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Galatians

And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. Galatians 2:13

In the previous verse, it was seen that Peter began to withdraw from fellowship with the Gentiles because of the presence of some Jews who came from James. As Peter withdrew, "the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him."

Peter was considered a pillar and a leader. In his move to apostasy, the other Jews followed ranks as well. They feared that they would lose the approval of other Jews, caring more about what man thought than what Christ offered to them. This became such a strong movement among the Jews "that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."

Barnabas had traveled with Paul on a missionary journey, evangelizing Jew and Gentile. He had received the commission for this while at Antioch. The commission and the missionary journey fill all of Acts 13 & 14 and their work comprised countless miles and encompassed a host of areas. Both Jew and Gentile were preached to and there was intimate fellowship with all who received the gospel. Through all of this, Barnabas had seen the power of the Holy Spirit and had been a close participant in all that occurred.

In verse 2:5, Paul noted that Barnabas had held fast through previous challenges by the false apostles. He stood strong and defended the gospel of Christ. If

anyone should have had the conviction to stand against Peter's hypocrisy, one would think it would be him. But such was not the case. He weakened in his devotion to the truth of the gospel and fell back on the law.

Life application: No person is above waffling on his convictions. We may think we are an unyielding iron wall, but the Bible bears out that even the heartiest soul can falter. Paul's words of 1 Corinthians 10 should be heeded by all -

"Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." 1 Corinthians 10:12, 13

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?"

Galatians 2:14

This verse is perfectly clear on its surface, and yet there are those who can read it - and indeed the rest of the book of Galatians - close their eyes to what is being said, and continue to insist that we are somehow bound to observe the Law of Moses or other Jewish traditions. It is a most curious thing to behold. Paul has noted that Peter had fellowshiped with the Gentiles, but when Jews from James came to Antioch, he started separating himself from those same Gentiles and causing the other Jews to separate from them. Even Barnabas was found to be "carried away with their hypocrisy."

And so Paul, the only one left with any intestinal fortitude to stand up for the truth of the gospel, upon seeing "that they were not straight forward about it," took a stand. The word for "they were [not] straightforward" is *orthopodeó*. It's found only here in the New Testament and just looking at it gives one a sense of the Greek meaning. It comes from *ortho*, meaning "upright," and *puos*, meaning "foot." Thus it means "to be straight-footed" and "not shuffling." The idea is that

Peter and the other Jews walked in a manner contrary to the true gospel. They wavered one way and then another.

Because of this, he spoke "to Peter before *them* all." In other words, he openly stated his words in front of everyone. The matter was so severe and the consequences so harmful that he directly challenged this great "pillar" of the church concerning his aberrant conduct. His words to him were, "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?" This is exactly the hypocrisy that he mentioned in the previous verse. The word "being" is set in the emphatic position. It means that Peter was and continued to be a Jew. Because of this, his actions as a Jew and yet a follower of Jesus are what are being challenged.

He was and continued to be a Jew and yet he found it acceptable to live as a Gentile. Why? Because he was freed from the bondage of the law by Christ. In living as a Gentile, he was not living as "Jews." In other words, he had departed from the walk of being a Jew under the law. He was still a Jew, but now freed from what the unconverted Jews were bound by. And yet, by his actions of removing himself from the Gentiles, he thus compelled the "Gentiles to live as Jews." What this means is that he is the apostle; he carried the authority, and he set the example. Through his faulty example, he was sure to cause the Gentiles who had come to Christ to start living as Jews. This would bring them under the law that they never before had and it would set aside the grace of Christ.

Life application: Just because someone is a Jew; just because someone speaks Hebrew; just because someone was born and raised in Israel; or for any other "just because," we are not to follow them and take up their practices. Instead, we are to follow the word of God which is given for us to follow Christ. The word of God clearly shows that we are free from the law. Peter lived that way until he faltered. In his faltering he had to be corrected; not for failing to observe the law, but for the exact opposite! Stand fast on the grace of Christ.

We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Galatians 2:15

It is debated where Paul's spoken words to Peter, which began in the previous verse, actually end. Are his words through verse 21 included in this address, or does he now speak directly to the Galatians, having shown his disapproval of Peter's actions and his efforts to call him out? Chapter 3 will begin with a direct address to the Galatians, and so his words at that point are purely for doctrine. However, the words from 2:15 - 2:21 are actually doctrinal in nature as well.

This does not mean that they were not spoken to Peter though, but he changes to the plural in this verse with "we." Peter was called out for his error openly, in front of all who were there. Therefore, though Paul's words are doctrinal in nature, they were certainly spoken to Peter and to all who were with him. Paul is, in essence, recounting his words of correction to those who had failed to hold to the truth of the gospel. In essence, it is a mini-sermon for the edification of those wayward Jews which he is restating now in his letter to the Galatians.

The term "Jews by nature" is given for a specific purpose. In Romans 2, Paul says, "For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." Romans 2:28, 29

There is the natural Jew who is born of the covenant people, and then there is the true Jew who lives according to the precepts which made him a Jew in the first place. Circumcision of the flesh identifies their lineage, but circumcision of the heart identifies their standing with God. Paul is speaking of the latter when addressing Peter and the other saved Jews. They had given up on works of the law, understanding that Christ was the fulfillment of it. Thus they stood in contrast to "sinners of the Gentiles."

