



## Does the Apostle Paul Contradict Himself? (Part II)

### Contradictions Series

**Galatians 6:2,5: (KJV) <sup>2</sup>*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.* <sup>5</sup>*For every man shall bear his own burden.***



In many ways, the Apostle Paul can be likened to a magnet. Over the last two thousand years, his preaching, teaching and writing have attracted countless millions to seek out what being a Christian really means. He was a leader in every sense of the word. He lived his faith in Jesus Christ without reservation, and Christians throughout the age have been inspired by his example. The Apostle Paul was also a magnet for trouble. His ministry drew incredible conflict and persecution and even led to his death. Today, the same controversy surrounds his legacy. While so many of us cling to his example and teaching, others are repelled by him and label him as a self-contradicting, hypocritical deceiver. Who is right? Was Paul a teacher of truth or contradiction?

This is part two of a four-part series about the Apostle Paul.

We expect atheists to have unresolved issues with the Bible, but we are surprised that there are many sincere Christians who are having difficulty with apparent contradictions in his life and teachings. We gathered some of the most often-cited problems and are addressing them one at a time. Please see [Ep.1111: Does the Apostle Paul Contradict Himself? \(Part I\): Contradictions Series](#). As a quick reminder, we offered four basic rules when examining Scriptures that LOOK like they contradict each other. Briefly, it could be a copy or translation error, differing eyewitness accounts, context of the writings and context of time; meaning all Scriptures do not apply to all people at all times. Last week many of the contradictions raised were resolved by simply reading the context, and we will find that with some on this program as well.



**Introduction, *The Apostle Paul Was the Anti-Christ According to the First Christians*, [christian-dilemmas.com](http://christian-dilemmas.com)**

- *Remember, the word "apostle" was reserved for those who were with Jesus and witnessed his doings. Paul claimed to be an apostle and the Christian Church calls him an apostle, even though he was not involved or even knew Jesus. He had died long before Paul.*
- *Well, if you take the conventional Christian-Lutheran sort of view of Paul, he is a convert from Judaism to Christianity.*
- *Paul not only becomes a follower of the sect he persecuted but imagines himself to be an apostle and an authority on Jesus. Out of nowhere the guy says, "You know, I'm not only a Christian, I'm an apostle. I'm on the level with the guys Jesus actually taught."*

It is a scriptural absurdity for them to say Paul made himself to be an apostle.





CONTRADICTION -  
or needing a  
clear explanation?



Is bearing the  
*burdens of others*  
the way to go, or are we  
supposed to each be responsible  
*for our own burdens?*

Which is it?

Paul says we should bear  
**ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS.**

Galatians 6:2: (KJV)

*Bear <941> ye **one another's**  
**burdens <922>**, and so fulfil the  
law of Christ.*

Three verses later he says  
we should bear  
**OUR OWN BURDENS.**

Galatians 6:5: (KJV)

*For every man shall  
**bear <941> his own burden**  
**<5413>**.*



**Bear:** Strong's #941 *bastazo*; to lift, literally or figuratively  
(endure, declare, sustain, receive, etc.)

The King James Version translates this word as: bear, carry, take up

We are not trying to retract or rephrase Paul's words; we are simply trying to understand what Paul is saying to find the truth of the matter.

Are we supposed to bear our burdens individually or collectively? We read both verses from the King James Version, each which use the same word *burden*. It seems silly to think the Apostle Paul - or anyone for that matter - would make a completely opposite statement in the same paragraph.



We need to look closer at the context because if we understand the context and the words, we can find the answer:

The answer seems so obvious that it seems the people raising the question really do not want an answer.

Paul's letter to the Galatians has six chapters. He begins his closing words of this letter by encouraging tender compassion towards the brotherhood based on personal humility and the importance of pulling our own weight.

Galatians 6:1-5: (KJV) *'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*



*If a man be overtaken in a fault* was read from the King James Version, but the New International Version says: *...if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.* It is our obligation to humbly and kindly try to help them find the right path back without getting stuck in whatever sinful thoughts and practices they are dealing with. When the text says *being overtaken* or *caught in a sin*, it suggests that maybe this took the person by surprise. For our day, this might be an addiction or an inappropriate attraction to something or someone is what could take us by surprise.

### Now the application:

<sup>2</sup>Bear ye one another's **burdens** <922>, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

**Burden:** Strongs #922 *baros*; weight; in the New Testament only figuratively, a load, abundance, authority

These burdens are extra heavy loads or experiences that are difficult to handle alone. We are all tempted by different things and need to work together to fight off Satan. I am *my brother's keeper*. We are accountable to each other. We need to step in with a spirit of love, responsibility and honesty, not with gossip or judgments.

### Next comes another warning to be humble, and for each to be fully accountable for themselves:

<sup>3</sup>For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. <sup>4</sup>But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

(Source: Commentary by Albert Barnes) He will not be dependent on the applause of others for happiness. In an approving conscience; in the evidence of the favor of God; in an honest effort to lead a pure and holy life, he will have happiness.

### Paul's next statement is about accentuating our personal responsibility towards God:

<sup>5</sup>For every man shall bear his own **burden** <5413>.

