

# Scenario

Galatians 2:11

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This is an attempt to treat the text of Galatians Chapters 1 and 2 in a realistic manner. These chapters deal with the start of the Apostle Paul's ministry; the section I am most interested in exploring is Paul's confrontation with Peter over theology in Galatians 2:11. I'd like to attempt a Pinter-esque dialog between the two men.

The play in which this scene appears would begin with a theatrical, multi-media, symbolic representation of Saul's conversion experience. The audience would be dropped without warning into frantic clips representing Saul's systematic execution of Christian members of the Jewish community, followed by brilliant light and a confusion of voices which Saul can understand and reply to, but we the audience cannot. He hears Saul's convicted voice, and cuts past to the first real scene. This first scene has Saul/Paul taking his leave of Ananias, somewhat overwhelmed by his conversion experience, headed off into the desert of Arabia. Saul rambles incoherently at times, utters fallacy, blasphemy, and crude theological twistings in his poor understanding of his world-view shift, all of which concern Ananias a great deal. Ananias wants to keep Paul nearby, in Damascus, but at the same time is fearful of reprisal by zealots against the man. Paul is certain he must leave, but perhaps neglects to physically provide for himself and his journey.

The next scene is an awkward dialog between Paul and Peter, upon Paul's return from Arabia, three years later, in Jerusalem. Peter and Paul don't communicate well; it seems to be an encounter between an emotionally-driven, charismatic Paul and an intellectual, rational, conservative Peter. Paul wants Peter's blessing. Peter is increasingly alarmed by Paul's approach to ministry. A moment of confusion where Paul coerces Peter to utter something which Paul can interpret as a blessing, and Paul leaves.

Fourteen years later, Paul returns to Jerusalem. He is bold, confrontational, but utterly unrecognized by the Jerusalem church. He preaches and denounces boldly, outlining his ministry among the Gentiles. Peter (and James and John, who are not represented by actors) are worried about this upstart, but agree that he won't do any harm—perhaps, he may even help, somehow—as long as he stays away from the Jews and works only with Gentiles. Paul, however, is embracing his Jewish heritage, after having been separated from it for fourteen years; Peter has to gently exile him again from his people.

Last scene is Peter visiting Paul in Antioch. Paul denounces Peter's actions to his face, in public; a greeting wholly inconsistent (in Peter's view) with the respect owed to an elder of the Jerusalem church. Paul rebukes Peter for his slavish adherence to the heritage of his people, even when it is at odds with the Gospel Peter preaches. At some point Paul sends away his congregation so the two men can speak privately. It is a tense dialog; Paul uses the same arguments that Peter had advanced before, in Jerusalem, in attempting to exile Paul from Jewish ministry.

PAUL: May God bless your many mercies to me.

ANANIAS: Come on, now, none of that. I'm a man, a Christian like any other.

PAUL: Do all Christians share your power?

ANANIAS: Well, God's gifts are available to all. . .

PAUL: I will heal the blind one day, too.

ANANIAS: Be careful, Paul. The gifts aren't always given in. . .

PAUL: I'll learn. I'll study, harder than before. I'll be given the gifts.

ANANIAS: You need to trust God.

PAUL: I am. I will! I'll work hard.

ANANIAS: Belief isn't something to work at, Paul. You've got to be like a child.

PAUL: That teaching still seems strange. Becoming simple like a child. That can't be what he meant. Surely he meant something deeper!

ANANIAS: There are plenty of mysteries left to be uncovered, Paul. Don't go making the easy things hard.

PAUL: How can I leave now? There's so much I don't know.

ANANIAS: I worry sometimes. But you've been called for a great task.

PAUL: I'm ready.

ANANIAS: No, you're not. You can't do it that way.

PAUL: What's that supposed to mean?

ANANIAS: God is much larger than you. Let him work, and stop trying to carry the world yourself.

PAUL: But. . . I'm not a good man.

ANANIAS: God will use you, Paul.

PAUL: But I don't understand. Anything. I've studied all my life and I feel like I'm starting over.

ANANIAS: Remember the Prophet. Jonah tried his best to flee from God, but God saved a great city through him. You've been running most of your life. But you'll be used to save—maybe many cities. Trust. And pray. Be on your guard.

PAUL: I don't want to run. I killed Christians because I didn't understand how they were so certain of their faith. Now I call myself one, and I still don't understand. How can you say that? How do you know?

ANANIAS: You had God speak to you, Paul. You still can't trust Him?

PAUL: I can trust. I can read the Scriptures and do what it says. But where are the Scriptures to tell me what to do?

ANANIAS: [*Silence.*] The law isn't fixed anymore.

PAUL: What's that supposed to mean?

ANANIAS: I don't know. Find out.

PAUL: I don't know how! I'll be killed when I leave. I need to talk to...

ANANIAS: Right now what you need to do is leave this city. It's not safe. I dearly want you to stay here. I worry for your soul.

PAUL: What do I do? If the ways of my fathers aren't enough? The Messiah has come, changed the rules, and never told me.

ANANIAS: He did, Paul.

PAUL: My name is Saul.

ANANIAS: Your name has changed.

PAUL: Why? I studied the Law and the Prophets as Saul. Why does that all have to be thrown out?

ANANIAS: It doesn't.

PAUL: But everything's changed. I don't know... anything.

ANANIAS: As a little child come to him.

PAUL: I know. I know. I'm sorry. I...

I just don't understand it all, yet.

It's real. I saw it. I saw the light. I just don't know...

*[He kneels.]* I'm sorry.

ANANIAS: *[Quietly.]* Father in heaven, your name is holy. May your kingdom come quickly to this poor earth. Do your will with your child Paul. Guide his ways on Earth, and his soul in heaven.

Provide for his journey today. Feed him and give him drink.

Forgive the wrongs he's done against you. Forgive the wrongs against your church. Help him to forgive those who will make his journey harsh. May your church also forgive him.

Clarify his thoughts. Guard his ways. Keep him from stumbling, correct his misunderstandings. Deliver him from evil.

To you be all glory, honor, majesty and power.

Amen.

*[Paul looks up.]*

You should go now. The sun is almost up.

*[Paul embraces Ananias.]*

God will keep you safe. He doesn't waste miracles on the doomed.

PAUL: *[Smiles.]* Thank you. You've... I wish I could stay.

ANANIAS: As do I. *[Beat.]* Go now.

*[A moment's pause, and Paul picks up a small satchel and moves to the door. Purpose in his eyes.]*

You've got food?

PAUL: *[As he leaves.]* God will provide.

ANANIAS: You didn't pack bread! How...

*[A beat. Quietly.]*

Faith.