

# Galatians 2: The Jerusalem Crowd

## 5-Day Devotional

### Overview of Sermon, Devotion Below

# GALATIANS 2

## THE COWARD AND THE CONFRONTATION

-- BRINGING BACK THE FREEWAY --

- **Last week:** Jesus built the freeway, grace is free, the tollbooth has no authority.
- **Paul knows** this not because he was told — but because he experienced it. Damascus first, then three years in the stacks confirming what grace had already done.
- **Chapter 2:** knowing the road is free and acting like it's free when the wrong people are watching are two very different things.
- **Enter Peter.**

### FOURTEEN YEARS AND A CLARIFIED CALL

**14**

- After Damascus, Paul doesn't go straight to Jerusalem — he goes to work. Fourteen years of regional mission — Syria, Cilicia, planting churches, preaching grace to Jews and Gentiles alike.
- Every time grace works on someone with no Jewish background, no covenant history, no Mount Sinai in their story — the call gets sharper. The Holy Spirit shows up anyway. The freeway runs just as freely in Gentile territory.
- Something crystallizes over those fourteen years — this isn't a Jewish movement with Gentile exceptions. This is for everyone. The whole world.
- Paul is called. You have a calling to when you can only see yourself doing one thing.
- Paul isn't bringing a theory to Jerusalem. He's bringing fourteen years of evidence — and a clarified mission that can't stay within the confines of Jewish influence anymore.
- So when Paul goes to Jerusalem it isn't to ask permission — it's to declare intent: I am taking this everywhere. You need to know that.

### PAUL GOES TO JERUSALEM

- Paul goes to Jerusalem not as a student returning for evaluation — but as a practitioner reporting in. A peer, not a subordinate. A missionary declaring the scope of what's coming.
- Notice the language — those who seem to be leaders. That's not deference. That's a subtle shot. Paul isn't intimidated by titles or tenure.
- The verdict: the Jerusalem leadership adds nothing to Paul's gospel. Call confirmed.
- Paul goes to Antioch and he finds others in the room — undercover "add-ers" among the Christians. False brothers who slipped in to spy on the freedom Paul preaches.
- Peter temporarily sides with the "add-ers".
- They aren't just being theologically tidy — they're trying to keep the gospel contained. Jewish framework, Jewish requirements, Jewish oversight.
- Same tollbooth as last week — just operating in the shadows and dressed up in respectability.
- The covert tollbooth is harder to fight than the obvious one — but it's doing the same damage.

### TWO DAMASCUS ROADS: SAME MESSAGE, TWO DIRECTIONS

#### PAUL'S DAMASCUS ROAD GRACE HAS NO FLOOR

- God shows up on the road to Damascus and stops the chief persecutor of the church cold.
- For Paul, grace meant: it can reach even me. The murderer. The man who held coats at stonings and dragged families from their homes.
- Grace has no floor — no one is too far gone, too violent, too guilty to be reached.
- This is Paul's personal revelation. He didn't read it. He lived it.

#### PETER'S ROOFTOP GRACE HAS NO BOUNDARY

- The sheet from heaven — Acts 10. God shows Peter a vision of unclean animals and says get up, kill and eat.
- Peter refuses — I have never eaten anything impure. God's response: do not call anything impure that God has made clean.
- Then Cornelius — a Roman centurion, a Gentile — sends for Peter. The Holy Spirit falls on the whole household before they are even baptized.
- For Peter, grace meant: it can reach even "them". The outsider. The unclean. The one outside the covenant.
- Grace has no boundary — no one is too far outside, too foreign, too different to be reached.

**TOGETHER:** The freeway runs in every direction, to every person, with no floor and no fence.

**Both men knew this.** Not from theology. From personal encounter with God.

### THE CONFRONTATION AT ANTIOCH

- Peter is in Antioch — eating with Gentiles, living like the freeway is free — because he knows it is.
- Then the Jerusalem crowd arrives. The people whose opinion Peter is managing.
- And Peter quietly gets up and moves to the other side of the table.
- Not because his theology changed. Because he was afraid.
- He didn't stop believing in grace — he just stopped acting like he believed it when it cost something socially.
- Except Paul doesn't change. "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile. How is it that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"
- Paul says it out loud. In front of everyone. Because the behavior was public and the damage was communal.
- But underneath the confrontation is something deeper — Paul isn't just calling out hypocrisy. He's calling Peter back to his own encounter with God. "You had your Damascus road, Peter. God showed up for you personally on that rooftop. And you're going to stand here and act like it didn't happen?"
- This isn't a doctrinal disagreement between two theologians. This is one man calling another man back to what God told him personally.
- Peter's private cowardice had become a public tollbooth — people were watching the first apostle act like the road had a toll and drawing their conclusions from it.

### THE HEART OF GALATIANS 2

- Grace is free. The tollbooth has no authority.
- God showed Paul grace has no floor. He showed Peter grace has no boundary.
- The gospel is for everyone, everywhere, with no exceptions.
- The issue isn't rules. It's remembering what God already showed you is true.