**Burden:** Strongs #5413 *phortion*; an invoice (as part of freight), i.e. (figuratively) a task or service



There is NO CONTRADICTION because these are two different words.

Those who say Paul is contradicting himself would benefit from looking into the fact that the English language and different translations may not express the actual meaning of a word.



## CONCLUSION

It is critical to examine the words and context if we want the truth! Paul is explaining that we need to thoroughly support one another while being diligent to manage our personally assigned responsibilities.

There is no contradiction. We help EACH OTHER BEAR the weight of their experiences, and we take care of what WE are responsible for.

**Paul seems to hint that Satan's role in his life was more overpowering than God. Could this be true?**

We have established that Paul was surrounded by controversy, difficulty and threats. It is reasonable to expect that Satan DID play a major role in his life and ministry. The most important thing to understand is what that role was and what was its results.

Before Paul's conversion, he (Saul) was a persecutor and enemy against Christ. He fit the term anti-Christ - but as Saul - NOT Paul. Jesus showed himself to Saul and gave him a mission, and from that point on he followed Christ.

Peter first, *The Apostle Paul Was the Anti-Christ According to the First Christians, christian-dilemmas.com*

- *But however it happened, he becomes a Christian and decides that the Torah is no longer binding. That Jews may keep it if they wish, but they are grossly mistaken, even to the point of spiritual peril, if they think they must. He describes himself as being born to the Jewish tradition, but he does not think we should follow the Law as Christians. And he's being opposed thereby Cephas, a lot of people say it's Peter, who was an actual disciple of Christ. Now in any argument between Peter and Paul, guess who would have the advantage, right? It wouldn't be Paul; it would be Peter. Peter could say to Paul all the time, listen Paul, "I was with Jesus. I was a friend of Jesus and you are an interloper. You never even met the guy, right?"*

These are dramatic assumptions. The commentary is referencing the time when Paul faces off with Peter because he began to ignore the Gentile Christians and went to sit with the Jewish Christians. Paul corrected Peter. Peter did not always have the upper hand, nor was he always right just because he had been with Jesus. For example, it was not right for Peter to ignore the Gentile Christians.

**Ananias gives us proof that Jesus spoke with Paul:**

Acts 9:17: (NIV): *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."*



CONTRADICTION -  
or needing a  
clear explanation?



Was **GOD** or  
Satan stronger  
in Paul's  
ministry work?

Who is stronger,  
Satan or God?

Paul clearly shows  
**GOD'S STRENGTH**  
in his ministry:

**1 Thessalonians 2:2:** (NASB)  
...after we had already suffered and  
been mistreated in Philippi, as you  
know, **we had the boldness in our God**  
to speak to you the gospel of God  
amid much opposition.



Paul clearly shows  
**SATAN'S POWER**  
to overshadow his ministry:

**1 Thessalonians 2:17-18:** (NASB)  
<sup>17</sup>But we, brethren, having been  
taken away from you for a short  
while—in person, not in spirit—were  
all the more eager with great desire  
to see your face. <sup>18</sup>For we wanted to  
come to you...**yet Satan hindered us.**

Both God and Satan influenced Paul's experiences.

Once again, Paul is never going to contradict himself within a few paragraphs.



We need to understand the immediate and larger context and then we can find the answer:

In Part I of this topic, Episode 1111, we talked about how Paul explained to the church at Thessalonica all of the hardships he was going through. We dealt with a supposed contradiction about whether Paul was a people-pleaser or a God-pleaser.

Here he makes the point that God was stronger than anyone or anything Paul encountered:

**1 Thessalonians 2:1-4:** (NASB) <sup>1</sup>For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, <sup>2</sup>but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. <sup>3</sup>For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; <sup>4</sup>but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.

Paul is focused on being the servant of God. He said, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God. Paul showed the power of God in his every word, move and thought.



Later in the same chapter, Paul is encouraging their continued faithfulness. Notice who he points out is opposing him:

1 Thessalonians 2:14,16-18: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they did from the Jews, <sup>16</sup>hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

There was controversy from their *own countrymen*, especially the spiritual leaders amongst them. This was harsh opposition and they hindered Paul from being allowed back into the city.

Paul next gives the “bigger picture” of the opposition from a different perspective:

<sup>17</sup>But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short while—in person, not in spirit—were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. <sup>18</sup>For we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, more than once—and yet Satan **hindered** <1465> us.

This is where the contradiction seems to arise - *Satan hindered us* so we could not return to Thessalonica. Does this mean Satan was stronger than God?

**Hindered:** Strong's #1465 *egkopto*; cut into, to impede, to detain

The word means cut into, as in breaking up a road or placing an obstacle in the path. Satan did not place flaming demons on the path to the city or whisper in his ear to go to other places. He stirred up controversy using ungodly actions of a mob of those unbelieving Jews to create this circumstance that prevented Paul's trip.

Was Satan's power bigger than God's power in Paul's life?

As we reason through this comparison, let's expand the larger picture:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! <sup>8</sup>Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. <sup>9</sup>And he has said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

God is always stronger, but that does not mean Satan cannot try to trip us up using a variety of methods.



