

## Gal 2:16, 19-21

Brothers and sisters:

We who know that a person is not justified by works of the law  
but through faith in Jesus Christ,  
even we have believed in Christ Jesus  
that we may be justified by faith in Christ  
and not by works of the law,  
because by works of the law no one will be justified.  
For through the law I died to the law,  
that I might live for God.  
I have been crucified with Christ;  
yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me;  
insofar as I now live in the flesh,  
I live by faith in the Son of God  
who has loved me and given himself up for me.  
I do not nullify the grace of God;  
for if justification comes through the law,  
then Christ died for nothing.

## Jerome Biblical Commentary

**(B) Paul's Gospel Approved by the Jerusalem Leaders (2:1-10).** **1. once again in fourteen years:** The usual translation, "14 years later," has been questioned by S. Giet ([RSR](#) 41 [1953] 323-24) on the score that elsewhere in Paul's writings *dia* with the genitive means "during (the course of)." This meaning, plus the use of "again," seems to imply a reckoning of the date from his conversion (*ca.* AD 36). Correlation of this visit to Jerusalem with the data in Acts constitutes one of the most difficult exegetical problems of the [NT](#). Nevertheless, one cannot escape the impression that Gal 2 refers to Acts 15 (vv. 1-12 at least); but many problems remain in this identification (→ Life of Paul, 46:29-34). *Barnabas:* A Cypriote Levite, named Joseph, subsequently called Barnabas by the apostles (Acts 4:36) with the popular etymology, "son of Consolation." He was Paul's companion during Mission I (Acts 13:1-14:28), up to the Jerusalem "Council." *Titus:* A Gentile Christian, who reconciled Paul with the Corinthian church (2 Cor 3:13; 7:6, 13-14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18), and was later left in Crete to organize the church there (Tit 1:4). **2. because of a revelation:** In Acts 15:2 the reason for the visit is given as a decision of the Antiochene community. If Paul means that he himself had the revelation, then he mentions it at least to show that he was not summoned by the Jerusalem apostles. *privately to those of repute:* He slightly disparages the Jerusalem "pillars" whose authority he nevertheless recognizes. **3. not compelled to be circumcised:** It is impossible to say whether Paul means that Titus was in fact not circumcised or that he was not "compelled," but agreed to submit to it. The general tenor of the passage would be in favor of the former. **4. false brothers:** More than likely these are the same persons as the Jewish-Christian converts from Pharisaism of Acts 15:5, who pressed for the circumcision of Gentiles and their obligation to observe the Mosaic Law. *the freedom we have in Christ Jesus:* This short phrase sums up the message of Gal: in Christ we have secured freedom

from the Law and “the flesh” (5:1, 13; cf. Rom 6:18, 20, 22; 7:3; 8:2).**5.** *not even for a moment did we yield:* Paul boasts as if he influenced the assembly, but Acts 15:7 gives the credit to Peter.**6.** *the men of repute:* Undoubtedly James, Cephas, and John (2:9). *what kind of people they were:* A difficult, parenthetical statement that seems to mean that Paul was not overawed by the prestige they had gained for having been eyewitnesses of Jesus’ mission. Such an experience and such prestige could not outweigh the truth of the God-given gospel. *added nothing to me:* His essential message was not deficient, despite the claims of the Judaizers.**7.** *I was entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, as Peter was for the circumcised:* Paul was thus acknowledged to be the equal of Peter, and the mission-field was divided among them (see Acts 15:4, 12; Rom 15:17-19). The division must be understood geographically rather than ethnically, for Paul often began his evangelization of an area with the Jews (Acts 17:1ff.; 18:4; Rom 2:10-11).**9.** *James, Cephas, John:* James, the “bishop” of Jerusalem (1:19), is given precedence over Peter and John, the son of Zebedee. The order suggests that even the head of the Jerusalem church agreed to Paul’s gospel and mission. Are these called “pillars” (styloi), because together they were ruling the Jerusalem mother church? (See C. K Barrett, in *Studia Paulina* [Fest. J. de Zwaan; Haarlem, 1953] 1-19.)**10.** *remember the poor:* Not a special designation for the Jerusalem community. It may be an imitation of the expression used by the Qumran Essenes of themselves (’ebyônîm, 4QpPs 372:10; [1QpHab](#) 12:10; see L. E. Keck, [ZNW](#) 56 [1965] 100-129).

**17 (C) Paul’s Gospel Revealed Peter’s Inconsistency at Antioch (2:11-14).** Not only did the “pillars” of the Jerusalem church approve Paul’s gospel, but in the Antiochene church of Gentiles and Jews it proved to be the only answer. **11.** *opposed him to his face:* Although frank in his assertion, Paul apparently regarded Peter as a person of greater consequence than himself. Presumably both Peter and Paul came to Antioch shortly after the decree on circumcision at the Jerusalem “Council.” *because he stood condemned:* By his own actions; explained in 2:12-13. Paul seems to forget here that he allowed Timothy to be circumcised (Acts 16:3); later he will submit himself to the Nazirite vow ritual (Acts 21:20-26). His guiding principle, however, is stated in 1 Cor 9:20 (cf. Rom 14:21). But a greater issue is at stake at Antioch, involving the unity of the Church itself.**12.** *some people came from James:* They are not necessarily the same as the “false brothers” (2:4). The issue now involves Jewish dietary laws, quite distinct from the issue of circumcision settled at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-12). It had not yet been resolved by the Jerusalem church authorities, although the composite and conflated account of Acts 15 might suggest this *prima facie* (→ Acts, 45:72). *he withdrew:* Peter refused to eat further with the Gentile Christians and gave the impression that only the Jewish Christians, still observing the Levitical dietary laws, were the real Christians. See Est 14:17; Lk 15:2; Tb 1:10-11.**13.** *the other Jews:* Jewish Christians. *played the hypocrite along with him:* Although Peter’s influence on a minority of the Antiochene community might be explained in various ways, Paul saw it only as inconsistency and compromise. For this reason he rebuked Peter for it publicly.**14.** *the truth of the gospel:* The “freedom we have in Christ Jesus” (2:4-5), not only from the custom of circumcision but also from Jewish dietary laws. Cf. Acts 10:15, 28; 11:3. Paul found fault with Peter because he was not “walking straight toward” this truth (see G. D. Kilpatrick [BZNW](#) 21 [1954] 269-74). *if you, a Jew, live like a Gentile:* See Acts 10:23; Gal 2:12. *why do you force the Gentiles to become Jews?:* Since Peter’s example had already misled Barnabas and others, it would tend to compel Gentile Christians in a similar way. Was Paul’s rebuke effectual? The passage suggests that it was; he cites his opposition to Peter in order to establish the validity and logic of his own gospel. He made his point with Peter. Whether the issue of dietary laws was settled in the Antiochene church by this incident is another question. Apparently, it arose again after the departure of Peter and

Paul, and the Antiochene church sent for instructions from James in Jerusalem (Acts 15:13-33; → Life of Paul, 46:31-34).

