

The main point - Paul's burden in this passage is to declare:

- **His shock that the Galatians have strayed from the gospel he preached to them (v1:6-10)**
- **As to the source of this gospel, he is independent from the Jerusalem leaders (v.1:11-24)**
- **As to the content of this gospel, he is in agreement with the Jerusalem leaders (v.2:1-10)**
- **As to the integrity of this gospel, his commitment to maintaining it is unwavering (v.2:11-14)**

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

(1:6-9) There is one gospel, don't abandon it

- **? After the opening greeting, how does Paul customarily proceed next? What's different about Galatians?**
 - He usually opens with some form of thanksgiving for what he's seeing God do among the congregations he's writing to, even when those churches have issues that need to be addressed. The contrast is stark with Galatians.
 - Here he launches immediately into a rebuke, astonished at their quick departure from the gospel. Paul's language is reminiscent of Israel's desertions of the Lord for idols where they are described as turning quickly from the way:
 - Exodus 32:8; Deut. 9:16 -
The Lord said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; ⁸ they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it,
The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Ex 32:7–8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
 - Judges 2:17 -
¹⁶ Then the Lord raised up judges, who delivered them out of the power of those who plundered them. ¹⁷ Yet they did not listen even to their judges; for they lusted after other gods and bowed down to them. They soon turned aside from the way in which their ancestors had walked, who had obeyed the commandments of the Lord; they did not follow their example
The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version. (1989). (Jdg 2:16–17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.
- **? Who are the Galatians abandoning? How are they doing it?**
 - They are abandoning the God who has called them in his grace ((cf. Rom 4:17; 8:30; 9:12, 24; 11:29; 1 Cor 1:9, 26; 7:15, 17–24; Eph 1:18; Phil 3:14; 1 Thess 2:12; 4:7; 5:24; 2 Thess 1:11; 2:14; 2 Tim 1:9)
 - They are doing this by turning to a different gospel, which is really no gospel at all. That's the meaning of what he's saying here in v7 - these false teachers are teaching you something that is such a perversion of the gospel that it has become altogether different from the one true gospel. In fact no one would even call it a gospel except that they're trying to confuse you and lead you astray.
 - **? In what way are the agitators distorting the gospel of Christ?**

- They were teaching that the Messiah was a servant of the Torah. Essentially, the gospel starts with the coming of the Messiah, but finds its fulfillment in the law. (Cf. Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-4). The vindication on the last day ("justification") will come to those who are part of the people of God, and the way you can tell that in the present is those who faithfully hold to the Torah, in particular who are circumcised and keep the Sabbath and food laws.
- Two implications of what's being said here:
 - Turning to a perversion of the gospel is a desertion of God himself
 - **? How does distortion = desertion?**
 - They so perverted the message as to render it not the gospel at all. The message had been transformed from a focus on Christ and the cross to a focus on the Torah. Going after this "gospel" would be effectively an abandonment of the true gospel.
 - It is not only an abandonment of the message, but a desertion of the God who brought the message and called them to faith in it. What's at stake is nothing less than a rejection of the creator God and his Messiah.
 - A perverted gospel is really no gospel at all
- **? How do we recognize the true gospel vs distortions?**
 - Put simply, the true gospel is the message that has been proclaimed and that which was received and passed down from the Messiah - the apostolic tradition, which is founded upon the Scriptures of the Old Testament
 - Key OT Background for the word Gospel:
 - Isaiah 40:9
 - Isaiah 41:27
 - Isaiah 52:7
 - Isaiah 61:1-2
 - Joel 3:5 LXX: "And it shall come to pass [that] whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved: for in mount Zion{gr.Sion} and in Jerusalem shall the saved one be as the Lord has said, and they that have glad tidings preached to them, whom the Lord has called."
 - Key NT Texts in Paul:
 - Romans 1:1-4
 - 1 Corinthians 15:1-5
 - 2 Tim. 2:8
 - Acts 13
 - Summaries of Paul's Gospel:
 - Michael Bird: "God promised in the scriptures that He would renew creation and restore Israel. The gospel is the good news that God has made these promises good in Jesus, the Messiah and Lord. Jesus died and rose for the purpose of atoning for sins, and through faith in Him and His work believers are reconciled to God. The new age has been launched and God has revealed His saving righteousness in the gospel so that He justifies and delivers persons from the penalty and power of sin and death."
 - Key elements:
 - God's promise in the scriptures
 - The renewal of creation
 - The restoration of Israel
 - These promises are fulfilled in Jesus, Messiah and Lord

