perhaps both. The contrast between "circumcised" and "uncircumcised" draws attention to the distinguishing boundary marker between respective people groups.¹⁶⁰ As was the case with Paul's other congregations, the Galatians are gentiles (4:8–10). Even the letter to the Romans is addressed to gentiles and not Jews. In the book of Acts, gentile God-fearers participated in Jewish synagogue gatherings, and these God-fearers served as a useful starting point for the evangelization of other gentiles (cf. Rom 1:16–17: to the Jew *first* and to the Greek). 1 Cor 9:20 offers some evidence from Paul's own letters that he preached to Jews while targeting gentiles in synagogue gatherings. Such proselytizing activity no doubt led to his punishment by the synagogue authorities (2 Cor 11:24). Paul does not appear to have limited his missionary activity to the uncircumcised.

Since a strictly ethnic interpretation of the agreement in Gal 2:7–10 seems unlikely in view of Paul's subsequent missionary labors, other interpreters have concluded that 2:7–10 is referring to a primarily geographical division of labor. Paul does not use the simple dative case noun one would expect for going "to" a group of people (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν). Thus Paul (and Barnabas) would be going "into" or "toward" (εἰς) gentile lands (εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, 2:8, 9), whereas the Jerusalem apostles would go "into" or "toward" (εἰς) the land of the circumcised (εἰς τὴν περιτομήν, 2:9). Paul works "among" (ἐν) the gentiles in 1:16 and 2:2.

Paul's labors seem confined to predominantly gentile regions outside of Jerusalem and Judea (1:17–23), a fact which bolsters the impression of a geographical division of labor.

Nevertheless, a strictly geographical division of labor is unlikely since Jewish colonies resided throughout the Roman Empire in the midst of gentile populations. More Jews lived outside of Palestine than within. The Jerusalem apostles themselves ventured beyond Jerusalem and Judea in their labors (cf. Acts 11:19–21; James 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1). Antioch was full of both Jews and gentiles (as was Palestine).¹⁶⁵ Peter's and Paul's respective fields of operations would inevitably overlap. Neither the strictly ethnic nor the strictly geographic approach seems likely. A more likely understanding of the agreement in 2:7–9 is that the apostles agreed on the primary emphases of their respective missions while not ruling out Peter's preaching to gentiles or Paul's preaching to Jews. The single use of the word "Gospel" implies that the *same Gospel* is "for the circumcised" and "for the uncircumcised." For Jewish Christians to require gentiles to become Jewish (through circumcision) would, in Paul's mind, violate the Jerusalem agreement regarding the one Gospel.¹⁶⁹

Paul throughout his epistles normally calls Peter "Cephas" (eight of ten instances), with the two conspicuous exceptions of "Peter" in Gal 2:7–8. The formulation "the Gospel for the uncircumcised just as ... for the circumcised" struck some specialists as unusual. These unusual details could be explained if Paul were quoting in 2:7–8 a semi-official statement from the Jerusalem proceedings. "Peter" would therefore take priority over James (left unmentioned) in the semi-official agreement in 2:7–8, whereas in 2:9 the order is "James" before "Cephas" (Peter). The notion that Paul is citing the proceedings from the meeting remains speculative and incapable of proof. Paul does not say that he is citing proceedings. Such a document left no trace in the book of Acts, where Luke traces the origin of the gentile mission to Peter.¹⁷³ Furthermore, it is unclear why a Jerusalem agreement would employ "Peter" (2:7, 8), the *Greek* form of Cephas' name. As Paul writes to gentile audiences, he apparently felt perfectly comfortable using the Aramaic form of Peter's name, "Cephas" (e.g., 1:18; 2:9). The expression "to be entrusted" with respect to "the Gospel" reflects a rather typical Pauline style (e.g., 1 Cor 9:17; 1 Thess 2:4; 1 Tim 1:11; Titus 1:3; cf. Rom 3:2). The first person pronoun usage in 2:7 is fitting for Paul's own style but not for an official agreement. Gal 2:7 also places Paul first, contrary to the order one would expect in an official agreement.

Perhaps the semi-official proceedings hypothesis may be modified with the agreement reflected in 2:8–9, where "Peter" is mentioned first and Paul ("me") second. In this modified proposal, Paul would have himself called Cephas "Peter" in 2:7. In that case, the distinction between "Cephas" and "Peter" would no longer serve as support for a semi-official report. As for the "official" distinction in mission emphases, Paul has already described his own ministry as among the gentiles (2:2). No independent evidence confirms the existence of such an agreement among the apostles, and Paul does not otherwise identify these verses as a citation. Finally, the wording in 2:7–8 appears to be Paul's own, e.g., the pair "circumcision/circumcised" (περιτομή) and "uncircumcision/uncircumcised" (ἀκροβυστία) occurs eleven times. In fact, he never uses the word "uncircumcision" (ἀκροβυστία) except when paired with "circumcision" (περιτομή), as is the case in Gal 2:7–8. The language appears to be Paul's own.¹⁷⁹ The notion that Paul is citing some agreement or document concerning the meeting may be dismissed.

2:8 *For the one working for Peter an apostleship for the circumcised also worked for me [an apostleship] for the gentiles.* This verse is a parenthetical comment explaining the previous verse: "I had been entrusted with the Gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter [had been entrusted with the Gospel] for the circumcised—for the one working for Peter an apostleship for the circumcised also worked for me [an apostleship] for the gentiles" (2:7–8). God was working through both of them in their respective apostolic spheres. "Apostleship" (ἀποστολή) is a surprisingly rare word in the NT (elsewhere only in Acts 1:25; Rom 1:5; 1 Cor 9:2). Paul mentions Peter's "apostleship for the circumcised" (2:8a), but for himself (2:8b) he does not use the corresponding phrase "apostleship for the gentiles" (which would be ἡ ἀποστολή τῶν ἐθνῶν or εἰς ἀποστολήν τῶν ἐθνῶν). He says only "for the gentiles" (εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, 2:8b). Although Paul does not use the word "apostleship" in describing his own ministry to the gentiles, most specialists have concluded that the word is to be understood in 2:8b. Apart from the ellipses these two verses are parallel, both internally and in relation to each other:

2:7

I had been entrusted with

πεπίστευμαι

the Gospel for the uncircumcised

τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας

Peter [had been entrusted with]

Πέτρος [πεπίστευται]

[the Gospel for] the circumcised

[τὸ εὐαγγέλιον] τῆς περιτομῆς

2:8

The one working for Peter

ὁ ... ἐνεργήσας Πέτρῳ

an apostleship for the circumcised

εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς

also worked for me

ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐμοὶ

[an apostleship] for the gentiles

εἰς [ἀποστολὴν] τὰ ἔθνη [τῶν ἐθνῶν]

Even as the word “Gospel” in 2:7a is understood in 2:7b, so the word “apostleship” in 2:8a is understood in 2:8b.

On the other hand, the parallelism between 2:7 and 2:8 is not exact. In 2:7 the corresponding nouns “the uncircumcised ... the circumcised” are both in the genitive case (τῆς ἀκροβυστίας ... τῆς περιτομῆς), which renders fairly certain that the governing noun in both instances is “Gospel.” In 2:8, however, “the circumcised” (τῆς περιτομῆς) is in the genitive case, whereas “the gentiles” (τὰ ἔθνη) is in the accusative case. “Indeed, rendering ἐνήργησεν καὶ ἐμοὶ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη as ‘he worked also in me for an apostleship of the Gentiles’ would require not only supplying the word ἀποστολὴν [‘apostleship’] but also changing the accusative τὰ ἔθνη [‘the gentiles’] to the genitive τῶν ἐθνῶν [‘the gentiles’].” A literal translation of the actual text would be “he worked also in me for the gentiles.” In other instances within Paul’s letter to the Galatians where a word has been elided, the missing word is clear with no alteration required of any of the remaining words.¹⁸⁴ Parallel clauses in 2:8 would require inserting a word after the preposition *and* changing the accusative case of “the gentiles” (τὰ ἔθνη) to the genitive case (τῶν ἐθνῶν). These differences, however, should not be pressed. The parallel elements in 2:8 each occur within a *prepositional phrase* (εἰς) that grammatically requires an accusative noun (εἰς ἀποστολὴν ... εἰς τὰ ἔθνη). The change is not as violent as it may at first seem. God’s working “with respect to Peter” is followed by a prepositional phrase (εἰς) expressing the purpose or result of “an apostleship for the circumcised.” The verse continues with God’s working “also with respect to me” for a purpose, expressed by another prepositional phrase (εἰς). The “also” (καί) along with the identical preposition (εἰς) offer strong evidence that the accusative “gentiles” is simply a grammatical adjustment to the preposition (εἰς) after the omission of the second “apostleship.” The parallelism remains intact.

A large number of Galatians specialists have advocated that Paul is defending his apostolic credentials in the first two chapters of Galatians. The omission of “apostleship” in reference to himself in 2:8 is surprising. If Paul had not been recognized as an apostle at the Jerusalem meeting, he could have omitted his reference to Peter’s apostleship altogether and thereby avoided the issue. Surely he would not dare omit a corresponding reference to his own “apostleship” after mentioning Peter’s. He would not have wanted to provide ammunition for his rivals. He could very easily have included the word “apostleship” (εἰς ἀποστολὴν) between “for me” (ἐμοὶ) and “the gentiles” (which then would have been τῶν ἐθνῶν). He does refer to his apostolic status at the beginning of the letter in 1:1. Interestingly, when Paul uses the term “apostleship” for himself in Rom 1:5 and 1 Cor 9:2, he does not emphasize it in any particular way. The omission of “apostleship” in relation to Paul (in Gal 2:8b) is further evidence, then, that his apostolic

credentials are not in fact in question. Rather, it is the *Gospel message* that he views as under attack. What Paul *does* repeat is God’s “*working*.” God’s activity in both his and Peter’s ministry is what is important, and not credentials (cf. 2:6). Both the mission to the Jews *and* the mission to the gentiles remain equally grounded in God’s active power!

2:9 *And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas, and John, the ones recognized to be “pillars,” gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we [should evangelize with respect] to the gentiles and they to the circumcised.* Again, the sentence that begins in 2:6 in the original Greek continues through 2:10. Paul now identifies the Jerusalem leaders as “James, Cephas, and John.” Why Cephas is listed after James is not entirely clear. Perhaps James is listed first because churchly administration and policy are at issue, which are James’ apparent responsibilities in the Jerusalem church. Peter is the key player in 2:7 when missionary labors are at issue. Such a suggestion must remain tentative in the absence of further evidence. Paul may have mentioned James first as a recognized adherent of the Law of Moses, and yet even James recognized God’s work in Paul’s circumcision-free mission to the gentiles.¹⁹¹

By delaying the full identity of “the recognized ones” until 2:9, Paul keeps their identity from overshadowing his own apostolic labors. The Jerusalem trio added nothing to Paul (2:6). On the contrary, they *saw* (ιδόντες) that he had been entrusted with the Gospel (2:7) and *recognized* (γνόντες) the grace given to him (2:9). They not only saw but also recognized that grace. Paul regularly describes himself as the recipient of “grace” in general as well as for his apostolic office.¹⁹⁴ He is not referring at this point to grace in general but rather to the specific grace of his apostolic office: “*the grace*” given to Paul. He does not explain how the “pillars” recognized that grace. Perhaps they noted his success in evangelism, or perhaps they heard his testimony. More importantly, by mentioning their recognition of “the grace” given to him for his labors, Paul implies their recognition of his credentials for evangelizing the gentiles, the very point of the gathering.¹⁹⁶ He renders that recognition explicit by the end of the verse.

In his fourth reference to “the recognized ones” (2:9, as in 2:2, 6 [twice]), Paul calls them the “pillars” (στῦλοι). Pillars supported the wilderness tabernacle as well as the Solomonic temple (two of the pillars even had names: Jachin and Boaz). Some of the Jews of Paul’s day were anticipating an eschatological temple.¹⁹⁸ Paul calls *the body of Christ* the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16–17; 2 Cor 6:15–16; cf. Heb 3:6; 10:21; 1 Pet 2:5). Here he seems to recognize the three Jerusalem apostles as pillars in that structure, a structure that may have become associated with Jewish Christianity’s institutional organization.²⁰⁰ The three gave to Paul and Barnabas “the right hand of fellowship” (δεξιὰς . . . κοινωνίας). This recognition is, no doubt, the climax of Paul’s narrative in 2:1–10. The pillars recognized and became partners with Barnabas and Paul in the sharing of the Gospel (Phil 1:5).

The proffered “right hand of fellowship” is socially ambiguous. The gesture may be offered by an authority figure or superior toward an inferior (e.g., Josephus, *Ant.* 18.9.3 §§ 328–29—a king toward some Jews) or by an inferior to a superior (תן ידך, “give [one’s right] hand,” 1 Chr 29:24; Lam 5:6). The gesture may also be between social equals (e.g., Xenophon, *Anab.* 1.6.6; 2.5.3). “Fellowship” (κοινωνία) can be used for treaties. The gesture here indicates the formalizing of an agreement between two parties, with James, Cephas, and John on the one hand, and with Paul and Barnabas on the other.²⁰⁵ The recognition conferred upon Paul and Barnabas may have been an official act, but Paul, in his convoluted syntax, downplays any notion of potential inequality.

“Fellowship” (κοινωνία) may refer to table fellowship and perhaps even the Eucharist. Philip Esler has contended that the “right hand of fellowship” *must be* in the context of meals and therefore the Eucharist. From Esler’s perspective, the issue of table fellowship was already addressed with Titus at Jerusalem (Gal 2:1–10). At Antioch in 2:11–14 the pillar apostles were reneging on the earlier agreement. Esler noted the lack of an oath with the exchange of right hands (the omission of an oath was the ancient equivalent of fingers being crossed). James, however, was not a proponent of oaths (James 5:12; cf. Jer 5:2; Zech 5:3–4; Mt 5:33–37; Sirach 23:9–14). Esler’s thesis relies too much on what remains unstated in the Galatians text. For that matter, although unstated, Titus may not have been eating with the other Jerusalem Christians if he were residing at the home of Paul’s sister (cf. Acts 23:16). Esler conceded that “fellowship” (κοινωνία) is used in a general sense in 2 Cor 6:14 and Phil 1:5 and that the term’s “precise

implications vary considerably” in the thirteen instances in Paul’s letters. The general notion of fellowship or, better, partnership is more likely here, since the Eucharist is not otherwise indicated in Gal 2:1–10. Rather, the apostles are now partnering or sharing in the apostolic task.

The “right hand of fellowship/partnership” was for the purpose (ἵνα) of an arrangement in which “we [go or evangelize] to the gentiles and they [go or evangelize] to the circumcised” (ἵνα ἡμεῖς [ἐλθῶμεν or εὐαγγελισώμεθα] εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοὶ δὲ [ἐλθῶσιν or εὐαγγελίζωσιν] εἰς τὴν περιτομήν). Paul’s intended verb may have been “to be,” in which case the preposition (εἰς) would be “for” (expressing benefaction) or “with reference to.” The agreement was probably inevitable once the Jerusalem apostles “recognized” what God had been doing among the gentiles. Again, the parties are only specifying the general direction of their labors: Paul and Barnabas to the gentiles and Peter, James, and John to the Jews.²¹⁵ Paul and Barnabas were free to avoid the matter of circumcision among their gentile converts. Presumably Paul and Barnabas did not require Jewish converts to abandon their ethnic distinctives. The diverging ministries were compatible as long as Paul’s and Peter’s spheres of operation remained separate. The Antioch episode in 2:11–14 illustrates the problems when the two groups come together.

2:10 *Only [they asked] that we [continue to] remember the poor, which is the very thing I also had been eager to do.* Paul places the adverb “only” (μόνον) at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis. The right hand of fellowship and agreement in respective missionary thrusts did include this one stipulation: they must remember the poor. For the fourth verse in a row, all within the same sentence, the reader must supply a word, here a verb, probably “they asked” (see the first textual note on 2:10). In the Greek of Paul’s day, the omission of a verb after “only” (μόνον) was common (cf. Gal 6:12 and 2 Thess 2:7).

In the Greek, “the poor” (τῶν πτωχῶν), like “only” (μόνον), is similarly thrust forward for emphasis to the beginning of the clause. Many interpreters over the years have equated “the poor” with the Jerusalem saints. Paul’s Jerusalem collection was therefore a direct response to the mandate here in 2:10 (see Rom 15:25–28; 1 Cor 16:1–4; 2 Corinthians 8–9). Despite Luke’s general concern with the proper use of property and wealth, he never uses the term “poor” for the Jerusalem church in his Acts account. Even though Matthew writes for a Jewish audience, he never hints that “the poor” referred to Jerusalem or its Christians. In his letter, James repeatedly castigates the rich and identifies with the poor (e.g., James 5:1–6). The rich will wither like grass; they will drag others into court (James 1:10–11; 2:6–7). The poor of the world are rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom (James 2:5). One must give to those in need and not show partiality (James 2:1–13, 15–16). James never uses “the poor” as a self-designation for the Jerusalem Christians. Likewise Paul normally uses the terms “poor” (πτωχοί, 2 Cor 6:10; perhaps Gal 4:9) and its cognate “poverty” (πτωχεῖα, 2 Cor 8:2) “in their natural, material sense.” He is not using “poor” as a title for the Jerusalem saints.²²³ The phrase “the poor of/among the saints in Jerusalem” (οἱ πτωχοὶ τῶν ἁγίων τῶν ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ) in Rom 15:26 is best taken as a partitive genitive, that is, as the poor who form a *part* of the larger Jerusalem church. Most likely, the agreement in Gal 2:10 concerned those who were poor in general rather than the Jerusalem Christians as a congregation.

The sharing of “the right hand of fellowship” in 2:9 may have entailed the sharing of goods, which would explain Paul’s use of the term “fellowship” in connection with the Jerusalem collection (κοινωνία, Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13). Almsgiving was a central feature in the practice of the Torah.^h The first Christians continued the practice (Acts 2:44–45; 4:32–37; note *Barnabas*’ role in Acts 4:36–37 and “we [Paul and Barnabas] remember the poor,” Gal 2:10). Perhaps the Jerusalem apostles were requiring of Paul and Barnabas in their missionary labors a minimal Torah observance. Had the Jerusalem leadership expressed assistance for the poor in terms of the Torah, Paul would not likely have agreed to the stipulation. He did not view this request as something “added” to him (2:6). He never interprets his collection for Jerusalem as a fulfillment of a Torah obligation (Rom 15:25–29). Paul never hints of any disagreement or rift between himself and the Jerusalem apostles over how the collection might be understood.²²⁹ The sole specific request appended to the agreement likely confirmed, from Paul’s standpoint, that the Jerusalem authorities did indeed recognize his approach to the gentiles.

The present tense of the verb “we remember” (μνημονεύομεν) likely conveys the sense of ongoing action: “that we *continue to* remember.” This does not refer to a single gift or collection. The request to

“remember the poor” was not so general as to exclude the poor in the Jerusalem church where the agreement took shape. Paul therefore would endeavor during his ministry to assist Jerusalem’s needy by means of a collection. The collection would demonstrate his faithfulness to the Jerusalem agreement. The Galatians themselves would participate in the collection project (1 Cor 16:1). Paul’s collection is not a response to an urgent crisis or famine since the collection took several years before completion. Nevertheless, a combination of famine, food shortage, and a Sabbatical Year converged in AD 46–48 and probably overtaxed the Jerusalem church’s distribution system (Acts 4:32–37; 6:1–7; see also Josephus, *Ant.* 20.2.5 § 51). The recent shortages may well have been on the pillars’ minds as they made the general request.

Paul adds that he had been eager to do this very thing. Not too much should be made of his use of the first person singular form of the verb “I had been eager” (ἔσπούδασα). He is not distinguishing a current action with Barnabas (Acts 11:27–30; 12:25/Gal 2:1–10) from a future action on his own (an overemphasis on the first person singular verb form). Although both Barnabas and Paul were present in Gal 2:1–10, Paul frequently refers to himself in the singular. The first person singular verb form is of little help in determining if the action of the verb is taking place in the past, present, or future. The aorist tense of the verb conveys the notion of *completed* action. The emphasis on “this very thing” (αὐτὸ τοῦτο) “has more point if ἔσπούδασα [‘I was eager’] is pluperfect in sense: ‘and this very thing I had already taken pains to do.’ ” Paul had already done so. As noted above, the main verb “we remember” may have a continuous sense: “we *continue to* remember the poor” (μνημονεύομεν). If Acts 11–12 is describing the same visit as Gal 2:1–10, then Paul had *already* brought provisions for Jerusalem at the time of the agreement. Even in remembering the poor, then, the pillars did not add anything to Paul (2:6).

Paul agrees to continue remembering the poor. The Gospel message always expresses itself in action. The love of Christ engenders a genuine concern for the well-being of fellow Christians. This concern for others in the community becomes a major focus in 6:1–10. All believers should “remember the poor.” The Lord responded to people’s needs by feeding and healing. Although Paul does not cite the earthly ministry of Jesus, he proclaims that the Spirit of Christ is at work in the believer (4:6; 5:22–23).

2:6 τι (“something special”)—This word is emphatic. Note the singular τι, and not the plural τινες, which would match the articular plural participle τῶν δοκούντων.

[ὁ] θεός (“God”)—The Greek article ὁ with “God” is attested by \mathfrak{P}^{46} κ A P Ψ 33 81 104, but it is omitted in B C D F G K L m. Paul rarely uses θεός without the article. Without the article, “God” would have a qualitative force over against humans and human partiality (cf. 1 Cor 2:5; 3:9, 16; 1 Thess 1:9; 2:4). A later scribe may have inserted the article to conform to Paul’s normal usage.

προσανέθεντο—The verb προσανατίθημι in the middle voice with an object (οὐδέν, “nothing”) has the active sense “to bestow something not possessed before,” “to add,” or “to set forth (or teach) in addition” (cf. 1:16, where it is used intransitively as “consult”). Although BDAG suggests the possibility of “lay before” or “submit,” the immediate context does not support the notion that the “recognized” ones might have submitted a matter to Paul for consideration. (CC)

those who seemed to be influential. Paul respected the Jerusalem leaders but refrained from overstating their importance. (TLSB)

This is a vehement and proud refutation. For Paul does not call the true apostles themselves by any honorific title. Almost as though he wanted to minimize their position, he speaks of “those who were reputed to be something,” that is, those who were in authority and on whose nod or refusal everything depended. Nevertheless, the authority of the apostles was actually very great in all the churches, and Paul does not take any honor away from them. But this is his way of giving a contemptuous answer to the false apostles, who sought to weaken Paul’s authority and to cast suspicion upon his whole ministry by pitting the authority of the apostles and of their pupils against Paul in all the churches.

God shows no partiality. Paul cites this passage from Moses, who says this very thing, not once but many times: “You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great” (Lev. 19:15). And this is a γνώμη or principle of theology: “God shows no partiality.” With this statement he silences the false teachers. It is as though he were saying: “You pit against me those who are reputed to be something, but God does not care about such things.