**18 (D) Paul's Résumé of His Gospel (2:15-21).** The first part of Gal ends with a summary of Paul's teaching on faith and the Law, and represents a reformulation of Paul's address to Peter at Antioch. Much of the doctrine of Rom and Gal is compressed in the next seven verses with remarkable conciseness.

**15. we:** Primarily Peter and Paul. *Jews by birth:* Lit., "by nature," or natural condition and inheritance (see Rom 2:27; Eph 2:3). Paul thus acknowledges his Jewish background. *not sinners of pagan origin:* Paul ironically contrasts his privilege (echoing the claim of his Judaizing opponents) with the lot of pagans who not only failed to observe the Law, but did not even possess it. Being "law-less" (*anomoi*), they were sinners (see Lk 6:32-34; Mt 18:17). But for Paul, the Jew as well as the Greek was really a sinner (Rom 3:9, 19). **16. no man is made upright:** The passive of *dikaioō* expresses the status of a man standing before the tribunal of God. It may mean no more than "is pronounced upright," if understood by its **LXX** usage; but Pauline usage seems to demand more, "is made upright." First, verbs ending in *-oō* are usually causative, producing the quality expressed by the root; second, **OT** prophets apparently believed that God could change a man internally (his heart: Jer 31:33; Ez 36:26-27); third, Paul believes that the Christian so judged actually lives a new life in vital union with Christ—"Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). The verb, therefore, merely expresses a juridical aspect of what divine benevolence actually effects in man as a result of his faith. (See E. J. Goodspeed, *JBL* 73 [1954] 86-91; → Pauline Theology, 79:94-97.) *by deeds of the Law:* The frequency with which Paul uses this succinct expression (Gal 3:2, 5, 10; Rom 2:15; 3:20, 28) suggests that it was a commonly used formula for acts prescribed by the Mosaic Law and/or its Pharisaic interpretation. But the exact expression is unknown in the OT and in rabbinical (Pharisaic) writings (see *ThDNT* 2,646; *Str-B* 3, 160-62). Strangely enough, it has turned up in **QL** (*ma'āšê tôrāh*, "deeds of the Law," *4QFlor* 1:7 [*JBL* 77 (1958) 352; cf. *1QS* 6:18; 1QpHab, 7:11]). In using it, Paul refers to the Mosaic Law, which cannot be restricted to ceremonial prescriptions. *through faith in Christ Jesus:* Lit., "through [the] faith of Christ Jesus" (obj. gen.); see Rom 3:20, 28. By faith Paul means that attitude of man by which he accepts the divine revelation made known through Christ and responds to it with a complete dedication of his personal life to him (→ Pauline Theology, 79:125-27). *even we believed:* Paul appeals to the conviction shared by him and Peter at the time of their conversion that a Jew fully realizes his inability to achieve uprightness by the "deeds of the Law." *no mortal is made upright:* Ps 143:2 is implicitly quoted: "Before you no living man is just." Paul omits "before you," diminishing the statement's forensic nuance, but adds the decisive phrase, "by [doing] the deeds of the Law." The sense of the Psalm is thus greatly restricted (cf. Rom 3:20).

**19 17. through Christ:** The phrase, *en Christō*, seems at first sight to be the Pauline formula of union with Christ (→ Pauline Theology, 79:138); but here in contrast to "by deeds of the Law," it is more likely instrumental. *we too turn out to be sinners:* That is, like the pagans (2:15), because as "Christians" we are "law-less." *does that make Christ an agent of sin?:* This translation understands the particle *ara* as interrogative. But it could be inferential, introducing an illative statement, "Then Christ is..." Because of the following exclamation the question is preferred. *by no means!:* A strong negative used after rhetorical questions. Paul resolutely rejects the suggestion and turns it back on the imaginary objector: To submit to the Law again would be to sin again. **18. If I [try to] rebuild what I tore down:** Paul's first reason to justify the rejection; commentators dispute its precise meaning and hold that: Either Paul would admit that, in restoring the Law as a norm of conduct, he had sinned in abandoning it;

or, more probably, he would commit himself, in setting up the Law as a norm again, to a life of certain transgression (Rom 7:21ff.; 4:15; see W. Mundle, *ZNW* 23 [1924] 152-53). In either case it emerges that it is not Christ, but the Judaizer, who is the real “minster of sin.”**19.** *because of the Law I died to the Law:* The second reason. The clue to this difficult verse lies in recognizing that Christ is not “an agent of sin,” because the Christian has been crucified with him and now lives for God. Living for God is hardly sinful. But this status of the Christian has been made possible for him through his crucifixion with Christ. So crucified, he has died to the Law (“is dead to the Law,” Rom 6:11; cf. 2 Cor 5:15). But how has this status resulted “because of the Law”? Its proximate cause is the crucifixion of Christ himself, but its remote cause is the Law, the curse of which was leveled against Christ (3:13). It was the Mosaic Law and the mentality it produced among men that was responsible for the crucifixion—and indirectly for the emancipation of Christians from it. *I have been crucified with Christ:* See Rom 6:8-10; 7:6. Through faith and baptism (Rom 6:3ff.) the Christian has been identified (pf. tense, expressing the state or condition of identification) with the phases of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. And so he can “live for God” (→ Pauline Theology, 79:137).**20.** *Christ lives in me:* The perfection of Christian life is expressed here, since it is not merely an existence dominated by a new psychological motivation (“living for God,” 2:19). Faith in Christ does not substitute a new norm or goal of action; rather it reshapes man anew internally, supplying him with a new principle of activity on the ontological level of his very being. A symbiosis results of man with Christ, the glorified Kyrios who has become as of the resurrection a “vivifying Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45), the vital principle of Christian activity. *I live by faith in the Son of God:* Paul’s profound insight into the Christian experience: the reshaping of man’s very physical life by the transcendent influence of Christ’s indwelling. It must eventually penetrate to his psychological awareness, so that he realizes in faith that his real life comes only from the redemptive and vicarious surrender of the Son of God.**21.** *I am not nullifying the grace of God:* Like the Judaizers, who insist on legal obligations and imply thereby the inefficacy of Christ’s surrender.