- He died and rose to atone for sins
- Through faith in Him and his work we are reconciled to God
- In Jesus, the new age has been launched
- God has revealed his saving righteousness, justifying and delivering persons from the penalty and power of sin and death
- Trevin Wax: "In the beginning, the all-powerful, personal God created the universe. This God created human beings in His image to live joyfully in His presence, in humble submission to His gracious authority. But all of us have rebelled against God and, in consequence, must suffer the punishment of our rebellion: physical death and the wrath of God. Thankfully, God initiated a rescue plan, which began with His choosing the nation of Israel to display His glory in a fallen world. The Bible describes how God acted mightily on Israel's behalf, rescuing His people from slavery and then giving them His holy law. But God's people – like all of us – failed to rightly reflect the glory of God. Then, in the fullness of time, in the Person of Jesus Christ, God Himself came to renew the world and restore His people. Jesus perfectly obeyed the law given to Israel. Though innocent, He suffered the consequences of human rebellion by His death on a cross. But three days later, God raised Him from the dead. Now the church of Jesus Christ has been commissioned by God to take the news of Christ's work to the world. Empowered by God's Spirit, the church calls all people everywhere to repent of sin and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. Repentance and faith restores our relationship with God and results in a life of ongoing transformation. The Bible promises that Jesus Christ will return to this earth as the conquering King. Only those who live in repentant faith in Christ will escape God's judgment and live joyfully in God's presence for all eternity. God's message is the same to all of us: repent and believe, before it is too late. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, and you will be saved."
- **? What's the outcome for those bring a different gospel?**
 - **? What does it mean to be "accursed?"**
 - This is the New Covenant curse, the equivalent of the "devote to destruction" of the OT. At a minimum, excommunication is in view but given the severity of the warning and the impact of following the false teachers, this is a soul-threatening situation with nothing short of eternal damnation.
 - There is an interesting connection between the Anatolian folk beliefs and this discussion of a curse. The folk religion of the regions of Galatian taught strict observance to moral codes and laws, with the threats of cursing for not adhering to them. It's very possible that the Judaizers were playing on these ingrained fears to persuade the Galatians to their message. Paul turns the tables on them, proclaiming that the curse actually comes to those who reject the true gospel.
- **★ KEY POINT #1: All authority is subject to the test of the one true gospel**
 - It doesn't matter what the credentials are of the person bringing the message, the final word and final authority has already been set down in the gospel, the very one that Paul preached to them initially. If he were to come back and preach something else, or if a very angel from heaven were to come preaching a different message, they are not to be followed.
 - A key takeaway here is that all claims to authority should be judged by the standard of the gospel of Christ. It is the last word.
 - **? What are some examples of "new gospels" in our day that are distortions of the one true gospel such that they become no gospel at all?**

- Islam
- Jehovah's Witness
- Mormonism
- Hebrew Roots movement

¹⁰ For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.


(1:10) I'm a servant of Christ, not a man-pleaser

- **? Why include this statement here?**
 - **? What would he be seeking or not seeking their approval regarding?**
 - Option 1: The charge being leveled by the adversaries is that Paul has brought a "half-way" gospel in order to accommodate his message to the Gentiles. "Paul is a man-pleaser" and is trying to be all things to all people just to win converts. He's making the road easier to make the gospel more palatable. In effect, Paul says, "Do you think if that was my motivation, I would be speaking to you the way that I have?"
 - Option 2: The "men" Paul speaks of are the leaders in Jerusalem. The charge leveled against him is that even though he actually believes in circumcision, he preaches the law-free gospel out of submission to Jerusalem. Paul's strong language of cursing would be drawing attention to his fierce commitment to the same gospel he has always preached. In effect, "Clearly, I'm not preaching this out of a desire to please men
 - Commentator: "If anyone has charged Paul with being a "manpleaser" (cf. Pss. Sol. 4:7, 8, 19; Eph 6:6; Col 3:22), then his tone in these verses should be proof enough that he is not. He is decidedly not "all things to all men" (1 Cor 9:22) in the sense that his detractors would have the Galatians believe. As he maintains elsewhere, "We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts" (1 Thess 2:4). From the Jewish/Judaizing perspective, the charge of people-pleasing would have been leveled because superficially it would have appeared that Paul has dispensed with the law only in order to be a successful missionary."
- **? Paul says, if I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ. How is it that seeking to please people is not compatible with being a servant of Christ?**
 - While we can and should contextualize and translate the message, we cannot accommodate the message to the tastes and proclivities of our hearers.
 - **? Have you ever had to choose between pleasing a person and pleasing God? What was the situation and what was the outcome of that?**