Lit, “God does not take (or receive) the face” (cf 2Ch 19:7). Paul is not overawed by personal credentials. Before God, all are on equal footing. (TLSB)

added nothing to me – This is what he means: “I did not confer or converse with the apostles in such a way that they taught me anything. For what were they to teach me when Christ by His revelation had already taught me everything very well, when I had been preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles for a period of eighteen years, and when Christ had performed so many miracles through me to validate my teaching? Therefore it was merely a conference, not a debate, in which I reported on what I had done.” (Luther)

Neither to Paul’s message nor to his divine commission. (TLSB)

2:7 ἀλλὰ τοῦναντίον (“but on the contrary”).

ιδόντες (“when they saw”)—This is a temporal participle.

τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (“the Gospel”)—This is an instance of the accusative case of the retained object of the passive verb πεπίστευμαι, “I had been entrusted.” (CC)

entrusted. Paul regarded himself as a steward of the Gospel (Ti 1:3). “St. Paul clearly affirms that he was neither ordained nor confirmed by Peter. Nor does he acknowledge Peter to be one from whom confirmation should be sought” (Tr 10). (TLSB)

to the uncircumcised. Paul’s ministry was not exclusively to the Gentiles. In fact, he regularly went first to the synagogue when arriving in a new location (see note on Ac 13:14). He did, however, consider himself to be foremost an apostle to the Gentiles (see Ro 11:13 and note). (CSB)

2:8 ἐνεργήσας ... ἐνήργησεν—The repeated verb ἐνεργέω, “to work,” could be rendered more literally by its English derivative, “to energize.” It is regularly used for God’s action in the NT.^b

Πέτρῳ ... ἐμοί (“for Peter ... for me”)—These are datives of advantage or of respect.

εἰς ... εἰς (“for ... for”)—The preposition εἰς expresses the goal of God’s working. (CC)

worked through Peter – Here Paul refutes yet another argument. “Why do the false apostles brag,” he says, “that the Gospel was powerful in Peter, that he converted many, that he performed many great miracles, that he raised the dead and healed the sick with his very shadow (Acts 5:15)? I grant that all this is true. But Peter received this power from heaven. God endowed the voice of Peter with a force that caused many to believe him and many miracles to be performed through him. I have the same power. I did not receive it from Peter, but the same God and the same Spirit who worked through Peter worked through me also. (Luther)

Gk *apostole* (“apostolate”), a technical term for the office and work of an apostle of Christ (Ac 1:25; Rm 1:5; 1Co 9:2). (TLSB)

worked also through me for mine –Coming together and agreeing that Peter is to the Jews, Paul to the Gentiles. Peter is thrilled about this. He obviously had the vision. And went to Cornelius. So he understands that the Gospel is for the Gentiles. And so he goes to Antioch and he enters into this church of Jews and Gentiles. And he's loving being part of this group of both Jews and Gentiles. In fact, one of the things that he does for the first time in his life probably as a Jew is he begins to eat the foods of the Gentiles. Now, we don't want to make too much of it. But I think it is an important point that the Jewish dietary laws were very restrictive. So the Jewish diet was very bland. Gentiles had access to the greatest foods and they came from temples. They came from idol worship. Meat sacrifice to idols. It's like the difference between French cuisine and English cuisine. And Peter must have just had taste buds open up to him in Antioch that had never happened before. And he was loving it. (Just – V-8)

Acts 15

Now, I think we should pause for a moment and talk about that. Because it certainly is a big factor in Paul's ministry and it certainly is in the Apostolic Council. I don't know if you realize it but pagan worship was obviously the worship of the empire. And this was a very vital way of life for the pagan Rome. And they had temples and they had what we might call two sacraments so to speak. And by sacraments I simply mean that the pagans had two ways of communing with the god. They communed with the god by means of the food that they ate after it was sacrificed to idols. And they also communed with the god by means of sexual idolatry with prostitutes. So great food. And consorting with temple prostitutes. Those were the means by which they communed with their god. And you're going to see that what James responds to in the Apostolic Council is a response to these two things. (Just – V-9)

But James does something that has always bothered people. Is it seems like he does give laws. And Paul and Barnabas as you're going to see and Peter, too, completely agree with James. But in citing the Leviticus holiness code, what James is basically doing is appealing to the First Commandment. And the Sixth Commandment. And what he's saying is this: Whether you're Jew or you're Gentiles, there's to be no idolatry. There's to be no sexual immorality. (Just V-9)

Now, remember what I said about the temples. He's not just talking about the run of the mill idolatry and sexual immorality. He's talking about worship at the temple cult. He's talking about how the fact that Gentiles who up until this time have worshiped there, if they are going to be in the context where there are Jews who are deeply, deeply offended by this activity, that they must refrain from this. (Just V-9)

Now, this is the interesting thing: After this Council, for all intents and purposes, circumcision ceases to be an issue. It really isn't discussed as a problem in the church. Even up until this day. Nobody really insists after this, except perhaps some stray Jewish cults, that one must be circumcised. And it really ceases to be an issue for Paul. However, the other issues that have to do with idolatry and the temple cults not only continue to exist for Paul in places like Corinth. But if you read the history of the early fathers, the first 3 or 400 years of Christianity when the temple cult was still alive and well, they would repeatedly go back to these admonitions in Acts 15 and show that they still obtain for the people of God because of the temple cult. (Just – V-9)

Today, since we don't have those kinds of idol worship around, that is perhaps not as big an issue for us. But I will say: Last December I was in India. And I went into a Hindu temple where there was idol worship and there was clearly food that was being sacrificed to idols. In a context like that, this passage in Acts 15 might be very important to that church there. (Just – V-9)

2:9 Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης (“James, Cephas, and John”)—“James” is mentioned first among the pillars and then “Cephas,” while in several Western manuscripts (D G it^d ^s Marcion Marius Victorinus Ambrosiaster [Hilary] Jerome) the first name is “Peter” (a switch in order plus the substitution of his

more familiar name, Πέτρος, in place of Κηφᾶς). This surely reflects Peter’s significance for the Western church. The change may also be a scribal attempt to harmonize with the order of the three names in Mk 5:37; 9:2, although the James mentioned in Mark is James the brother of John, not James “the brother of the Lord” (Gal 1:19), to whom Paul refers here. Other Western witnesses (B⁴⁶ and it) also change “Cephas” to “Peter,” using the established name for the second name in the list. Κηφᾶς is omitted in manuscript A. James was not simply the de facto head of the Jerusalem church in Peter’s absence, but he had also become an authority figure as the apostles were sorting out their respective global missionary fields. (CC)

pillars. A common metaphor for those who represent and strongly support an institution. (CSB)

Figurative of leaders who supported and gave stability to the Church (cf 1Tm 3:15). (TLSB)

When Paul says (v. 9) that James and Cephas and John “were reputed to be pillars,” this is not idle talk; for they really were reputed to be pillars. The apostles were revered and honored throughout the church. They had the authority to approve and declare the true doctrine and to condemn its opposite. (Luther)

right hand of fellowship. A common practice among both Hebrews and Greeks, indicating a pledge of friendship. (CSB)

This handshake symbolized a partnership between friends. (TLSB)

That is, the hand of communion, the social handshake. They said: “Paul, we preach the Gospel in unanimous consensus with you. There we are companions in doctrine and have fellowship in it; that is, we have the same doctrine. For we preach one Gospel, one Baptism, one Christ, and one faith. Therefore we cannot teach or command anything so far as you are concerned, for we are completely agreed in everything. (Luther)

2:10 τῶν πτωχῶν ἵνα μνημονεύωμεν (“[they asked] that we [continue to] remember the poor”)—The verb μνημονεύω, “remember,” may take a genitive object, as here: τῶν πτωχῶν, “the poor” (plural). ἵνα with the subjunctive could be imperatival or express an urgent request: “Please go on remembering the poor.”²⁵ In the translation above, the clause serves as the object of an implied verb, most likely ἠτήσαντο, “[they asked] that we ...,” or else ἐθέλησαν, “[they desired] that we ...” The construction still suggests urgency.

ὃ ... αὐτό τοῦτο (“which is the very thing”)—The intensive pronoun αὐτό strengthens the (pleonastic) neuter demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο. Robertson also noted that it is uncommon in the NT to have a demonstrative (here τοῦτο) before the relative (here ὃ); thus ὃ ... τοῦτο is the common order. Both αὐτό and τοῦτο are incorporated into the relative clause. The gender, number, and case of αὐτό and τοῦτο, matching those of ὃ, represent an instance of attraction. (CC)

remember the poor—The Jerusalem pillars recognized the divine legitimacy of Paul’s calling and work, but they had one request: that Paul and Barnabas administer financial relief for the saints in Jerusalem, who were caught in persecution and famine. This became a major task to which Paul conscientiously devoted himself. (Ac11:29-30; Rm 15:25-28; 1 Co 16:1-4; 2 Co 8-9), in part to demonstrate the Church’s unity (largely, these were gifts of Gentile churches to Jewish Christians). (TLSB)

2:1–10 By divine revelation, Paul goes to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus to visit Church leaders who, in spite of some opposition in their midst, approved of his message and mission to the Gentiles. Today, Christians continually face threats to the freedom they have in Christ, even from their own sinful flesh. The Gospel comes from God and thus cannot be deprived of its power to set us free. • Lord, grant us strength in our partnership in the Gospel. Amen. (TLSB)

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Antioch on the Orontes River in northwestern Syria was the capital of the Syrian province and, with an estimated 250,000 people, the third largest city in the empire after Rome and Alexandria. Because of its proximity to the Jewish homeland, Antioch had a large Jewish community along with a substantial number of God-fearers, that is, gentiles sympathetic and attracted to the Jewish movement in varying degrees. Estimates of the Jewish population range from 20,000 to 50,000.³² In Acts 11:26 Luke notes that the followers of Christ were first called *Christianoi*, “Christians,” in Antioch. The Christ-believers were a distinguishable movement in the city. (CC)

After the amicable conclusion in Jerusalem (2:1–10), the confrontation here in Antioch (2:11–14) seems abrupt. Perhaps it should not be so surprising in view of Paul’s earlier qualification of the Jerusalem pillars as men who (perhaps) “*seemed* to be something” (2:6). The presence of the uncircumcised Titus (2:3) aggrieved the circumcision party, who had sneaked in to spy on the meeting with Peter and Barnabas (2:4). From the spies’ perspective, the battle may not have been over once the Jerusalem agreement had been reached (2:6–10). “When Paul left Jerusalem, he would have been well advised to watch his back.” Paul had gone to Jerusalem, and now Jerusalem comes to Paul.³⁵ No sooner have Paul and Cephas shaken hands when they find themselves in disagreement. So much for the happy unity of “the right hand of fellowship” (2:9). Indeed, if 2:1–10 takes place *prior* to the Acts 15 resolution, then the conflicts are still swirling as Paul writes. (CC)

Philip Esler has emphasized in his writings that the Jerusalem “pillars” of James, Peter, and John (2:9) would have been shamed by their apparent concession to Paul and Barnabas. The apostles had made the agreement but without sealing it with an oath (2:6–10). For Esler, the overt exchange of the right hand of fellowship (2:9) obscured the left hand’s crossed fingers behind the back. James therefore reneged on the Jerusalem agreement and, through his representatives, persuaded Peter to renege as well. Much of Esler’s reconstruction remains speculative since Paul does not *say* that James sought to renege. Esler responded that Paul would not have wanted to admit James’ intent, but Esler’s reasoning nevertheless remains an argument from silence. Paul calls it hypocrisy on the part of Peter (2:13) and not a reneging on what took place at Jerusalem. To renege would have been a dangerous move by James that would have potentially jeopardized relations with Antioch, especially if he had initiated this move without consulting Peter, who was already in Antioch. Furthermore, Barnabas’ withdrawal (2:13) would be hard to explain if this were a reneging on the Jerusalem agreement for which he had fought so hard (2:1, 9). The Jerusalem agreement stipulated that the gentiles need not be circumcised, and the withdrawal did not, technically, violate that agreement. To deny Esler’s thesis that James set about to renege on the Jerusalem agreement does not mean that the Jerusalem leadership was not experiencing tremendous pressure for the leaders’ perceived openness to uncircumcised gentiles. (CC)

At Antioch Peter was eating with the gentile believers until a delegation arrived from James. The delegation persuaded him to withdraw from the shared table. Peter’s withdrawal encouraged other Jewish believers to leave the table, including “even Barnabas” (2:13). Paul found himself forced to confront Peter’s withdrawal as an act of hypocrisy. The apostle Paul’s confrontation of the apostle Peter caused no little consternation among the church fathers. Chrysostom claimed that Peter deliberately withdrew from

the table at Antioch precisely in order to give Paul the opportunity to confront the matter; they remained on the same page. The confrontation is, no doubt, troubling, but such a solution does not respect the veracity of Paul's account. The confrontation at Antioch requires the sober recognition that even the greatest and most gifted of leaders may at times fail and fall. Paul's rebuke of Peter is a call for humility on the part of all Christians. The Word of God and its teachings have to retain their priority at all times in the church's life. At stake in Paul's adamant and vigorous reproof of Peter was the unity of all believers in the Gospel of Christ and his church. (CC)

The tense conflict at Antioch serves as the climax of the autobiographical material in Galatians 1–2. The issues at Antioch parallel those faced at Galatia. The Jerusalem council had ruled that gentile Christians need not be circumcised (2:6–10). Table fellowship does not appear to figure in the agreement. Did the Jerusalem council not anticipate the shared meals and fellowship of Jewish and gentile believers? Such lack of prescience of the day-to-day realities is inconceivable. Large numbers of gentiles were already frequenting the synagogues and interacting with the Jews. Paul's point is that *Peter's* behavior is creating a situation that would, in effect, be in violation of the Jerusalem agreement. (CC)

Although it was surely not his intent, Peter's actions created a situation in which some Christians would become "second-class" Christians. If Jewish Christians did not eat with gentile Christians, the gentile Christians would find themselves marginalized. There is no such thing as a second-class Christian. Whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female (3:28), no person is of lesser worth in the Lord's eyes. When William Carey took the Gospel message to India, he and his missionary associates refused to baptize anyone who continued to advocate or support the caste system, which prevented common meals. The situation Carey faced is parallel in many ways to the Antioch episode. On the other hand, the Jews' concerns are understandable since God had given them the Law of Moses as a means of maintaining their unique identity. If the boundary-marking features of the Mosaic Law are no longer meant to divide Jews and gentiles, why should Christians segregate themselves from each other, whether, for instance, in American Christianity or German Christianity or Chinese Christianity? (CC)

Luther (AE 26:106) observed how "those men look at Peter's high prestige; they admire his social position and forget the majesty of this doctrine. Paul does the opposite." Paul treated Peter with due respect "but because he sees that the prestige of Peter is endangering the majesty of the doctrine of justification, he ignores the prestige, in order to keep this doctrine pure and undefiled" (AE 26:106). Luther recognized that sometimes the stubborn defense of the Gospel may be misperceived by others:

When it comes to the defense of the truth of the Gospel, therefore, we are not embarrassed to have the hypocrites accuse us of being proud and stubborn, the ones who think that they alone have the truth, those who refuse to listen or to yield to anyone. Here we have to be stubborn and unbending. The cause for whose sake we sin against men, that is, trample underfoot the majesty of someone's social position or of the world, is so great that the sins that are the worst in the eyes of the world are the highest virtues in the eyes of God. (AE 26:107) (CC)

Even with all due respect, broaching disagreement may place someone on the defensive and may seem to be, despite all winsomeness, an expression of arrogance. When the Gospel is at stake, those who remain faithful to the Lord must take such risks in others' perceptions. Paul was prepared to stand as the lone witness to the Gospel in his day. Martin Luther was prepared to stand alone at the Diet of Worms for the sake of God's Word. Christian devotion to the Word and its truth must always prepare the believer to go it alone if necessary. A Christian's first and overarching commitment must be to the truth of the Gospel, whatever the cost. (CC)

Paul does not narrate the outcome of the Antioch confrontation. Did Paul lose the honor challenge, or did Peter and the others rethink their position? What happened afterward? Many scholars have concluded that

Paul lost the confrontation. The fact that Paul does not narrate anyone's change of mind has suggested to many that Paul was not successful that day. He may well have stood alone as a "resolute and uncompromising defender of the truth of the gospel."⁴⁴ Paul's purposes at Galatia would not have been served by reporting that Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jewish Christians returned to their former strict practices with respect to the gentiles. The rivals would have seized on that fact. So Paul awards himself the final words, as if they were irrefutable, even as he leaves Peter in silence. (CC)

On the other hand, later in the first century, Luke in his book of Acts and Ignatius, the first-century bishop of Antioch (Ign. *Eph.* 12.2), have a high regard for the apostle Paul. Had he not carried the day at Antioch, the loss would not have had a long-term impact. Furthermore, Paul's report of the Antioch event may not make sense if the outcome did not ultimately vindicate his perspective.⁴⁷ The rivals would have been all too happy to fill the Galatians in on the rest of the story had the incident not concluded in Paul's favor. If Gal 2:1–10 is describing an earlier incident than Acts 15, then the conflict at Antioch is understandable since the issues and implications of Jew-gentile fellowship had not yet been fully worked out. The Antioch incident in 2:11–14 prompted the discussion of food and fellowship that took place at the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council, which resulted in a mending of fences. Acts 18:22–23 records Paul's later visit to Antioch with no hint of lingering troubles. The rift between Paul and Peter/Jerusalem at this point does not keep Paul from recognizing Peter and Barnabas as his fellow apostles and missionaries (1 Cor 1:10–13; 9:5–6; Col 4:10; cf. 2 Pet 3:15–16). Even here in Gal 2:11–14, Paul restrains his criticism of the "pillars" (2:9; cf. his attitude toward the false brothers in 2:4–5). Discussions of who won or lost may ultimately be beside the point. "Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy, not apostasy, which indicates that they both agree about the gospel and its relationship with the Law." (CC)

The Antioch Incident (2:11–14) (CC)

2:11 *But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.* Paul's "when" (ὅτε) with the mildly contrastive "but" (δέ) differs from his earlier temporal connections in 1:18; 1:21; 2:1, each with "then" (ἔπειτα). Noting the variation in the temporal connection, some scholars have supposed that the Antioch incident *preceded* the Jerusalem conference in 2:1–10. The temporal conjunction that Paul employs here, "when" (ὅτε), does not of itself indicate that the events of 2:11–14 transpired before 2:1–10. The "when" (ὅτε) of 1:15 introduces an event that follows the persecuting activity described in the preceding verses. The "when" (ὅτε) of 2:12 ("when they came") takes place after the "when" (ὅτε) of 2:11 ("when Cephas came"). Likewise, the "when" (ὅτε) of 2:14 ("when I saw") follows the events narrated in the preceding verses. More would be required, then, to signal an out-of-sequence narration. The Jerusalem conference in 2:1–10 addressed the issue of circumcision, but the problem at Antioch involved the mutual gatherings of Jews and gentiles at the table. The shared meals would make better sense *after* the Jerusalem discussions. Paul's position at Antioch certainly takes the matter a step further: not only do gentiles not need be circumcised, but there should also be no hindrance to their fellowship with Jewish Christians. Peter "stood condemned" precisely because the Jerusalem agreement had preceded, and he should have known better.⁵⁵ Had the Jerusalem conference been after the Antioch incident, it would have been better to have placed 2:11–14 before 2:1–10 and thus in proper order: to conclude on the happy note of agreement at Jerusalem after the Antioch disturbance would have been even more decisive for Paul's position (thus Augustine). Gal 2:1–10 and 2:11–14 are therefore narrated in the proper order. Certainly some time had elapsed since the agreement of 2:1–10, enough time for Peter to have arrived in Antioch from Jerusalem and to have begun socializing with the gentiles. Also, word would have had to reach James of Peter's practice with additional time for a delegation from James to reach Antioch. (CC)

"But when Cephas came to Antioch ...!" This is no longer the "recognized one" (see 2:2, 6, 9) or the "pillar" (see 2:9) who is arriving. He is simply "Cephas." "When Cephas came" is from the perspective of Paul's location at Antioch. The implication may be that now Peter is arriving on *Paul's* turf, the gentile

mission field (cf. 2:7–8). The words “when Cephas came” also suggest that this was a well-known visit. Whereas Paul reserves the results of the Jerusalem conference to end of his narration in 2:6–10, he states the results of the Antioch conflict up front in 2:11: Paul opposed him to his face. The abrupt change in tone signals a less irenic context. (CC)

Nevertheless, Paul’s opposition to Peter to his face (κατὰ πρόσωπον αὐτῷ ἀντέστην) implies active resistance but not necessarily any personal hostility (see the expressions with “to/against” and “face” in Deut 7:24; 9:2; 11:25; 31:21; Judg 2:14; 2 Chr 13:7–8; Judith 6:4; Acts 25:16 [“face to face”]; 2 Cor 10:1 [“face to face”]; and “oppose” [ἀνθίστημι] in Mt 5:39; Acts 6:10; 13:8). In English, “to his face” suggests “two angry men glowering at each other.” The point is that Paul confronted Peter personally.⁶¹ This is still a “face off” in the sense that people’s respective honor and shame are at stake. Paul sees himself as Peter’s equal, even if others at Antioch may not have viewed Paul that way. Should the onlookers have viewed Peter and Paul as social equals, if Peter chose not to respond to Paul’s challenge, then Peter would have lost face. If Paul were seen as the inferior party, then a non-response by Peter would have shamed Paul instead. If Peter had responded, and negatively, then Paul would likewise have been shamed.⁶³ The point is that Paul’s confrontation of Peter was a bold gamble that Paul felt forced to undertake, regardless of the outcome for his personal reputation. Paul was not dissuaded by human honor conventions or social structures. The Gospel took priority in his actions as he evaluated the situation from a divine perspective. God’s grace is at odds with human distinctions. Salvation in Christ and his church does not respect such boundaries. Sometimes one must be willing to stand alone for the sake of the Gospel. (CC)

Paul resisted Peter to his face because Peter “stood condemned” (κατεγνωσμένος ἦν). By whom was he “condemned”? He may be “self-condemned” by his retreat from the prior agreement in Jerusalem (2:6–10). Perhaps Peter is “self-condemned” by his own conscience (cf. Sirach 14:2; *T. Gad* 5.3; 1 Jn 3:20–21, the only other NT usage of this verb for “condemn,” καταγινώσκω). Gal 2:11 parallels Rom 14:23, where Paul likewise refers to actions that do not square with someone’s beliefs. The other option is that Peter is “condemned” by God’s judgment. If this latter option is, in fact, correct, then the NRSV’s “he stood self-condemned” and the CEV’s “he was wrong” do not convey the severity of the original. The word carries very serious overtones in many of its non-biblical occurrences. (CC)

2:12 *For before certain people came from James, he used to eat with the gentiles. But when they came, he began to withdraw and separate himself [from them], because he feared those of the circumcision.* Paul turns to what precipitated the confrontation of 2:11 and why (γάρ, “for”) Peter stood condemned. Peter “used to eat” with gentiles. The Jewish and gentile Christians were meeting together for fellowship and meals and were not worshipping or gathering separately—at least until certain outsiders arrived, who brought concerns over Peter’s newfound habits. Paul does not denigrate these people as he does the “false brothers” in 2:4–5, and he is respectful of James in 1:19; 2:6–10. Although Paul does not name the “certain people,” in the same manner as he refuses to name the Galatian rivals, he associates them with James. The arriving party would not have carried weight with Peter were they not legitimately representing James’ interests and views. Had the “certain people” not actually been representing James, Paul’s case would have been strengthened to say as much or to leave James out of the narration entirely. Without any such qualification, one can only assume that the concerns they represent are consistent with James’ actions and views. He may have been the one who allowed the false brothers to sneak into the Jerusalem meeting in 2:4. James was well-respected by the strictly Law-observant at Jerusalem who were outside the Sadducean party (Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 §§ 199–201; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.23) and had likely adopted a stricter approach to Jew-gentile interactions at this particular point than did Paul. (CC)

The problem of the identity of the “certain people” from James is compounded by the identity of “those of the circumcision.” Were the two groups really one and the same? Paul offers no clear clue that the “certain people from James” and the “circumcision” faction are the same group, despite the fact that the arriving Jewish Christians may have agreed in many ways with the perspective of Paul’s rivals at Galatia.