[RSR](#) *Recherches de science religieuse*

[NT](#) New Testament

[Fest.](#) Festschrift (generic name for *any* publication honoring a person)

[1QpHab](#) Peshier on Habakkuk from Qumran Cave 1 (→ 68:77)

[ZNW](#) *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*

[BZNW](#) Beihefte zur *ZNW* (Berlin)

[LXX](#) Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT)

[OT](#) Old Testament

[JBL](#) *Journal of Biblical Literature*

[ThDNT](#) G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, 1964-).

English version of *ThWNT*

[Str-B](#) H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* (6 vols.; Munich, 1922-61)

[QL](#) Qumran Literature (See *Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Texts*)

[4QFlor](#) Florilegium (or Eschatological Midrashim) of Qumran Cave 4 (→ 68:80)

[1QS](#) Serek ha-Yahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline) (→ 68:71)

Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *The Jerome Biblical commentary* (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

# Haydock's Catholic Commentary

## Notes & Commentary:

**Ver. 1.** *Then fourteen years after.* That is, after my former going to Jerusalem, which was seventeen years after my conversion, an. 51[the year A.D. 51]. See Tillemont. (Witham) The cause of St. Paul's second journey to Jerusalem was as follows. Some brethren coming from Judea to Antioch, there maintained the necessity of circumcision and the other Mosaic rites, asserting that without them salvation could not be obtained. St. Paul, upon his return to Antioch, strongly defended, in conjunction with Barnabas, the liberty of the gospel. As the contest grew warm, it was resolved to depute Paul and Barnabas to consult the other apostles and ancients of Jerusalem. By the approbation of the living and speaking tribunal, which all are commanded to hear, the Scriptures are not made true, altered or amended; they merely are declared to be the infallible word of God, a point only to be learned by authority; hence that memorable saying of St. Augustine: "I would not believe the gospel unless the authority of the Church moved me." (Conta ep. fund. chap. v.)

**Ver. 2.** *According to revelation,* or an inspiration from the Spirit of God, and conferred with them, as an equal, says St. Jerome. --- *But apart to them, who seemed to be something considerable.* That is, with the other apostles, *lest I should run in vain,* not for fear of false doctrine, says St. Chrysostom, but that others might be convinced that I preached not any thing disapproved by the apostles, which would prejudice the progress of the gospel. (Witham) --- The particle *but*, which begins this verse, is quite useless: the Latin Vulgate and the Greek copies have it indeed, but in many copies it is not found; it is omitted also by St. Jerome and Theodoret; and this verse is united in sense with the preceding. Titus was not compelled to be circumcised on account of the false brethren, &c.

**Ver. 3.** *Neither Titus....circumcised,* who had been a Gentile. A convincing proof, says St. Chrysostom, that even according to the other apostles, the Gentiles converted, were not subject to the Jewish laws. (Witham)

**Ver. 5.** *To whom we yielded not.* St. Jerome takes notice that in some Latin copies read, *to whom we yielded;* but that was not the true reading by the Greek and Syriac. (Witham)

**Ver. 7.** *As to Peter was that of the circumcision.* Calvin pretends to prove by this, that St. Peter and his successors are not head of the whole Church, because St. Peter was only the apostle of the Jews. But St. Paul speaks not here of the power and jurisdiction, but of the manner that St. Peter and he were to be employed. It was judged proper that St. Peter should preach chiefly to the Jews, who had been the elect people of God, and that St. Paul should be sent to the Gentiles; yet both of them preached both to Jews and Gentiles: and St. Peter, by receiving Cornelius, first opened the gate of salvation to the Gentiles, as he says of himself, (Acts xv. 7.) *that God made choice of him, that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the*

*gospel, and believe.* That St. Peter was head of the Church, see the notes on Matthew xvi. and John xxi. (Witham)

**Ver. 9.** *James, and Cephas, and John.* No proof of any greater authority can be drawn from the placing or numbering of James first, which perhaps St. Paul might do, because of the great respect he knew the Jewish converts had for St. James, bishop of Jerusalem, where the ceremonies of the law of Moses were still observed. Several Greek copies have *Peter, James, and John.* So we also read in St. Jerome's Commentary, p. 240, and St. Chrysostom in his Exposition, p. 729, has *Cephas, John, and James.* (Witham)

