

# **GALATIANS: THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL**



## **WEEK 5 SPIRITUAL SPIES GALATIANS 2:1-5**

Van Nuys Bible Study  
Doulos Fellowship Group  
Grace Community Church

Prepared by Hans Kaufman  
2014

## Galatians 2:1-5 – Spiritual Spies

---

### The Text

---

Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

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.

But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

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—to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

---

### Introduction

---

- Paul has already reminded the Galatian churches that his apostolic authority comes from God and that there is only one true gospel.
  - False teachers have infiltrated these churches and replaced God's gospel with a lie.
  - Paul is now proving to the Galatians that the gospel he preaches is God's gospel.
  - There is no room in the church for a false gospel (which is no gospel at all).
  - But this is not Paul's first rodeo with the Judaizers...
- 

### Principal Proposition

---

The truth of the gospel is worth defending against those who would strive to turn God's freedmen into slaves.

---

## Literary Context

---

- A. Paul's Gospel is God's Gospel (1:11-2:21)
    - 1. Revelation from God (1:11-12)
    - 2. Support for Paul's Claim (1:13-2:21)
      - a. His Pre-Converted Life (1:13-14)
      - b. His Conversion (1:15-17)
      - c. His Obscurity (1:18-24)
      - d. **His Approval by the Jerusalem Apostles (2:1-10)**
- 

## Literary Structure

---

Paul's Return	(v. 1)
Paul's Reason	(v. 2)
Paul's Reiteration	(v. 3)
Paul's Resolve	(v. 4-5)

---

## Interpretive Comments

---

### Paul's Return

- v. 1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.
- “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem”
    - This refers to either: 1) fourteen years after his conversion, or 2) fourteen years since his first visit to Jerusalem after becoming a believer (Galatians 1:18). Either way, fourteen years is a long time.
    - It is his second (Acts 11:27-30) or third (Acts 15) visit since his conversion.
    - It is likely his third visit, because of the similarities between this private account and the public convention described in Acts 15 (discussed in week 1).
  - “with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me”

- Barnabas' name means "Son of Encouragement" in Aramaic. His cameos in the book of Acts prove he lived up to his namesake (Acts 4:36-37; 11:22-24, 30).
- He was a native of Cypress, one of the earliest Christian converts, and helped convince the other apostles of Paul's legitimacy (Acts 9:27).
- He accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey. The two split ways after arguing over John Mark's inclusion on the second trip (Acts 15:35-39). Paul later acknowledged that Barnabas' faith in Mark was justified (Colossians 4:10; 2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24).

### Paul's Reason

v. 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.

➤ "I went up because of a revelation"

- If the events described here relate to the Acts 11 trip, Paul is probably referring to the global famine prophecy of Agabus (Acts 11:28).
- If this is the visit to the Jerusalem council (Act 15), Paul is likely referring to one of the many special, direct revelations he received from God (Acts 9:4-6; 16:9; 18:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:1-6).
- *In any case, the revelation was given by God, and Paul made the trip to Jerusalem in accord with God's will. (Schreiner)*



➤ "and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles"

- The phrase "those who seemed influential" appears four times in the Greek for this text (Galatians 2:2, 6 twice, 9) and refers to Peter, James, and John.
- Did Paul mean for this to be a dismissive comment or a positive one?

- “in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain”
  - Paul did not need the approval of influential men to validate his ministry. He knew his authority came from God, not men (Galatians 1:1).
  - However, his efforts to preach the gospel would have quickly unraveled if they opposed him. He wanted their approval for support, not authority.

### Paul’s Reiteration

v. 3 But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

- “But even Titus, who was with me”
  - Titus was one of Paul’s most trusted co-workers for the gospel and friend (2 Corinthians 2:12-13; 7:6; 8:6; Titus 1:4-5).
  - He also played a major role in the Corinthian church (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:6, 13-14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18).
- “was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek”
  - Paul was accustomed to use the term “Greek” when referring to Gentiles (Romans 1:14, 16; 2:9-10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Corinthians 1:22, 24; 10:32; 12:13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11).
  - Titus was an obvious choice for this trip because he was an uncircumcised Gentile (and the product of the gospel of freedom the Judaizers were attacking).
 

*Titus, a true Christian, was living and incontrovertible proof that circumcision and Mosaic regulations are not necessary for salvation. (MacArthur)*
  - The fact that the church did not require Titus to be circumcised, provides further evidence that Paul is right and the Judaizers are wrong.

### Paul’s Resolve

v. 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—

- “Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in”
  - False brothers are not true brothers. They are unbelievers who claim to believe.
  - Paul also uses the phrase “false brothers” in 2 Corinthians 11:26.
  - Another way to translate “secretly brought in” is to say they “sneaked in.” They did not accidentally stumble into the church.
  
- “who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus”
  - Freedom is a major theme for this letter (Galatians 4:22-23, 26, 31; 5:1, 13).
  - The word for “slipped in” indicates that they were intruders and interlopers. A similar reference is found in Jude 4.
  - These are not confused Christians. They are spiritual spies!

