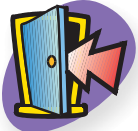


Galatians



The Threat of Compromise

History of the Early World	Patriarchs	Israel in Egypt	Conquest of Canaan	Judges	United Kingdom	Divided Kingdom Exile	Exile	Return	Maccabean Revolt	Jesus the Messiah	Church



Introduction

We have had an opportunity to thoroughly examine how the Council of Jerusalem handled the difficult question of circumcising Gentile converts. Even though circumcision and keeping the Law of Moses weren't requirements for Gentiles, they were required to live in brotherly love for their Jewish Christian brethren. A letter was sent to the churches, explaining the ruling. All seemed well.

As we return to Galatians, we discover that problems caused by the Judaizers continued to disturb the peace of the Church, even after the Council's ruling. In this lesson, we will get some insider details about the Council (2:1-10). We will learn about a disturbance between Peter and Paul in Antioch (2:11-14). In addition, we will be introduced to a theological term—justification—that will pervade the rest of the epistle (2:14-21). This word is not one that is familiar to most Catholics. In fact, they often find it a confusing term, with an almost elusive meaning. The reason for the confusion is that the Church speaks of justification without actually using that word. For Catholics, being justified means being in a state of grace. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man" (CCC 1989). It is received through faith, given to us in baptism, and preserved by obedience. When lost, it is restored through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The result of justification is being righteous before God, *pleasing* to Him. "With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us" (CCC 1991). If these are new ideas to you, take a few moments to think them over before you begin this lesson. The reason St. Paul speaks so much about justification is that he sees the threat of a return to the Law of Moses as a terrible misunderstanding of how men are put right with God, how they are "justified."

Read through this entire passage, all at once. Then answer the questions on the text that follow.



GALATIANS 2

1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. 2 I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 4 But because of false brethren secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage— 5 to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. 6 And from those who were reputed to be something (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who were of repute added nothing to me; 7 but 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 the mission to the circumcised worked through me also for the Gentiles), 9 and when they perceived the grace that was given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised; 10 only they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do.





GALATIANS 2 (cont.)

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 ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. 13 And with him the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity. 14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about 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 compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?" 15 We ourselves, who are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, 16 yet who know that a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we 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 shall no one be justified. 17 But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we ourselves were found to be sinners, is Christ then an agent of sin? Certainly not! 18 But if I build up again those things which I tore down, then I prove myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law died to the law, 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 justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.



Questions on the Text

PAUL'S GOSPEL ENDORSED READ GAL. 2:1-10

1. *Paul makes reference to another trip up to Jerusalem, in vs. 1. This was very probably the trip we read about in Acts 15. To what does Paul attribute the decision to make that trip?*
2. *What does Paul say in vs. 2 that reveals his understanding of the authority of those in Jerusalem?*
3. *What pressure did Paul resist in order to preserve "the truth of the gospel," as he says in vs. 5?*
4. *Notice the way Paul describes the "spying" incident in vss. 4-5. What does the incident indicate about the severity of this problem about circumcision in the early church?*
5. *In vs. 6, Paul says he wasn't really impressed by the "reputation" of those in authority. What do you think he means by that statement?*
6. *In vss. 7-8, Paul says that the apostles approved his work after they perceived two things about him. What were they?*
7. *After giving Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, what one thing did the apostles want them to do? Why has this always been an abiding concern in the Church?*
8. *Paul was willing to submit to the authority of people whose personal reputation didn't overwhelm him. How does the Catholic Church keep this spirit of submission alive today, especially at the parish or diocesan level?*





Questions on the Text (cont.)

PAUL CONFRONTS PETER READ GAL. 2:11-14

9. *What is the problem that developed between “Cephas” (Peter) and Paul in Antioch?*
 10. *Why do you suppose Paul took Peter to task in public? Why couldn’t he do this privately?*
 11. *Some have looked at this incident as evidence that Jesus never intended to build his Church on Peter, who is clearly quite fallible in this case. How would you respond to that? Do these verses present a threat to the Church’s teaching about the chair of Peter?*
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JUSTIFICATION IS BY FAITH READ GAL. 2:15-END