¹¹ For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I **received it through a revelation** of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when **he who had set me apart before I was born**, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to **reveal his Son to me**, in order **that I might preach him among the Gentiles**, I did not immediately consult with anyone; ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

(1:11-17) From persecutor to evangelist, by revelation

- **? v.11-12** Constitute the main proposition that he seeks to demonstrate in the rest of Chapter 1 and into Chapter 2. **What is this proposition?**

-  **KEY POINT #2: Paul received his gospel and commission from Jesus Christ himself**
 - Paul's understanding of the gospel came by means of a revelation from Jesus Christ himself. Paul is not dependent on men for what he preaches - the key thing being in view here is that he was not and is not receiving his message from the Jerusalem leadership, but is preaching exactly what he receive from the Lord.
 - While we don't know exactly what Paul's revelation consisted of, we have reported in the Book of Acts a couple instances that show the Lord speaking directly to him on the mission he was to be given.
 - At his conversion: Acts 26:13–23 (ESV)

13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' 15 And I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.' 19 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. 21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: 23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."
 - Praying in the Temple: Acts 22:17–21 (ESV)

17 "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18 and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 19 And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20 And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.' 21 And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.' "
 - Of note in both of those passages is that Paul's mission to the Gentiles in particular is highlighted, and this is the revelation - that Gentiles as Gentiles (rather than becoming Jews) are full-fledged members of the family of God. For example:

Ephesians 3:1–10 (ESV)