The circumcision faction seems to be a larger group than the party that came to Antioch from Jerusalem. The “certain people from James” and “those of the circumcision” (τοὺς ἐκ περιτομῆς) are most likely separate, but perhaps partially overlapping, groups. Acts 15:1 and 15:5 identify a circumcision faction active within the confines of the Christ-believing community in Judea. Perhaps the arriving party from James was representing the interests of the Jerusalem circumcision party (“those of the circumcision”). (CC)

Another possibility is that “those of the circumcision” were not Christ-believing Jews at all. They could have been zealous Jews who were put off by the association of Jewish Christ-believers with gentiles and who were pressuring the Christ-believers to refrain from contacts with the gentiles. Peter’s mingling with gentiles could very well have made life difficult for the Jerusalem church in view of such external pressure. The non-Christ-believing advocates of circumcision perhaps were also present in Antioch and were posing a more direct threat to Peter. Certain considerations favor *non*-Christ-believing Jews as the circumcision party. First, the nearest antecedent for this group is in 2:7–9, where Peter is to go to the circumcised in his missionary labors even as Paul is to go to the non-Jews. There “the circumcision/circumcised” (ἡ περιτομή) stands juxtaposed once with ἡ ἀκροβυστία (“the uncircumcised”) and twice in contrast to τὰ ἔθνη (“the gentiles”). In all likelihood, Peter’s missionary work among the circumcised would be jeopardized by his meals with the gentiles. Arguably, Paul could be referring to non-Christ-believing Jews as “(the) circumcised” throughout his letters (Rom 3:30; 4:9, 12; 15:8; Eph 2:11; Col 3:11; 4:11; Titus 1:10). The non-Christ-believing identity of the “circumcised” is clearer in some of these texts than others. Peter had shown no fear of human authorities or parties in the past (Acts 2:14–41; 3:17–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32). His fear at this point was in all probability of the potential persecution of the Jerusalem church by other Jews or of the damage to his credibility as a missionary to the Jews. His fear does not likely reflect any concern for his personal well-being. The growing violence within an increasingly nationalistic Judaism posed severe challenges for those early Jewish Christians perceived as overly sympathetic toward gentiles. Second, and more briefly, were “those of the circumcision” actually Christ-believing Jews, Peter’s fear as one of the “pillars” (2:9) is difficult to justify. Why should he fear his fellow Jewish believers? More likely, then, “those of the circumcision” were *not* fellow Christ-believers. The people from James were concerned with how Peter would be perceived in his missionary labors by his potential converts. (CC)

Paul’s custom was to eat with the gentiles. Although sacramental interpreters have often concluded that this must refer to the Antiochene Christians celebrating the Eucharist, the reference in 2:12 to eating with gentiles refers to shared meals in general and not to the Eucharist as such. Whereas Paul openly refers to the Lord’s Supper elsewhere (1 Cor 10:16–17, 21; 11:20–26), he does not mention it here. In 1 Cor 11:17–34 Paul draws on the Lord’s Supper as a warrant for why the Corinthians should not be divided among themselves. The unity in Christ requisite for and proclaimed by the Lord’s Supper would surely prove Peter’s separation at Antioch to be wrong-headed. Paul does not offer that sort of reasoning here. “It would have been a powerful argument for Paul to say, ‘If you share the bread and wine with Gentiles at the table of the Lord, how can you refuse to eat ordinary meals together?’”⁷⁶ The apostle refers to ordinary meals among Christians in Romans 14, and nothing would suggest otherwise here. The point is not that the Antiochene Christians were avoiding the Eucharist but that the Lord’s Supper is simply not the referent of the “eating” in 2:12. Shared meals were expressions of hospitality in antiquity and were of immense social importance. Non-Jews would cite the popular legend in Ovid (*Metam.* 8.613–70) of Philemon and Baucis. Jews would point to Abraham’s entertaining strangers over a meal in Genesis 18 (e.g., Philo, *Abr.* 22 §§ 107–14; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.11.2 § 196). (CC)

Paul describes Peter as “withdrawing and separating himself.” “Separate” (ἀφορίζω) is the regular Jewish term for ritual avoidance of unclean persons or objects for the sake of purity. Most likely, the Antiochene Jews withdrew to their own tables and provisions rather than to their own separate assembly. Paul therefore addresses Peter in a public gathering where the grievance could still be aired. Paul was a

Pharisee who had specialized in maintaining such separations from others for the sake of purity, even from other Jews (Gal 1:13–14; Phil 3:5–6). With the phrase here, “Paul, indeed, might have been making a deliberate pun: Peter ‘played the Pharisee.’” Paul articulates far more serious implications of Peter’s withdrawal in Gal 2:14: Peter is effectively forcing the gentiles to be circumcised in order to enjoy continued fellowship with Jewish Christians. (CC)

The focus on Peter’s behavior at Antioch is understandable in view of his assigned mission field among the Jews in 2:7–9. James no doubt recognized that Peter’s fellowship with the gentiles was jeopardizing that missionary work. To draw on the language of 2:15, non-Christ-believing Jews would have difficulty taking seriously the witness of an individual who had associated with “gentile sinners.” Peter would have been implicated by mere association in the idolatry so common at gentile meals with the characteristic meat sacrificed to the gods and the wine of libation—even though the charge was entirely unjustified among gentile Christians with similar qualms about such meat and drink (cf. Rom 14:13–15:3; 1 Cor 8:7–13). (CC)

2:13 *And the rest of the Jews also joined with him in the hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.* Peter’s action motivated the rest of the Jewish believers at Antioch to join him in withdrawal and separation, even Barnabas. They joined “with him” in the “hypocrisy.” Paul treats Peter alone as the instigator of the hypocrisy. Peter’s withdrawal, and not just the logic of the Jerusalem delegation, seems to have persuaded the Antiochene Jewish believers to withdraw as well. (CC)

Paul accuses Peter, and those who followed his example, of hypocrisy with both a verb (συνυπεκρίθησαν, “joined with ... in the hypocrisy”) and a noun (ὑπόκρισις, their “hypocrisy”). The emphasis is hard to miss. Paul likely has in mind the ordinary Greek sense of those words in which an actor dons a mask and plays a part. The sense would be “insincerity,” “playacting,” or “hypocrisy.” In this instance, Peter and the other Jews are playing a part that does not agree with their own convictions. They are acting out of character in caving to someone else’s agenda. To draw on the language of 1:10, they are guilty of “people-pleasing.” The συν-compound verb συνυπεκρίθησαν, “joined *with* ... in the hypocrisy,” has the secondary sense in Greek literature of joining someone to act hypocritically. According to Polybius 3.31.7: “For all men are given to adapt themselves to the present and assume a character suited to the times, so that from their words and actions it is difficult to judge of the principles of each, and in many cases the truth is quite overcast” (Paton, LCL). Epictetus writes of a gentile influenced by Judaism: “Whenever we see a man halting between two faiths, we are in the habit of saying, ‘He is not a Jew, he is only *acting the part* [ὑποκρίνεται]’ ” (*Diatr.* 2.9.20; Oldfather, LCL; emphasis added). The Jews would use these words for “playing a part” (*Let. Aris.* 219, 267). Jewish authors tend to use the word group (ὑποκρίνομαι, ὑπόκρισις, and related words) negatively in the sense of “pretend” or “deceive” (Sirach 32:15; 33:2; *Pss. Sol.* 4:20, 22). Eleazar refused even to pretend to eat pork or the food sacrificed to idols (2 Macc 6:21, 24; 4 Macc 6:15, 17). Paul need not be claiming that Peter was *consciously* insincere. He does not charge Peter with apostasy but with hypocrisy, and that difference is significant!⁸⁶ The point is that Peter himself should have realized the inconsistency in his behavior. He was acting contrary to the principles he and the others had agreed upon at Jerusalem (Gal 2:6–10). He was effectively forcing the gentiles to become Jews to continue their shared fellowship. This is no mere pragmatic action in the moment (cf. Rom 14:13–15:3; 1 Cor 8:7–13). What is at stake is a matter of principle! (CC)

“*Even* Barnabas was led astray.” Paul’s disappointment reverberates in the admission that even Barnabas was led astray in their charade. “Paul could hardly believe it.” His former mentor, advocate, and co-worker in Cyprus and south Galatia was swept away in the false behavior (Acts 9:26–28; 11:25–30; 13:2–14:26). Perhaps Paul should not have been surprised. Barnabas had strong ties with the Jerusalem church (Acts 4:34–37; 11:22) and, according to Acts 4:36–37, he was a Levite, who at one point would have had scruples with respect to Jewish customs. On the other hand, Paul employs a συν-compound verb, aorist passive “was led astray [‘with others’]” (συναπήχθη). The passive verb form, the instrumental dative “by

hypocrisy” (τῆ ὑποκρίσει), and the possessive pronoun “their” (αὐτῶν) all point to Barnabas’ being influenced by the hypocrisy of Peter and the others. Paul therefore softens the charge against Barnabas. The “hypocrisy” language is, of course, rhetorically charged and polemical (see Mt 23:28; Mk 12:15; Lk 12:1; 1 Tim 4:2; 1 Pet 2:1). (CC)

2:14 *But when I saw that they were not walking straightforward in relation to the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all: “If you, although you are a Jew, are living like a gentile and not like a Jew, how [is it] you are trying to compel the gentiles to judaize?”* The “but” (ἀλλά) conveys the sense of a strong contrast to what came before. Luther commented on this verse:

Since Peter withdrew with pious thoughts, fearful of offending the weak, what would Paul do if in the same situation there were weak brethren on both sides, Gentiles as well as Jews? To whom would he yield? It is no great problem, you see, to concur with individuals separately. For if he were to eat with the Jews, he would offend the Gentiles, as Peter did; if he were to eat with the Gentiles, he would offend the Jews, as Peter feared in this case. In such an event the truth of the Gospel must be preserved and explained by stating the reason, as Paul does in this instance when he reproves Peter in the presence of all and asserts that it is permissible to live as the Gentiles do and as he did before, when he refused to let Titus, a Gentile, be circumcised [Gal 2:3] and did not yield for even a moment [Gal 2:5]. (AE 27:215) (CC)

If Paul could be accommodating of all people in 1 Cor 9:19–21 as a Jew to the Jews and a gentile to the gentiles, why was it wrong for Peter to follow the same principle? Peter’s withdrawal went beyond going to Jews as a Jew or to gentiles as a gentile. As Luther pointed out, this is a shared meal and the dynamic is different. Peter was forcing the gentiles to become Jewish in order to continue their shared meals. Gentiles would need to become Jewish and observe the Law of Moses. The gentiles would have to get circumcised. (CC)

Paul may have been absent from Antioch at the time of Peter’s initial withdrawal. By the time he returned, others had joined Peter. Another possibility is that Paul had delayed his confrontation with Peter until it was unavoidable. Richard Longenecker has drawn attention to the aorist “I saw” (εἶδος) following the temporal particle “when” (ὅτε). The aorist verbs (εἶδον and εἶπον, “I said”) stand in contrast to the imperfect verbs in 2:12 (“he used to eat ... he began to withdraw ... he began to separate”). The verb tenses suggest that the separation had taken place for some time (2:12–13) before Paul intervened and confronted Peter (2:14). That Paul did not realize the implications of Peter’s action right away is unlikely since in that case Paul would have been implicating himself as having experienced the same confusion.⁹⁵ That Paul was afraid to voice his opposition at first is likewise unlikely for this former persecutor and brave evangelist. Paul would not have bided his time to voice opposition to such an egregious situation. Most likely, Paul had been absent from Antioch and had confronted the matter immediately upon his return. This raises the question of where the apostle to the gentiles had been in the interim before arriving back at Antioch. Paul and Barnabas may well have been away in south Galatia and Cyprus while the situation in Antioch was initially developing (Acts 13:4–14:23). Barnabas would have joined in the withdrawal upon his return with Paul to Antioch. (CC)

Paul saw that “they were not walking straightforward (not acting consistently) in relation to the truth of the Gospel.” The verb for “walking straight forward or upright” (ὀρθοποδέω, *orthopodeō*; cf. the English “orthopedics”) is not used elsewhere in the NT or in other Greek literature. Paul may have even coined the word. The notion of “walking upright or straight” with respect to the truth of the Gospel is unusual language that sensitizes the Galatians’ ears to the comments later in the letter about “walking” by the Spirit (περπατέω, 5:16), “walking in step” with the Spirit (στοιχέω, 5:25), and “walking in step” according to this rule (στοιχέω, 6:16). One must *walk according to* “the truth of the Gospel.” The truth of God’s Word is intensely practical and must be lived out in a manner consistent with its principles. In this

case, Peter had fallen short. He is the target of Paul's ire because his actions prompted the withdrawal. That someone of the apostle Peter's stature could err against "the truth of the Gospel" should prompt self-reflection on the part of *every* believer! (CC)

Paul queried: "If you, although you are a Jew, are living like a gentile and not like a Jew, how [is it] you are trying to compel the gentiles to judaize?" "You ... a Jew" (σὺ Ἰουδαῖος) is juxtaposed with "the gentiles" (τὰ ἔθνη). This Jew was "living in a gentile manner" (ἔθνικῶς—a NT hapax legomenon), that is, he was living in a way that did not maintain the proper distinction between the Jews and the rest of the world. An excursus to this section will address the much debated question of what precisely had drawn the attention of James' representatives.⁹⁹ Paul's question may well have reflected the language the people from James used in expressing their concerns to Peter: "You are living like a gentile"! Paul's use of the language of the James party would explain the present tense verb (ζῆς) *after* Peter's withdrawal: "You *are* living." Peter is no longer living like a gentile after his withdrawal. Paul, in making his point, would simply be drawing on the language of the James group that had led to Peter's withdrawal. Even so, one might expect the past tense for the sake of the logic: "If you, Jew that you are, were [earlier] living in a Gentile manner, how is it that you [now] compel Gentiles to Judaize?" (CC)

Some scholars have proposed that, apart from Peter's withdrawal from the table, he was in *other ways* living like a gentile—thus "you *are* living like a gentile." Such a possibility goes beyond any clues in the text of Galatians. Others have proposed that Peter had withdrawn from the gentiles only as a matter of temporary expediency without any intent of shattering the unity of the Christian fellowship.¹⁰³ Nothing in the context, however, suggests that Peter intended to return to shared meals. Another approach to the present tense "you *are* living" would be to take the gentile lifestyle as "the essential principle of his life." In a variation on this approach, another scholar has confused the *results* of Peter's actions with what was originally at stake: "Living" like a gentile in this case would be to rely "on the faith of Christ to live before God and thus before others justified in Christ (cf. 2:20; 3:11; Rom. 1:16–17), versus one who relies on some other means to live before God and thus before others, in this case justified by 'the works [status] of the Law' (Gal. 2:16; cf. 3:11–14, 21)." (CC)

To paraphrase this extremely compact argument, Paul was saying to Peter that if he lived (justified) as (an equal, that is, justified in the same manner as) a gentile (through faith in Christ) and not like (those) Jews (who still relied on the works [status] of the Law for their justification), then why would he now withdraw in such a way as to compel the gentiles (also justified by faith Christ) to believe that they are not equals unless they also live (justified) as Jews (by the works [status] of the Law). (CC)

The clarifying parentheses illumine the logic of this approach, but they also highlight the fundamental problem: too much must be read into Paul's words. "Living like a gentile" is best understood as a reference to what was taking place *in* the shared meals as Jews and gentiles came together to eat and drink. That shared fellowship was problematic for other Jewish observers of a stricter stripe. The most likely solution is much simpler: "Perhaps the verb's tense [ζῆς, 'you *are* living'] does not bear its normal temporal reference. In that case Paul would be disregarding the 'when' of Cephas's behavior and posing a rhetorical question that asserts a principle: You cannot live in a Gentile manner *and* yet compel Gentiles to Judaize." (CC)

Paul's use of the verb "compel" (ἀναγκάζω, 2:14) is an ironic twist after James, Cephas, and John had earlier agreed *not* to "compel" (ἀναγκάζω, 2:3) Titus "to be circumcised" (περιτμηθῆναι, 2:3). It is as if Peter had gone back on his word. In effect, Peter was acting in a way that is consistent with precisely what Paul is facing at Galatia, where the rivals are trying to "compel" (ἀναγκάζω, 6:12) the gentiles "to be circumcised" (περιτέμνεσθαι, 6:12), in effect, to judaize. Paul's verb "judaize" (ἰουδαῖζω, 2:14) is a NT hapax legomenon, but it is used in the Septuagint (Esth 8:17) and in a few other sources for adopting

practices in order to become Jewish. In the OT patriarchal narrative Jacob would not give Dinah to the sons of Hamor “until all the inhabitants of Shechem were circumcised [περιτεμνομένους] and followed the customs of the Jews [Ἰουδαῖσαι, literally, ‘judaized’]” (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.22.5, citing Theodotus; trans. E. H. Gifford). Peter’s boycott of the shared table had the *practical* effect of requiring the gentiles to be circumcised in order to restore fellowship, but that need not imply that the representatives from James were actually advocating circumcision. Paul does not call them “false brothers” (unlike those he so labels in 2:4), and he does not impugn James. (CC)

Later in 6:1 Paul admonishes restoring a transgressing brother or sister with the Spirit’s gentleness. Paul seems anything but gentle in 2:11–14. The issue at Antioch is not a personal “transgression” (as in 6:1) but rather a public situation which was antithetical to the Christian Gospel and faith, and which had to be immediately and openly addressed. Paul’s reply in 2:14 took place “in front of them all” (ἔμπροσθεν πάντων); note the aorist εἶπον, “said,” which conveys promptly accomplished action and not “argumentation or advice gradually built up to.” Peter should not have yielded to the representatives from James, even as Paul stood firm for the sake of the Gospel. Paul risked ostracism and isolation to stand up for God’s truth. The Antioch conflict prompts self-reflection as Christians regularly find themselves in situations with friends, employers, and others in their lives where the easier, more convenient path would be to remain silent or to compromise when the confession of the Gospel calls for an open witness. Paul set a profound example in the personal risks he took that day in tackling an esteemed but erring pillar apostle. (CC)

Excursus 6

The Issue at Antioch

Under pressure from the delegation sent by James, Peter chose to withdraw from the shared meals with gentile Christians at Antioch, and his withdrawal motivated other Jewish Christians to do the same (2:11–13). Paul confronted Peter on the decision (2:14). What was it about the shared meals that prompted the concerns of James? The brevity of Paul’s comments requires some sleuthing to pinpoint what precisely the James party saw as problematic. Many readers, even scholars, come to 2:11–14 with preconceptions about the issue at Antioch that may or may not be justified. The early Christian meals at Antioch were not the first instance in the Greco-Roman world where Jews and non-Jews came together at the same table. Certain issues regularly emerge in both Jewish and non-Jewish literature when Jews interacted at meals with others. Once several false leads are disqualified, the path will become clearer for a more fruitful accounting of the crux of contention at Antioch. (CC)

2:11 δέ (“but”)—The connective is mildly adversative since 2:11–14 offers a contrast to 2:7–10 as Paul continues his narrative.

Κηφᾶς (“Cephas”)—As in 1:18 a strong textual tradition replaces “Cephas” (Κηφᾶς) with the better known “Peter” (Πέτρος; D F G m Marcion Marius Victorinus Chrysostom). As the more difficult reading, “Cephas” is to be preferred (with x A B C H P vg syr^{pes}). See the similar scribal changes of Κηφᾶς to Πέτρος in 1:18; 2:9, 14.

κατεγνωσμένος ἦν (“he stood condemned”)—The verb ἦν is an imperfect, which, with the perfect participle of καταγινώσκω, functions as a pluperfect with the sense of a past existing state. It could be translated like a predicate adjective (i.e., “he was guilty”). (CC)

Antioch. The leading city of Syria and third leading city of the Roman empire (after Rome and Alexandria). From it Paul had been sent out on his missionary journeys (see Ac 13:1–3; 14:26). (CSB)

The third-largest city of the Roman Empire and a commercial hub, it had a significant Jewish population. The first Gentile Church was founded here with the aid of Barnabas and Paul (Ac 11:19–26). (TLSB)

This was not the Antioch in Asia Minor that was evangelized by Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. It was located several hundred miles north of Jerusalem. It was a mixed congregation, one of the earliest containing Jews and Gentiles (Acts 11:19-26). It was the congregation from which Paul and Barnabas were commissioned at the outset of their Gentile mission work, and it was always the “base” from which they carried on future outreach efforts. It might be called the mother church of Gentiles. (PBC)

I opposed him to his face – Paul continues his refutation and says not only that he has the testimony of Peter and the other apostles at Jerusalem on his side, but also that he opposed Peter on this issue before the entire church at Antioch. He tells that this took place in the presence of the entire church, not in a corner. (Luther)

Paul took issue with Peter personally. (TLSB)

I think Peter goes running from Jerusalem to Antioch and just rejoices in being able to participate in a church now made up of Jews and Gentiles. Remember now, like I said, he is the founder of the mission to the Jews, founder of the mission to the Gentiles.