**Ver. 11.** *But when Cephas, &c.*[1] In most Greek copies, we read *Petrus*, both here and ver. 13. Nor are there any sufficient, nor even probable grounds to judge, that *Cephas* here mentioned was different from *Peter*, the prince of the apostles, as one or two later authors would make us believe. Among those who fancied Cephas different from Peter, not one can be named in the first ages[centuries], except Clemens of Alexandria, whose works were rejected as apocryphal by Pope Gelasius. The next author is Dorotheus of Tyre, in his Catalogue of the seventy-two disciples, in the fourth or fifth age[century], and after him the like, or same catalogue, in the seventh age[century], in the Chronicle, called of Alexandria, neither of which are of any authority with the learned, so many evident faults and falsehoods being found in both. St. Jerome indeed on this place says, there were some (though he does not think fit to name them) who were of that opinion; but at the same time St. Jerome ridicules and rejects it as groundless. Now as to authors that make Cephas the same with St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, we have what may be called the unexceptionable and unanimous consent of the ancient fathers and doctors of the Catholic Church, as of Tertullian, who calls this management of St. Peter, *a fault of conversation, not of preaching* or doctrine. Of St. Cyprian, of Origen, of the great doctors, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, St. Gregory the Great, of St. Cyril of Alexandria, of Theodoret, Pope Gelasius, Pelagius the second, St. Anselm, St. Thomas Aquinas. In later ages, of Bellarmine, Baronius, Binius, Spondan, of Salmeron, Estius, Gagneius, Tirinus, Menochius, Alex Natalis, and a great many more: so that Cornelius a Lapide on this place says, *that the Church neither knows, nor celebrates any other Cephas but St. Peter.* Tertullian and most interpreters take notice, that St. Peter's fault was only a lesser or venial sin in his conduct and *conversation.* Did not St. Paul on several occasions do the like, as what is here laid to St. Peter's charge? that is, practise the Jewish ceremonies: did not he circumcise Timothy after this, an. 52[A.D. 52]? did he not *shave his head in Cenchrea*, an. 54? did he not by the advice of St. James (an. 58.) *purify himself with the Jews in the temple*, not to offend them? St. Jerome, and also St. Chrysostom,[2] give another exposition of this passage. They looked upon all this to have been done by a contrivance and a collusion betwixt these two apostles, who had agreed beforehand that St. Peter should let himself *be reprehended* by St. Paul, (for this they take to be signified by the Greek text) and not that St. Peter was *reprehensible*:[3] so that the Jews seeing St. Peter publicly blamed, and not justifying himself, might for the future eat with the Gentiles. But St. Augustine vigorously opposed this exposition of St. Jerome, as less consistent with a Christian and apostolical sincerity, and with the text in this chapter, where it is called a *dissimulation*, and that Cephas or Peter

*walked not uprightly to the truth of the gospel.* After a long dispute betwixt these two doctors, St. Jerome seems to have retracted his opinion, and the opinion of St. Augustine is commonly followed, that St. Peter was guilty of a venial fault of imprudence. In the mean time, no Catholic denies but that the head of the Church may be guilty even of great sins. What we have to admire, is the humility of St. Peter on this occasion, as St. Cyprian observes,[4] who took the reprehension so mildly, without alleging *the primacy, which our Lord had given him.* Baronius held that St. Peter did not sin at all, which may be true, if we look upon his intention only, which was to give no offence to the Jewish converts; but if we examine the fact, he can scarce be excused from a *venial indiscretion.* (Witham) --- *I withstood,* &c. The fault that is here noted in the conduct of St. Peter, was only a certain imprudence, in withdrawing himself from the table of the Gentiles, for fear of giving offence to the Jewish converts: but this in such circumstances, when his so doing might be of ill consequence to the Gentiles, who might be induced thereby to think themselves obliged to conform to the Jewish way of living, to the prejudice of their Christian liberty. Neither was St. Paul's reprehending him any argument against his supremacy; for in such cases an inferior may, and sometimes ought, with respect, to admonish his superior. (Challoner)

**Ver. 16. &c.** *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law.* St. Paul, to the end of the chapter, seems to continue his discourse to St. Peter, but chiefly to the Jewish Galatians, to shew that both the Gentiles, whom the Jews called and looked upon as *sinners*, and also the Jews, when converted, could only hope to be *justified* and saved by the faith of Christ, and not *by the works of the law.* --- *But if while we seek to be justified in Christ, by faith in him, and by his grace, we ourselves also are found sinners,* as the false doctors teach you, and not to be justified but by the ceremonies and works of the law of Moses, this blasphemous consequence must follow, *that Christ is the minister and author of sin,* by making us believe that by faith in him, and complying with his doctrine, we may be justified and saved. For thus we must be considered *transgressors*, unless we renew and *build again* what Christ and we have destroyed. --- *For by the law I am dead to the law.* That is, says St. Jerome, by the evangelical law of Christ I am dead to the ancient law and its ceremonies. Others expound it, that by the law and its types and figures, and by the predictions contained in the law, I know the Mosaical law hath now ceased, in which sense he might say, *by the law I am dead to the law.* --- *If justice.* That is, if justification and salvation be to be had, or could have been had *by the works of the law; therefore Christ died in vain,* and it was not necessary that he should become our Redeemer. (Witham)

**Ver. 19.** He here expresses the change which had been wrought in him. The law to which he had been attached, had passed away from him. Now he was so united to Christ and his cross, that he says: Not I, but Christ liveth in me. The strong expressions made use of by St. Paul with regard to the Jewish law in this chapter, may appear strange, and very capable of a wrong interpretation. But we must ever bear in mind that St. Paul speaks exclusively of the *ceremonial* part of the law, and not of the *moral*, contained in the decalogue: of this latter he says in his epistle to the Romans, (ii. 13.) the doers of the law shall be justified. But to effect this, was and is necessary the grace which Jesus Christ has merited and obtained for all, grace which God has shed on all, more or less, from the commencement of the

world.

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[1] Ver. 11. That Peter and Cephas were the same, see Tertullian, lib. de præscrip. chap. 23, p. 210. Ed. Rig.; Origen in Joan. Ed. Græcè et Latinè, p. 381.; St. Cyprian, Epist. 71. ad Quintum, p. 120.; St. Jerome on this Ep. to the Galatians, as also St. Chrysostom; St. Augustine. See his epistles on this passage to St. Jerome.; St. Gregory, lib. 2. in Ezech. tom. 1, p. 1368.; Gelasius apud Labb. T. 4. Conc. p. 1217.; Pelagius, the 2d apud Labb. t. 5. p. 622.; St. Cyril of Alexandria, hom. ix. cont. Julianum, t. 6, p. 325.; Theodoret in 2. ad Gal. iv. 3. p. 268.; St. Anselm in 2 ad Gal. p. 236.; St. Thomas Aquinas, lib. 2. q. 103. a. 4. ad 2dum. --- St. Jerome's words: Sunt qui Cepham non putent Apostolum Petrum, sed alium de 70 Discipulis....quibus primum respondendum, alterius nescio cujus Cephæ nescire nos nomen, nisi ejus, qui et in Evangelio, et in aliis Pauli Epistolis, et in hac quoque ipsa, modo Cephas, modo Petrus scribitur....deinde totum argumentum Epistolæ....huic intelligentiæ repugnare, &c.