All Gentiles were outside of the promises of Christ. There was nothing that could bring them into a right relationship with God. However, in Christ, that could happen. Paul will explain to Peter how the same process saves both Jew and

Gentile, and thus it will demonstrate that their circumcision of the flesh meant nothing in the eyes of God in relation to their right-standing with Him. All that matters is faith in the work of Christ.

Life application: Later in Galatians, Paul will say that "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This does not mean that there are now no Jews. It means that there is no distinction between any of these categories in regards to salvation and incorporation into the body of Christ. The fact that Paul says "neither male nor female" shows this to be true. Men do not stop being men when they come to Christ. Paul's words need to be carefully evaluated lest we follow unintended paths in our understanding of right doctrine. Regardless of our genealogy, gender, or status in society, we all have access to the One true God through Jesus Christ.

...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. Galatians 2:16

Paul's words here, probably spoken to Peter as correction, are also as direct and obvious on the surface as they could be. Even though they are spoken to Peter, they are to be used as doctrine and for correction. They develop the very basis of justification by faith and they clearly show that deeds of the law can do nothing to either bring about salvation or keep one saved. And yet, these words are completely ignored by legalists, heretics, and false Christians. It is as if Paul's words have no meaning at all to them.

And this is exactly why Paul is so often maligned. Theories about the corruption of his letters at an early point in history are spoken of as fact in order to negate the authoritative nature of what he says. In calling into question the reliability of the letters of Paul which we now possess, the only choice one then has is to throw them out of one's theology and to fall back on a reliance of the law.

But this approach demonstrates a rather incompetent "god" who cannot even secure his word enough to bring it to us in a manner which shows us what is expected of us. If Paul's words are suspect, then all of the other books of the Bible are too. Such conspiracies are destructive and are put forth by legalists and nut jobs. Ignore such perverse people entirely!

In this verse, Paul begins with "...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law." These words are based on his introductory thought that said, "We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles." In other words, he is speaking to Peter, in the presence of the other Jews who had removed themselves from the Gentiles. They (meaning these believing Jews) already knew this point. They had received Christ's justification by grace, when they believed in Him and what He had done.

They had grown up under the law and yet Christ had come. If they could be justified under the law, then there would have been no need for Christ at all! However, He did come. Because He did, then there must have been a reason for it. And the reason is perfectly obvious - no man is (or ever could be) justified by the works of the law because no man can meet the expectations of the law. The law only brings a consciousness of sin, and the law only brings condemnation because of that sin which it reveals. Christ needed to come and fulfill the law for us. In so doing, we are justified "by faith in Jesus Christ."

It is faith in what Christ did, and faith alone, which justifies a man in God's sight. The Jews Paul is speaking to found this out. They placed their faith in Christ and they received the Spirit of promise. Those who did not place their faith in Him did not receive the Spirit. The obvious truth then is that only those who trust in Christ, and in Him alone, will be saved. They had done nothing to deserve this state of justification except to believe in Him.

As Paul says, this applies to "even we have believed in Christ Jesus." Those who hadn't believed did not receive. Nothing could be clearer. Not only are Paul's words here not corrupted by a later source, they are merely an obvious explanation of what occurred in the book of Acts. Rather than being corrupted

words of a Gentile-led conspiracy, they simply reveal what the historical record of Acts clearly and poignantly shows.

The account in Acts (which Paul is recalling to the mind of Peter and the other Jews now) shows that when they "believed in Christ Jesus," it was so that they "might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law." All of the Jews in Acts fall into one of two categories:

- 1) Those who had trusted in Christ, believing that He was the fulfillment of the prophetic utterances of their people, or
- 2) Those who had rejected Christ.

For the first category, they received the Spirit without having done anything according to the law during the process. In fact, the Spirit came at Pentecost, many months before the annual Day of Atonement. And yet, despite not having that year's sins atoned for, they were granted the Holy Spirit. Those in the second category had rejected Christ, continued to pursue the law, and did not receive the Spirit. They were not justified in God's sight.

And the reason for both of these categories is that "by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Anyone who is shown this logical and obvious verse given by Paul and then rejects what it shows is self-deluded. It reveals exactly what Acts reveals and it was spoken to the very person who in Acts 2 was a participant in the reception of the Spirit. He then spoke under the influence of the Spirit to the rest of the Jews who had not yet believed. Those who then did received the Spirit. Those who did not did not receive Him.

Paul is calling this incident to mind for Peter to remember and to rely on. And he is doing so in order that they wouldn't become a stumbling block to the Gentiles who never had the law in the first place. There is one truth in Christ - we are saved by grace through faith and not through any works of the law. They are entirely excluded. Why can't people see this and simply accept it at face value?

Life application: Why is it so important to be able to refute people who say we cannot eat pork or that we must observe a Sabbath Day in order to be pleasing to

God? The reason is that if we do those things in order to be pleasing to Him, then we can never be pleasing to Him. Only by faith in what He has done through Christ can we ever hope to please our heavenly Father.