Now, I think when he was there, he loved celebrating the Lord's Supper with the Gentiles, eating in their houses, eating the foods that they served. Perhaps for the first time, as I said, eating foods he had never eaten before. But it says -- this is Verse 11: But when Cephas came to Antioch -- and I think it's important to see that Cephas, Peter who is coming to Antioch -- I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. Now, that is a strong statement. And clearly, you know, maybe Peter left for a while, came back. But what happened in Antioch. And when he comes now back to Antioch, Paul is in his face. Now, remember what I talked about Paul, short guy, skinny neck, kind of bulging eyes, fierce kind of countenance, long hook nose, shrewd. High pitched voice. Imagine him getting in your face. (Just – V-21)

he stood condemned. For yielding to the pressure of the circumcision party (the Judaizers), thus going against what he knew to be right. (CSB)

Not merely self-condemned but convicted in God's presence. (TLSB)

2:12 τινάς (“certain people”)—This form, the masculine accusative plural, is well-attested in \times A B C D G, whereas \mathfrak{P}^{46} and a few other minor witnesses have the masculine accusative *singular* variant τινά, “a certain person.” The variant reading ἐλθεῖν τινά matches ἦλθεν Κηφᾶς, “Cephas came,” in 2:11 as well as the variant later in this verse, “he came” (ἦλθεν in place of ἦλθον; see the fourth textual note on 2:12), a scribal error in the very same manuscripts.

ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου (“from James”)—The preposition ἀπό may be used for παρά with a genitive noun; thus “to come *from* a person,” i.e., from James (BDF § 210 [3]). These two words could modify τινάς (“certain people”: “before the arrival of *certain people from James*”) or ἐλθεῖν (“came”: “before certain people *came from James*”). A modification of τινάς (“certain people from James”) would suggest that these were people sent *by* James, as most commentators have concluded. A modification of ἐλθεῖν (“came from James”) would imply that the people were adherents of James' school of thought but not necessarily directly sent by James. In favor of ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου (“from James”) modifying τινάς (“certain people”), the subject of an infinitive “somewhat more frequently” precedes rather than follows the infinitive. So τινάς would be associated with ἀπὸ Ἰακώβου and would not likely be the subject of ἐλθεῖν. On the other hand, “the rarity of any limitation of an indefinite pronoun by any phrase except a partitive one is against this construction [‘certain people from James came’]” and favors “certain people came from James.” James may have been responsible for allowing the spies into the meeting in 2:4. He is likely behind the people in

2:12 as well. The very mention of James' name implies that these people were sent by James or closely associated with him.

συνήσθιεν (“he used to eat”)—The imperfect expresses habitual or customary action. The word is stressed by its placement at the end of the sentence; the Greek word order is, literally, “for before came certain people from James, with the gentiles he used to eat.” Peter had made himself at home with the gentiles at Antioch.

ἦλθον (“they came”)—The alternate reading ἦλθεν (“he came”) has good attestation with \mathfrak{B}^{46} x B D* G, but the sense requires the plural ἦλθον (with A C D^c it vg syr^{pesh, h} cop^{sa, bo}). The alternate ἦλθεν could be understood as “a certain *one* came” (with the subject being the variant reading *τινα*; see the first textual note on 2:12) or “*Peter* came.” “A certain *one* came from James” (thus \mathfrak{B}^{46}) harmonizes 2:12 with 5:10’s “the one who is disturbing you.” The variant “he came” (ἦλθεν) would also match the same verb in relation to Cephas who “came” (ἦλθεν) in 2:11. In fact, the variant “he came” may refer not to “a certain one” but rather to Cephas himself: “When Cephas came to Antioch, he withdrew and separated himself.” However, this is an awkward, redundant reading since “Cephas came” is already expressed in 2:11. Several verbs in the context (συνήσθιεν, ὑπέστειλλεν, and ἀφώριζεν) end in -εν and an unconscious “careless [scribal] assonance” ensued.

ὑπέστειλλεν καὶ ἀφώριζεν ἑαυτὸν (“he began to withdraw and separate himself”)—The verbs are in the imperfect tense, but their exact sense is difficult to pinpoint with precision. Is the sense that Peter “started to withdraw and separate himself”? Was the process gradual? So gradual as to be unobtrusive?¹³ What gradual steps would be entailed in a withdrawal? At what point would a withdrawal draw attention? Surely he simply excused himself from the meals. Perhaps the inceptive sense is apt here: the initial withdrawal from the meals created an ongoing state of separation and withdrawal. (CC)

before...he was eating with Gentiles – And then he says this: Before some from James came -- now that's a very colorless expression. We don't know what that means. And we do not think -- and I think this is important to state. And we do not think that they represented James. They may claim they are from James. And that certainly may be something. Oh, we're from the bishop. The bishop sent us. But I don't think that's the case. There's no indication anywhere else in the New Testament that James held to this position. But it says: Before some from James came, Peter -- this is an ongoing act in the past -- was continually eating with the Gentiles. Now, I think that means both kind of normal meals and table fellowship at the Lord's Supper. I think it's table fellowship in both the common meals and the supper of the Lord. Peter was continually over and over again eating with Gentiles. (Just – V-21)

Table fellowship signified freedom from the Law (specifically Jewish food laws) and Church unity. (TLSB)

circumcision party. Judaizers, who believed that circumcision was necessary for salvation (cf. Ac 10:45; 11:2; Ro 4:12). (CSB)

fearing – Now, this is a loaded statement. And I want to explain a couple of the words here. The word there for drawback is a military word. Remember I said the Galatians were military men. They were soldiers. And so this is the sense of retreat. Now, I think you can see this as the Gospel is moving forward, it's taking ground. I mean, this conference in Jerusalem, this private conference brought all these players together to show that the Gospel is now to move among the Gentiles. And Peter is in Antioch moving forward. I mean it's an extraordinary moment in the church history. And then all of a sudden because these from James came, he began to retreat. He began to back off. Like an army would as it's beginning to take territory and then receiving resistance begins to have to retreat because it doesn't want to have to lose any more forces. (Just – V-21)

Emotion, not change of conviction, prompted Peter's duplicitous behavior. (TLSB)

And the word that's next and again it's an ongoing action in the past. And he was repeatedly over and over again separating himself. Now, that word separate is a Celtic word. What that means is that it's talking about the context of liturgy. Of cult. Of worship. He's separating himself from the Lord's Supper. So he's retreating. He's moving himself away from the Gentile celebration of the Lord's Supper and just doing a Jewish one. And here is the critical reason: Because he was afraid. Now, we're afraid of a lot of things. But the word fear both in the gospels and here I think in Paul has to do with fear that comes from persecution for confessing the true faith. Peter was afraid of confessing the faith that was agreed upon in that private meeting in Jerusalem right before this text that he had with Paul and Barnabas and the church in Antioch. He was afraid of being persecuted by the circumcision party. (Just – V-21)

Now, I think we have to be a little gentle here on Peter. Not that we want to excuse his behavior. But I think he's afraid not just of being ridiculed or being considered somebody who doesn't have a backbone. I think he's afraid maybe not so much for his life but the life of those who are his followers. Because these are those terrorists. These are those people who are literally killing people who they do not think are living like a Jew should live. And in this case that they think a Jewish Christian should live. So in order to preserve life, Peter retreats, Peter withdraws. (Just – V-21)

2:13 καί (“also”)—The other Jews “also” joined Peter in the hypocrisy. This word is included in \times A C D F G H K L P but missing in \mathfrak{P}^{46} B 1739 1881. “While neither external nor internal evidence is decisive, it seems easier, particularly on such a minor matter, to accept its original inclusion and later deletion (whether inadvertently or believing it to be superfluous) than its original omission and later addition.”

ὥστε ... συναπήχθη (“so that ... was led astray”)—The conjunction ὥστε may introduce an independent sentence and may take the indicative (as here), imperative, or hortatory subjunctive (“therefore”); BDF § 391 (2), citing ὥστε συναπήχθη. Usually the infinitive follows. An indicative mood expresses actual result. The construction is therefore emphatic: “so that even Barnabas *was led astray*.”

τῇ ὑποκρίσει (“in the hypocrisy”)—Either the word depends on the preposition συν- in συναπήχθη, “even Barnabas was led astray *with* their hypocrisy,” or is an instrumental dative, “even Barnabas was led astray *by* their hypocrisy.” (CC)

rest of the Jews. Jewish Christians not associated with the circumcision party but whom Peter’s behavior had led astray. (CSB)

Jewish Christians in Antioch (cf v 15). *even Barnabas.* Paul could hardly believe it! “Even” (Gk *kai*) his trusted friend and colleague for so many years succumbed to behavior inherently dishonest. “Paul yields and gives way to the weak concerning food and <the observance of> times or days (Romans 14:6). But to the false apostles, who wanted to impose these on the conscience as necessary things, he will not yield even in matters that are adiaphora” (FC SD X 13). (TLSB) (TLSB)

And it says: That the rest of the Jews -- see this -- the rest of the Jews played the hypocrite with Peter. Now, hypocrite -- a hypocrite is somebody who puts a facade up. And if you read the teachings of Jesus, a person is a hypocrite because they are afraid of confessing the true faith. So Peter and the rest of the Jews put up a facade now. In other words, they retreat behind a wall because they are afraid of confessing the true faith with these Judaizers from Jerusalem, the circumcision party. And his leadership is so powerful. Peter is such a significant figure that not only do the rest of the Jews go with him -- and this must have just killed Paul -- so that even Barnabas, even Barnabas -- and I think this is such a word with such ***pathos that even Barnabas was led astray. Was in a sense perverted by their hypocrisy. Now, this is his traveling companion. This is the man what went with him on his first missionary journey. This is his good friend. The man who in many ways taught him to be a missionary. Even Barnabas is swayed by Peter. (Just – V-21)

2:14 οὐκ ὀρθοποδοῦσιν (“they were not walking straightforward”)—Note the present tense form of ὀρθοποδοῦσιν for a past event as Paul shifts the point of temporal reference. In this case, the present tense verb functions within indirect discourse after a past time main verb, εἶδον, “I saw.”

πρός (“in relation to”)—On πρὸς for the standard by which their walking straight should be judged (close to the sense of κατὰ) and thus “in conformity with,” see Lk 12:47; 2 Cor 5:10; Eph 3:4. The preposition can also mean “in relation to” (2 Cor 1:12; Gal 6:10; Col 4:5). “Either way, the translation ‘in line with’ is appropriate.” On the other hand, Paul does not use κατὰ here, even though he otherwise uses κατὰ with περιπατέω in the sense of “walk in conformity to” (Rom 14:15; 2 Cor 10:2, 3). Burton therefore suggested “toward” in the sense of walking *a straight course* towards the truth of the Gospel. Since motion toward a goal is not literally intended in this context, he translated the phrase as “pursue a straight course in relation to the truth of the gospel.”²⁵ Here it may well have the metaphorical sense of “he was not straightforward” or “he was not walking down the right road toward the truth of the gospel.”

Κηφᾶ (“Cephas”)—On the switch from “Cephas” to the better known “Peter” (Πέτρος) in many manuscripts, see the discussion of the similar scribal change in the second textual note on 2:11 (see also the same change in 1:18; 2:9).

Ἰουδαῖος ὑπάρχων (“although you are a Jew”)—The participle ὑπάρχων is concessive and is connected to ἐθνικῶς ... ζῆς, “you are living like a gentile.”

καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς ζῆς (literally, “and not like a Jew you are living”)—The reading οὐχὶ is attested by κ^c B D* H Ψ, whereas κ* A C D^e F G K L 88 1739 have οὐκ. An accidental omission of the *iota* is more likely than its addition. The variant οὐκ substitutes the more familiar form for the less familiar οὐχὶ. On the use of the verb ζάω, “live,” for ordinary, daily living, see Rom 7:1 and likely also Rom 7:9. Some witnesses lack the words καὶ οὐχὶ Ἰουδαϊκῶς, “and not like a Jew” (Ⲣ⁴⁶ Ambrosiaster Marius Victorinus), but strong witnesses include the phrase.

ἀναγκάζεις (“you are trying to compel”)—The verb has a conative sense. (CC)

acted hypocritically – Now, this is Paul's conclusion. And I think it's very important. He says: But when I saw that they were not walking in an Orthodox way, literally ortho, they were not walking lightly to the truth of the Gospel -- there is that expression again, the Gospel that is the truth, the truth that is the Gospel that they were not walking to what he, Paul, considers the truth of the Gospel. (Just – V-21)

Measured by the Gospel of freedom in Christ, the deliberate withdrawal from fellowship with Gentiles not only lacked integrity but betrayed God's truth. (TLSB)

before them all – And notice, this isn't a private thing. This isn't like Matthew 18. This is a public sin. Public act. It takes a public rebuke. He said: I said to Cephas -- that's Peter -- before all of them, the whole church -- he didn't just take Peter in a corner and say: Hey, what are you doing? He goes before the whole church and says to Cephas -- and this is a very important statement here and this shows his hypocrisy. If you, Peter, though you are a Jew -- your being is a Jew. And he's admitting there that Peter lives like a Jew. And that's okay. That's what he is. Ethically he is a Jew. Even though you, Peter, are a Jew are now living like a Gentile and not like a Jew -- now that shows you that Peter fully immersed himself in the Gentile life. Which means he was eating their foods. He was participating in things that would have been uncleaned by Jews. So he's living like a Gentile. If you, Peter, even though you were brought up as a Jew are living like a Gentile and not like a Jew -- and here is the killer and here is the same word that was used to compel circumcision. How can you force to compel Gentiles to live like Jews? (Just – V-21)

Now, whether or not Peter was fully doing that, it doesn't say. But the fact that he withdrew and separated himself indicates that he is making a statement in which perhaps it is necessary as the circumcision party says that these Gentiles must first become Jews in order for them to become

Christians. Now, this is a serious breach in the church. And it is my guess that after Paul said this, there was a tremendous tragedy here. That Paul went his way and Peter went his way. And Barnabas, who knows what. But obviously from Acts 15, there was great dissension. And even though Luke kind of glosses it over a little bit, it's very clear that Paul and Barnabas were in great discussion. (Just – V-21)

Not raw coercion, but strong group pressure constrained the Gentiles to adopt Jewish customs and practices. (TLSB)

you live like a Gentile. You do not observe Jewish customs, especially dietary restrictions (see v. 12). (CSB)

This means: “You are a Jew and one who is bound to live like a Jew, that is, to abstain from foods prohibited by the Law. Nevertheless, you, a Jew, live like a Gentile; that is, you freely act contrary to the Law, transgress it, and trample it underfoot. For you eat common and unclean foods, as does any other Gentile who is free from the Law; and you do right. But when you keep the Law, you compel the Gentiles to act like Jews, that is, to observe the Law by necessity. For by your example of abstaining from profane foods you cause the Gentiles to think as follows: ‘Peter now avoids the Gentile foods he used to eat. Therefore we, too, should avoid them and live in a Jewish manner. Otherwise we shall not be righteous and shall not be saved.’ ” You see, then, that Paul does not rebuke ignorance in Peter—for he knew that he was free to eat any foods at all with the Gentiles—but pretense, by which Peter compelled the Gentiles to live like Jews. (Luther)

2:11–14 For the sake of the truth of the Gospel, Paul publicly rebukes Peter for his hypocritical conduct, which communicates that the Gentiles must keep Jewish laws. The Word of God condemns hypocrisy (Mt 23:28; Lk 12:1; 1Pt 2:1; cf Lk 20:20). Yet this history shows that God is true to His promise of mercy toward sinners (1Co 1:9; 1Jn 1:9). • Lord, keep us from hypocrisy in our thoughts, words, and actions. Affirm our freedom won by Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

Justified by Faith

15 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; **16** yet we know that a person is not justified[b] by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! **18** For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. **19** For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. **20** I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **21** I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness[c] were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

2:15–21† Probably a narrative section and not part of Paul’s statement to Peter, as indicated in. (CSB)

Legalism Then and Now

It is important to understand the problem of legalism in the Church—then and now—and to distinguish it from the Gospel and Christian freedom. Outside of biblical Christianity, other religions or philosophies have one thing in common. They teach that we must somehow save ourselves. Such salvation is sometimes viewed as a future paradise. Sometimes it simply means a bettering of this present world. Either way, it is up to us to achieve it. (TLSB)

In Galatians, Paul reminds us that the struggle against the way of the Law is as old as Christianity itself. One commentator notes: “God’s grace cannot be compromised. Law and Gospel cannot be mingled.” (TLSB)

That is the situation answered by Paul in Galatians. Some sincere Jewish Christians from Judea were troubling the new churches by insisting that the Gentile members submit to circumcision and other aspects of the ceremonial law. In their view, faith in the Gospel was not sufficient—new converts also needed to observe the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. (TLSB)

Not only did Paul have to deal with these Judaizers, but he also had to oppose the apostle Peter, one of the great pillars of the Early Church! In Gal 2:11–16, Paul tells how he had opposed Peter at Antioch. There, Peter himself had been leading others into legalism by his example. The very truth of the Gospel was at stake. (TLSB)

It is tempting for Christians to fall into the trap of legalism. That is especially true today since we live in an increasingly godless society and we like to see evidences of faith. For example, some might feel that true Christians will vote in a certain way. If we find out that an individual voted for a party or candidate that we disagree with, then that individual’s faith is suspect. We might feel strongly that alcoholic drinks are dangerous and should be avoided. But though Scripture condemns drunkenness, it does not label all drinking a sin, and therefore, it is legalistic to say that having a drink is sinful. (TLSB)

In some ways, legalism makes life easier. We do not have to think or make decisions. Yet such a life is really a slavery of the worst kind. No matter how hard people try, they still cannot keep the Law perfectly. In the end, legalism leads either to pride or to despair. If we think we are living a fairly good life—not like the people we read about in the papers—we become proud and self-satisfied. This was the attitude of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day. On the other hand, if we realize the true enormity of our sins—how they daily color our thoughts, words, and actions—we can easily fall into complete despair. In either case, the end is the same—separation from God and the loss of salvation. (TLSB)

Rather than being caught up in legalism, God wants us to hold on to the freedom He gives us: “Stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1). We are free. God does not intend for us to live a life as slaves to a set of rules, as mechanical robots. Rather, our good works flow from a love of God and not from a sense of bondage or slavery. (TLSB)

Jesus alone is the antidote to legalism. He alone offers the free, full, and saving grace of God!

True Christianity versus Three Distortions

Group	Definition of a Christian	Genuine Concern	Danger
Judaized Christianity	Christians are Jews who have recognized Jesus as the promised Savior. Any Gentile desiring to become a Christian must first become a Jew.	Having a high regard for the Scriptures and God’s choice of Jews as His people, they do not want to see God’s commands overlooked or broken.	Tend to add human traditions to God’s Law. Also tend to subtract from God’s concern for all nations.
Legalistic Christianity	Christians are those who live by a long list	Faith in Christ should lead to changes in	Tend to make God’s love something to earn.

of “don’ts.” God’s favor behavior.
is earned by good
behavior.

Reduce Christianity to a
set of impossible rules.

Lawless Christianity	Christians live above the Law. They need no guidelines. God’s Word is not as important as one’s personal sense of God’s guidance. Behavior does not matter.	Forgiveness from God cannot be based on living up to His perfect standards. It must be received by grace as a gift made possible by Christ’s death on the cross.	Tend to forget that Christians still have a sinful human nature and fail when trying to live only by what they “feel” God wants. Also tend to forget that God’s commandments are still binding.
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True Christianity	Christians are those who believe that Jesus’ death has allowed a holy God to freely give them forgiveness and eternal life. They have that gift through faith. By the power of God’s Spirit through Word and Sacrament, they grow in faith and in holiness of life, thankful for what He has done in and for them.	Christianity is both private and public, with heart-belief and mouth-confession. Having received the gift of forgiveness and eternal life, Christians are now daily empowered to live that life with His help, realizing that the goal is nothing less than eternal life with God as beings who are transformed into His likeness. (TLSB)	Avoids the above dangers.
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Gal 2:15–21 appears to be a continuation of 2:11–14; Paul does not signal a break. In 2:14 Paul chastises Peter as one who, while “living like a gentile and not like a Jew,” was compelling “gentiles” to “judaize,” just as in 2:15 he juxtaposes “Jews” and “gentiles.” The “we” of 2:15–17 could be the participants in the Antioch conversation (2:11–14). For that matter, 2:17 could reflect charges leveled either against Peter by those from James (cf. 2:12) or against Paul by Jewish Christians. With 2:18–21’s “I,” Paul presents himself as an example of one in whom the crucified Christ now dwells. So is 2:15–21 a continuation of the Antioch conflict between Paul and Peter or a turn to the Galatian situation? A decision is not necessary. Paul may well be continuing the account of the incident at Antioch and his reasoning in that regard precisely because of the incident’s relevance for the Galatian situation. Gal 2:15–21 may even be what Paul *wishes* he had said at Antioch. In many respects, this paragraph is transitional as Paul concludes the autobiographical section (1:11–2:21) and prepares to launch into the more detailed argumentation following 3:1, a verse which bears clearer marks as the introduction of a new section. (CC)

Many commentators have labeled 2:15–21 the letter’s *propositio* or thesis statement as Paul lays out the key arguments of the letter that he then defends in the following paragraphs or *probatio*, to draw on the language of the late first-century rhetorician Quintilian. The following are among the key motifs introduced in 2:15–21:

- “righteousness” (δικαιοσύνη), 2:21; 3:6, 21; 5:5; cf. “righteous” (δίκαιος), 3:11
- “justify” (δικαίω), 2:16 (three times), 17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4

- “Law” (νόμος), 2:16 (three times), 19 (twice), 21; 3:2, 5, 10 (twice), 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 21 (three times), 23, 24; 4:4, 5, 21 (twice); 5:3, 4, 14, 18, 23; 6:2, 13
- “work” (ἔργον), 2:16 (three times); 3:2, 5, 10; 5:19; 6:4
- “faith” (πίστις), 2:16 (twice), 20; 3:2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 22, 23 (twice), 24, 25, 26; 5:5, 6, 22; 6:10
- “believe” (πιστεύω), 2:16; 3:6, 22
- “live” (ζῶω), 2:14, 19, 20 (four times); 3:11, 12; 5:25; cf. “life” (ζωή), 6:8

On the other hand, specialists in ancient rhetorical theory have not reached a unanimous consensus that 2:15–21 is a *propositio*. While 2:15–21 may or may not bear the marks of a rhetorical *propositio*, the paragraph is transitional as Paul closes the autobiographical narrative (1:11–2:21). Ultimately, Paul must explain who the people of God are and on what basis they are included among God’s own. Adherents of Moses’ Law is one possible answer, and believers in Jesus Christ, irrespective of the Law, is another. (CC)

Because of the apostle’s compressed style, virtually every word, phrase, and clause of 2:15–21 is disputed in modern scholarship. This paragraph is the *nexus* of almost every major debate in Pauline theology. Those who advocate the “new perspective on Paul,” those who deny a forensic approach to justification, or even those who advocate justification by “the faith of Christ” (versus “faith in Christ,” 2:16) point to these verses as proof of their new avenues of interpretation, approaches that would have seemed strange and perhaps even inimical at the time of the Reformation. Grammatical, contextual, and theological issues emerge at every turn. Gal 2:15–16 is especially demanding and yet inescapable for a reconstruction of Paul’s theology. After addressing 2:15–16, interpreters frequently surrender in their labors on 2:17–18; Gal 2:19–21 is somewhat less demanding but often overlooked in Lutheran syntheses. The densely textured style of the apostle requires slow-going interpretive parsing. (CC)