[2] Ver. 11. St. Chrysostom by a contrivance, *eikonomon*. p. 730, &c.

[3] Ver. 11. *Kategnosmenos* may signify reprehensus, as well as reprehensibilis; and he says it is to be referred to others, and not to St. Paul: *all upo ton allon*.

[4] Ver. 11. St. Cyprian, Ep. ad Quintum, p. 120. Petrus....non arroganter assumpsit, ut diceret se primatum tenere, &c.

## Daily Bible study Series (non-Catholic)

### THE MAN WHO REFUSED TO BE OVERAWED

#### Galatians 2:1–10

Fourteen years afterwards I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and I took Titus with me too. It was in consequence of a direct message from God that I went up; and I placed before them the gospel that I am accustomed to preach among the Gentiles, because I did not want to think that the work which I was trying to do, and which I had done, was going to be frustrated. This I did in private conference with those whose reputations stood high in the Church. But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, although he was a Greek. True they tried to circumcise him to please false brothers who had been furtively introduced into our society and who had insinuated themselves into our company to spy out the liberty which we enjoy in Christ Jesus, because they wished to reduce us to their own state of servitude. Not for one hour did we

yield in submission to them. We took a stand that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. Now from those who are men of reputation—what they once were makes no difference to me—there is no favouritism with God—those men of reputation imparted no fresh knowledge to me; but, on the other hand, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the preaching of the gospel in the non-Jewish world, just as Peter had been in the Jewish world—for he who worked for Peter, to make him the apostle of the Jewish world, worked for me too to make me the apostle to the non-Jewish world—and when they realized the grace that had been given to me, James, Cephas and John, whom all look upon as pillars of the Church, gave pledges of partnership to me and to Barnabas, in complete agreement that we should go to the non-Jewish world, and they to the Jewish world. The one thing which they did enjoin us to do was to remember the poor—the very thing that I myself was eager to do.

In the preceding passage Paul has proved the independence of his gospel; here he is concerned to prove that this independence is not anarchy and that his gospel is not something schismatic and sectarian, but no other than the faith delivered to the Church.

After fourteen year's work he went up to Jerusalem, taking with him Titus, a young friend and henchman, who was a Greek. That visit was by no means easy. Even as he wrote there was agitation in Paul's mind. There is a disorder in the Greek which it is not possible fully to reproduce in English translation. Paul's problem was that he could not say too little or he might seem to be abandoning his principles; and he could not say too much, or it might seem that he was at open variance with the leaders of the Church. The result was that his sentences are broken and disjointed, reflecting his anxiety.

From the beginning the real leaders of the Church accepted his position; but there were others who were out to tame this fiery spirit. There were those, who, as we have seen, accepted Christianity but believed that God never gave any privilege to a man who was not a Jew; and that, therefore, before a man could become a Christian, he must be circumcised and take the whole law upon him. These Judaizers, as they are called, seized on Titus as a test case. There is a battle behind this passage; and it seems likely that the leaders of the Church urged Paul, for the sake of peace, to give in, in the case of Titus. But he stood like a rock. He knew that to yield would be to accept the slavery of the law and to turn his back on the freedom which is in Christ. In the end Paul's determination won the day. In principle it was accepted that his work lay in the non-Jewish world, and the work of Peter and James among the Jews. It is to be carefully noted that it is not a question of two different gospels being preached; it is a question of the same gospel being brought to two different spheres by different people specially qualified to do so.

From this picture certain characteristics of Paul emerge clearly.

(i) He was a man who gave authority its due respect. He did not go his own way. He went and talked with the leaders of the Church however much he might differ from them. It is a great and neglected law of life that however right we happen to be there is nothing to be gained by rudeness. There is never any reason why courtesy and determination should not go hand in hand.

(ii) He was a man who refused to be overawed. Repeatedly he mentions the reputation which the leaders and pillars of the Church enjoyed. He respected them and treated them with courtesy; but he remained inflexible. There is such a thing as respect; and there is such a thing as the grovelling, prudential bowing to those whom the world or the Church labels great. Paul was always certain that he was seeking the approval not of men but of God.

(iii) He was a man conscious of a special task. He was convinced that God had given him a task to do and he would let neither opposition from without nor discouragement from within stop him doing it. The man who knows he has a God-given task will always find that he has a God-given strength to carry it out.

## THE ESSENTIAL UNITY

### Galatians 2:11–13

But when Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. Before some men arrived from James it was his habit to eat with the Gentiles. When they came he withdrew and separated himself, because he was scared of the circumcision party. The rest of the Jews played the hypocrite along with him, so that even Barnabas was led away along with them by their hypocritical actions.

THE trouble was by no means at an end. Part of the life of the early Church was a common meal which they called the *Agape* or Love Feast. At this feast the whole congregation came together to enjoy a common meal provided by a pooling of whatever resources they had. For many of the slaves it must have been the only decent meal they had all week; and in a very special way it marked the togetherness of the Christians.

That seems, on the face of it, a lovely thing. But we must remember the rigid exclusiveness of the narrower Jew. He regarded his race as the Chosen People in such a way as involved the rejection of all others. "The Lord is merciful and gracious" (Psalm 2:5). "But he is only gracious to Israelites; other nations he will terrify." "The nations are as stubble or straw which shall be burned, or as chaff scattered to the wind." "If a man repents God accepts him, but that applies only to Israel and no other nation." "Love all but hate the heretics." This exclusiveness entered into daily life. A strict Jew was forbidden even to do business with a Gentile; he must not go on a journey with a Gentile; he must neither give hospitality to, nor accept hospitality from, a Gentile.

Here in Antioch arose the tremendous problem, in face of all this could the Jews and the Gentiles sit down together at a common meal? If the old law was to be observed it was obviously impossible. Peter came to Antioch and, at first, disregarding the old taboos in the glory of the new faith, he shared the common meal with Jew and Gentile. Then came certain of the Jewish party from Jerusalem. They used James's name although quite certainly they were not representing his views, and they worked on Peter so much that he withdrew from the common meal. The other Jews withdrew with him and finally even Barnabas was involved in this secession. It was then that Paul spoke with all the intensity of which his passionate nature was capable, for he saw certain things quite clearly.