12. *Is Paul suggesting, in vs. 15, that Jews aren’t sinners like the Gentiles? What do you think he means there?*
13. *The phrase “works of the law,” in this context, refers to Jewish ceremonial law, such as eating habits, circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, etc. It is a phrase (occasionally reduced to “works” or “the law”) often used by Paul to refer to the Mosaic covenant, a short-hand way of making reference to the Jewish way of thinking that by observing all the law, both moral and ceremonial, one obligates God to save him. What power do works of the law have towards a person’s justification (vs. 16)?*
14. *In vs. 17, Paul imagines a Jewish Christian who, seeking to be justified by faith in Christ, lives in a way that he formerly would have called sinful—that is, like the Gentiles. If he then tries to go back to living the way the Law of Moses required, what is he suggesting by his behavior?*
15. *In vs. 19, Paul wants to show his new relationship to the Law of Moses. What is it?*
16. *When does a person die to the law? (Hint: See Rom. 6:1-4)*
17. *The treatment Paul gives to “life in Christ” is developed a bit more fully later in the letter. In vs. 20, what seems to be the distinguishing characteristic of Paul’s new life in Christ?*
18. *If a person wants to cling to the old system of legal perfection, what becomes of the work of Christ (vs. 21)?*
19. *Sometimes when Catholics read through this paragraph in Galatians, especially if it’s for the first time, it scares them. What is your reaction? Why?*





Questions for Reflection

1. ***St. Paul says that God shows no partiality. He is fair and just. In family life, we know that parents also try not to show partiality to their children. They love and care for all of them equally. However, sometimes one child in the family puts more effort into his relationship with his parents. Perhaps he spends more of his free time with them, or he tries harder than the others to keep the rules of the household. What is the result? That child and his parents will perhaps have a deeper, richer, more satisfying relationship than the other children in the family who haven't made these choices. The parents continue to be fair and even-handed in their relationships with all their children. But one child's warm and appreciative response to them gives him (and them) more joy in the familial bond.***

Think of yourself as a child in God's family (which is exactly what you are) and review your relationship with Him in light of this example from family life. Can it make a difference?

2. ***Catholic life is always a combination of sound doctrine and a transformed life, just as the apostles perceived in St. Paul. Would the people who know you describe you that way? Would strangers you encounter in the various episodes of your life describe you that way? Speak to the Lord about it.***
3. ***St. Paul breaks out of the cosmic kind of language he used in this section of his epistle to describe God's redemption of whole groups of people (Jews and Gentiles) to make one thing clear. He understood that Jesus personally loved him and personally gave His life for him. Take time to be reminded of the profoundly personal love that Jesus has for you.***





Opportunities for Additional Study

For the student who wishes to reflect more deeply on the passage in the lesson, consider these:

Points to Ponder

It is interesting to note the difference in emphasis between the letter of the Council of Jerusalem and St. Paul's letter to the Galatians. In the former, the primary concern is pastoral—how can Jewish and Gentile converts live together in love? In Galatians, the primary concern is theological—what threat does a “gospel of circumcision” present? The final section of the epistle reflects the same pastoral concerns as the Council's letter did, but St. Paul's main objective is to explain, in great detail, why observance of the Law of Moses is not only unnecessary but actually dangerous. It was inevitable that as the New Covenant replaced the Old, some confusion and questions would arise over what it meant, for both Jewish and Gentile Christians, to be free from the Law. St. Thomas Aquinas noted, in his *Commentary on Galatians*, that there are three periods in observance of the Law of Moses. Before the time of Christ, it was obligatory to keep all its precepts. Between the Passion of Christ and the spread of apostolic preaching, the precepts were “dead” but not “lethal.” Jewish converts could still keep them, as part of their ethnic heritage, as long as they understood that their hope of blessedness was in Christ, not the Law's precepts. For example, St. Paul had his co-worker, Timothy, circumcised because although his father had been a Greek, his mother was Jewish (see Acts 16:30). In addition, he himself observed Jewish practices in order to defuse unnecessary suspicion and offense among the Jews around him (Acts 21:22-26). After the generation of Jews who had been the first converts in the Church passed away, observance of the Jewish precepts as a means of salvation would amount to denying the redemptive power of Christ. Thus they would be “lethal.” St. Augustine says, “All that shadowy observance had to cease in an unnoticed way, gradually, as the pace grew of the wholesome preaching of the grace of Christ [...], during the lifetime of that generation of Jews who had experienced the physical presence of our Lord and had lived through the apostolic times. This sufficed to make it clear that those practices were not to be deemed hateful or idolatrous. But neither were they to be kept up any longer than that, in case people might hold them to be necessary, as if salvation came from them or could not be obtained without them” (*Letter 82, II, 15*).