Paul opens the paragraph by laying common ground between himself and other Jewish Christians in 2:15–16, which is one long sentence. He poses an objection to his Gospel message in 2:17 and then offers an extended response to that objection in 2:18–21. Reestablishing the Law would render him a transgressor (2:18). Paul speaks representatively of himself as one who has torn down and died to the Law (2:18–19). Now he lives to God through Christ’s living in him (2:20). In 2:21 he closes by pointing out that the Law simply does not confer righteousness. (CC)

Shared Ground and Diverging Perspectives (2:15–16) (CC)

2:15 *We are Jews by birth and not sinners from the gentiles...* In a sentence that continues until the end of 2:16, Paul begins by contrasting “we Jews by birth” with “sinners from the gentiles.” Those outside the Israelite nation and its faith are regularly categorized as “sinners” destined for destruction (e.g., Pss 1:1, 5; 37:34–36; Sirach 41:5–11). “Sinners” are commonly equated with “gentiles” who do not obey the Law of Moses (1 Sam 15:18–19; Ps 9:16–17 [MT 9:17–18]; Is 14:5; Tobit 13:6; *Jub.* 23.23–24; 24.28; *Pss. Sol.* 2:1–2; Mt 5:47 || Lk 6:33; 4 *Ezra* 3:28–36; 4:23). “Righteous” Jews could also hurl the “sinner” epithet against fellow Jews (e.g., Ps 58:10 [MT 58:11]; Prov 12:12–13; 24:20; Sirach 7:16; 9:11; 1 Macc 1:34; 2:44, 48; 1 *En.* 5.4–7; 82.4–5; 1QH X [= II].8–12; 1QpHab V.4–8; *Pss. Sol.* 4:8; 13:6–12). Jesus ate with Jewish “sinners” (Mk 2:16). Paul is likely echoing the language of the people from James (2:12) in their shock over the shared meals with gentile “sinners.” Although Paul initially relays their point of view, he revisits this pejorative label in 2:17. (CC)

The label “sinners” in all likelihood does not refer to the gentiles as ritually unclean or guilty of ceremonial violations of the Mosaic Law. Deut 14:21 prohibits an Israelite from eating an animal that dies of itself but permits the Israelite to sell the animal to a gentile. The gentile was not expected to keep this ritual food law. Similarly, Ex 12:43–48 restricts the Passover observance to the circumcised. To eat the Passover as an uncircumcised individual would be a sin, but it was no sin for the uncircumcised *not* to eat

the Passover. Similarly, gentiles in the land of Israel (resident aliens) were supposed to observe the Sabbath (Deut 5:12–14), but to fail to observe the Sabbath was not a sin for gentiles *outside* the land. Torah specialists have debated whether gentiles were guilty of corpse impurity, but such impurity was not limited to the gentiles. The Law simply did not require Jewish ritual and food laws of the gentiles. The gentiles are not “sinners” in merely the ritual sense. (CC)

Most likely, the Jews were labeling gentiles “sinners” in a moral sense. The gentiles did not have the advantage of Moses’ Law for guidance (Rom 2:14; see also Gal 4:8). In the Psalms “sinner” is associated with immorality and lawlessness (ἀνομία, LXX Pss 54:4 [MT 55:4; ET 55:3]; 91:8 [MT 92:8; ET 92:7]; 100:8 [MT/ET 101:8]; 124:3 [MT/ET 125:3]; 128:3 [MT/ET 129:3]; see also LXX Ps 118:53, 155 [MT/ET 119:53, 155]). In the Second Temple period “sinner” came to function primarily as a term for forsaking or being unassociated with God’s Law, i.e. apostates and gentiles (e.g., 1 Macc 1:34; 2:44). 2 Macc 6:12–17 contrasts the sins of the Jews that require discipline with the sins of the gentiles that require judgment. The sense of moral failure, however, is still present. Paul therefore associates the gentiles with lustful passions in 1 Thess 4:5 (cf. 1 Cor 6:9–11; Eph 2:12). (CC)

Paul identifies the “we” group of Gal 2:15–16 as “Jews by birth.” The word φύσει, “by birth,” may also be translated as “by nature,” but here Paul is not referring to a natural process. The phrase in this instance refers to being members of God’s historic people. In 2:16 it becomes obvious that “we Jews” are specifically those Jews who believe in Jesus Christ. Only “we” Jewish Christians could affirm “that a person is not justified by the works of the Law except through faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16). This group of Jewish Christians includes at a minimum both Peter and Paul, the primary participants in the Antioch discussion (2:11–14). The emphatic “we” in the sentence distinguishes Paul and his fellow Jews from the gentiles. Paul is identifying what is common to Jewish believers in Christ, whether at Antioch, Jerusalem, or Galatia.⁴⁰ He is restating *shared ground* among “we” Jewish Christians. These Jews recognize the necessity of faith in Christ. (CC)

The following are further clues in 2:16a that Paul is citing shared ground among Jewish Christians: (1) The preposition “through” (διὰ) in the phrase “through faith in Jesus Christ” is unusual. Elsewhere in the verse Paul employs a different preposition, “by” (ἐκ, once in “by faith in Christ” and three times in “by the works of the Law”). (2) Paul introduces but does not define the verb “to justify.” Paul seems to be responding to the Galatian rivals’ approach to justification, later expressed in 5:4: “you who are trying to be justified by the Law.” The rivals were probably using this sort of language. (3) Likewise, Paul introduces but does not explain “faith in/of Jesus Christ” and “works of the Law.” (4) Finally, the construction of the first clause of 2:16 is ambiguous and could conform just as well to the rivals’ way of thinking. (CC)

Some interpreters have limited the necessity of faith in Christ to the gentiles: *They* are justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law. The works of the Law would still be a viable means of justification for the Jew. One can imagine the advantages of this approach for modern interfaith discussions. Nevertheless, “had Paul intended this meaning, he would have spoken explicitly of the *hellên*, the Greek, as he does in 3:28, saying something like ‘We who are born Jews know that a Gentile (*hellên*) is not rectified by observing the Law ...’” Instead, Paul uses in 2:16 the indefinite “a person/man” (ἄνθρωπος), which refers to anyone and everyone (1:10, 11, 12; 2:6; 3:15; 5:3; 6:1, 7). See also πᾶσα σὰρξ, literally, “all flesh,” in 2:16. Thus Paul agrees with his fellow Jews in the Christ movement that faith in Christ is God’s means of justification for all people, including the Jews themselves! (CC)

2:16 *And yet because we know that a person is not justified by the works of the Law except through faith in Jesus Christ, even we ourselves believed in Christ Jesus in order that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law, because no flesh is justified by the works of the Law.* The shared

affirmation, which is limited to the first part of the verse, says: “We know that a person is not justified by the works of the Law except through faith in Jesus Christ.” (CC)

“Of/by the Works of the Law”: Adverbial and Not Adjectival (CC)

The first occurrence in 2:16 of the phrase “of/by the works of the Law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) is adverbial and modifies “is not justified” (οὐ δικαιοῦται). A handful of scholars have advocated that the phrase is, instead, adjectival, modifying “a person” (ἄνθρωπος): “A person *of the works of the Law* is not justified except through faith in Jesus Christ.” The adjectival translation would form a contrast of spiritual origins with the immediately preceding “sinners from the gentiles” (ἐξ ἔθνων ἁμαρτωλοί). Paul refers to “those of the circumcision” (οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς) in 2:12 and, arguably, to “as many as/all who are of the works of the Law” (ὅσοι ... ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) in 3:10 (see also Rom 4:16; 9:6; Col 4:12; Titus 1:10). The supposedly adjectival phrases “of the works of the Law” and “of faith” would denote affiliation or origin (cf. “those of faith” [οἱ ἐκ πίστεως] in 3:7, 9, 11). In this scenario, Paul is dealing with a rival message that emphasized the significance of being the seed or children of Abraham (3:7) and thus heirs of the Abrahamic promise (3:1–29). Paul sees these blessings through faith in/of Christ and not through the works of the Law. Gal 2:16a would affirm that even those of the Law are justified by faith. Nevertheless, throughout 2:16 at least, the prepositional phrase “of/by the works of the Law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) is not adjectival. First, the participle (εἰδότες) is most likely causal, “because we know,” and should be understood in relation to the main clause, “even we ourselves believed.” The stress on Jewish identity in “even we [Jews] ourselves” (καὶ ἡμεῖς) as believing would be unnecessarily redundant if those justified in the first part of the verse were already identified as “of the works of the Law.” Since Paul is speaking *more generally* of “a person” (anyone and everyone) being justified, whether “by the works of the Law” or “by faith in/of Christ” (adverbial), Jewish identity needs to be more clearly flagged later in the verse: thus “even we ourselves believed.” Second, “of/by the works of the Law” is paired with “faith in/of (Jesus) Christ” as its antithesis. Paul returns to that contrast later in 2:16, and both phrases at that point are again parallel and adverbial. The two later adverbial instances of “of/by the works of the Law” in 2:16 —“that we might be justified [δικαιωθῶμεν] by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law” (2:16b) and “no flesh is justified [δικαιωθήσεται] by the works of the Law” (2:16c)—are also linked with a form of the same verb as earlier in the verse, “a person is not justified [δικαιοῦται] by the works of the Law” (2:16a). The last two clearly adverbial instances of “by the works of the Law” in 2:16 render an adverbial understanding the most natural approach to the first instance in 2:16a. (CC)

Another scholar has claimed that Paul’s “of/by” (ἐκ) prepositional phrases are “partisan” and signal membership in a particular community. The BDAG lexicon grants that in certain instances of ἐκ the partisan usage overshadows the sense of source or origin. Thus BDAG (ἐκ, 3 b) takes οἱ ἐκ νόμου in Rom 4:14 as “partisans of the law,” Rom 4:16’s οἱ ἐκ περιτομῆς as “the circumcision party,” and Rom 9:6’s οἱ ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ as “the Israelites.” Gal 2:15 has the phrase ἐξ ἔθνων ἁμαρτωλοί, “sinners *off/from* [ἐκ] *the gentiles*” or “gentile sinners.” In 3:12 the Law is not “of [ἐκ] faith,” that is, it does not share any part of faith. “Those of faith” (οἱ ἐκ πίστεως) in 3:7, 9 belong to the company of believers. Garlington wanted to extend the partisan sense consistently to *all* instances of the preposition ἐκ in Paul, or at least in Galatians. Justification is not to be found in the community of the Law but rather in the community of faith. Paul does use the preposition “of/by” (ἐκ) with an indisputably “partisan” sense in several instances. Nevertheless, in 3:21 righteousness is not “from the Law” (ἐκ νόμου) in the sense of *source* or *origin*. To translate 3:21 as saying that righteousness does not “come by way of individuals assuming their place within the confines of the Torah” is to demand too much of the prepositional phrase. Likewise in 3:18, it is strained exegesis to interpret a promise not “of the Law” (ἐκ νόμου) as not “by retention of membership in that state of affairs that postdated the promise.” The BDAG lexicon grants that “of” (ἐκ) may also express cause or means (see BDAG, 3, esp. 3 f). Paul shifts from ἐκ (“by means of”) to διὰ (“through”) in Rom 3:30, and most commentators have seen little difference in meaning. Paul is emphasizing in Gal

2:16 the *means* or *grounds* by which one is justified. A person is not justified “by means of” or “on the basis of” the works of the Law, but “by” or “on the basis of” faith in Christ. (CC)

Forensic Justification? (CC)

Paul uses a noun, an adjective, and a verb with a common root, δικαί- (*dikai-*), but the translated words may seem unrelated in the English language. The verb (δικαίω) is usually translated as “justify” or “be justified” in English. The adjective (δίκαιος) is usually translated as “righteous” or “just,” and the noun (δικαιοσύνη) as “righteousness.” “We are unsuspecting victims of a semantic shift completely foreign to the Greek. For Paul’s Greek-speaking hearers, to be justified was to be regarded or acknowledged as righteous.” Some of this confusion is the result of the melding of the Teutonic language group (German) with the Romance language group (Greek and Latin). The Romance language group came to England by way of Normandy, France. English continues to bear witness to both Latin and Anglo-Saxon influences. Two words in English will often express the same idea, but the words may or may not be synonymous. The simpler, shorter word is usually from the Anglo-Saxon, while the longer word is from the Latin. For instance, “work” is an Anglo-Saxon word (cf. the German *Werk*), but “labor” comes from the Latin. The Latin and Anglo-Saxon influences in the English language affect the “justify” word group:⁵⁹

<i>Greek</i>	<i>English (Latin Root)</i>	<i>English (Anglo-Saxon Root)</i>
δικαίω	justify (verb)	rectify (no real Anglo-Saxon equivalent, e.g., “righteousize”)
δίκαιος	just (adjective)	righteous (“just” and “righteous” are not synonymous)
δικαιοσύνη	justice (noun)	rectification/righteousness

The historic controversy is whether “justification” or “righteousness” in Paul refers to a forensic declaration of a conferred status (as per the Lutherans and the Protestants) or to the quality of a life lived, that is, an ethical sense (as per the Roman Catholics). In support of the ethical sense, the Roman Catholics have stressed the noun (δικαιοσύνη) and the adjective (δίκαιος). They interpret the verb (δικαίω) as referring both to an acquittal *and* to “making righteous.” The Protestants start with the verb as a forensic term and interpret all words in the δικαί- word group as likewise referring to a declared right relationship or standing, irrespective of ethical uprightness. (CC)

When Paul writes in 2:16 “a person is not justified,” God is the active agent behind the passive construction (cf. 3:8). The verb “justify” (δικαίω) occurs three times in 2:16 as well as in 2:17; 3:8, 11, 24; 5:4. It occurs fifteen times in Romans. “Justify” frequently carries a forensic sense, as in Rom 2:13, where the verb refers to God’s verdict at the judgment. Similarly, those “justified” in Rom 5:9 will be spared God’s wrath at the judgment. The believer need not fear the Last Day since the future verdict is already assured when a person is justified. In Rom 8:33 God “justifies” in the face of those who would dare lodge charges. The forensic, legal sense of “justify” is clear in several instances of the Hebrew verb on which Paul’s forensic usage appears to be based (the Hiphil of קָדַשׁ). Judges declare people innocent or condemn the guilty (Deut 25:1 [LXX: δικαίω]; cf. 1 Ki 8:31–32 [LXX: δικαίω] || 2 Chr 6:23 [LXX: δικαίω]; Prov 17:15; Is 5:23 [LXX: δικαίω]). In Gal 2:16 Paul, perhaps surprisingly, excludes the Law’s works or the behavior of the righteous from this verdict. God’s justifying verdict depends entirely on faith which appropriates Jesus’ saving work. (CC)

Paul regularly contrasts, then, a righteousness by faith and a righteousness by deeds. Saving righteousness is clearly a gift of God bestowed on the basis of Christ's completed work. Abraham and David were justified forensically precisely because they were sinners. Righteousness was "reckoned" to them on the basis of faith. Paul cites the final clause of Ps 143:2 later in Gal 2:16. In Ps 143:8, 11, 12 God is steadfast, righteous, and merciful *in spite of* the psalmist's own unworthiness. The clearer forensic sense of the verb "justify" (δικαίω) surely influences the meaning of the cognate noun "righteousness" (δικαιοσύνη) in texts where the words are used together (e.g., Gal 2:15–21; also 5:4–5). (CC)

"Works of the Law" (CC)

Judaism and Legalism?

Paul continues: "A person is not justified by the works of the Law" (Gal 2:16). "Works of the Law" (ἔργα νόμου) is a phrase that is unique to Paul in the NT. Scholarship prior to the late twentieth century tended to view "works of the Law" more generally as those works prescribed or demanded by the Law. Some scholars in previous generations understood Paul's phrase in 2:16 to be a reference to legalism. Among Lutheran commentators, Lenski wrote of "the intolerable and hopeless burden of works of law." He described "self-righteous Jews who called Gentiles 'sinners' " and who "labored to produce 'works of law' in order thereby to become righteous."⁶⁵ In early twentieth-century mainstream scholarship, Burton wrote that *nomos* (νόμος; "Law") "is here evidently used ... in its legalistic sense, denoting divine law viewed as a purely legalistic system made up of statutes, on the basis of obedience or disobedience to which men are approved or condemned as a matter of debt without grace. This is divine law as the legalist defined it." The phrase "works of the Law" refers to "deeds of obedience to formal statutes done in the legalistic spirit, with the expectation of thereby meriting and securing divine approval and award."⁶⁷ To the contrary, the apostle is not faulting his fellow Jews for trying to earn their way into heaven by their deeds. Instead, he points out that the Law, which came 430 years after the promise, was simply never part of God's saving plan (3:15–18). Paul repeatedly describes the Law as incapable of producing righteousness (2:21; 3:21). He is not confronting some legalistic mindset on the part of Jewish Law observers as if they are people trying to earn their way into heaven. He is speaking more generally: obeying God's Law and living according to its principles does not render one right before God. God's favor may be enjoyed solely on the basis of faith in Christ and not on the basis of the observance of the Law. (CC)

Many scholars across a broad theological spectrum have rightly recognized a caricature of Second Temple Judaism in the older claims of "works righteousness." E. P. Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, a classic of twentieth-century biblical scholarship, ushered in a new paradigm in the understanding of the Jews of Paul's day. Second Temple Jews regularly referred to themselves as God's elect or chosen people. In the words of the later Mishnah: "All Israelites have a share in the world to come" (*Sanh.* 10.1; trans. H. Danby). Only those who deliberately forsook their membership in the people of Israel needed to fear. The Jews recognized repentance and atoning sacrifice as the God-given means of restoring a relationship with God in the face of sin. Further, the Jews recognized that God must necessarily enable Law-observant behavior because human beings lack the ability to obey God under their own power. The Dead Sea Scrolls are representative on this point:

But I know that justice [righteousness] does not belong to man nor the perfect path to the son of man. To God Most High belong all the acts of justice [righteousness], and the path of man is not secure except by the spirit which God creates for him.... For I have remembered my faults ... I said "For my sin I have been barred from your covenants." But when I remembered the strength of your hand and the abundance of your compassion I remained resolute.... For you have supported me by your kindnesses and by your abundant compassion. Because you atone for sin

and cle[anse man] of his fault through your justice [righteousness]. (1QH XII [= IV].30–31, 34–37; trans. F. García Martínez)

The mercies of God shall be my salvation always; ... he will draw me near in his mercies, and by kindnesses set in motion my judgment; he will judge me in the justice [righteousness] of his truth, and in his plentiful goodness always atone for all my sins; in his justice [righteousness] he will cleanse me from the uncleanness of the human being and from the sin of the sons of man, so that I can extol God for his justice [righteousness]. (1QS XI.12–15; trans. F. García Martínez) (CC)

Similarly, the first century Jewish philosopher Philo recognized: “We must take note that the very confession of praise itself is the work not of the soul but of God who causes thankfulness to appear” (*Leg.* 1.82; Colson and Whitaker, LCL, altered). (CC)

The Referent of “Works of the Law”: Ethnic Markers or the Entire Law? (CC)

With this new perspective on the Judaism of Paul’s day, a “new perspective on Paul” himself emerged in the 1980s that is now no longer “new” but well-entrenched among many scholars. The “new perspective,” as championed by James D. G. Dunn, stressed the social boundary-marking function of the “works of the Law.” The “works of the Law” are those aspects of the Torah—whether circumcision, Sabbath observance, or food laws—that render the Jewish people distinctive and set them apart from the gentiles. The withdrawal at Antioch in the context of a meal (2:12–13) renders the “new perspective” approach to “works of the Law” in 2:16 attractive. Furthermore, Paul refers to calendrical observances in 4:10 and to circumcision in Galatians 2 and more fully in Galatians 5–6. Such “works” would maintain the Jewish people’s distinctive identity. Many critics of the “new perspective,” however, have contended that the phrase “works of the Law” in Paul should not be limited to those elements of the Law that distinguish the Jewish people. Dunn has repeatedly responded that he would no longer limit “works of the Law” to the boundary-marking aspects of the Law and that the phrase does indeed refer to entirety of the Law’s requirements. Nevertheless, even in Dunn’s more recent work, he says: “In speaking of ‘works of the law’ Paul had in mind this boundary-marking, separating function of the law.” The boundary markers remain *primarily* in view since they are those aspects of the entire Law that are in particular situations “contentious.” Or in the words of another adherent of Dunn’s “new perspective”: “Though the meaning of ἔργα νόμου [‘works of the Law’] is broader than a few selected identity markers, the focus of Paul’s usage is on circumcision and food laws because it was precisely this subset of religious activity which both Jews and non-Jews recognized as *the distinguishing identifiers* of Jewishness and which Paul understood to be relativized through faith in Christ.” To claim that “works of the Law” (ἔργα νόμου) *always* highlights the Law’s boundary-marking aspects overextends the evidence. In Rom 4:4–5 Paul exchanges “works of the Law” (ἔργων [νόμου], Rom 3:27–28) for the verb “work” (ἐργάζομαι) to clarify that observance of the Law is a matter of autonomous human effort. Gal 3:10’s “works of the Law” most likely refers to the Law’s demand for comprehensive obedience. Precisely *because* the Law demands obedience in its entirety (3:10), the Law demands that the gentile must be circumcised and observe the Law in the same manner as the Jew! (CC)

The phrase “works of the Law” is not in the OT but is attested in some form in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4QFlor I.7; 1QS V.21; VI.18; 1QH IX [= I].26; XII [= IV].31; cf. in 2 *Bar.* 57.2: “works of the commandments”). Dunn has pointed to the closest parallel to Paul’s phrase in 4QMMT with its distinctive, sectarian, boundary-marking laws, but the document’s title, taken from its conclusion, is *Some of the Works of the Law* (מקצת מעשי התורה, *Miqṣat Ma‘asê ha-Torah*, 4QMMT C 27 [4Q398 Frag. 2.II.3]). The Qumran community would not limit the “works of the Law” just to those serving as boundary markers. Dunn noted 4QMMT C 27 with the full phrase “works of the Law” (מעשי התורה) in support of his position that “works of the Law,” or the shortened “works,” always refers to those aspects of the Law that distinguished the sectarian community. 4QMMT C 23, within the same paragraph, however, employs “their works” (מעשיהם) in relation to the actions of the kings of Israel, including

One defender of the “faith in Christ” translation has outlined the unfolding structure of 2:16 in this way:
We know that

ειδότες [δὲ] ὅτι

A

B

Ia a person is not justified **by the works of the Law** except **through faith in/of Jesus Christ,**

οὐ δικαιούται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ
διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ,

Generic

B

Ib even we ourselves **believed in Christ Jesus**

καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν
ἐπιστεύσαμεν

Personal

B

A

IIa in order that we might be justified **by faith in/of Christ** and not **by the works of the Law,**

ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν ἐκ πίστεως
Χριστοῦ καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων
νόμου

Personal

A

IIb because **by the works of the Law** no flesh is justified.

ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ
δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

Generic

Parts Ib and IIb are amplifications of the last part of Ia and IIa, respectively. This approach to the structure of the verse takes “even we ourselves believed in Christ Jesus” as an amplification of “through faith in/of Jesus Christ” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). The amplifying verb “believed” helps define the preceding noun “faith” as a reference to the believer’s own trust (in Christ). (CC)

In favor of a reference to Jesus’ faithful obedience, that is, the faithfulness of Christ (cf. Christ’s obedience in Rom 5:19 and Phil 2:8), Paul describes “the faithfulness of God” (τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ) in Rom 3:3 and the “faith of ... Abraham” (πίστεως τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ) in Rom 4:12 and in Rom 4:16 (πίστεως Ἀβραάμ). In Rom 1:5 “faith” (πίστις) is closely associated with “obedience” (ὕπακοή). In the contexts of the disputed phrase “faith in/of (Jesus) Christ” (πίστις [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ) in Rom 3:22; Gal 2:16; and Phil 3:9, Paul uses the *verb* πιστεύω, “believe” (typically with a preposition such as εἰς [“in”] or ἐπί [“on”]), for expressing believing trust “in” Christ (cf. Rom 10:14; Phil 1:29). For the disputed phrase

also to refer to “faith in Christ” would be redundant. Furthermore, the “coming” of “faith” or the “revelation” of “faith” makes better sense if referring to *Christ’s* coming (Gal 3:23, 25). With the “faith of Christ” Paul’s thought would remain centered on what God is doing in Christ, rather than on the human response. When “faith” is used with a referent other than Christ, the faith is typically *of* that individual (i.e., a subjective genitive). Finally, God and not Christ is the usual object of the believer’s trust (e.g., πιστεύω, “believe,” in Rom 4:3, 5, 17, 24; Gal 3:6; πίστις, “faith,” in 1 Thess 1:8). (CC)

On the other hand, the “faith in/of Christ” phrase, when adjacent to the verb for believing *in* Christ, could be interpreted as *emphatic*. Paul is stressing faith as the sole means of justification before God. In the case of emphasis, the noun “faith” is defined by and should be translated in a similar fashion as the cognate verb “believe”; thus “faith *in* Christ.” In Gal 2:16 Paul uses “faith in/of (Jesus) Christ” (πίστις [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ) twice, “justify” (δικαιώω) three times, and “by the works of the Law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου) three times. Regardless of the meaning of the disputed phrase “faith in/of Christ” (πίστις Χριστοῦ), Paul is clearly redundant in his language. “The threefold repetition both of ἐξ ἔργων νόμου [‘by the works of the Law’] and of δικαιώω [‘justify’] might just as well be thought to *demand* a threefold repetition of ‘faith in Christ.’ ” Furthermore, a genitive object with “faith” does occur in clear instances elsewhere in the NT (e.g., πίστιν θεοῦ, “faith *in* God,” in Mk 11:22 and τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “the faith *in* our Lord Jesus Christ,” in James 2:1). The contention that faith in Christ is a human activity as opposed to God’s action overlooks how faith is itself a miraculous creation of God (Rom 10:16–17; Phil 1:29). Finally, the “coming” of “faith” in Gal 3:23, 25 could be emphasizing the coming of faith’s *object* (Jesus) as God fulfills the saving promises of old. Despite the preference here for “faith in Christ” and despite the dogmatic claims of many commentators, the arguments for either translation are not ultimately decisive. Individual verses and texts must be weighed on their own terms insofar as they offer insight into the debate. (CC)

“A Person Is Not Justified by the Works of the Law Except ...”? (CC)

When Paul writes in 2:16 “we know that a person is not justified by the works of the Law *except* [ἐὰν μὴ] through faith in Jesus Christ,” the “except” may be interpreted in three different ways. One possibility is that “except” qualifies the entirety of the preceding statement: “We know that a person is not justified by the works of the Law except ...” In this case, with faith in Jesus Christ, a person *would* be justified by the works of the Law. This interpretation agrees with the eleven other instances of “except” (ἐὰν μὴ) in Paul’s undisputed letters (Rom 10:15; 11:23; 1 Cor 8:8; 9:16; 13:1; 14:6, 7, 9, 11, 28; 15:36; likewise 2 Thess 2:3; 2 Tim 2:5) and with the majority of instances in ancient Greek literature. An affirmation of this sort would be agreeable to many Jewish Christians, including Paul’s rivals at Galatia.¹⁰¹ The Galatian gentile Christ-believers would need to become Jewish. (CC)

On the other hand, “except” may modify only a portion of the preceding clause: “A person is not justified by the works of the Law, [a person is not justified] except through faith in Christ.” This second option has the advantage of reflecting how Paul himself understands the relationship between faith in Christ and works of the Law. Of course, the apostle’s understanding is unmistakably clear by the end of the verse. Faith in Christ and works of the Law are mutually exclusive alternatives. The weakness of this interpretation is that it requires a less frequent use of ἐὰν μὴ in Greek literature, a usage that is nowhere else in Paul. Also, “works of the Law” is an integral part of that main clause in that it forms a contrast to “faith in Jesus Christ.” (CC)

In a third possibility, ἐὰν μὴ (“except”) may be signaling an adversative construction and mean “but” or “but only,” as in Jn 5:19 and Jn 15:4. This is a viable option as well for the interpretation of Gal 2:16. The weakness of the third possibility is that Paul does not elsewhere employ ἐὰν μὴ as an adversative meaning “but” instead of “except.” The adversative ἐὰν μὴ is present in only two out of the fifty instances of ἐὰν μὴ in the NT (Jn 5:19; 15:4) and is fairly rare in Greek literature. The weight of Pauline usage and of

Greek usage in general favors an exception of the entire preceding clause, the first option. This understanding of “except” in 2:16 would favor the position of the Galatian rivals. The third, adversative interpretation is also possible, and the ambiguity of his wording forces Paul to state matters more clearly by the end of the verse. “This ambiguity was nicely calculated precisely with a view to gaining Peter’s assent.”¹⁰⁷ Peter’s actions would effectively render the works of the Law consistent with faith in Christ, but Paul sees Christ and the Law as mutually exclusive. (CC)

After stating the common ground between himself and other Jewish Christians, Paul reaches the main clause of 2:15–16: “Even we ourselves believed.” The expressly stated “we” (ἡμεῖς) is doubly emphatic with the ascensive conjunction “even” (καί): “even we ourselves.” In other words, even we Jews by birth enjoy God’s favor through Christ. Jewish Christians have placed their faith “in/into” (εἰς) Christ too! “We believed” is in the aorist tense (ἐπιστεύσαμεν) and refers to the initial response. Both gentile and Jew enjoy God’s justification the same way.¹¹¹ Paul places the “we ourselves believed” as Jews at the very center of a long verse that begins in the Greek with the generic a/any/every person (ἄνθρωπος) and ends with a negated “all flesh” (οὐ ... πᾶσα σὰρξ), i.e., “no flesh”: “The Jewish Christian experience of the gospel is placed within a common human narrative.” If even Jews believe in Christ, clearly gentiles will not be justified in any other way. As Paul says in the immediately following dependent clause: “in order that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law.” In contrast to the dependent clauses that immediately precede and follow with their antithetical expressions, the main clause of the sentence makes no reference to the works of the Law. (CC)

Psalm 143:2

Paul concludes Gal 2:16 by drawing from Ps 143:2 (LXX 142:2) proof for the antithetical relationship between faith in/of Christ and the works of the Law. The psalmist pleads with God: “And enter not into judgment with your servant, for every living being is/will not be righteous before you.” Paul introduces the reference with the word ὅτι, most likely meaning “because” rather than a *recitativum* (that signals a quotation; cf. 3:11), since this word (ὅτι) appears to be a deliberate alteration from the original. Paul’s psalm allusion differs from the Greek Septuagint in three regards. First, he substitutes “all flesh” (πᾶσα σὰρξ) for “every living being” (πᾶς ζῶν). The Scriptures use “all flesh” as a synonym for “all who live” (e.g., Pss 65:2 [MT 65:3; LXX 64:3]; 136:25 [LXX 135:25]; 145:21 [LXX 144:21]). If “flesh” is Paul’s own alteration (cf. *1 En.* 81.5) and not that of the Scriptural source text that he was using, he may be drawing attention to human “flesh” where circumcision takes place, and/or anticipating what he intends to say about the “flesh” later in the letter. “The flesh” serves as the opposite of “the Spirit” in Paul’s next paragraph (3:3). Second, Paul omits the phrase “before you [God]” (ἐνώπιόν σου, LXX Ps 142:2 [MT/ET 143:2]). Third, he adds the phrase “from the works of the Law” (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου). The phrase “from the works of the Law,” along with the word “flesh,” identifies activity that stands apart from God’s Spirit in the same manner as Paul contrasts “the Spirit” and “the flesh” later in the letter (e.g., 3:3). As a merely human activity apart from God’s empowering Spirit, such works of the flesh are incapable of justifying. (CC)

Hebrew Bible and Second Temple authors recognized that no one could claim to be righteous before God of their own power. For that matter, Psalm 143 itself invokes *God’s* righteousness as that which saves (Ps 143:1, 11 [LXX 142:1, 11]). God *alone* will be able to save the psalmist from the enemy: “In *your righteousness* bring my soul out of trouble” (Ps 143:11). In Gal 6:12 Paul accuses the rivals in Galatia of making a good showing “in the flesh” by promoting the circumcision of the gentile Galatians. God never intended the Law and its works to justify. As Psalm 143 attests, God alone can render the individual righteous since all people are utterly sinful before God and are in need of his deliverance. As the psalmist confesses (Ps 143:2), even the Jews must be justified by God’s grace and, as Paul shows, that deliverance is *in Christ*. The Lord himself becomes the “righteousness” (Ps 143:1, 11) of his people! This is the very point that the rivals, whether intentionally or not, were jeopardizing.¹²⁴ Paul’s logic becomes clearer by

the end of Galatians 3, if not already in 2:17–21. Paul insists upon a conceptual shift of God’s grace from being found/grounded in the Law to in Christ and contends that God’s grace had *always* been in Christ. (CC)

“No Flesh Is Justified by the Works of the Law” (CC)

The future tense of Paul’s literal “will be justified” could be generalizing and not a reference to the future judgment as such. Nevertheless, with the deliverance from “the present evil age” (1:4) and with the “new creation” in Christ’s saving work (6:14–15), that future judgment is a present reality for the believer! Paul’s use of “justify” therefore varies in tense. The future verdict of justification is grounded in what God *already* declares on the basis of faith in Christ. So, for Paul, no flesh *is* justified by the works of the Law. (CC)

2:15 Technically, 2:15 is without a predicate. Were 2:16 a separate sentence, the subject of the plural participle εἰδότες, literally, “knowing” (see the second textual note on 2:16), would not come until much later in that verse. More likely, the ancient hearer would interpret the subject of the plural participle εἰδότες (2:16) in view of those identified in 2:15. The doubled apposition “by birth Jews and not sinners” (2:15) and “knowing that” (2:16) further define “we” (2:15), with the connective δέ (see the first textual note on 2:16) signaling the second apposition. The referent of “we believed” in the middle of 2:16 would be those identified in 2:15. Therefore 2:15–16 is a single Greek sentence. In the translation above, a linking verb is assumed in 2:15 (“we *are* ...”), but 2:15–16 is retained as a single (compound) English sentence. (CC)

we ourselves are Jews by birth –Now, I think Verse 15 sets the stage. And this is, as I said, the first concerted theological argument in Galatians. And I love what one commentator says about Verse 15. And I’ll just read it, translate it. And then I’ll explain what I think it means. Paul says now: We -- and the we is you, Peter and me -- we are by nature Jews and a not Gentile sinners. Now, what an author says is that he thinks Paul here is rhetorically putting his arm around Peter. In other words, Paul has just gotten in Peter’s face. Says: You stand condemned. Describes him as a hypocrite. Being afraid. But I think Paul has some compassion here for Peter. And he puts his arm around Peter. And he’s going to use this as an opportunity to show what we believe about the Gospel as Jews. And he says: We are by nature Jews. Peter, I was brought up as a Pharisee. I was the best in my class. I was in the school of Gamaliel. You don’t think I understand the law? You don’t think I understand this? He says: Peter, you and I, we are Jews. We are not like these Gentile sinners. Look what he’s saying. These Galatians are Gentile pagan sinners. We’re not sinners. We’re Jews. Now, you know what he means. He means we are the ones who have been privileged with the revelation of God. We have the temple. We know what it means to be holy. And let’s not be like them. By resorting to a Gospel that’s not a Gospel. (Just –V-22)

For the sake of argument, Paul speaks from a Jewish perspective¹For the sake of argument, Paul speaks from a Jewish perspective. (TLSB)

Gentile sinners. The phrase represents the attitude of the pious Law-observing Jews toward nations without the Law. (TLSB)

2:16 [δέ] (“and yet”)—The initial postpositive conjunction δέ is not in \mathfrak{B}^{46} and a few other witnesses (A Ψ 33 1739 1881 syr^h cop). The δέ creates a slight adversative sense (“and *yet*”), perhaps signaling that the Jewish believers have come to a new understanding of their justification. The connective also links 2:16 to 2:11–14. The decision on the conjunction’s inclusion could go either way. The external evidence for inclusion is slightly stronger (\times B C D*).

¹

εἰδότες ... ὅτι ... καὶ ἡμεῖς ... ἐπίστεύσαμεν (“because we know that ... even we ourselves believed”)—Dunn thought that had Paul wanted to say “but/and we know” he would have used an indicative verb, e.g., οἶδαμεν (as in Rom 8:28), rather than εἰδότες, a participle. Actually, the participle places the emphasis squarely on the main clause which follows: “even we ourselves believed.” The participle εἰδότες is causal: “because we [Jewish Christians] know that a person is justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law,” therefore, “even we ourselves believed.” εἰδότες is followed by the ὅτι *recitativum*: “because we know *that* ...”

ἐξ ἔργων νόμου (“by the works of the Law”)—This phrase occurs three times in the verse. As is common in prepositional phrases, νόμου is anarthrous despite referring to “the Law” of Moses; so also in 2:19.

ἐὰν μὴ (“except”)—See the discussion of this grammatical construction in the commentary below.

διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (“through faith in/of Jesus Christ ... in Christ Jesus”)—Some manuscripts substitute “Jesus Christ” for “Christ Jesus” and vice versa. Scribes apparently were not overly concerned about the word order. In Galatians Paul uses “Christ” or “Christ Jesus” after the preposition ἐν (for ἐν Χριστῷ [Ἰησοῦ], see 1:22; 2:4, 17; 3:14, 26, 28; 5:6). Manuscript L follows this rule when it attests a change in 3:22 from “Jesus Christ” (with no preceding preposition) to “in [ἐν] Christ Jesus.” Otherwise in Galatians, apart from phrases with “in” (ἐν), the normal order is “Jesus Christ” (see 1:1, 3, 12; 3:1, 22; 6:14, 18), except for the readings εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν here, ὡς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν (with no variant reading) in 4:14, and possibly τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] in 5:24, depending on the original text. Scribes may have conformed the occasional departures to Paul’s normal pattern in order to create greater uniformity.

δικαιωθήσεται (literally, “will be justified”)—Grammarians have stressed the timelessness of the future tense, leading to the translation “is justified.” Others have seen a reference to the future judgment. (CC)

A key verse in Galatians (see Introduction: Theological Teaching). Three times it tells us that no one is justified by observing the law, and three times it underscores the indispensable requirement of placing one’s faith in Christ. (CSB)

But here is the deal: In Verse 16, our faith in Christ stands at the center of that verse. This in no way discounts that our faith in Christ is important. But it says: How does God make right what has gone wrong in the world? It is through Christ and his faithfulness on the cross. Not by works of the law. Not by our faith. Because all flesh is going to be declared righteous, justified. That all of this is going to make right what has gone wrong by means of what happened on the cross of Calvary. (Just – V-22)

by works of law. Paul is not depreciating the law itself, for he clearly maintained that God’s law is “holy, righteous and good” (Ro 7:12). He is arguing against an illegitimate use of the OT law that made the observance of that law the grounds of acceptance with God. (CSB)

The Jews who truly understood the nature of this covenant with God never trusted or relied on their performance of these special regulations as the reason why God should be gracious to them. For example, when they brought their sacrifices, it was not viewed as something they did for God; their sacrifices of an ox or lamb foreshadowed the real Sacrifice that God had promised to make for them – the Lamb of God, who as the Savior of the world would one day suffer and die in their place. They understood that all the Mosaic ceremonies and customs were viewed as a teaching medium – a reminder of the promised Messiah, the Christ who was to come. (PBC)

justified by faith.† The essence of the gospel message. Faith is a gift of God, accomplished by the Holy Spirit through word and sacrament (cf. Eph 2:8–9). Faith is not the cause of our justification, but it is the hand by which we receive and appropriate to ourselves all of the treasures proclaimed in the gospel. (CSB)

Jesus is the object of our faith. (TLSB)

works of the law no one will be justified – In effect, Paul is saying to his fellow apostle who was pressuring the Gentiles to keep the OT ceremonies: ‘Come on, Peter! Even the Jews don’t trust in our keeping of Moses’ ordinances and ceremonies, because we know that our salvation rests solely on Christ’s merit. And if even we to whom the law was given don’t rely on it for our salvation, why should we pressure Gentiles to keep it?’ The folly, yes even the danger, in urging people to keep the Mosaic Law lay in their being led to put trust and confidence in their obedience and assumed merit. They would then be trusting in something that couldn’t save them, for as Paul adds, “By observing the law no one will be justified. (PBC)

This exclusionary statement means that a person is justified before God by faith alone. “[These works] are only forced out of a person by teaching the punishment and threatening of God’s wrath” (FC Ep VI 5). (TLSB)

An Objection and Paul’s Response (2:17–21) (CC)

2:17 *But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, even we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? By no means!* In 2:15–16 Paul interprets the shared Jewish-Christian ground as saying that a person is justified by faith in Christ and *not* by the works of the Law. Many Jewish Christians would have objected that God provided the Law precisely to deal with sin. Surely abandoning the Law would lead to rampant evil, perhaps even to the licentious lifestyle associated with gentiles. In effect, Christ would become the servant of sin. (CC)

The protasis (“if” clause) includes two premises: (1) “we” are seeking to be justified in Christ (and not the Law); (2) “we” are found to be sinners. On the basis of these two premises Paul asks whether Christ is “a servant of sin.” The phrasing of one of the premises—“seeking to be justified”—strikes many as non-Pauline. The apostle certainly does not consider justification as a prize to be sought or achieved. One interpreter tried to avoid this notion of justification as a prize by translating 2:17 this way: “But if we were found seeking to be justified in Christ [by observing the Law], indeed we ourselves are sinners.” In this translation the participle “seeking” (ζητοῦντες) is supplementary to the main verb “we were found” (εὑρέθημεν). The “seeking” would refer to human striving after justification, and such striving would be sinful as a denial of God’s free gift of grace. The problem with this proposal is that the distance in the original Greek between the words for “seeking” and “we were found” renders a grammatical connection between the two words unlikely. Furthermore, in this approach “sinner” (ἁμαρτωλοί) in 2:17 would be unrelated to the pejorative, sectarian use of the same term in 2:15. A lack of connection between the two uses of the same term in such close proximity seems improbable. (CC)

“Seeking to be justified” could be non-Pauline language. Perhaps Paul is repeating the charges leveled against him by other Jewish Christians for eating with gentiles at Antioch (cf. 2:11–14). He may also be repeating the charges being leveled against his Gospel message. Paul consistently uses the verb “seek” (ζητέω, as in Gal 1:10) for human activity and never for the divine creation of faith. He describes the Jews’ wrongly “seeking” justification in Rom 10:3. Then in Rom 10:20 (quoting Is 65:1), God is “found” by those who did *not* seek him. Paul may be adopting others’ language for the purpose of his argument as he imagines or actually recalls an objection from those seeking to be justified “by the Law” (5:4) lodged against those “seeking to be justified in Christ” alone. (CC)

Commentators have agreed that the first of the two premises given above is true: “we” are seeking to be justified in Christ, and not by the works of the Law (2:15–16). Gal 2:17 is therefore responding to an imagined objection to 2:15–16. The second premise—“we” were found to be sinners—can be plausibly

argued as true and as false. The apostle is either drawing a logical conclusion from a false, second premise or an illogical conclusion from a correct premise. (CC)

Those who consider the second premise—“we were found to be sinners”—to be false have typically reasoned that to seek justification in Christ would not lead to sin. The justified are no longer “under” the Law and can no longer be classified as sinners thanks to God’s saving work in Christ. The justified are considered to be guiltless by God. Paul clarifies in the subsequent verses how those in Christ are living a God-pleasing life. Thus Christ could not be “a servant of sin.” In 2:17 Paul forcefully responds, “By no means!” (μη γένοιτο). (CC)

The Spirit-filled Christ-believer has been delivered from under the forces of evil and is capable of producing the Spirit’s fruit in a way that is not possible for those “under the Law” (5:18–23). As Paul explains in Galatians 5, the presence of the Spirit guarantees that those in Christ are not led into *further* sin. Were Christ associated with further sin, such a disastrous result would require an explanation. The rivals might have questioned the wisdom of abandoning the arguably more successful approach of Moses’ Law for restraining sin, or they may have challenged the Pauline Gospel itself with the specter of libertinism. The apostle would have had to explain at greater length why the path of Christ is superior to the Law. (CC)

Despite the attraction of taking the second premise (“we were found to be sinners”) to be false, this approach represents a false lead. Those who take the second premise as false relate Paul’s reasoning to the lives of the redeemed who are surely not led by Christ into further sin. The apostle, however, does not use language that is consistent with a status in Christ. He writes of “*seeking* to be justified.” Paul is writing about people *prior* to conversion. Furthermore, he does not write that “we were *falsely accused* of being sinners” or that “we were *charged* as sinners,” but “we were *found to be* sinners.” The apostle, as others in his day, frequently uses “found” in a legal or forensic sense for a verdict—in this case, before the divine Judge (Sirach 44:17, 20; Acts 5:39; 24:5; 1 Cor 4:2; 15:15; Phil 3:9; 1 Pet 1:7; Rev 5:4). Paul considers this premise to be *true*. Of the fourteen instances of Paul’s phrase “by no means!” (μη γένοιτο), thirteen are in diatribal contexts where he is answering the questions of imaginary opponents (the exception is Gal 6:14). In each of these thirteen instances, the forceful “by no means!” (μη γένοιτο) denies a false conclusion “from *premises that Paul takes to be correct*.” Paul would *agree* that “we were found to be sinners,” but he would deny that that fact makes Christ an agent of sin. Ironically, whereas Jews classify gentiles as “sinners” (2:15), Paul points out that Jewish Christians were *likewise* guilty of sin before being justified by Christ. All people enter into Christ from a life of sin. The logic of 2:17 anticipates the fuller explanation in 3:10: *no one* is free of sin apart from Christ. Indeed, in 2:16 the apostle draws on the language of Ps 143:2 as proof that no one is justified before God by the Law. There is no divide between the Jew and the gentile with respect to the category of sin: even the Jew, apart from Christ, falls short of the Law’s rigorous demand! (CC)