(i) A church ceases to be Christian if it contains class distinctions. In the presence of God a man is neither Jew nor Gentile, noble nor base, rich nor poor; he is a sinner for whom Christ died. If men share in a common sonship they must be brothers.

(ii) Paul saw that strenuous action was necessary to counteract a drift which had occurred. He did not wait; he struck. It made no difference to him that this drift was connected with the name and conduct of Peter. It was wrong and that was all that mattered to him. A famous name can never justify an infamous action. Paul's action gives us a vivid example of how one strong man by his steadfastness can check a drift away from the right course before it becomes a tidal wave.

## THE END OF THE LAW

## Galatians 2:14–17

But when I saw that they were straying away from the right path which the gospel lays down, I said to Peter in front of them all, “If you who are a born Jew choose to live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, why are you forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews? We are by nature Jews; we are not Gentile sinners as you would call them; and we know that a man is not put right with God because he does the works which the law lays down, but through faith in Jesus Christ. Now we have accepted this faith in Jesus Christ, so that we might be right with God, and that faith has nothing to do the works the law lays down, because no man can ever put himself right with God by doing the works the law lays down. Now if in our search to be made right with God through Christ Jesus we too become what you call sinners, are you then going to argue that Christ is the minister of sin? God forbid!”

HERE at last the real root of the matter is being reached. A decision is being forced which could not in any event be long delayed. The fact of the matter was that the Jerusalem decision was a compromise, and, like all compromises, it had in it the seeds of trouble. In effect the decision was that the Jews would go on living like Jews, observing circumcision and the law, but that the Gentiles were free from these observances. Clearly, things could not go on like that, because the inevitable result was to produce two grades of Christians and two quite distinct classes in the Church. Paul’s argument ran like this. He said to Peter, “You shared table with the Gentiles; you ate as they ate; therefore you approved in principle that there is one way for Jew and Gentile alike. How can you now reverse your decision and want the Gentiles to be circumcised and take the law upon them?” The thing did not make sense to Paul.

Now we must make sure of the meaning of a word. When the Jew used the word *sinners* of Gentiles he was not thinking of moral qualities; he was thinking of the observance of the law. To take an example—Leviticus 11 lays down which animals may and may not be used for food. A man who ate a hare or pork broke these laws and became a *sinner* in this sense of the term. So Peter would answer Paul, “But, if I eat with the Gentiles and eat the things they eat, I become a sinner.”

Paul’s answer was twofold. First, he said, “We agreed long ago that no amount of observance of the law can make a man right with God. That is a matter of grace. A man cannot earn, but must accept the generous offer of the love of God in Jesus. Therefore the whole business of law is irrelevant.” Next he said, “You hold that to forget all this business about rules and regulations will make you a sinner. *But that is precisely what Jesus Christ told you to do.* He did not tell you to try to earn salvation by eating this animal and not eating that one. He told you to fling yourself without reserve on the grace of God. Are you going to argue, then, that he taught you to become a sinner?” Obviously there could be only one proper conclusion, namely that the old laws were wiped out.

This is the point that had to come. It could not be right for Gentiles to come to God by grace and Jews to come to him by law. For Paul there was only one reality, grace, and it was by way of surrender to that grace that all men must come.

There are two great temptations in the Christian life, and in a certain sense, the better a man is the more liable he is to them. First, there is the temptation to try to earn God’s favour, and second, the temptation to use some little achievement to compare oneself with our fellow men to our advantage and their disadvantage. But the Christianity which has enough of self left in it to think that by its own efforts it can please God and that by its own achievements it can show itself superior to other men is not true Christianity at all.

## THE LIFE THAT IS CRUCIFIED AND RISEN

Galatians 2:18–21

If I build up again these very things that I destroyed, I simply succeed in making myself a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. True, I am alive; but it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life that I am now living, although it is still in the flesh, is a life which is lived in faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to cancel out the grace of God; for if I can get right with God by means of the law, then Christ died quite unnecessarily.

PAUL speaks out of the depths of personal experience. For him to re-erect the whole fabric of the law would have been spiritual suicide. He says that through the law he died to the law that he might live to God. What he means in this—he had tried the way of law; he had tried with all the terrible intensity of his hot heart to put himself right with God by a life that sought to obey every single item of that law. He had found that such an attempt produced nothing but a deeper and deeper sense that all he could do could never put him right with God. All the law had done was to show him his own helplessness. Whereupon he had quite suddenly abandoned that way and had cast himself, sinner as he was, on the mercy of God. It was the law which had driven him to God. To go back to the law would simply have entangled him all over again in the sense of estrangement from God. So great was the change that the only way he could describe it was to say that he had been crucified with Christ so that the man he used to be was dead and the living power within him now was Christ himself.

“If I can put myself to rights with God by meticulously obeying the law then what is the need of grace? If I can win my own salvation then why had Christ to die?” Paul was quite sure of one thing—that Jesus Christ had done for him what he could never have done for himself. The one man who re-enacted the experience of Paul was Martin Luther. Luther was a showpiece of discipline and penance, self-denial and self-torture. “If ever,” he said, “a man could be saved by monkery that man was I.” He had gone to Rome; it was considered to be an act of great merit to climb the Scala Sancta, the great sacred stairway, on hands and knees. He toiled upwards seeking that merit and suddenly there came to him the voice from heaven, “The just shall live by faith.” The life at peace with God was not to be attained by this futile, never-ending, ever-defeated effort; it could be had only by casting himself on the love and mercy of God as Jesus Christ revealed them to men.

“Pining souls! come nearer Jesus,  
And O come, not doubting thus,  
But with faith that trusts more bravely  
His huge tenderness for us.  
If our love were but more simple,  
We should take him at his word;  
And our lives would be all sunshine,  
In the sweetness of our Lord.”

When Paul took God at his word, the midnight of law's frustration became the sunshine of grace.