Satan can sometimes try to get us through the experiences of our family. We may have difficult trials with drama and trauma in life. I've had trauma in my own life. It was pointed out to me that Satan tries to get to me through my family. He tries to distract me from doing the spiritual work given to me. We must keep these things in perspective so we can see God's will throughout our experiences. We need to be on guard.





Is Satan stronger or is God stronger?



This comparison requires common sense and does not remotely resemble a contradiction, as the powers of good and evil are always at work in this age. Satan was powerful AND influential, but he could NOT DERAIL THE POWER OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST!

Satan IS powerful and influential, but we cannot be derailed unless we choose to be.

When it comes to biblical controversy, it is amazing how uncommon common sense is. We need to use our heads.

**If humility regarding our lives and experiences is a necessary Christian trait, did Paul not get the message?**

When you think about it, accusing the Apostle Paul of being full of himself is a pretty serious accusation. We know that the 12 Apostles are the twelve pillar foundations of all Christianity. This means they were chosen to be living definitions of Christlikeness for the rest of us. Scripturally, the writings and the experiences of the Apostle Paul were not self-contradictory.

 **Dominant, *The Apostle Paul Was the Anti-Christ According to the First Christians*, [Christian-dilemmas.com](http://Christian-dilemmas.com)**

- *So, it's actually interesting that this non-disciple of Jesus ended up being so dominant in early Christianity because he never met Jesus by his own account. Everything he got, he got from revelation.*
- *How are we to verify that Jesus actually revealed anything to Paul? And clearly a lot of the early Christians did not agree with him.*
- *So, Paul insists in Galatians that he was sent by the resurrected Christ and made the point, "I'm as much sent as you are. And if you knew Jesus before the crucifixion that doesn't make a bit of difference; everything is new now in 2 Corinthians."*

It bothers us that they are essentially trying to throw the Apostle Paul out of the New Testament. Many of the so-called contradictions are in the book of Acts which was written by Luke. If they want to throw out the book of Acts because the Apostle Paul is in it, they may as well throw out the Gospel of Luke. We cannot be pick and choose which pieces of Scripture we want to keep just to feed a pet peeve.



It is ironic that what these people are saying about Paul now is what Paul dealt with firsthand.

CONTRADICTION -  
or needing a  
clear explanation?



Was Paul a  
*humble servant*  
or was he  
*full of himself?*

What do we do now?

Paul says we should  
**NOT BOAST** about our  
virtue or be **PROUD**.

Romans 11:20: (NASB)  
*...stand by your faith.*  
*Do not be conceited*  
(opinionated), but fear...



Paul **BOASTS OF HIS FAITH**,  
and says  
**WE SHOULD TOO**.

Romans 15:17: (NASB)  
*...in Christ Jesus I have*  
*found reason for boasting*  
*in things pertaining to God.*

**Proud:** Strongs 5244 *hyperphanons*; appearing above others

A big complaint of those who oppose Paul is that he was at best overly ambitious, and at worst, downright arrogant. He writes using terms like *my gospel or our gospel or the gospel which I preached to you*. (Romans 16:25, 2 Corinthians 4:3, 1 Corinthians 15:1). There are so many Scriptures that show us how much God values humility. We are not supposed to boast about our virtue or be proud.

1 Peter 5:5: (NASB) *...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the **proud <5244>** but gives grace to the humble.*

Hebrews 3:6: (NASB) *but Christ was faithful as a Son over His house - whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.*

2 Corinthians 5:12: (KJV) *For we... **give you occasion to glory** on our behalf...*

2 Corinthians 11:17: (KJV) *...I speak... as it were foolishly, **in this confidence of boasting**.*

There are 13 times in the book of 2 Corinthians where Paul uses “boast” or “boasting.” We know he used that letter to defend himself against his critics. Please see the **Bonus Material** for a list of Paul’s credentials he used in his defense in this chapter, as they appear in the *Life Application Study Bible Commentary*.





**To add to this list of Paul's supposed arrogance, he wrote:**

1 Corinthians 4:16: (KJV) *Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.*

1 Corinthians 11:1: (KJV) *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

We would assume an apostle would say, look at what Christ did - follow him! Not, hey, watch ME watching Christ.

It is important to understand the attitude of Paul when he says *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*. Follow me in the ways I am following Christ - imitate what is Christlike in me. He was their conduit to show them to Jesus.

Example: Sometimes we wonder why we ended up with Christian Questions. God has given us a wonderful opportunity for over 22 years to talk to the world about the gospel. People may look at us and say, is that bragging? No, this is feeling blessed for this door of opportunity He opened.



**We need to understand the context and the words, and then we can find the answer:**

The problem is simple. We are attempting to compare things that are NOT comparable. **Pride** and **conceit** are a far cry from what **boasting** often means in Scripture.

**Paul here declares what "appropriate boasting" is, and we will quote his Old Testament source as well:**

1 Corinthians 1:31: (NASB) *...as it is written, Let him who **boasts** <2744>, **boast** <2744> in the Lord.*

**Boast**: Strong's #2744 *kauchaomai*; to vaunt (to praise something excessively)

King James Version translates this word: (make) boast, glory, joy, rejoice

Paul is boasting *in the Lord* excessively, and he cannot help himself because the Lord has done so much for him.