*The false brothers in Paul’s view were still stuck in bondage, for like prisoners they came to see what freedom in Christ is like. But they did not arrive as prisoners who longed to be free but as those who desired to bring others into bondage with them. (Schreiner)*

- “so that they might bring us into slavery”
  - Slavery stands in contrast to freedom throughout this letter (Galatians 4:1, 7, 22-25, 31; 5:1).
  - In every case, the context refers to the bondage of believing that salvation requires circumcision and the law.
  - Paul will drive this point home (that submission to the law brings slavery instead of freedom) in chapters 3-4.
  - He will also encouragingly urge the Galatians to stand in freedom and reject slavery (Galatians 5:1).



v. 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.

➤ “to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment”

- Paul is using his resolve to serve as an example to the Galatians who are folding under similar pressures by their own infiltration of Judaizer spies.

*To buckle under such pressure constitutes a denial of the gospel, which includes the truth that Gentiles are justified in the same way as Jews, by faith in Jesus Christ. (Schreiner)*

➤ “so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you”

- This is the one true gospel and not a different one (Galatians 1:8-9).
- What would have happened if Paul had capitulated and circumcised Titus?
- *He (Paul) would make considerable concessions in order to accommodate weak Christians, but he would not yield an inch of truth to accommodate false Christians. (MacArthur)*

A final warning from Thomas Schreiner:

*We must be exceedingly careful to make sure we understand someone’s theology before branding anyone as a false brother or sister. To say works are a necessary evidence of salvation is not the same as saying that works are the ultimate basis of our salvation. As we will see in the rest of Galatians, to base our salvation on our works denies what Christ did on the cross. Any theology that ultimately locates salvation in ourselves and what we do or accomplish is a false gospel. . . . Do false brothers worm their way into our midst today? Clearly they do.*

---

## Discussion Questions

---

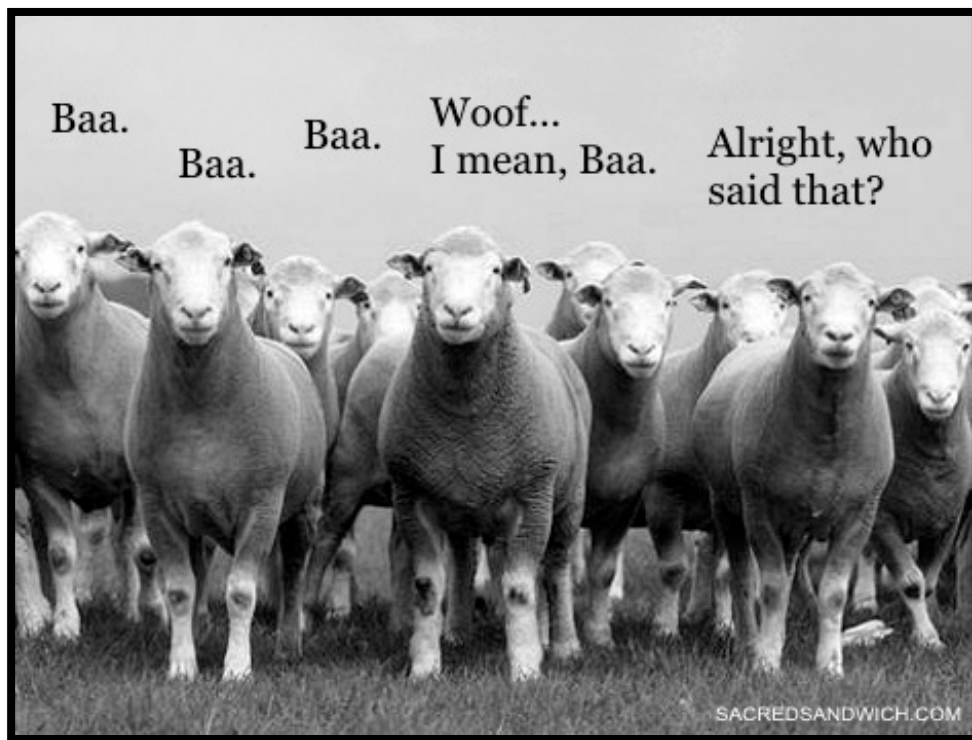
- Is there a difference between false brothers and confused Christians?
- According to Paul and Jude, what is a spiritual spy’s mission?
- How do we know if the truth of the gospel is under attack?
- Why is it important to defend the freedom we have in Christ from the law?

---

## Concise Prayers

---

- Lord, thank you for blessing our lives and the church with faithful men and women (v. 1)
- Your true gospel has been proclaimed to the Gentiles (v. 2)
- The Mosaic law and circumcision is what you require from us (v. 3)
- May we have the wisdom and resolve to defend the freedom we have in you, so the truth of the gospel might be preserved for others (v. 4-5)



“Baa, Baa, Fake Sheep” from The Sacred Sandwich



**PAUL'S CONVERSION  
AND EARLY MINISTRY**

ACTS 9:1-30; 11:19-30; 12:24-25  
GAL. 1:11-24

- City
- ▲ Mountain peak
- ( ) Pass
- Paul sent to Damascus
- Paul spends time in Arabia
- Paul returns to Jerusalem
- Paul flees from Hellenists
- Paul and Barnabas travel to Antioch
- Paul and Barnabas sent to Jerusalem
- Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch
- Kingdom of Agrippa I

118