## MacArthur New Testament Commentary (non-Catholic)

**Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor-the very thing I also was eager to do. (2:1–10)**

As Jesus made clear in the parable of the wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24–30), wherever and whenever the good seed of God's truth is sown Satan will be there to sow his seed of falsehood. It was therefore inevitable that, as Paul faithfully and powerfully planted the truth of the gospel, Satan's false teachers would be on the apostle's heels planting lies.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders to "be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:28–30). He warned Timothy, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" (1 Tim. 4:1–2).

Throughout his long and widespread ministry Paul fought against the emissaries of Satan who always seek to discredit both the truth and its representatives. In Galatians 2:1–10 he continues defending himself against their accusation that he was a self-appointed apostle proclaiming a self-devised message that was different from that of Peter and the other

apostles at Jerusalem. He devastatingly argues that, although he received his message independently of the other apostles, he preached a message identical to theirs, a fact they wholeheartedly acknowledged. His gospel was independent in terms of revelation but identical in terms of content.

Recounting his most significant trip to Jerusalem after his conversion, Paul shows by his coming, his companion, his commission, and his commendation that he was of one truth and one spirit with the other twelve apostles.

#### PAUL'S COMING

**Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. (2:1–2)**

Paul had already established that his contact with the other apostles was almost nil during the first years after his conversion. He did not see any of them until three years after his Damascus Road encounter with the Lord, and then only briefly. He had stayed with Peter for fifteen days in Jerusalem and had met James, Jesus' half brother (1:18–19; [cf.](#) Acts 9:26–28). He later went to Jerusalem a second time for probably an even briefer period, which he does not refer to in this text since it had no direct bearing on the issue of apostleship. During that brief second visit he helped Barnabas take the collection to Jerusalem from the church at Antioch for relief of famine-stricken believers in Judea (Acts 11:27–30; 12:24–25)

**Then after an interval of fourteen years** from the first visit when he met Peter and James, he **went up again to Jerusalem**. During the previous seventeen years he had preached the gospel without any human instruction, his message having been given to him entirely by God's direct revelation (Gal. 1:11–12, 16–17).

Paul and Barnabas had completed their first missionary tour (Acts 13:1–14:28) and returned to Antioch to report the miracles of Gentile conversion by grace through faith. Jewish legalists in Judea were upset when they heard the report and went to Antioch to teach that a Gentile had to become a Jew before becoming a Christian.

It seems probable, as many scholars believe, that this trip of Paul's **again to Jerusalem** was for the council (Acts 15) called to resolve the issue, and that again does not linguistically denote a second visit. (For a thorough treatment of the viability of that view of Acts 15 compared with the view that this text refers to Paul's second visit to Jerusalem for famine relief recorded in Acts 11:27–30; 12:24–25, see William Hendricksen's *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Galatians* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971], [pp.](#) 69–77.)

According to Acts 15, those professing Jewish Christians from Judea went to Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were ministering, “and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue” (Acts 15:1–2). The whole debate was to be resolved in **Jerusalem**.

In addition to the leader Paul and his intimate Jewish friend and companion **Barnabas**, ...

**Titus**, a spiritual child of Paul and his co-worker (Titus 1:4–5), went **along also**, being among the “certain others” mentioned by Luke. Titus, as an uncircumcised Gentile and a product of the very ministry the Judaizers were attacking, was a fitting attendee to take along to the council. Consistent with their deceitful, self-serving methods of operation, the Judaizers likely claimed they sent the delegation from Antioch to Jerusalem to have Paul’s and Barnabas’s doctrine corrected. But both Luke and Paul make clear that such was not the case. Luke states that they were “sent on their way by the church” at Antioch (v. 3). Though there may have been some reluctance on the part of Paul in accepting the assignment to go to Jerusalem, a direct **revelation** by God affirmed his obligation. Paul says more specifically that **it was because of a revelation that I went up**. It is possible that the Holy Spirit spoke to the leaders of the Antioch church, along with Paul, just as He had done when Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for their first missionary venture (Acts 13:2). In any case, the matter was resolved when Paul, divinely commanded to go to Jerusalem, was obedient, and the Antioch church affirmed that command by giving their blessing.

When Paul reached Jerusalem, he simply **submitted** (from *anatithēmi*, to lay something before someone for consideration) **to them the gospel which** he had always preached **among the Gentiles**, the gospel of salvation by God’s sovereign grace through man’s penitent faith—a gospel utterly contrary to the works-righteous belief of the Judaizers that “unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

**Them** refers first of all to the local church apostles and elders, including chiefly Peter, John, and James, our Lord’s half-brother, and then to the whole assembled church at Jerusalem, composed of all the apostles and elders as well as other church members and possibly other visiting believers besides those sent by the Antioch church (Acts 15:4). Paul and Barnabas gave that group a general report on “all that God had done with them,” after which “certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them [Gentiles], and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses’” (vv. 4–5).

At that point the “apostles and elders came together to look into this matter” more thoroughly. After much debate, Peter addressed the group, declaring that God makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, saving them both by faith and granting them both the gift of His indwelling Spirit. Concerning the supposed necessity of being circumcised and of following all the Mosaic law in order to be saved, he said, “Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” (vv. 10–11).

It seems reasonable to assume that this private meeting occurred first because Paul wanted to be sure of the theology of the Jerusalem leaders before he spoke publicly. Therefore before any council appearance. Paul and Barnabas related **in private to those who were of reputation** “what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles” (Acts 15:12). In complete accord with what Peter was to say, Paul and Barnabas declared, first privately and then publicly, that God had saved Gentiles wherever they had proclaimed the gospel and that their message and those conversions were attested by God himself through means of miraculous “signs and wonders.” That evidence was conclusive, because God does not confirm falsehood. When the Lord attested preaching and conversion with signs and wonders, there was no greater proof that the preaching was according to divine truth and the conversions were by the power of His Spirit.

That the Jerusalem church, and probably most of the church at large, had not been seriously devastated by the heretical teaching of the Judaizers is seen in the fact that the matter was quickly and decisively resolved at the Jerusalem Council. The entire body “kept silent” when Peter finished his address, and immediately after Paul and Barnabas spoke, James summarized their messages and proposed that the substance of what they said be sent as a directive to all the churches. After Peter, Paul, and Barnabas spoke there was no more debate (cf. v. 7) James’s proposal “seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church,” and a letter stating their decision was sent to “the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles” (vv. 12–22). The believers at Antioch, having been thoroughly grounded in the true gospel by Paul and Barnabas, “rejoiced because of its encouragement” when the council’s letter was read to them (vv. 30–31).