Jeremiah 9:23-24: (KJV) <sup>23</sup>*Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: <sup>24</sup>But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.*

If we are wise, do not glory in it. If we are mighty, do not glory in it. If we are rich, do not glory in it. If we are going to glory and praise something excessively, praise the fact that we know God. This was not Paul's definition of appropriate boasting; he was quoting Jeremiah's definition of appropriate boasting.





## Let's go back to the original four boasting Scriptures we read to see if Paul fulfills the standard appropriately:

**Romans 15:15,17-18:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>*But I have written very boldly to you... because of the grace that was given me from God,* <sup>17</sup>*Therefore in Christ Jesus I have found reason for **boasting** <2746> in things pertaining to God.* <sup>18</sup>*For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.*

**Boasting:** Strong's #2746 *kauchesis*; boasting (properly, the act;) in a good or a bad sense

This word is closely related to the previous Greek words. Paul said, *I have found reason for boasting in things pertaining to God.* Paul's boasting is appropriate.

Paul knew it was only because of God's grace that he was able to be a servant of the gospel. He called himself *the least of the apostles*.

**Hebrews 3:5-6:** (NASB) <sup>5</sup>*Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;* <sup>6</sup>*but Christ was faithful as a son over His house—whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the **boast** <2745> of our hope firm until the end.*

**Boasting:** Strong's #2745 *kauchema*; a boast (properly, the objective; by implication, the act) in a good or a bad sense

King James Version translates this word: boasting, (whereof) to glory (of), glorying, rejoice (-ing)

## Think about the attitude of Paul in his ministry:

**Philippians 4:13:** (KJV) *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Paul relied fully on our Lord to see him through every experience.

In **Hebrews 3:6** Paul said, *hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.* The hope Christianity is given is the greatest hope.

There is a difference between Paul being authoritative and 100 percent convinced of his message and being arrogant.

**2 Corinthians 5:12,14:** (NASB) <sup>12</sup>*We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be **proud** <2745> of us, so that you will have an answer for those who **take pride** <2744> in appearance and not in heart.* <sup>14</sup>*For the love of Christ controls us...*

Meaning: I want you to lift up the fact that *the love of Christ controls us*.



**2 Corinthians 11:17:** (KJV) *...I speak...as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.*

Paul is speaking sarcastically here and playing the part of his accusers. For more on how Paul was using sarcasm to make his point, please listen to Part I from last week's podcast.

## Next, let's look at a different type of boasting and what to stay away from:

**2 Timothy 3:2:** (NASB) *For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, **boastful** <213>, **arrogant** <5244>, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy.*

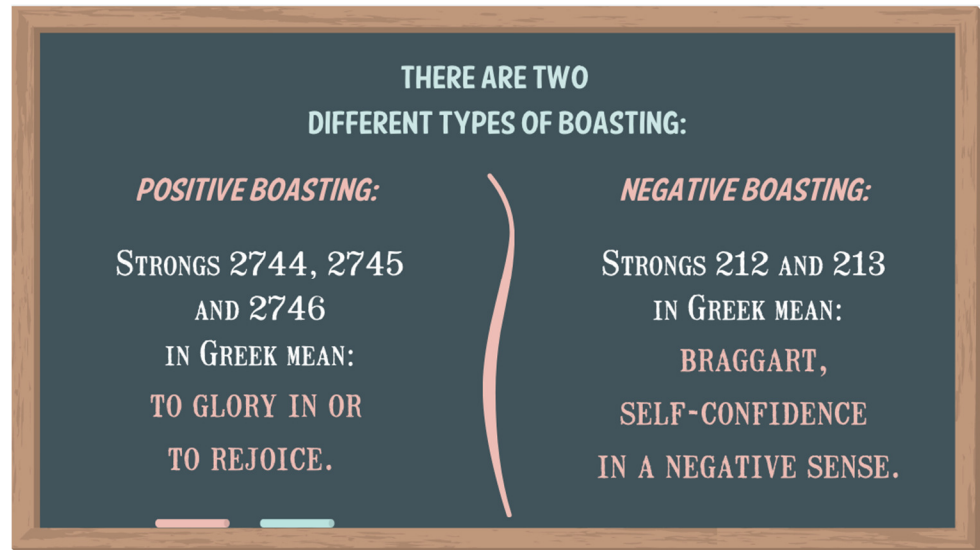


This type of boasting is not lift something up. “Braggarts” focus on the person and their ego.

**Boastful:** Strong's #213 *alazon*; from *ale* (vagrandy); braggart

1 John 2:16: (NASB) *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the **boastful** <212> **pride** <212> of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.*

**Pride:** Strong's #212 *alazoneia*; braggadocio, i.e. (by implication) self-confidence



Every time Paul boasts, it is the appropriate type of boasting in godliness.