Some have questioned a reference to pre-conversion sinfulness in 2:17. The rivals’ charge is that *Christ* is serving or promoting sin. Christ would not be a factor in the sins of the non-Christian. Furthermore, the issue at Antioch (2:11–14) was not pre-conversion sinfulness but rather the Jewish Christ-believers’ withdrawal from the table with gentile *believers* as “sinners.” The Jewish believers’ withdrawal from the table (2:12–13) places a question mark on the gentile believers’ Christian identity. They are not *really* acceptable until they adopt Mosaic Law observance, which raises the issue of the believer’s justification, to which Paul turns in 2:15–16. Paul has left table fellowship behind to address “*seeking to be justified*” (2:17). Again, to be justified by Christ is to be justified *from sin*. The recognition that salvation is in Christ and not the Law implies that the situation apart from Christ is actually sinful. Non-Christ-believing Jews share in the same sinful state as gentiles. Justification in Christ reveals pre-conversion sinfulness for what it is. In that limited sense, Christ may seem to be a servant of sin. Furthermore, a salvation in Christ entirely by grace may seem to remove the restraints on sin and may seem to promote it. Without the Law,

the Jewish-Christian rivals would argue that there is only lawlessness. Is Christ a servant of sin? Paul, of course, denies the conclusion. (CC)

Despite having reached a satisfactory interpretation of 2:17, the reader ought to be aware that the “new perspective on Paul and the Law” has offered a competing interpretive option that has grown in popularity in recent years, but is ultimately problematic. According to the “new perspective,” the justified in Christ have indeed been found to be sinners, but “sinner” should be defined in terms of the Mosaic Law’s boundary-marking features that distinguish Jews from gentiles, e.g., food laws, circumcision, and Sabbath observance. “‘All right, then, so eating with Gentiles means that we (Jewish Christians) ourselves are sinners.’ If that is the consequence of solidarity with the Gentiles, so be it!” In that sense, then “we” are “sinners.” “Sin” in 2:17 would thus bear the same sectarian sense as “sinners” (in reference to gentiles) in 2:15. Those who live like gentiles—outside the purview of Moses’ Law—would automatically be “sinners” before God. In Christ, the boundary that marked God’s people is no longer the Law observance that had defined the Jews as an ethnic people. No longer may the gentile outside the Law be categorically labeled “sinner” in that sectarian sense. (CC)

Clearly Christ is a “servant of sin” if sin is what Torah says it is. This, however, is precisely the point that Paul will not grant. Yes, he is saying, we who advocate dispensing with works of the Law [boundary-markers] are indeed “sinners” according to Torah, but we do not thereby make Christ a servant of sin. Why? Because Torah is no longer the definer and arbiter of sin. Christ is not a servant of sin because “sin” is not what Torah says it is, at least not insofar as relations between Christian Jews and Christian Gentiles are concerned. (CC)

The “new perspective” approach takes as axiomatic that 2:15 employs “sinners” in the sectarian sense of non-Jews. The problem is that the Jews used “sinner” to refer not just to the gentiles but also to their supposedly profligate lifestyle. Paul associates the gentiles elsewhere with lustful passion (1 Thess 4:5). “Sinners” in 2:15 therefore likely also includes reference to the immoral lifestyle of the gentiles. The label “sinner” should not be severed from its attendant ethical dimension. This is not a case of either/or.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Paul’s use of the word “sinner” in Rom 3:7; 5:8, 19; 7:13 would deemphasize the non-ethical, sectarian sense. Furthermore, Paul *distinguishes* “sinners” in 2:17 from “transgressor” in 2:18, where the Law is at issue. The charge that Christ promotes sin (2:17), rather, may be related to what Paul addresses in Rom 3:8 and 6:1, 15: Shall we go on sinning that grace may abound? The charge of Gal 2:17 is motivated by Paul’s statement on justification in 2:16. “Grace without law, the opponents would assert, quickly becomes cheap grace, and Christ is thus made ‘an agent of sin.’” If so, the life in Christ in 2:20–21 refutes that false conclusion. Finally, against a sectarian approach to “sinner,” the description “we were found to be” (εὐρέθημεν) is associated with “seeking to be justified” (ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι) and not with the withdrawal from the table at Antioch. Since 2:17 represents a potential response to the logic of 2:15–16, the “even we” “found to be sinners” must remain the same “we” Jews by birth in 2:15 or the “even we” who believe in Christ in 2:16. Paul signals no shift in referent, whether to a different group or subgroup. Paul responds that “even we” were found to be “sinners” no less than the gentiles in light of justification in Christ.¹⁵² Paul is referring to pre-conversion sinfulness, if not also the threat of profligacy in a life apart from the Law. Christ subsequently creates a new life that is anything but sinful (2:20–21). In summary, Paul is undermining the pejorative sectarian label of “sinners from the gentiles” in 2:15 with its ethical dimension in 2:17. The conclusion derived from the two premises is clearly false: Jesus is *not* a servant or minister of sin. (CC)

2:18 *For if I build up again the very things that I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.* Even as 2:17 has been interpreted in different ways, unfortunately, the same is true of 2:18. Because of Paul’s compressed logic in 2:17–18, these verses number among the most difficult in the letter. In 2:18 the apostle begins to explain *why* Christ is not a servant of sin—thus the “for” (γάρ) that connects this verse to 2:17. However, Paul leaves something unsaid which renders the connection between 2:18’s explanation

and 2:17 unclear at first glance. This seems to be the logic: “Christ is certainly *not* a servant of sin; one can so regard him only if the Law remains the definer and arbiter of sin, and that is exactly what I [Paul] refuse to do. ‘Indeed (*gar*), if I build back what I tore down, I prove myself a transgressor.’ ” Three interrelated interpretive options are viable and may be stated, respectively, in terms of the Gospel, justification, or Christ:

1. Returning to the Mosaic Law would not in itself be a violation of the Law. Rather, rebuilding the Torah in withdrawing from table fellowship with the gentiles (2:12–13) renders one a transgressor, ironically, of the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ. This first approach follows from the Antioch incident in 2:11–14 and yet bears implications for the Galatian situation.

2. Others have stressed that 2:17–18 is support for justification by faith in 2:16, the immediately preceding verse. Since justification is only in Christ, to reestablish the Torah and to seek justification therein is to render oneself unjustified and therefore a transgressor.

3. Rebuilding the Law of Moses after tearing it down could be viewed as a betrayal of Christ the Savior. Returning to the Law denies the grace of God and renders Christ’s death in vain.

Any of these three approaches makes good sense of 2:18. (CC)

The commentary literature on 2:18 offers a number of additional interpretive options that should be rejected. One solution to the connection between 2:17 and 2:18 relies on the disputed premise of 2:17: “we” are *not* found to be sinners in seeking justification in Christ. One *would be* a transgressor if one were to rebuild the Mosaic Law (2:18). This solution is problematic because of the assumption that the disputed premise in 2:17 is false. The “for” (γάρ) in 2:18 would really mean “but.” Thus 2:18 would offer a contrasting situation to 2:17. In other words, “we” are not sinners in Christ, *but* in rebuilding the Law “I” would prove myself a transgressor (of the Law). This option would require the Greek connective “for” (γάρ) to signal a contrast, “but,” a meaning the connective does not normally convey. In all likelihood 2:17 actually represents a *fulfilled* condition (see the discussion of 2:17), in which case there would be no contrast between 2:17 and 2:18. The Greek “for” (γάρ) would bear its normal sense with 2:18 providing *support* for 2:17. Paul substantiates his “by no means!” (μὴ γένοιτο) in what immediately follows in twelve of the thirteen Pauline instances of this construction in diatribal contexts (as here). (CC)

In a second approach that should be rejected, some interpreters have noted that the Greek word for “tear down” (καταλύω) is a synonym of the word “destroy” (πορθέω). Paul uses “destroy” (πορθέω) in his autobiography (1:13, 23) for his persecution and attempted destruction of the church. Rather than destroying the Gospel, Paul is advocating and “building up” (οικοδομέω) the Gospel. Thus 2:18 would have no connection to rebuilding or reestablishing the Mosaic Law at all. In a variation of this second approach, other scholars would have Paul previously seeking to tear down and destroy the *church*, which he is now rebuilding. In his other letters, Paul refers to “building up” churches (οικοδομέω or the related noun οἰκοδομή, Rom 15:20; 1 Cor 14:4, 5, 12, 17, 26; 2 Cor 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; 1 Thess 5:11; ἐποικοδομέω, 1 Cor 3:10–15). By presently “building up” either the church or the Gospel, Paul would be proving, from a Christian perspective, that he was a transgressor in his prior persecuting activity—or, from the Law’s perspective, that he is *currently* a transgressor. A reference either to building up the church or the Gospel, however, would require reaching well behind the Antioch incident of 2:11–14 back to Paul’s autobiography in Galatians 1. Further, for Paul to be referring to “building up” the Gospel or the church would assume that the Galatians know that he uses (or will use) “build up” in other letters for missionary activity—an unlikely premise. Furthermore, the Greek word for “tear down” (καταλύω) means to dismantle, abolish, bring to an end, dissolve, or destroy, and is not actually a close synonym of the term Paul uses in Galatians 1 for “destroy” (πορθέω), a military term for ravaging, plundering, ruining, or destroying. “Had Paul wished to refer to destroying the *church* [or the Gospel], he could have made his intent much clearer had he used the same verb we find at 1:13, 23.” To reach back to 1:11–24 for an understanding of Paul’s language in 2:18 is unnecessary when the more immediate context offers better guidance. (CC)

In a third problematic approach, Paul could be referring to a rumor that he is still preaching circumcision and thus modifying his Law-free Gospel (see 5:11). This suggestion is unlikely since Paul does not mention this rumor until later in the letter. Gal 5:11 does not necessarily demonstrate that the apostle was inconsistent in his approach to circumcision. (CC)

A vital clue to the proper interpretation of Paul's language of "tearing down" and rebuilding is its association in Jewish literature with the Torah (καταλύω: Mt 5:17; 2 Macc 2:22; 4:11; 4 Macc 4:24; 5:33). Also, Paul usually associates the term "transgressor" (παραβάτης) with the Mosaic Law. The apostle is most likely referring to the wall of separation between Jews and gentiles created by the Law of Moses (cf. Eph 2:14–16; cf. also, e.g., Num 23:9; Is 5:2, 5; *Let. Aris.* 139–42; *Jub.* 22.16). A reference to the Law would be natural after he vigorously denies justification by the works of the Law in 2:16 and after the narrative of strife at Antioch in 2:11–14. (CC)

What renders Paul a potential transgressor in 2:18 is not the act of tearing down the Torah. The main verb in the clause is to "build up" (οικοδομέω), which suggests that rebuilding the Mosaic Law is the potential transgression. The rivals, on the other hand, would have reasoned that tearing down the Torah's wall of separation between Jews and gentiles at Antioch (2:11–14) would create a situation in which people would become transgressors of the Torah and its way of life. To rebuild the Torah, in that case, would be to recognize the implicit transgression involved in tearing it down. In 2:17–18, however, Paul is trying to explain why the path of Christ does *not* further sin and transgression. It also strains the syntax to say "I demonstrate or show (*now*) [in building back up] that I was (*then*) a transgressor [in tearing down]." Tearing down the Law is not likely the source of transgression in view of Paul's affirmations of justification and life through Christ (2:16, 19, 21; also 4:9; 5:1–4). To view the abolition of Moses' Law as a transgression would be precisely the approach of Paul's rivals! (CC)

The potential transgression Paul envisions lies in *rebuilding* the Mosaic Law. Is Paul claiming, then, that an individual would subsequently find himself or herself guilty of violating the reestablished Law? In that case, the present tense verb would have an unusual future sense: "I *will* constitute myself a transgressor [of the reestablished Law]." Paul never actually says that he would become a transgressor of the *Law*. The clue to 2:18 lies in Paul's explanation in 2:19 that one must die to the Law in order to live for God. Presumably rebuilding the Law prevents a person from living for God (in Christ), and thus the individual remains a "transgressor." Rebuilding Moses' Law, the focus of 2:18, transgresses the divine intent that a person die to the Law. The cognate verb "transgress" (παραβαίνω) may certainly refer to legal transgression, but the word may also have the more general meaning of "to turn aside or deviate from" (LXX Ex 32:8; Deut 9:12, 16; 17:20; 1 Kgdms 12:21 [MT/ET 1 Sam 12:21]; see also Sirach 23:18; Acts 1:25). Paul has just charged Cephas, Barnabas, and the other Jewish believers at Antioch with "not walking straightforward in relation to the truth of the Gospel" (2:14). Thus "if I build back the laws that I tore down (laws that keep Gentiles and Jews separate), I thereby show myself to be a 'deviator' from the truth of the gospel—and I am no deviator." To rebuild Moses' Law is to transgress God's will in Christ: "a radical and ironic inversion of what the term 'transgression' had meant in Paul's 'former life in Judaism' (1:13)" Paul has ironically and polemically redefined "transgressor." Paul has already rebuked the Galatians in 1:6 for turning away from the Gospel. He writes later of their potential falling away from grace and being severed from Christ (5:4). In many ways, the Galatians are in danger of failing to submit to God's righteousness, the error of the disobedient Jews (Rom 10:2, 21). (CC)

The shift to the first person singular "I" in Gal 2:18 "personalizes and universalizes" what Paul argues in 2:15–17. More significantly, the aorist verb tense of "I tore down" (κατέλυσσα) matches the aorist of "we believed" (ἐπιστεύσαμεν) in 2:16: with "I build up" (οικοδομῶ) Paul is referring to the rebuilding of a Torah-based approach to justification as advocated by some of his Jewish-Christian peers. The shift from the first person plural "we" (2:16) to the first person singular "I" (2:18) is difficult to understand if Paul views the referent of 2:18 still as the Jewish Christians at Antioch (2:11–14), unless Paul is trying to be

tactful. Paul is likely speaking of himself as a case in point that has wider applicability: if he were to rebuild the Mosaic Law (as had Peter and the others at Antioch), he would render himself a transgressor and nullify the grace of God in Christ.¹⁷⁷ As Paul continues in 2:19–21, he draws on the gracious, new life in Christ as a potent argument against rebuilding Moses’ Law. (CC)

2:19 *For through the Law I died to the Law in order that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ.* Paul explains in 2:18 that to rebuild the Law would cause him to be a transgressor either of the Law or, more likely, of the will of God as expressed in the Gospel. Gal 2:19—with “for” (γάρ)—is a clarification of 2:18. Dying to the Law in 2:19 corresponds to tearing down the Law in 2:18. Paul has torn down/died to Moses’ Law, not in order to build it back up again, but in order to live to God. Thrust forward to the beginning of 2:19 is an emphatic “I” (ἐγώ). To say that Paul includes himself in these remarks does not go far enough. He is presenting himself as a *paradigm* of dying to the Law and living for God. (CC)

The dative nouns “to the Law” (νόμῳ) and “to God” (θεῷ) are syntactically parallel and should be understood in the same way. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that these are datives of respect: to die “with respect to the Law” and to live “with respect to God.” Presumably to die with respect to the Law is to be severed from a relationship in which the Law determines one’s approach to the world. Paul emphasizes the importance of this death by placing the dative noun “with respect to the Law” (νόμῳ) before the verb “I died” (ἀπέθανον). Unfortunately, Paul does not explain why living to God requires dying “*through* the Law” (διὰ νόμου). How does one die to the Law through the instrumentality (διὰ) of the Law? The interpretive possibilities are many, some more viable than others. Paul is not likely saying that his Law-inspired persecution of the church (1:13, 23) came to an end (“I died to the Law”) “*through* the Law.” Christ’s appearance (1:12, 16) took care of that. Paul offers no hint that he had understood the Law as somehow deficient prior to seeing Christ. He does not describe a new perspective on the Law from the vantage point “of faith” (cf. Rom 3:27) or “of Christ” (Gal 6:2). Paul does not say that the Law somehow led him to Christ, as some have mistakenly interpreted 3:24. He does not indicate that he ever despaired of his own righteousness because of the impossibility of doing the Law. As a non-Christian Jew, Paul would have viewed the Law as providing its own means of atonement for sin through repentance and sacrifice. He gives every indication of a robust conscience with no hint of guilt with respect to his own Law observance (Gal 1:14; Phil 3:3–6). Christ’s appearance on the Damascus road proved that there was a problem with the Law, but the Law itself had not led Paul to that conclusion. (CC)

Richard Hays’ caution is apropos: “We may be well advised to concede that we do not know exactly what Paul meant by the aphoristic statement ‘through the Law I died to the Law.’ ” In the context of the letter, dying to the Law “through the Law” should most likely be interpreted in light of the believer’s dying with Christ in the latter half of the verse and perhaps also in light of Christ’s exhaustion of the Law’s curse in 3:13. Christ was born “under the Law” (4:4) in order to become a curse “on our behalf” (3:13). The Law orchestrated Christ’s death and now no longer holds sway over those who share in that death. Similarly in Rom 7:1–4, Paul says that a person dies to the Law through the body of Christ. Those in Christ are delivered from under the Law (cf. Rom 6:3). In other words, the believer must die to the Law with Christ in order to live.¹⁹⁰ Paul therefore adds that “I have been crucified with Christ” (2:19). (CC)

The perfect tense of “I have been crucified” (συνεσταύρωμαι) carries the sense of an ongoing state of co-crucifixion with Christ. The cross is not just an epoch-changing historical event but also a reality that the believer experiences and shares. The believer continues to be conformed to Christ’s death (Phil 3:10–11; cf. Gal 6:17). All those who believe in Christ continue to crucify what they once were prior to faith. Furthermore, even as Jesus hung on the cross as a defiled outcast according to the Law (see 3:13), nothing remains to divide believers in Christ at Antioch (2:11–14) or elsewhere from other believers. Since those who have been crucified with Christ have died to the Law, which also demands separations, nothing keeps Jews and gentiles from coming together at Antioch or Galatia. (CC)

Jewish literature in Paul's day offers statements similar to 2:19. In 4 Macc 7:19: "They believe that they, like our patriarchs Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, do not die to God, but live to God" (NRSV). In 4 Macc 16:25: "They knew also that those who die for the sake of God live to God, as do Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the patriarchs" (NRSV). The Jews, however, did not envision themselves dying with respect to the *Law*. Paul seems to be driving a wedge between the Law as an instrument of death and the subsequent life, a disjunction that would have been alien to the thinking of most Jews. Ben Sira describes "the Law of life" (Sirach 17:11; 45:5). Baruch advocates "the commandments of life" (Baruch 3:9). In Baruch 4:1: "All who hold [the Law] fast will live, and those who forsake her will die" (NRSV).¹⁹³ Deuteronomy pronounces: "Listen to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you and do (them) so that you may live" (Deut 4:1). In Lev 18:5: "You shall therefore keep my statutes and ordinances, by doing which a man shall live." Paul affirms the opposite about the Law: It does *not* lead to life (Gal 2:21; 3:21). One must *die* to the Law. The other side of dying with respect to the Law is to live with respect to God. Death and life are paradoxically *both* in Christ! In a person's relationship with God, to return to the Law is to go from life back to death again. (CC)

Whereas the Jews of Paul's day anticipated "life" beyond the grave, Paul views eternal life as a current reality for those who have been saved in Christ. One commentator further distinguished "life" in the soteriological sense of an escape from the penalty of sin from "life" defined as living in an ethical sort of way. Burton thought that Paul uses "life" in Galatians 2 in an ethical sense but in Galatians 3 in a soteriological manner. Gal 2:19 defies that distinction since the verse seems to bear *both* senses. To live in relation to God is both to experience the new life that comes beyond death as well as to enjoy a new life in the midst of this "present evil age" (1:4). Crucifixion with Christ does not lead to moral license but to a life that truly honors the Lord and Savior. Paul elaborates on the Christ-like shape of the Christian "life" in 5:13–6:10. (CC)

2:20 *I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the flesh, in faith I live, namely, [faith] in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* With 2:20 Paul expands on the idea of being "crucified with Christ" (2:19). "I no longer live," "Christ lives," and yet "in faith I live." "The alternation seems conscious: this is not a careless self-contradiction but an attempt to express a duality in agency in which the death of the 'I' is the precursor to its reconstitution."²⁰¹ The sense is *not* that the "I" operates alongside the agency of Christ, "but that Christ operates in and even as the human agent." Paul employs formulations such as "I, yet not I, but grace/Christ"; conspicuously, he never reverses the pattern to say "the grace of God, yet not grace, but I" (cf. Rom 15:15–19; 1 Cor 15:10; 2 Cor 9:8–10; Phil 2:12–14). "This suggests that grace operates not only prior to believer agency but also as the determining factor within it—without coercing human agents or obliterating their capacity truly to act." The Christian "life," then, does not represent the believer's claim on God but rather God's activity in and through the believer as the Lord invites and energizes sanctified works. (CC)

The "I" of the past gives way; a new "I" is born as Christ expresses himself through the believer. Indeed, some Christians can testify to a dramatic change that took place when Christ first entered their lives. Such testimony should not be dismissed. Paul narrates just such a testimonial in Galatians 1 as Christ worked a miracle in the life of a man once steeped "in Judaism" (1:13). Gal 2:19–21 recalls in many ways 1:13–16. In both passages Paul refers to his adherence to the Law or the traditions of the fathers and then to the "grace" of God who acts through the "Son (of God)" "in me." The apostle has left behind an entire way of life which had been oriented around the Law and human traditions. He presents himself as an example of abandonment of the Law and of the elements again in 4:9–12 and then describes the new life in Christ in Galatians 5 and 6. The power source remains the indwelling Christ. "In me" is the same phrase Paul uses in 1:16, 24. "Paul's 'person' has been exchanged for that of another with whom he has been united." (CC)

Christ's dwelling "in" an individual does not entail a loss of the individual's own personality. The Lord's indwelling is no mere private, mystical experience. Mysticism entails "the negation of personality, withdrawal from objective reality, ascetic contemplation, a searching out of pathways to perfection, and absorption into the divine."²⁰⁹ A mystical point of view is alien to the Scriptures, which affirm the goodness of God's creation. Christ refashions the individual, determines identity, and guides actions: "the life I now live *in the flesh*" (ἐν σαρκί). "Flesh" in this context does not carry the negative overtones it does later in the letter (e.g., 3:3; 5:13). The apostle is simply referring to life in the created body (as also in 2 Cor 10:3; Phil 1:22, 24). The future life has already begun in the believer's bodily flesh! Christ expresses himself as Lord in the life of the believer, whether in personal decisions, relationships, values, or beliefs. (CC)