1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the

same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

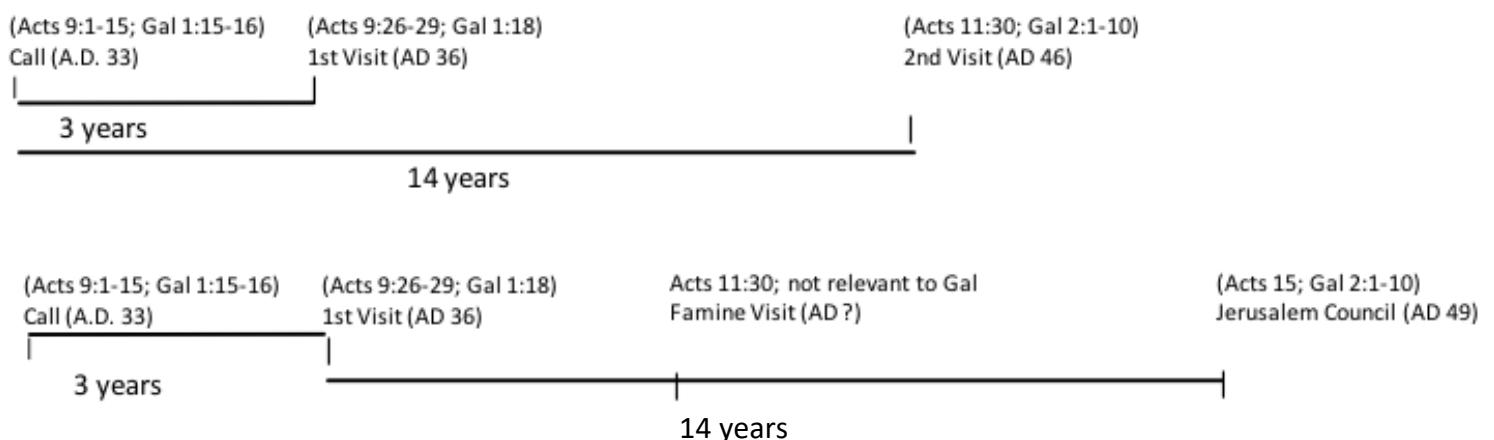
- **? Look closely at the language Paul uses to describe his call in vv.11-17. What picture does he paint?**
 - "Received through a revelation"
 - "revealed his son in me"
 - "that I might preach"
 - "he who had set me apart before I was born" - cf. Jeremiah 1:5; Isaiah 49:1-5; Luke 1:15-16. Paul positions himself on the same level as Old Testament prophets who spoke the very words of YHWH, and as the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah who brings the message of salvation to the nations. This knowledge should color the way the we approach the words of Paul and the authority we grant to them. Paul speaks as an authoritative messenger of Christ himself, and is not simply a delegate of Jerusalem.
 - **? How should the reality that Paul was a prophet of God of the same class as the OT prophets influence the way we view his message?**
- The remainder of this chapter and into the next defend this position by a narration of his call and key points in his ministry.
- **★ KEY POINT #3: Paul is well-versed in separatist Judaism, and was called out of it by the grace of God**
 - **? What kind of Jew was Paul before his conversion?**
 - Paul was well-versed in Judaism, excelling above all of his peers in his adherence to the traditions of the law
 - He describes himself as a Pharisee, full of zeal. His behavior reported in the book of Acts confirms the picture we painted earlier in the study that zeal was "something you did with a knife."
 - Two features of this 'zeal' are particularly relevant if we are to understand what it was that Paul felt so deeply and what it was in turn that he reacted against.
 - One is that such zeal was characteristically directed towards the preservation of Israel's purity and distinctiveness—from intermarriage which breached Israel's ethnic identity, and from syncretistic influences which diluted Israel's dedication to Yahweh alone and the purity of the cult...To be noted is the fact that such zeal was directed more against fellow Jews who were seen as such a threat, than against outsiders as such. It was presumably because Paul saw the new Jesus movement as just such a threat that he had taken up the task of persecution.
 - The other relevant feature of this zeal is that it was consistently expressed in violent activity—typically in taking the sword against those who were seen as breaching these boundaries. Against this background, the violence of Paul's actions against the early Christian movement, or the Hellenists in particular, should not be wondered at.
 - Paul's agenda as a "zealot" is well summarized in that:

- (1) he was zealous for Israel's God and for the Torah;
 - (2) he intended that he and others should keep the Torah so wholeheartedly in the present that they would be marked out as those who would be vindicated on the great coming day of the Lord when he finally acted to redeem his people;
 - (3) he intended to hasten this day by forcing other Jews to keep the Torah in his way, using violence if and when necessary
 - **? What's significant about Paul's pre-Christian background and particularly relevant to the controversy in Galatia?**
 - Obviously, the stark transformation that has taken place. One who was once a persecutor is now a preacher.
 - **? Why does God often seem to choose the most unlikely of candidates for his service? What are some other biblical and non-biblical examples of this?**
 - This is one of the clearest biblical examples of God's sovereign purpose in carrying out his plans.
 - The other significant aspect to this is that Paul has been where the agitators want to take the Galatians, and where they are being tempted to go. Imagine an ex-Gangster speaking to young people being drawn into that life, and he says, essentially, "I was as deep as you can get into it, I've been there and speak as one who's seen the direction you're headed."
 - Paul, being a Jew of Jews, and having come to know the Messiah, speaks as one who can tell them authoritatively how they should approach the Torah now that he has come. He, of all people, would have had not reason to leave Judaism, yet so significant was this revelation of the Messiah to him and now through him, that it has completely reshaped his commitments, priorities, and his ultimate mission.
 - **? What challenge does the example of Paul's conversion provide to us?**
 - Complete reordering of our priorities and allegiances
 - A call to abandon all
 - Paul recounts his conversion and call to mission, and then emphasizes that he did not consult with anyone, nor go up to Jerusalem, but went away into Arabia and then returned to Damascus.
 - **? What's the point here in v.17?** He accomplishes several things:
 - He acknowledges the legitimate and prior apostleship of those in Jerusalem
 - He claims apostleship for himself on the same level as them, just later in time
 - He demonstrates that he already had a gospel to proclaim before he ever met with the other apostles.
 - Not only did he not go to Jerusalem, but the areas that he goes to are far outside of the jurisdiction of the Jerusalem apostles, and yet there he is preaching the same gospel.
- ¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) ²¹ Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God because of me.*