I have been faced several times with someone who is going through a difficult new experience they don't understand. And I have gone through that same experience many times with other individuals. Being able to go to that person and say, “Hey look, I have a lot of experience with these things in the past, and I can tell you that your perspective on this is missing a lot. I want you to have confidence in my perspective rather than your own.” Now, is that boasting or is that potentially saving someone's life by showing them there is experience that can help them?



## CONCLUSION

Scriptural comparisons need to be made carefully as the use of words in an ancient language does not always readily coincide with our use of words today.

The Apostle Paul shows us  
**THE GLORYING IN OUR LIVES SHOULD ALWAYS BE TOWARDS GOD AND HIS GRACE.**

*It is far removed from pride and bragging.*

That is what Apostle Paul did. This is a great lesson for us as to what we should and should not “lift up” in our lives. Let us only glory in God.



**We are now clear on what we should honor.  
Does Paul tell us to throw all else onto the scrap heap?**

Because being a Christian is so contrary to our instinctive human nature, the Apostle Paul's teachings were specific about details. Our next area of supposed contradiction deals with how we treat those who do not share our faith. Some say Paul could not decide between being rude and gracious.

 **Ham sandwiches, *The Apostle Paul Was the Anti-Christ According to the First Christians*, [christian-dilemmas.com](http://christian-dilemmas.com)**

- *Now this seems to be the tip of an iceberg, though, where he's trying to decide a larger issue. If these Gentiles, who really like our new religion, want to join but don't want to become Jews - and this is very common, there were loads of Greeks and Romans going to the synagogue every Sabbath. They say, "This is great! This is better than the Pagan garbage we were brought up with; these bed-hopping deities and so on. These people have a real faith here. But to tell you the truth, I don't want to get circumcised. I don't want to stop having shrimp cocktails and ham sandwiches. Do you mind if I just attend and listen to those Scripture in the sermons?" And the Jews said, "Come on, no problem. You're not Jews, but that's alright." Well, that's the kind of issue facing Paul. "I've got these people lining up to be baptized as Christians. Do I have to tell them they've also got to be circumcised and no more ham sandwiches?"*

Enough already! What do they do with the Apostle Peter having the vision of eating unclean meat in Acts 10:9-16? What God made clean was clean. God opened up the way of the Gentiles by relaxing the stringent requirements of the Law. Christianity was not supposed to be just another sect of Judaism. This was a brand-new way opened up by Jesus.



**Ep. 1113: Did the Apostle Paul Contradict Jesus? (Part I)**  
**Ep. 1114: Did the Apostle Paul Contradict Jesus? (Part II)**

This supposed contradiction says Paul differed in how he treated people who did not want to listen to his teachings. Does he make it up as he goes along based on if he liked the person?

**CONTRADICTION -  
or needing a  
clear explanation?**



**Does Paul tell us  
to treat unbelievers  
*rudely* or *wisely*?**



Does Paul tell us we should be  
**RUDE AND AVOID**  
those with false beliefs?

1 Timothy 6:20: (NASB) *...avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge.*

2 Timothy 3:5: (NASB) *holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.*

Should we be  
rude or kind?



Does Paul tell us to be  
**KIND AND GRACIOUS**  
to those with false beliefs?

Colossians 4:5-6: (NASB) *<sup>5</sup>Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*

2 John 1:10: (NASB) *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting.*

1 Peter 3:15: (NASB) *...always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*



**We need to understand the utter simplicity of who is speaking to whom about what, and then we can find the answer:**

Should we be rude or kind? The answer lies in recognizing who is speaking, to what audience and for what purpose. The “this is where you draw the line” texts have to do with protection of the gospel message. For Timothy, he is being taught leadership skills. Paul is showing him how to appropriately stand for truth and then how to teach others the same. They could not let the false teachers who were going around to these new churches infect the message.

1 Timothy 6:20-21: (NASB) *<sup>20</sup>O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called knowledge—<sup>21</sup>which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith. Grace be with you.*

Meaning: You do not have time for the noise! Do not waste your time on what is irrelevant to Christlikeness. Politics is a practical example. Those called to follow Christ are described as ambassadors. We are living in a “foreign country.” Avoid worldly politics, as our goal is Christ.

(Source: Biblical Commentary by Vernon McGee) Science so falsely called should be translated the falsely named knowledge. Paul is speaking of the Gnostic heresy, but this can certainly be applied to all human philosophies.

The Gnostic heresy as the topic was about the acquisition of knowledge. Paul’s advice was, it is not worth it. We end up getting stuck in debates, wasting time. Timothy had bigger things to do as a Christian leader.



## Paul tells Timothy, as a spiritual leader, that he needs to continually build up the body of Christ by focusing them on all things spiritual:

2 Timothy 2:14-16: (NASB) <sup>14</sup>Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless and leads to the ruin of the hearers.

This can bring us way off track.

<sup>15</sup>Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. <sup>16</sup>But avoid worldly and empty chatter, for it will lead to further ungodliness.

Focus on God's work because it is the only place truth will be found.

If anyone knew about wrangling over words, it was Saul, described as a *Pharisee of Pharisees*. They devoted their lives to debating every tiny word, missing that Messiah was right in front of them. See Matthew 23.



Paul is not saying to be rude.  
He is saying to keep our priorities in order.