"But if Christ is put aside and I look only at myself, then I am done for.... We must turn our eyes completely to ... Christ nailed to the cross," advised Luther (AE 26:166). " 'Christ,' [Paul] says, 'is fixed and cemented to me and abides in me. The life that I now live, He lives in me. Indeed, Christ Himself is the life that I now live. In this way, therefore, Christ and I are one' " (AE 26:167). "Faith takes hold of Christ and has Him present" (AE 26:132). Luther recognized the oneness of Christ and the believer, whose eyes are fixed on the Lord (AE 26:166–67). Such faith renders Christ and his righteousness present to the believer. Luther continued: "Because He lives in me, whatever grace, righteousness, life, peace, and salvation there is in me is all Christ's; nevertheless, it is mine as well, by the cementing and attachment that are through faith" (AE 26:167–68). The wonderful new life in Christ proves that he is *not* a servant of sin (2:17). This new life takes place "by" (instrumental) or, more likely, "in (the sphere of) faith" (ἐν πίστει). (CC)

"Faith ... in the Son of God" characterizes the new "I." This portion of 2:20 has been another battleground for the "faith in/of Christ" debate. The translation "faith ... *in*" assumes that "of the Son [τοῦ υἱοῦ]" is an objective genitive noun in the Greek, whereas "faith *of* Christ" takes a subjective genitive noun. Paul literally writes, "In/by faith [ἐν πίστει] I live [ζῶ], the [τῆ] [i.e., the faith which is] of the Son of God." Since "I live" (ζῶ) interrupts the linkage of the dative "in faith" (ἐν πίστει) with the matching dative Greek article "the" (τῆ), the Greek article is resumptive and reintroduces faith as "the [faith] of the Son of God" (τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ). On the one hand, then, the meaning may be "I live by faith(fulness), namely, that of the Son of God who loved me." In view of the emphasis on Christ's action in 2:20, one commentator concluded that "the faithfulness *of* the Son of God" should have "a slight preference" as the translation. One "lives" not by believing but rather by Christ's faithful action on behalf of humanity. (CC)

On the other hand, an ancient scribe interpreted this verse as referring to what is "of God and Christ" rather than to the faithfulness "of the Son of God." The scribe understood "faith" as "faith *in*." As an expression of faith *in* the Son of God, the Greek article would be for emphasis: "I live by trusting the One who is none other than the Son of God." Interestingly, one commentator, who elsewhere favored the subjective interpretation ("faith *of*"), interpreted the genitive in 2:20 as an objective genitive. The resumptive article (τῆ) in 2:20, despite the claims of subjective genitive advocates, is actually necessary for Paul's chiasmic, poetic contrast. The apostle first writes, literally, "I live in flesh, in faith I live" (ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, ἐν πίστει ζῶ). The resulting placement of the second "I live" (ζῶ) requires Paul to insert an article (τῆ) in order to resume the reference to faith: "... in faith I live, namely, *the* [faith] in the Son of God" (ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῆ τοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ). "The usage is appositional in this case, not truly articular." Gal 2:20 is therefore indecisive as support for the subjective genitive. "The issue must remain uncertain." (CC)

The Son of God "loved me and gave himself for me." In the Hebrew Bible, God expresses love for Israel (Deut 7:8; Ps 47:4; Is 43:4; Jer 31:3; Hos 3:1; cf. *Pss. Sol.* 9:8) and for individuals within Israel (Deut 4:37; 2 Sam 12:24; Ps 146:8; cf. *Wis Sol* 4:10; *Sirach* 4:14). This love is what Paul and other believers now enjoy in Christ. Paul speaks of Christ's "loving" us (Rom 8:37; 2 Thess 2:16) and of his "giving" himself in death (1:4 [!]; see also Rom 4:25; 8:32; 1 Cor 11:23–24; Phil 2:6–8; 1 Tim 2:6; Titus 2:14).

This love is no mere warm feeling. Paul sees Christ's love expressed in his self-sacrificial death (Rom 5:8; 8:32, 35; 2 Cor 5:14). Normally, Paul writes of Christ's death for "us" or for "all" (e.g., Gal 1:3–4; see also Rom 5:8; 8:32, 35; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Thess 5:10). The first person singular expression "for me" in 2:20 is striking. The crucifixion is of intensely personal value to Paul: Christ's love for all people is also "for me." "One simply cannot easily get past Paul's own sense of being loved personally by God's Son in his crucifixion." "The thought, of course, is not 'only me,' but 'even me' " with a "sense of wonder and gratitude."²²⁸ To preach Christ crucified is to preach a Savior who died for the Christian preacher personally! (CC)

2:21 *I do not nullify the grace of God. For if righteousness is through the Law, then Christ died in vain.* Paul abruptly breaks off from his discussion of the new life in Christ (2:20) to return to the Torah/Christ antithesis of 2:15–16. Note the lack of a connecting particle. Paul blurts out that he does not "nullify" or "render ineffective" God's grace.²³⁰ In what manner the grace of God might be nullified is clarified by the conditional sentence in the following, lengthier part of the verse: If justification took place through the Law, then Christ died for nothing. The condition in the protasis, "if righteousness is through the Law," expresses unreality. Christ did *not* die "in vain"! Justification does *not* come through the Law (2:16). Were righteousness to come through the Law, God's grace would be nullified ("in vain," δωρεάν), the very grace that called Paul (1:15; 2:9) and the Galatians (1:6). Gentiles would no longer stand justified before God. The Gospel would be scrapped. On the contrary, Paul is emphatically defending the grace of Christ against any denigration or supplementation by the Torah. (CC)

As Luther commented: "But if my salvation was worth so much to Christ that He had to die for my sins, then my works and the righteousness of the Law are vile—in fact, nonexistent—in comparison with such an inestimable price" (AE 26:183). "In vain" (δωρεάν) is actually the accusative form of the noun for "gift" (δωρεά, as in, e.g., Rom 5:15), a play on words. "The Son of God did in fact 'give himself' as a gift, but those who think rectification [justification] comes through Law have turned this gracious gift into a gratuitous superfluity."²³⁴ Any corruption of God's grace by the Law would render God's grace entirely in vain and worthless, as if the cross had never taken place. Righteousness is a free gift. (CC)

Adherents of the "new perspective" on Paul have contended that the apostle's problem with the Law rests with its boundary markers that exclude the gentiles from the Jewish people. Once again, the new perspective reading falls short. The problem in 2:21 is not that the Law limits righteousness to the Jewish Law observant, but rather that the Law simply does not convey God's righteousness, whether for gentile *or for Jew!* The problem in 2:21 is with the Law itself, and thus Moses need not be foisted upon the gentiles. New perspective interpreters have placed the cart before the horse. God's grace in Christ does not need supplementation or replacement by the Law of Moses. (CC)

Scholars have debated whether the sort of "righteousness" Paul has in mind in 2:21 is saving righteousness or the ethical righteousness of the new life in Christ (e.g., 2:20). In 3:6 Abraham's faith is reckoned as "righteousness." That righteousness is grounded in Christ's saving work (3:13–14). Regardless of whether righteousness is understood exclusively as forensic (2:15–16) or also as ethical (2:17–20), righteousness is *never* through the Law but is *always* through Christ crucified. God not only justifies people in advance of the end-times verdict, but he also joins them to the righteous Christ, who now lives in the believer. "So just as 'the works of the law' and 'the faith/faithfulness of Christ' are to be seen as antithetically related (2:16), also 'through the law' and 'Christ crucified' are noncomplementary. To affirm the one is to deny the other, and vice versa." As the sheer gift of God in Christ, believers have been delivered from the present evil age (1:4)! (CC)

2:17 ζητοῦντες ("in seeking")—"Seeking" does not of itself convey any sense of anxiety about salvation. Here the word ζητέω simply means "desire to obtain" (see BDAG, 3) in reference to a justification that takes place at the future judgment.

εὐρέθημεν (“we were found”)—The sense of the verb is “prove to be” or “turn out to be” with ἁμαρτωλοί (“sinners”) as the predicate nominative. Despite the aorist tense of the verb εὐρέθημεν, the sense could be timeless (cf. 2:18’s present tense verbs with a timeless sense): “If seeking to be justified in Christ we *are* found to be sinners, Christ is then a servant of sin?” On the other hand, Paul is most likely referring to pre-conversion sinfulness, in which case the aorist tense refers to the past: “we *were* found.”

ἄρα (“then”)—The original copy of Paul’s letters did not have accents. This word could be accented—as in UBS⁴ and NA²⁸—with a circumflex as an interrogative particle, ἄρα, in which case Paul is asking a question: “Is Christ *then* a servant of sin?” Without the circumflex accent as a paroxytone, the word is an inferential particle, ἄρα, and Paul would be drawing a conclusion: “Christ is *therefore/then* a servant of sin.” The inferential particle would seem at first to be justified. Nowhere else in Paul is this word an interrogative particle, whereas the inferential ἄρα (“therefore/then”) is quite common (see the first textual note on 2:21; see also 3:7, 29; 5:11; 6:10). On the other hand, an interrogative particle would make better sense in view of the following μὴ γένοιτο, “by no means!” which elsewhere in Paul is almost always in response to a rhetorical question (Rom 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; 1 Cor 6:15; Gal 3:21). (CC)

Christ then a servant? – Now, Paul goes on. And I think the way in which he goes on helps explain this. And I think Verses 17 and following are really helpful in clarifying this. In 17 he says: But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we, too, were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not. Now, this is kind of an obvious statement for Paul. But I think what it says in Verse 17 is that people are calling Paul by his teaching, by the fact that he eats with Gentiles, by the fact that he includes, you know, himself. And therefore, Christ and his Gospel with Gentile table fellowship is that he is being called by these opponents as a sinner. And anybody who has relationships in terms of both the Lord’s Supper and just generally with Gentiles is a sinner. Then if that’s true, then Christ is also a servant of sin. Because the Gospel is for everybody. And if you’re going to go with a selective Gospel, then you are going to go with a Gospel that makes not only those who kind of expand the Gospel to include Gentiles a sinner, then Christ then is a sinner, too. (Just – V-22)

By the legalist’s logic, if Jews who keep the Law are reckoned as “sinners” in need of God’s justifying grace, then Christ is made an agent of sin. Paul asserts that this is an invalid argument. (TLSB)

certainly not – It is as though Paul were saying: “Christ is not the minister of sin; He is the Dispenser of righteousness and of eternal life.” Therefore Paul separates Christ from Moses just as far as he can. Let Moses remain on earth; let him be the teacher of the letter, the taskmaster of the Law; let him crucify sinners. But the believers, he says, have another teacher in their conscience, not Moses but Christ, who has abrogated the Law, overcome and endured sin, wrath, and death. He commands us to look to Him and believe. Then it is time for the Law to go away and for Moses to die in such a way that no one knows where he is buried (Deut. 34:6). Neither sin nor death can harm us anymore. For Christ, our Teacher, is the Lord of the Law, sin, and death; therefore he who believes in Him is liberated from all these things. Therefore the proper task of Christ is to liberate from death and sin, as Paul teaches and inculcates continually. (Luther)

2:18 εἰ γὰρ ἃ κατέλυσα ταῦτα πάλιν οἰκοδομῶ (“for if I build up again the very things that I tore down”)—The conjunction εἰ (“if”) with the present indicative οἰκοδομῶ (“I build up”) conveys “the feeling of definiteness and actual realization.” “The sentence is cast in the form of a first class conditional sentence, not a second class contrary-to-fact condition, probably because Paul has in mind Peter and certain other Jewish Christians who in one way or another seemed intent on doing just that, even though terribly inconsistent in so doing.”¹⁷

Note also the first person singular verb forms in this and the following verses, which represent a shift from the plural “we” in the preceding verses: “The first person thus functions as a sort of polite way of

condemning the actions of the readers.” On the “I” as a shift to the Galatian situation, “the camera now pans in for the close-up shot of Paul’s face.” Paul may also be indicating that his comments are universally applicable for all who believe in Christ (BDF § 281) and that he is modeling for his readers a proper approach. Whether Peter would continue to agree with Paul’s reasoning depends on the interpretation of the verse.

παραβάτην ἑμαυτὸν συνιστάνω (“I prove myself to be a transgressor”)—The verb συνιστάνω is associated with an accusative object (here ἑμαυτόν) and a predicate accusative (here παραβάτην), thus “to prove to be”; BDF § 157 (4). (CC)

IF I REBUILD WHAT I DESTROYED... I AM A LAWBREAKER – And then in Verse 18 he says this: For if I rebuild what I tore down -- and he's talking about the law there. If I'm going to put up the law again as a means of salvation, if I'm going to do that, then he says: I prove myself to be a transgressor. Then I am a sinner. I'm not a sinner if I have table fellowship with Gentiles and see the Gospel as being for all people. I'm a sinner if I put requirements on the Gospel. If I make the Gospel something that I build up now, the law, around it as kind of a wall, then I am a sinner. (Just – V-22)

The Gospel Paul preached broke down the wall of separation (Law’s requirements) between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14–18). For Paul (and by implication, Peter), rebuilding this wall would make him a “transgressor.” (TLSB)

2:19 ἀπέθανον (“I died”)—The aorist tense may have a timeless aspect: through the Law “I die to the Law.” On the other hand, Paul views the death that took place as a decisive event inaugurating a new era in the life of the believer.

Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι (“I have been crucified with Christ”)—Paul uses a perfect tense verb for a present state resulting from a past action; the co-crucified is thus dead to the Law (cf. “crucified ... to the world” in 6:14). Incidentally, unlike the critical Greek text of Nestle-Aland, most English translations (e.g., KJV, RSV, ESV, NASB) include this clause with 2:20. (CC)

I died to the law. “The Law only accuses and terrifies consciences” (Ap XIIA 34). All who are in Christ (v 17) are no longer under the Law’s jurisdiction. It has no claim on them (their relationship to it is severed). They are free from its curse (3:13). (TLSB)

Now, what does the law do? The law shows us our sins. When the law looks at Jesus who is the ultimate sinner there, what must the law do? It must put Jesus to death. That's what the law demands of sinners. That's how Paul died to the law through the law. Because the collision there on the cross between Christ and the law, the law condemning Christ because Christ is a sinner there, that is how Paul dies to the law. He's referencing here the cross of Jesus Christ. (Just – V-22)

that I might live for God – That is, “that I might be alive in the sight of God.” You see, then, that there is no life unless you are without the Law, indeed, unless you are completely dead to the Law, namely, in your conscience. Meanwhile, as long as the body is alive, the flesh must be disciplined by laws and vexed by the requirements and punishments of laws, as I have often admonished. But the inner man, who owes nothing to the Law but is free of it, is a living, righteous, and holy person—not of himself or in his own substance but in Christ, because he believes in Him, as now follows. (Luther)

2:20 οὐκέτι (“no longer”)—This word is not always temporal in Paul, who sometimes posits two opposing thoughts, with “no longer” ruling out one option (e.g., Rom 7:20; Gal 3:18; cf. Rom 11:6; 14:15; Heb 10:18, 26). The “I” and “Christ” are two incompatible approaches to life. Christ is now the source of life as the “I” no longer lives.

ἐγώ—This pronoun is emphatic as Paul contrasts the “I” and Christ. (The verb “I live” would have sufficed without the added pronoun.)

ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ (“the life I now live”)—The neuter relative pronoun ὁ could be an accusative of content; cf. Rom 6:10. It could be either a synonym for “life” or perhaps defined with the following phrase ἐν πίστει ζῶ, “in faith I live.” “The decision is difficult, though probably viewing it as a substantive [i.e., ‘the life’] for the content of the verb ζῶ (‘I live’) is simplest and all that is required.” Commentators have typically taken this current life “in the flesh” (ἐν σαρκί) as referring to the physical life, although Bligh has suggested a different reading:

Paul cannot be saying that he draws his bodily life from Christ through faith. Therefore ἐν σαρκί must be dependent on an unexpressed participle: ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ, ἐν σαρκί ὑπάρχων ... Thus ἐν σαρκί [“in the flesh”] specifies νῦν [“now”] rather than determines the kind of life referred to by ζῶ. The sense is “so far as I now truly live, while in the flesh”; or, if ἐν σαρκί ὑπάρχων is read concessively, “so far as I now truly live, though still in the flesh, I live through faith.”

ἐν πίστει ζῶ (“in faith I live”)—Paul employs the preposition ἐν to signal “in” or “in the sphere of.” If he had meant “by faith I live,” he would likely have used ἐκ instead. “There can be no question about the meaning of ἐν with ζάω in Ga 2:20.”

τῆ—On this resumptive use of the article, see the commentary.

τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (“in/of the Son of God”)—Although the variant reading θεοῦ καὶ Χριστοῦ, “in/of God and Christ,” is strongly attested (℞⁴⁶ B D* G itd,^g Marius Victorinus Pelagius), Paul does not elsewhere speak of God as the object of Christian faith. This objection to the variant would be mitigated if Paul is referring to the faithfulness of God and Christ. Nevertheless, the variant would be a hapax legomenon in Paul as well as the sole instance in Paul of a double object of faith. The choice between the readings is difficult, but ℞⁴⁶ appears to have a less developed Christology with subordinationist leanings. Textual witnesses favoring a reference to τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ (“the Son of God”) include κ A C Ψ 33 1739. (CC)

crucified with Christ. Paul adds this because he wants to declare that the Law is the devourer of the Law. “Not only am I dead to the Law through the Law so that I might live to God,” he says, “but I am also crucified with Christ. But Christ is the Lord of the Law, because He has been crucified and has died to the Law. Therefore I, too, am lord of the Law. For I, too, have been crucified and have died to the Law, since I have been crucified and have died with Christ.” How? Through grace and faith. When by this faith I am crucified and die to the Law, then the Law loses all its jurisdiction over me, as it lost it over Christ. Thus, just as Christ Himself was crucified to the Law, sin, death, and the devil, so that they have no further jurisdiction over Him, so through faith I, having been crucified with Christ in spirit, am crucified and die to the Law, sin, etc., so that they have no further jurisdiction over me but are now crucified and dead to me. (Luther)

NO LONGER LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME – Then he says: “Nevertheless, I live,” this sounds rather personal, as though Paul were speaking of his own person. Therefore he quickly corrects it and says: “Yet not I.” That is, “I do not live in my own person now, but Christ lives in me.” The person does indeed live, but not in itself or for its own person. But who is this “I” of whom he says: “Yet not I”? It is the one that has the Law and is obliged to do works, the one that is a person separate from Christ. This “I” Paul rejects; for “I,” as a person distinct from Christ, belongs to death and hell. This is why he says: “Not I, but Christ lives in me.” Christ is my “form,” which adorns my faith as color or light adorns a wall. (This fact has to be expounded in this crude way, for there is no spiritual way for us to grasp the idea that Christ clings and dwells in us as closely and intimately as light or whiteness clings to a wall.) “Christ,” he says, “is fixed and cemented to me and abides in me. The life that I now live, He lives in me. Indeed, Christ Himself is the life that I now live. In this way, therefore, Christ and I are one.” (Luther)

Luther: “By [faith] you are so cemented to Christ that He and you are as one person” (AE 26:168). (TLSB)

in the flesh. This earthly life. (TLSB)

I live by faith in the Son of God – Now, that is a profound statement. And look at what happens in Verse 20, what he wants to expand now is the life. The life. This is the life after the cross. The life after Damascus. The life after faith. He says: The life -- and let me get this translation right in Verse 20. I am co-crucified with Christ. It is no longer -- it is no longer I who live. Me, Paul. But Christ who lives in me. I'm joined to Christ now Paul says. I have Communion with Christ. So when you see me, you don't see me, you see Christ. Even though you see my personality, you see my body, it is Christ who lives in me. This is that incorporation into Christ that justification brings. That baptism brings. (Just – V-22)

gave himself for me. See 1:4; 1Ti 2:6; Tit 2:14. (CSB)

Now these words, “who loved me,” are filled with faith. Anyone who can speak this brief pronoun “me” in faith and apply it to himself as Paul did, will, like Paul, be the best of debaters against the Law. For He did not give a sheep or an ox or gold or silver for me. But He who was completely God gave everything He was, gave Himself for me—for me, I say, a miserable and accursed sinner. I am revived by this “giving” of the Son of God into death, and I apply it to myself. This applying is the true power of faith. One who performs works does not say: “Christ loved me, etc.” (Luther)

2:21 εἰ (“if”)—This unreal conditional uses εἰ and a nominal clause in the protasis and an aorist (ἀπέθανεν) without ἄν in the apodosis (“then ...”). Paul elsewhere expresses an unreal condition with an indicative (either stated or understood) in the protasis and no ἄν in the apodosis (thus 1 Cor 12:19; Gal 4:15; see also Jn 15:24). Conditions not expressing reality are infrequent in Paul. As for the omission of ἄν, Paul “uses ἄν in the apodosis of conditions that otherwise would seem plausible.”

ἄρα (“then”)—In Classical Greek the inferential ἄρα never comes first in the clause, but this is one of several NT exceptions to the classical rule (cf. 1 Cor 15:18; 2 Cor 5:14; Gal 5:11).

δωρεάν (“in vain”)—This accusative form of δωρεά, “gift,” is adverbial, here indicating manner: “in vain” or “for nothing” or “to no purpose” or “without a cause” (LXX Job 1:9; Ps 34:19 [MT/ET 35:19]; Jn 15:25 [“without a cause”]). It can also mean “freely” (Rom 3:24; 2 Cor 11:7). (CC)

If obedience to the Law is in any sense regarded as part of God’s justification of the sinner, then Christ’s death becomes superfluous. (TLSB)

I do not nullify the grace of God – So finally Verse 21 and this brings this extraordinary rich section to an end. Paul says: I do not nullify the grace of God. He says he's not going to -- that grace, that space in which God is making right what has gone wrong, he's not going to nullify that. Because he says: If justification were through the law -- in other words if God made things right in the cosmos by means of our works of the law which is what the Pharisaical Christians are saying, then Christ died in vain for no purpose. There would be no point to the atonement then. Because going back to Verse 19, Christ and the law collided at the cross. And because that happened Paul and all of us who were baptized into Christ can say the law no longer defines us. I've died to the law. I died to it through the cross of Jesus Christ. And so it's Christ who lives in me. And that life I live is his life. (Just – V-22)

Christ died for nothing. To mingle legalism with grace distorts grace and makes a mockery of the cross. (CSB)

2:15–21 With the incident with Peter as the backdrop, Paul presents the Epistle’s core theological argument: justification is by faith in Christ and not by works of the Law. Those who appeal to the Law in

addition to Christ as a means of salvation make His death meaningless—worse still, null and void. God’s Son loves us and gave Himself for us to free us from the Law’s condemnation. • O God, our earthly life in Christ now has a high purpose, to live for You (2:19). Grant me full confidence in Christ Jesus, who alone can save me. Amen. (TLSB)