

Galatians 2:15–21

- ¹⁵ We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
- ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.
- ¹⁷ “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!
- ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.
- ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.
- ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Our Lives Must Agree with the Gospel **Galatians 2:11–21**

INTRO:

We come on the scene here in **Galatians 2** and stumble on the scene of the Apostle Paul confronting the Apostle Peter over the way he acted.

From our introductory study in Acts we must recognize that at no time did Peter disagree with the Gospel Paul proclaimed. Then the issue was a matter of practice in the life, and not a disagreement over the Gospel Paul and Peter preached.

I. Confrontation (v. 11-14)

II. Rationale (v. 15-21)

I. Confrontation (v. 11-14)

Galatians 2:11-14 *“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the*

truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'

A. Why did the Holy Spirit and Paul put this here? After Paul's assertion of Peter and the other Apostles agreement doctrinally in the paragraph before this one, we can see how a question would rise in their minds when they heard about Peter and Paul's disagreement in Antioch. So, Paul is straight forward in presenting the facts of that encounter.

"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision."

B. Notice the issue was not doctrinal. Rather, it was a matter of "unintended consequences" on Peter's part. We hear the issue very clearly. The issue is table fellowship with Gentile believers in the church.

C. The issue that everyone seems to gravitate too is the Levitical food laws. But the deep seated despising of the Gentiles is more the problem. Remember the unnamed prophet in **1 Kings 13-14**? Because he had table fellowship against the expressed command of God he was killed. This shows how important it was in the mind of the Jews to not have table fellowship with one who is unclean. They assumed all Gentiles were unclean.

D. Paul recognized that Peter's action which drew the other Jewish believers away from their Gentile brothers in Christ implied the Gospel was not true!

"And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."

They were not heretics, they were hypocrites. A hypocrite is a person whose activity denies their core values. Paul accused Peter of believing one thing and living in a way that undermines his supposed belief.

"But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'"

II. Rationale (v. 15-21)

A. ***"We who are Jews by nature, and not 'sinners' of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, in order that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified"*** (Galatians 2:15-16).

In discussing his rationale with Peter and the others who listened in, he began with the core truth that underlines every believer's life. We are declared righteous before

God not on the basis of works, but because we believe. This is the non–negotiable truth both Paul and Peter believed.

B. *“But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!”*

Paul enters into the Jewish argument leveled against Paul, Peter, and those who teach justification is based on faith alone. This is the Jewish argument, *‘If we associate with Gentile sinners, according to the Jews we contract their uncleanness and thus are sinners.’* Thus the Lord Jesus has to be a servant of sin. Paul immediately calls this non sense.

C. *“For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.”* To get the point here we need to remember another text.

1. Do you remember the example Paul described in **Philippians 3:5-7**?
“I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.”

2. These are some of the things he destroyed in his life. He could not hold on to the idea that these things brought him salvation. He had to throw them away and believe Christ alone could save! To restore them, to build these walls up again meant his sin was not forgiven.

3. The reason for the statement in **verse 18** is **verse 19**.
“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.”

Paul cannot return to the law as a way of righteousness and salvation because he died to the law. He died to the Law as a means of salvation when he recognized even he the super Pharisee could not keep the law.

D. There is another dimension to this dying to the law.
“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

1. Our dying to the law is pictured in **Romans 8:1–3**.
“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh.” We died positionally to the law as a means of

salvation in the death of Christ. However, that event had far reaching effects in our lives.

2. One result is that the old “I” in Adam died, and a new self was created.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*

Another main difference is that Christ lives in me. Not that our personalities are destroyed, but life is living out an internal relationship with Christ.

3. This ultimately means, what I believe changes how I act.

“The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Our lives are lived with an eye to what our faith in Christ teaches us.

E. *“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”*

Here is a summary and a premise for the next chapter. If salvation is not by grace alone, then the death of Christ was meaningless.

What Do We Learn from This?

1. We learn from Peter’s mistake that sin can do more damage than we imagine it could. Peter’s sinful compromise influenced other Jewish believers to follow and said untrue things about the Gospel.

2. We need to be concerned about living out our faith in our lives. We are not perfect or sinless, but our lives need to reflect Christ to others.

3. This reiterates that it is always and only by grace we are saved. Works never could save us and we must be clear, when we come to Christ, we bring nothing of merit. God alone saves us by grace. *“When the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”* (Titus 3:4–6).

Hymn #210 Jesus Paid It All