

Paul's letter to the Galatians



Paul Corrected Peter in Antioch

Galatians 2:11-21



Steve Lewis

www.SpiritAndTruth.org

Peter's visit to Antioch of Syria (2:11)

- This occurred after Paul and Barnabas returned from their famine relief visit to Jerusalem, but just before or just after their missionary trip to Galatia.
- Peter did something during that visit which prompted Paul to **“oppose him to his face”** (*anthistēmi*) ~ “to stand opposite or to withstand.”
- **“condemned”** (*kataginōskō*) ~ “to know against.” Peter’s own inconsistent actions put him in the wrong.



Withdrawing from table fellowship (2:12)

- Peter was in the habit of eating together with all the believers (both Jews and Gentiles).
- The men from James were members of the “**party of the circumcision**” who kept the strict Jewish dietary laws.
- After their arrival they convinced Peter to withdraw from eating with the Gentiles. Their accusation should have sounded familiar to Peter (Acts 11:3) and he should have known better.
- Peter probably thought he was doing the right thing by yielding his Christian freedom for the sake of fellow believers with a weaker conscience (cf. Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:23-33).

Peter's example led others astray (2:13)

- The other Hebrew Christians in Antioch followed his example, and even Barnabas got swept up in the controversy.
- **"hypocrisy"** (*hupokrisis*) ~ expressed the idea of playacting. They were hiding the truth behind a mask. Their pretense involved behaving as if the Mosaic Law were still binding upon Christians.
- Peter may have been focusing on the impact his freedom had on the Jewish visitors, but Paul was concerned with the effect Peter's behavior would have on the Gentile believers.
- Were Gentiles somehow second class Christians whose salvation was inferior to that of the Hebrew believers?

Paul publicly confronted Peter (2:14-15)

- The “**truth of the gospel**” was again at stake.
“**straightforward**” (*orthopodeō*) ~ “to walk a straight line” or figuratively “to act rightly according to orthodox doctrine.”
- “**If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles**” ~ Peter behaved appropriately before the arrival of the men from James.
“**compel the Gentiles to live like Jews**” ~ indirectly, by implying that Mosaic customs were still in force for Christians.
- “**Jews by nature**” (*phusis*) ~ ethnic Hebrews by birth and heritage.
Most Jews regarded non-Jews as “**sinner from among the Gentiles.**”

Justified by faith, not by works (2:16)

- Even the most self-righteous Jews had to admit that they were saved in exactly the same way as the lowly Gentiles.
- There is only one way for fallen, sinful human beings to be justified before God, and it is not by obedience to “**the works of the Law**” but “**through faith in Christ Jesus.**”

 Faith (<i>pistis</i>)	 Works (<i>ergon</i>)
through faith in Christ Jesus	not justified by the works of the Law
even we have believed in Christ Jesus	not by the works of the Law
justified by faith in Christ	by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified

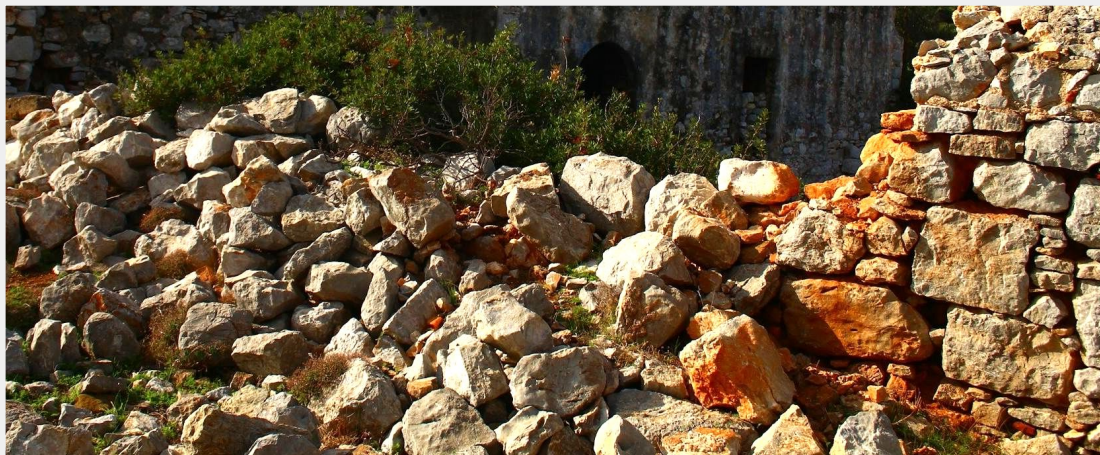
What is Justification?

- **"justified"** (*dikaioō*) ~ the verb form of the Greek noun *dikaios*, meaning "righteous." This means to pronounce or declare a person to be righteous.
- God cannot act contrary to His own righteous character, so the death penalty must be paid. He chose to step down from the platform and submit Himself to the death penalty in the place of the condemned sinner. God paid the just penalty and created a way for a guilty person to be declared righteous.
- **"grace"** ~ God doing *for us* what we cannot do *for ourselves*.



Rebuilding the barrier (2:17-18)

- If Hebrew Christians forsake their obedience to the Mosaic Law, living more like the Gentiles, is that a sin which Christ caused them to commit? Absolutely not! That would be unthinkable!
- Christ demolished the traditional barrier between Jews and Gentiles (Eph 2:11-22), so we must never attempt to rebuild it.
- Peter did not sin by living apart from the Mosaic Law. His error was behaving as though the Law was still in force.



Dead to the Law, but alive to God (2:19)

- The Law condemned anyone who could not measure up to its requirements, so “**through the Law I died.**” Violation of the Law brought the sentence of death upon him as a transgressor.
- “**I died to the Law**” ~ Paul finally gave up the possibility of gaining a right standing with God through strict obedience to the Law. The justification he could receive only by God’s grace through faith in Christ led him to abandon the Law.
- His former devotion to the Law had been a hindrance to his relationship with God. He eagerly accepted the gift of righteousness by faith which God offered to him apart from the Law.

New life through regeneration (2:20)

- The death penalty which the Law demanded was **PAID IN FULL** by Christ as our substitute. Anyone who trusts in Christ for salvation can be said to have died with Christ since they are identified with Him in His payment of the death penalty for their sin.
- If believers are identified with Christ in His death for them, they are also identified with His resurrection life. Even though Paul was still living in his fallen flesh – **“the life which I now live in the flesh”** – he had been given a completely new life.
- **“Christ lives in me”** ~ “In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and **you in Me, and I in you.**” (cf. John 14:16-20)

Nullifying God's grace (2:21)

If it were possible for righteousness to come through the Law:

1. It would “**nullify the grace of God**” (*atheteō*) ~ “to do away with; to set aside or disregard; to abrogate, annul, or make meaningless.” To nullify God's grace would be to destroy our only hope for justification (cf. 2:16).
2. “**then Christ died needlessly**” (*dōrean*) ~ “for nothing, for no purpose, for nought, or in vain.” The greatest sacrifice that God ever made – *giving His only Son to die for the sins of fallen humanity* – would have been meaningless, senseless, and of no benefit at all.

Summary

- Even the most scrupulous Hebrew Christian knew that **“a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus”** (2:16). If it were possible for righteousness to come through obedience to the Mosaic Law, then **“Christ died needlessly”** (2:21).
- Peter’s error was in separating from the Gentile believers and giving the impression that the Jewish dietary laws were still in force. Peter’s actions implied that he was trying to rebuild the old wall between Jews and Gentiles which Christ had demolished through His death on the cross.