St. Paul stood in the breach, as the New Covenant (and new wineskins) superseded the Old. It is well worth paying careful attention to his powerful explication of how the gospel frees men from bondage to the Law and enables them to be pleasing to God, returning them to that blessed state in the Garden of Eden, when God pronounced His creatures “very good.”

Catechism Connection

Excerpted from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

Gal. 2:10 – “The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches. As such, they exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them, assisted by priests and deacons. But, as a member of the episcopal college, each bishop shares in the concern for all the Churches. The bishops exercise this care first by ruling well in their own Churches as portions of the universal Church, and so contributing to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of Churches. They extend it especially to the poor, to those persecuted for the faith, as well as to missionaries who are working throughout the world.” (886)

Gal. 2:20 – “Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his agony, and his Passion and gave himself up for each one of us: ‘The Son of God...loved me and gave himself for me.’ He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation, is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that...love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal father and all human beings without exception.” (478)

“It is love ‘to the end’ that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now ‘the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died.’ No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine





Opportunities for Additional Study

person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for *all*.” (616)

“It is highly fitting that Christ should have wanted to remain present to his Church in this unique [Eucharistic] way. Since Christ was about to take his departure from his own in his visible form, he wanted to give us his sacramental presence; since he was about to offer himself on the Cross to save us, he wanted us to have the memorial of the love with which he loved us ‘to the end,’ even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us, and he remains under signs that express and communicate this love: ‘The Church and the world have a great need for Eucharistic worship. Jesus awaits us in this sacrament of love. Let us not refuse the time to go to meet him in adoration, in contemplation full of faith, and open to making amends for the serious offenses and crimes of the world. Let our adoration never cease’ (John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, 3). (1380)

Family Devotions

St. Paul, in Galatians 2, speaks of the distinctly human love that Jesus had for him, in very tender tones. This tender appreciation of the fact of Christ’s love has been preserved throughout the ages in the Catholic Church. It is generally referred to as “Sacred Heart Devotion,” which is the subjective response of the faithful to the objective fact of Christ’s love, divine and human. This is often symbolized in his physical Heart. Historically the Devotion to the Sacred Heart is an outgrowth of devotion to Christ’s sacred humanity, which the Church has more than once defended as adorable because the human nature of Christ forms one Person with the divine nature, and that Person is divine. A series of mystics over centuries contributed to the development of this devotion, notably St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), St. Bonaventure (1221-74), St. Mechtilde (1210-80), St. Gertrude (1256-1302), St. Frances of Rome (1384-1440), St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622), and St. John Eudes (1601-80). But it was especially St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-90), whose revelations before the Blessed Sacrament gave the devotion its modern aspect and importance. Through her Jesuit spiritual director, Claude de la Colombiere (1641-82), the Society of Jesus made promotion of the cult of the Sacred Heart part of its institute, notably through the Apostleship of Prayer (*Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, John A. Hardon, S.J., 1985)



Summary

Summary

In this lesson, we observed that:

- 1. St. Paul gave an account of his trip to the Council of Jerusalem. He was very clear on the fact that without the approval of those in authority there, his work would all be in vain. Theirs was an ultimate authority.**
- 2. He received their approval to preach the gospel to the Gentiles without requiring them to be circumcised. He was also encouraged to remember the poor.**
- 3. Later, when St. Peter visited Antioch, St. Paul had to challenge him to live up to the Council's ruling. A bad example in Peter would have had a devastating effect throughout the Church.**
- 4. In writing about that episode, St. Paul had cause to speak about "justification," a theological term used to describe being in a state of grace. He said emphatically that no one will be justified (pleasing before God) by keeping the Law of Moses ("works of law"). It is the work of Christ, the Son of God, that makes justification possible for men.**

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Scott, Jeff, Mark and Gayle