(1:18-24) Then I visited Peter and James, but no others

- ★ **KEY POINT #4: Paul is acquainted with, and in agreement with, the Jerusalem apostles, but not dependent upon them**
 - After 3 years, Paul visits Peter - the word 'visit' here carries the connotation "get acquainted with" or "get some information from" - it's just ambiguous enough for Paul's purpose here. He met with Peter, and likely learned some things from him about Christ's teaching and the mission of the apostles, but it's not as if Peter taught him the gospel.
 - The only other person he saw was James, the Lord's brother.
 - **? Was James one of the apostles?**
 - There has been an ongoing question whether the Lord's brother was considered an apostle in the technical sense of the word. Some people point to v18 here as evidence that Paul viewed him as such. The grammar could technically go either way:
 - "I saw none of the other apostles, except James the Lord's brother", or
 - "I saw none of the other apostles, only James the Lord's brother"
 - However, it's most likely that Paul is considering James an apostle like himself.
 - After those small encounters, he left without developing personal acquaintance with the rest of the churches in the region. However, while personally unknown, they did know about him and rejoiced that one of God's enemies had now become his servant.
 - **★ There is encouragement for us in that respect - instead of suspicion, we ought to give glory to God and rejoice when enemies become advocates.**
- **NOTE ABOUT TIMELINE:**
 - The chronological language Paul uses in this chapter is important for understanding where 2:1-10 fits with the Acts 15 council, and when Galatians could have been written. The issue is the "then after" language in 1:18 and 2:1:
 - (1:18) "Then after 3 years..."
 - (2:1) "Then after 14 years..."
 - The assumption is that the chronology begins at Paul's conversion, but it's not clear whether he speaks of consecutive or overlapping periods. In other words:
 - "I was called by Christ, then 3 years later I went to Jerusalem, and 14 years after that I went back to Jerusalem" - implying that the events in 2:1-10 were 17 years after his call. If this is the way it's to be understood, then it pretty much requires that 2:1-10 be the same event as the Acts 15 council and a later date for Galatians.
 - "I was called by Christ, then 3 years after being called I went to Jerusalem, and then 14 years after being called I went back to Jerusalem" - implying that the events were 17 years after his call. This would allow an earlier date for Galatians.

Possible Timelines:



¹ 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.

(2:1-10) After more than a decade, my gospel to the Gentiles confirmed by Jerusalem

- **?** Before getting into the specific details, what's Paul's point with this section? What does he want to get across here?
 - Regardless of the specific details of this passage, the point within context is fairly straightforward:
 - (1) that though he met with Peter and James at Jerusalem three years after his conversion, a much longer period elapsed (“fourteen years later”) before he met with the body of apostles and leaders at Jerusalem;
 - (2) that he went to Jerusalem in response to a divine revelation and not at the request of the Jerusalem authorities or to submit himself to them; and
 - (3) that the result of meeting with the so-called pillars of the Jerusalem church was their full recognition of the validity of his Gentile mission, which they accepted as parallel to their own Jewish mission.
- **?** What's the revelation he refers to in v.1?
 - While the reason for bringing it up is quite clear, what he doesn't make clear is what this revelation was. If we accept the early timeline for Galatians, then it would be possible to associate the revelation with the prophecy of Agabus regarding the coming famine in Acts 11:27-30.
- **?** Though Paul did not get his gospel from the Jerusalem leadership, he does come and set it before them to ensure that he was "not running in vain. **What would have been considered running in vain?**
 - Paul had been preaching (and was convinced of) a gospel to the Gentiles that allowed them full standing in the one people of God without becoming circumcised. If the leaders in Jerusalem had concluded a different way on the issue than there would have been an irreparable split in the Church between gentile factions and Jewish factions. Essentially, you would have two churches divided along ethnic lines, which would have rendered void the very foundations of what Paul proclaimed (cf. Ephesians 2:14-22)
 - The fact that they didn't conclude differently adds weight to his argument of essential agreement while maintaining independence.