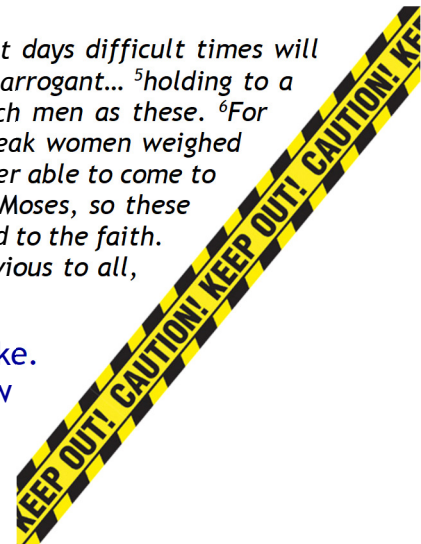
## Paul is here warning against those who take the name of Christ for their own gain and power:

2 Timothy 3:1,2,5-9: (NASB) <sup>1</sup>But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. <sup>2</sup>For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant... <sup>5</sup>holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these. <sup>6</sup>For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, <sup>7</sup>always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. <sup>8</sup>Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith. <sup>9</sup>But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, just as Jannes' and Jambres's folly was also.

Do not waste your time and entertain what is not Christlike.

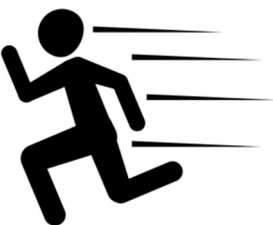
This is not rude. This is instructing a young leader on how to manage his time and manage the time of the flock.

This is setting up a "hedge of protection" around us, thinking in a humble, disciplined manner.



## The Apostle John issues the same warning about those who deceive in the name of Christ. His warning is simple - have nothing to do with them:

2 John 1:7-11: (NASB) <sup>7</sup>For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup>Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. <sup>9</sup>Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the son. <sup>10</sup>If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; <sup>11</sup>for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.





In summary, we are supposed to be kind to those around us, even those who do not believe like we do. However, the things around us are “sticky,” meaning we can get embroiled in debates and the minutiae of life that can take up all our consecrated time that is better spent working on something for the Lord.

We are to be hard-lined when it comes to protecting ourselves from a satanic influence, and there is a special warning to leaders of the church not to let error creep in and hurt the flock.

He is talking about deceivers, using Christ for self-gain, not those who simply disagree with us. This is not mean; this is protection.



Scriptural understanding can only occur when we know who is speaking or writing, to whom they are speaking or writing, and the specifics of what they are addressing. **THE APOSTLE PAUL NEVER TOLD ANYONE TO BE RUDE TO UNBELIEVERS.** He DID instruct Timothy to **avoid** falsehood and **be wary** of those who bring it.

What have we learned here? Stop, think and examine before we decide to speak.

**What about the places Paul went after his conversion?  
Do Paul and Luke contradict each other?**

Once again as we investigate the Apostle Paul's life, we come to another example of detail, this time having to do with how Scripture is written. It is easy to forget that so many different people wrote the different books of the Bible and they often had different objectives in their writing.

The argument critics present is two-fold: First, they say the timeline Paul provides after his conversion in his letter to the Galatians does not match what Luke wrote about him in the book of Acts.

**CONTRADICTION -  
or needing a  
clear explanation?**



**Do Paul and Luke  
*contradict each other*  
regarding when Paul went  
to Jerusalem?**

Second, the book of Acts implies Paul met with ALL of the apostles in Jerusalem, but in Galatians, Paul says he only met with Peter and Jesus' natural brother, James, during that time.

**CONTRADICTION -**  
or needing a  
clear explanation?



**Who did Paul  
meet with  
in Jerusalem?**

Are the Apostle Paul  
and Luke at odds?

**Luke** tells us in Acts  
that **SHORTLY AFTER Paul's  
conversion**, Paul went to Damascus,  
then Jerusalem where he was  
**introduced to the apostles** by Barnabas.



**Paul** tells us in Galatians that  
he made the trip  
**THREE YEARS LATER**,  
then **saw ONLY Apostle Peter**  
and James (Jesus' natural brother).



When we understand the reason and the way things are written, we can find the answer:

Luke was with Paul when Galatians was written. Luke had firsthand knowledge of what happened to Paul. Luke probably wrote Acts at least 10 years AFTER Paul wrote Galatians. Luke had the advantage of seeing the details Paul wrote about his own life.

We will use Paul's own words as our basis of fact. After all, he would certainly know when he was in Jerusalem.





### This account was probably written in around AD 40-50:

**Galatians 1:15-20:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>*But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased <sup>16</sup>to reveal His son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,*

The experience with the conversion and Ananias was so powerful that he had no need to stop and think. He knew what he was supposed to do.

<sup>17</sup>*nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me;*

His conviction was so deep, he did not even need to verify his mission with the apostles.

*but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.*



Paul simply sums up his early ministry.

**He did not give details of his time in Arabia and Damascus, but he did directly line up his conversion with his Jerusalem visit three years later:**

<sup>18</sup>*Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas (Peter), and stayed with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup>But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup>(Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)*

James, the Lord's brother, was not an apostle. He was Joseph and Mary's son and a strong disciple of Jesus.