STAND FIRM IN THE FREEDOM OF GRACE. DON'T LET FEAR BUILD A TOLLBOOTH WHERE GOD BUILT A FREEWAY.  
GALATIANS 2:1-21

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## Day 1: Grace Without Barriers

**Reading:** Acts 9:1-19

*Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”*

*“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.*

*“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”*

*The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

*In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!” “Yes, Lord,” he answered. The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”*

*“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”*

*But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”*

*Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. — Acts 9:1-19 (NIV)*

### **Devotional:**

Paul’s encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road reminds us that grace arrives unexpectedly, often when we least deserve it. Paul wasn’t seeking God; he was actively opposing Him. Yet Jesus pursued him anyway. This is the scandalous nature of grace—it doesn’t wait for us to clean ourselves up first.

Like Paul, we may need time to process this unmerited love, to study and understand what has happened to us. Consider today: Where have you experienced God’s grace showing up uninvited in your life? How did it change you?

Grace doesn’t require a resume or recommendation—it simply requires an open heart willing to receive.

**Reflection:** Where have you experienced God’s grace showing up unexpectedly in your life? How did it change the direction you were heading?

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## Day 2: Discovering Your Calling

**Reading:** Galatians 1:11-24

*I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*

*For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.*

*Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother. I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.*

*Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." And they praised God because of me. — Galatians 1:11-24 (NIV)*

### **Devotional:**

Paul spent years discovering the fullness of his calling, yet Jesus knew all along. Sometimes God's purposes unfold slowly, requiring seasons of preparation, study, and waiting. Your calling may not be religious in nature, but wherever God plants you, you have the opportunity to be a person of faith.

A true calling is something you cannot imagine yourself not doing—it captures your passion and aligns with God's purposes. Don't be discouraged if clarity takes time. God is already leading you toward what He's prepared.

Ask yourself: What am I so passionate about that I can't see myself doing anything else? Trust that God is working even in the waiting.

**Reflection:** What is something you are so passionate about that you can't imagine not doing it? How might God be shaping that passion for His purposes, even now?

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## **Day 3: Grace Has No Boundaries**

**Reading:** Acts 10:9-48

*About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."*

*"Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."*

*The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."*

*This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven...*

*Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right..." While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles... So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. — Acts 10:9-16, 34-35, 44-45, 48 (NIV)*

### **Devotional:**

Peter’s vision of the sheet filled with unclean animals wasn’t ultimately about food—it was about people. God was expanding Peter’s understanding that grace extends beyond cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries. The gospel isn’t a regional religion or exclusive club; it’s an invitation to all humanity.

We often create invisible boundaries around who deserves God’s love, who fits in our church, who qualifies as “good enough.” But God declares clean what He has made clean.

Today, examine your heart: Are there people or groups you’ve unconsciously placed outside God’s grace? Remember, the freeway of salvation runs through every heart willing to receive it, with no toll booths or barriers.

**Reflection:** Are there people or groups you have unconsciously placed outside God’s grace? What would it look like to welcome them the way God welcomes you?

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## Day 4: When Fear Silences Truth

**Reading:** Galatians 2:11-14

*When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.*

*When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, “You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?” — Galatians 2:11-14 (NIV)*

### Devotional:

Even Peter, Jesus’ right-hand man, fell into the trap of people-pleasing when the Jerusalem crowd arrived. He knew the truth about grace but stopped living it out when it became uncomfortable. This isn’t heresy—it’s fear. We’ve all been there, staying silent when truth matters or becoming too loud when love should lead.

Perhaps you have a “Jerusalem crowd” in your life—people whose presence causes you to compromise what you know is right. Peter’s failure caused others to stumble, reminding us that our witness matters. People are watching.

Today, ask yourself: Where am I compromising the truth of God’s grace because of fear? Who needs to see me living authentically in God’s freedom?

**Reflection:** Who is your “Jerusalem crowd”—the people or voices that cause you to pull back from what you know is right? What would it look like to stand firm in grace this week?

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## Day 5: United by Grace Alone

**Reading:** Galatians 2:15-21

*“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.*

*“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn’t that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.*

*“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!” — Galatians 2:15-21 (NIV)*

**Devotional:**

Paul’s passionate defense of grace wasn’t about winning an argument—it was about protecting the heart of the gospel. We are made right with God not by adding requirements, doing more, or being better, but by trusting in Jesus Christ alone. This levels the playing field completely.

There are no first-class and second-class Christians, no hierarchy of holiness. Grace binds us together as one, singing the same song of God’s unmerited love. When we add conditions to grace, we create division and burden people with weights Jesus never intended.

Today, consider: What am I tempted to add to grace? What invisible standards am I placing on myself or others? Rest in this truth: Jesus has already spoken, and His grace is sufficient.

**Reflection:** What invisible standards are you tempted to add to grace—for yourself or for others? How does Galatians 2:20 invite you to rest in what Christ has already done?