- **? Why might Titus have been compelled to be circumcised?**
 - Titus was a Greek and in Acts 2:1-10 essentially becomes a test case for the question of circumcision. If he was not compelled to circumcision by the Jerusalem apostles, then it can be concluded that the Galatians should also not be compelled to be circumcised, contrary to the Judaizers claims.
 - Paul demonstrates that the conflagration about circumcision was brought up by "false brothers" and that he and the Jerusalem apostles stood united on the issue.
- **? Who are the "false brothers"? What are they "spying" out? How did they try to enslave him?**
 - The 'false brothers' speaks from Paul's vantage point - those who claim to be Christians, but whose teaching is subversive to the very foundation of the gospel.
 - They were giving Paul's message a hearing in order to subvert it.
 - Expressed in their own terms, the concerns of this group's members would be quite other: to ensure that the new movement within Judaism remained true to the principles and practices of the covenant clearly laid down in the Torah (even as interpreted by Jesus), reinforced by the Maccabean crisis, and promoted particularly by the Pharisees. The argument used by Eleazar to Izates, king of Adiabene, who round about this very time became a proselyte without being circumcised, may well be like the arguments used by the 'false brothers': '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' (Josephus, *Ant.* xx.44–5).
 - The enslaving was precisely what it is throughout Galatians - bringing the Gentiles under the bondage of the Torah. There is an irony here in that the law was originally a gift following liberation, and the freedom movement of the Maccabean era was to reintroduce adherence to the law.
 - Commentator: "So ironically, the Torah was the emblem of Israel's release from Egypt, "the house of bondage."16 Moreover, only two hundred years before this letter, the war of liberation from Israel's Syrian captors was nothing other than a fight on behalf of the law. Many "freedom fighters" died that the nation might enjoy deliverance from its pagan oppressors. But now Paul declares that life under the law is a new form of slavery in comparison to the liberty bestowed on the new people by the Lord who is the Spirit (2 Cor 3:17). This is why he emphasizes that our freedom is "in Christ Jesus." Union with Christ means deliverance from sin and the burden of the law (Acts 13:39; Rom 6:7, 18; cf. Matt 11:28-30; Acts 15:10), not enslavement to the values of the old creation (Gal 4:3, 9)" (Garlington)
- **? Compare this incident with Acts 16:1-3. How do you explain the differences here?**
 - **? What lesson is there in this with regards to our approach to Christian liberty?**
 - **? How do you know when it's appropriate to compromise and when it's not? What are some matters of believe or practice that we should never compromise on?**
- The result of this meeting between Paul and "the pillars" in Jerusalem is that they acknowledge the grace of God at work in Paul, and established an agreed strategy of Paul's mission to the uncircumcised, and Peter's mission to the circumcised.
 - Just like in Acts 10, where Peter and the other saw that God had granted the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles at the preaching of the gospel, and had submitted to what God was doing, so now in Jerusalem they recognized the Spirit's work in the preaching of Paul just as it had been in that of

Peter. The conversation was not a strategy session on how ministry should best proceed in light of our understanding, but an attempt to discern what God was actually doing and then discern the proper response in light of that.

- The one thing they ask him to do is to remember the poor, speaking particularly of the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul devoted a great amount of energy in his endeavors to take up a collection among the various churches and bring them to Jerusalem for relief of the poor, so this request was right in line with what he wanted to do.
 - ★ Gospel mission and service to the needy go hand in hand in this case, as it should in our own lives

To sum up the rhetorical force of Paul's letter to this point:

- **His shock that the Galatians have strayed from the gospel he preached to them (v1:6-10)**
 - **Such abandonment leads to a curse**
- **As to the source of this gospel, he is independent from the Jerusalem leaders (v.1:11-24)**
 - **Paul speaks as a prophet of Christ Jesus himself**
- **As to the content of this gospel, he is in agreement with the Jerusalem leaders (v.2:1-10)**
 - **Requiring circumcision for Gentiles is to bring them into slavery**

God is:

- The one who calls us in the grace of Christ
- The source of the one true gospel
- Jealous that the truth be protected and proclaimed
- The one who redeems his enemies and brings them into willing service to himself
- One who shows no partiality