The first question was, where did Paul travel after his conversion experience? Paul reported this sequence of travel:

1. Conversion on the road to Damascus
2. Goes to Damascus and witnesses about Jesus
3. Goes to Arabia - we are not told what he does here
4. Returns to Damascus
5. Goes to Jerusalem and meets Peter and James, staying 15 days



Paul says, *three years later I went up to Jerusalem*. Does that mean three years from the conversion experience, three years after his second stay in Damascus or that he spent three years in Arabia? We are not given enough information to make a definitive answer. All we know is there was a period of time before he went to Jerusalem.



The second contradiction question had to do with who Paul met with in Jerusalem. Here in Galatians he says he only met with Peter and Jesus' natural brother, James. Paul is being specific because he is once again defending his own position as an apostle. Peter was clearly the chief apostle, but James was the leader of the Jerusalem Conference in Acts 15. By being specific about meeting Peter and James, Paul was showing he was accepted by the authority that others would accept.

Now let's compare the Galatians account Paul gave to what Luke wrote in Acts.

Luke wrote Acts sometime after AD 60. His objective for this writing was to summarize what the apostles did. Not being an eyewitness of many of these events, he learned them from the apostles and others. Luke traveled with the Apostle Paul and would have learned of his conversion firsthand.

Paul was on the road to Damascus when he was converted. As we learned last week in [Ep. 1111: Does the Apostle Paul Contradict Himself? \(Part I\)](#), his conversion story is found in three places:

	Acts 9:3-7	Acts 22:6-9	Acts 26:13-16
<b>Who is speaking?</b>	Luke	Saul	Saul
<b>Who is the audience?</b>	Those hearing or reading the book of Acts	A Jewish mob who physically attacked Saul	King Agrippa

**Here are the events right after the conversion story #1. This is Luke's account of what happened. The sequence of events is compressed:**

*Acts 9:19,22-30: (NASB) <sup>19</sup>and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus. <sup>22</sup>But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ. <sup>23</sup>When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, <sup>24</sup>but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; <sup>25</sup>but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.*

He is converted, and in a matter of days has to run for his life. This shows the zeal he had for Christ. As we shall soon see, this is a natural break in Luke's account in Acts. He reports factual events of times and places, but not all of the experiences. That is left to Paul.

*<sup>26</sup>When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. <sup>27</sup>But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that he had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. <sup>28</sup>And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord. <sup>29</sup>And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death. <sup>30</sup>But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.*



Going back to the first controversy: Notice this account does not mention the trip to Arabia nor the second stop in Damascus. Luke did NOT contradict Paul on the timing of his trip to Jerusalem; rather,



Luke repeats Paul's own telling of the conversion account where Paul talks about going to Jerusalem at some point after the conversion.

Why? Because the other two accounts of Paul's conversion specifically mentioned his trip to Jerusalem. Meeting with the Apostle Peter was a significant verification and beginning to the true ministry of the Apostle Paul. Being converted is one huge milestone. Meeting with the Apostle Peter and beginning the ministry in earnest is another.

	Acts 9	Acts 22	Acts 26
<b>Who is speaking?</b>	Luke	Saul	Saul
<b>Who is the audience?</b>	Those hearing or reading the book of Acts	A Jewish mob who physically attacked Saul	King Agrippa
<b>Where did Saul/Paul go after his conversion?</b>	Damascus then Jerusalem	Damascus then Jerusalem	Damascus then Jerusalem
<i>Paul's letter to the Galatians fills in the details that he went to Damascus - Arabia - back to Damascus between the conversion and Jerusalem.</i>			



Going back to the second controversy: Who did Paul meet in Jerusalem? We read in Galatians 1:18-19 he only met with Peter and James. Here it seems as though Barnabas took him in to meet ALL of the apostles. Which is correct? Did he meet them all or just Peter and James? (Who technically was not an apostle.)

Plausible explanations:

1. *Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles* - Galatians says the "apostles" he met were Peter and James. (James was not one of the 12 Apostles.) Maybe the apostles he met with Barnabas were only these two and the others refused to meet with him or were not there.
2. *Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles* - maybe Barnabas took Paul to ALL of the apostles, but he waited in an outer room while Barnabas tried to convince them to see Paul. Perhaps none except Peter came out to physically meet him.

We do know he met and stayed with Peter. He was able to go around Jerusalem with Barnabas, Peter and James. The details are clear enough as not to be contradictory.

Here are the events right after conversion story #2. Saul is talking to an angry Jewish mob and tells them how a devout man named Ananias helped him.



### Dropping in on Ananias' words:

**Acts 22:15-18:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>*For you will be a witness for him to all men of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name. <sup>17</sup>It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance, <sup>18</sup>and I saw him saying to me, Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.*

Paul mentions Jerusalem. Why? Because meeting Peter was a significant time marker in Paul's life as an apostle. There was no reason to explain to the angry mob that he first went to Damascus, then Arabia, then back to Damascus.



