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False Brothers slipped in to Spy Out our Freedom in Messiah 2: 3-5

False brothers slipped in to spy out our freedom in Messiah DIG: How does Paul confront those who believe Gentiles had to first become Jewish to be really believers? How did the decision about Titus confirm Paul's message? Give the charges against him (1:10), why was this a critical issue for Paul? Given the position of Peter, James, and John, how would their approval of Paul's message validate his claim in 1:11-12? How does caring for the poor relate to preaching the gospel (Galatians 2:10; Acts 11:25-30)?

REFLECT: How do you feel when your beliefs run counter to popular opinion? What would you have done in Paul's position? What would it matter to you if Paul's argument had lost out? What forms of legalism have you had to confront today? Have there been times in your life when you have begun to think that your performance counts toward salvation? What caused you to think this way? ADONAI sent Peter to take the gospel mainly to his fellow Jews, and He sent Paul to take the gospel mainly to Gentiles. To whom has God sent you? Are you ready to share your testimony in a couple of minutes?

Paul brought Titus with him to a meeting with the apostles to seek their endorsement for his gospel to the Gentiles. Had Paul been unwilling to wage this spiritual warfare, the Church might have become nothing more than a Jewish sect, preaching a mixture of Torah observance and grace. But because of Paul's courage, the gospel was carried to the Gentiles with great blessing.

48 BC

Galatians 2:1-10 would appear to refer to an earlier private meeting between **Paul, Barnabus, James, Peter,** and **John** at which an already-determined decision

to let **Peter** concentrate on **Jewish** and **Paul** on **Gentile** evangelism was ratified. Behind this decision would seem to lie the conviction that **the Gentiles** were not required to be circumcised – a fact that **Peter's** initial behavior supports.

It was because of a revelation from God Himself that Paul went up and presented to them the Good News that he proclaimed among the Gentiles. It is possible that **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** spoke to the leaders of the Antioch church, along with **Paul**, just as **He** had done when **Paul and Barnabas** were commissioned for **their First Missionary Journey** (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click [Bm](#) - Paul's First Missionary Journey**). In any case, the matter was resolved when **Paul**, divinely appointed to go up to **Jerusalem**, was obedient, and the Antioch church affirmed that command by giving their blessing.

There were two councils; there was a public council and a **private** council. The **private** one is spelled out here with the three key elders of the Messianic community in **Jerusalem, James, Peter and John. But I did so privately to those who seemed to be influential (2:2).** **Paul** was received in brotherly fellowship, and had been accorded full recognition as the apostle to **the Gentiles**. Thus, **he** again demonstrated **his** entire independence of any human authority. After the private meeting, it must have been agreed among all the parties that a larger public meeting among the other apostles, elders and members of the Messianic congregation at **Jerusalem**, other local Messianic congregations, as well as the elders of the Antioch church needed to be included in the decision to gain a larger consensus. The word went out, and after a time, the public council took place.

Paul took **Titus** with **him** and probably asked **him** to share **his** testimony before the whole council. Can you share your story before others? Every believer should be able to tell their story of salvation. **Yet not even Titus who was with me, a Greek, was forced to be circumcised. Now this issue came up because of false brothers who secretly slipped in to spy out our freedom in Messiah** (also see **Acts 15:1**), **in order to bring us into utter bondage**, the slavery of obedience to the 613 commandments of Moshe (**2:3-4**). The people who **Paul** is talking about were **Judaizers** (see **[Ag](#) - Who Were the Judaizers**), or **false brothers** (Greek: *pseudadelphos*), who had been claiming apostolic approval of **their** perverted gospel. Although **the Judaizers** did not proclaim **the same gospel** as taught by **the Twelve**, **they** knew **they** needed apostolic confirmation in order to be taken seriously. **They** therefore made-up a lie that **their** message was approved by **the apostles** in **Jerusalem** and that **they** were among **the apostles'**



acknowledged representatives.⁴⁷

Those **Judaizers** were like spies who were determined to discover weak points in the enemies' military position. **They** claimed to be believers, but when **Paul** would start a new church in a new city, after **he** left those **Jewish unbelievers** would swoop in to try to confuse the baby believers into thinking they had to be circumcised, follow the 613 commandments of the Torah and **the Oral Law** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei - The Oral Law**). **They** are the ones who are **cursed** in **Galatians 1:8**. **Peter** basically told **Simon** the sorcerer: **May your silver go to ruin, and you with it** (J. B. Phillips' rendering, "To hell with you and your money!" conveys the actual sense of **Peter's** words) because **he** was a **false brother** (see the commentary on **Acts Ba - Simon the Sorcerer**).

The Judaizers stood up and declared: **Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses you cannot be saved** (see the commentary on **Acts Bs - The Counsel at Jerusalem**). **Believers** are never cursed in the Scriptures. At worst, if a **believer** teaches false doctrine or continually drags **ADONAI's** name through the mud, the Bible tells us to **turn him over to Satan for the destruction of his fleshly nature, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Yeshua (First Corinthians 5:5)**. And **Paul** was beyond aggravated (see **3:1, 3:3, 4:19-20, 5:12**).

But we did not give in to the Judaizers even for a moment, so that the truth of the Good News might be preserved for you (2:5). **Paul** stood his ground. How important were **Paul's** actions? The entire status of **Gentile** believers was involved in the case of **Titus**. The question as to whether the Church was to be merely a modified form of **Judaism** or a system of pure grace, was at stake. Salvation equaling faith-plus-nothing was on trial. Circumcision would have set it aside. The phrase **be preserved** is from the Greek word *diameno*. The idea of firm possession is present in the compound verb. **For you** is from *pros humas*. The idea is not that of simple rest. The preposition expresses the relation of an active bearing on life. One could translate **for you**, and paraphrase it: *with a view to your welfare*.⁴⁸

Not only did the **Jerusalem** council approve **Paul's** gospel of salvation equals faith-plus-nothing, and oppose **the Judaizers**, but **they** also encouraged **Paul's** ministry and recognized that **ADONAI** had committed **Gentile** evangelism into **Paul's** hands. **They** could add nothing to **Paul's** message or ministry, and **they** dared not take anything away from it. **They** were in agreement. There was only one



gospel to preach to **Jews** and Gentiles alike. Therefore, **James**, the leader of the Messianic community in **Jerusalem**, wrote a letter to be circulated to all the other churches (see the commentary on **Acts [Bt](#) - The Council's Letter to the Gentile Believers**).

We need to recognize the fact that **God** calls people to different ministries in different places, yet we all preach/teach the same **gospel** and are seeking to work together to build **Messiah's** Church made up of **Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14)**. Among those who know and love **Yeshua**, there can be no such thing as competition. **Peter** was a great man, the leading apostle, yet he gladly yielded to **Paul** - the newcomer - and permitted **him** to carry on with **his** ministry as **the Lord** led **him**. In **Galatians 1**, **Paul** explained **his** independence from **the apostles**; now in **Galatians 2**, **he** points out **his** interdependence with **the apostles**. **He** was free, and yet **he** was willingly in fellowship with **them** in the ministry of **the gospel**.⁴⁹