A reporter summing up details and leaving an inconsequential part out does not mean the detail did not happen. It does not mean the reporter is flawed or nefarious.

### Here is post-conversion story #3 - Saul's account before King Agrippa:

**Acts 26:19-21:** (NASB) <sup>19</sup>*So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, <sup>20</sup>but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. <sup>21</sup>For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.*

He mentions Damascus and Jerusalem, but again, no mention of his trip to Arabia or the second trip to Damascus. The most significant parts of Paul's early Christian walk were his conversion and going to Jerusalem. All of the in-between details were about his preparation work to go to Jerusalem.

By this point, Galatians had already been written about ten years earlier. Those tiny details had already been told. There was no reason for Paul to retell them or for Luke to restate them in Acts.

Who was with the Apostle Paul at the very end of his life?

**2 Timothy 4:11:** (NASB) *Only Luke is with me...*

It could be Luke was putting the book of Acts together with the Apostle Paul in his last days. We do not know. But we know they had a close bond in Christ and worked together.





## CONCLUSION

Understanding **WHEN AND WHY** Scriptures were written gives solid insight into how differing accounts fit together.  
**Luke is copying what Paul said (most likely in Luke's presence) about Paul's conversion and his Jerusalem experience three years later.**

Instead of contradiction, we have confirmation. Paul wrote about his experiences. Luke, his Christian friend and brother, brought details together for our benefit.

Sometimes we have to dig deeper to find answers, but we have yet to encounter a contradiction that does not have a spiritually-sound answer.

*So, does the Apostle Paul contradict himself?  
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie) and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!*



Join us next week for our podcast on February 17, 2020  
Ep. 1113: Did the Apostle Paul Contradict Jesus? (Part I)



### Bonus Material

***Controversy equalizes fools and wise men in the same way - and the fools know it.***  
— *Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.*

One other small potential contradiction:

Acts 9:23 - The Jews tried to seize Paul.

2 Corinthians 11:32 - It was the governor who attempted to seize Paul.

These are two details from the exact same event. The players do not change; the focus changes. The Acts account shows that the Jews were just plain angry with Paul, and the 2 Corinthians account shows that the authorities were brought in on behalf of their anger. Both are true.



**Acts 9:23-25: (NASB)** <sup>23</sup>When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him, <sup>24</sup>but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death; <sup>25</sup>but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a large basket.

**2 Corinthians 11:31-33: (NASB)** <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup>In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, <sup>33</sup>and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.

(Source: Biblical Commentary by Albert Barnes) The governor. Greek, ο εθνάρχης, the ethnarch; properly a ruler of the people, a prefect, a ruler, a chief. Who he was is unknown, though he was evidently some officer under the king. It is not improbable that he was a Jew, or at any rate he was one who could be influenced by the Jews, and who was doubtless excited by the Jews to guard the city, and if possible, to take Paul as a malefactor. Luke informs us (Acts 9:23,24) that the Jews took counsel against Paul to kill him, and that they watched the gates night and day to affect their object. They doubtless represented Paul as an apostate, and as aiming to overthrow their religion.

(Source: Life Application Study Bible Commentary) “One of Paul’s biggest problems with the church in Corinth was his concern that they viewed him as no more than a blustering preacher; thus, they were not taking serious his advice in his letters and on his visits. Paul address this attitude in 2 Corinthians, pointing out his credentials as an apostle of Christ and why the Corinthians should take his advice.

2 Corinthians 1:1,21, 4:1	Commissioned by God
1:18, 4:2	Spoke truthfully
1:12	Acted in holiness, sincerity and dependence on God alone in His dealings with them
1:13,14	Was straightforward and sincere in his letters
1:22	Had God’s Holy Spirit
2:4, 6:11, 11:11	Loved the Corinthian believers
2:17	Spoke with sincerity and Christ’s power
3:2,3	Worked among them and changed their lives
3:4, 12:6	Lived as an example to the believers
4:1, 16	Did not give up
4:2	Taught the Bible with integrity
4:5	Had Christ as the center of his message
4:8-12, 6:4-5,9-10	Endured persecution as he taught the Good News
5:18-20	Was Christ’s ambassador, called to tell the Good News
6:3-4	Tried to live an exemplary life so others would not be kept from God.
6:6	Led a pure life, understood the gospel and displayed patience with the Corinthians
6:7	Was truthful and filled with God’s power
6:8	Stood true to God first and always
7:2, 11:7-9	Never corrupted or exploited anyone
6:20,21	Handled their offering for the Jerusalem believers in a reasonable, blameless manner
10:1-6	Used God’s weapons, not his own, for God’s work
10:7,8	Was confident that he belonged to Christ
10:12-13	Would boast not in himself but in the Lord
10:14-15	Had authority because he taught them the Good News
11:23-33	Endured pain and danger as he fulfilled his calling
12:2-4	Was blessed with an astounding vision
12:7-10	Was constantly humbled by a “thorn” in the flesh that God refused to take away
12:12	Did miracles among them
12:19	Was always motivated to strengthen others spiritually
13:4	Was filled with God’s power
13:5-6	Passed the test
13:9	Was always concerned that his spiritual children become mature believers