Paul’s referring to the apostles with whom he spoke in private as **those who were of reputation** reflected the general attitude of the church toward those Christ-appointed leaders. The phrase describing them is used of authorities and implies a position of honor. But the fact that he refers to them in this way four times in eight verses (Gal. 2:2–9) suggests a tinge of sarcasm. It is not, however, directed at the apostles but at the Judaizers who had been claiming apostolic approval of their legalistic perversions of the gospel. In the letter sent out by the council the deceitful Judaizers are described as “some of our number to whom we gave no instruction” who had been disturbing the churches and “unsettling [their] souls” (Acts 15:24).

Although the Judaizers did not proclaim the same gospel taught by the Twelve, they knew they needed apostolic confirmation in order to be taken seriously. They therefore fabricated the lie that their message was approved by the apostles in Jerusalem anti that they were among its acknowledged representatives. But that claim was absolutely denied by the apostles and elders at the council in Jerusalem.

The fact that Paul probably wrote Galatians some years after the Jerusalem Council shows that the decision and proclamation of that council had not stopped the Judaizers either from preaching their false doctrines or from claiming approval by the apostles, **those who were of reputation**. Paul was obviously not of any **reputation**, they told the Galatian believers, because his gospel conflicted with theirs and the apostles’.

But when Paul took Titus to Jerusalem and presented his gospel before these men **of reputation**, he was vindicated and the Judaizers were denounced. He had not sought vindication because he doubted the validity of his preaching. He had just declared emphatically that his message was by direct revelation from God and that it did not have and did not need any human clarification or confirmation (Gal. 1:11–19). He went to Jerusalem to prove that the gospel he preached was identical to that preached by the other apostles, having been revealed to him directly, though separately, by the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul did not go to confirm the apostolicity of his message in his own mind but in the minds of Galatian believers who were being confused and deceived by the Judaizers.

The Judaistic teachings were not simply misinterpretations or misapplications of the true gospel but the very antithesis of it. It was **for fear** that they might compromise with the teaching of the Judaizers and their perverse gospel that Paul sought in private to be certain that the teachers in Jerusalem agreed with his revelation of the gospel and would not be soft on legalism. Otherwise he **might** discover he was like an athlete who was **running, or had run, in vain** by seeing that all the spiritual effort in his ministry past and present was in conflict with them and was futile. The apostles affirmed Paul’s gospel and added nothing to it (Gal. 2:6). That private confirmation set the stage for the decision in the public council that

followed It was of the greatest importance that believers in Galatia, and everywhere else, understand that his gospel of grace was identical to that of the other apostles and that it was the Satanic message of the Judaizers that was the aberration of God's saving truth.

#### PAUL'S COMPANION

**But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (2:3–5)**

Although the Greek text of these verses may have been perfectly intelligible to the Galatians, it is almost impossible for modern scholars to translate. The noted biblical scholar J. B. Lightfoot called the passage "a shipwreck of Greek grammar." Perhaps Paul became so emotional while defending the very heart of the gospel and was so afraid that his beloved flocks would be corrupted by the Judaistic heresy that he used complex grammar and failed to complete his sentences.

But Paul's meaning is obvious, and there is no difficulty in understanding precisely what he is saying. As specific evidence in a test case showing that the Jerusalem apostles were in complete accord with him, Paul states that **not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised** while at Jerusalem (cf. Acts 15:10, 19). **Titus**, a true Christian, was living and incontrovertible proof that circumcision and Mosaic regulations are not necessary for salvation. The Jerusalem Council refused to accede to the demands of the Judaizers to have Titus and all other Gentile believers circumcised, determining that they would "not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" by compelling them **to be circumcised** (Acts 15:19, cf. v. 28).

It should be noted that some years after that occasion Paul circumcised Timothy "because of the Jews who were in those parts" (the region of Galatia), but he did so because Timothy was hail Jewish (Acts 16:1–3). He was not making a concession to the Judaizers, but rather was giving Timothy closer identity with Jews to whom they might witness. Timothy was circumcised as a Jew, not as a Christian. His circumcision had no relationship to his salvation but simply gave him entrance to Jewish synagogues, from which he would otherwise have been excluded.

**Titus**, however, was a full Gentile, and to have had him circumcised would have undercut the gospel of grace and made him a monument of victory for the Judaizers. Paul may have intentionally brought **Titus** to Jerusalem to confound the Judaizing **false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage**. Paul was perfectly confident in the outcome of the Jerusalem Council and knew that afterward he would have a companion who would be personal proof that his gospel of grace apart from law was valid. He was confident that **Titus** would be allowed to leave Jerusalem uncircumcised, just as he had entered, with the full blessing of the apostles and elders. And if Gentile believers were not compelled to be circumcised in Jerusalem, which was still home base for most of the apostles, how could they be required to be circumcised in their home countries? Henceforth **Titus** was a living verification that the Judaizers taught a spurious gospel that was rejected by the rest of the church.

The Judaizers were marked as **false brethren** (*pseudadelphos*), a phrase that has also been translated “sham Christians” (NEB) and “pseudo-Christians” (Phillips). Those professing Jewish believers had developed a hybrid faith that was true neither to traditional Judaism (because it claimed allegiance to Christ) nor to apostolic Christianity (because it demanded circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic law for salvation).

It is impossible to be a legalist and a Christian. “If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you,” Paul declares later in the letter. “Every man who receives circumcision ... is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:2–4). To do a single thing to earn salvation is to vitiate grace.

Some of the Judaizers no doubt sincerely believed their legalistic gospel was correct and that they were the only genuine Christians. But Paul refers to those **who had sneaked in to spy out the liberty** of true believers in terms that suggest enemies entering a camp by stealth with the objective of sabotage. Those men may not even have been honest Judaizers. Some scholars believe they were planted in the churches by Pharisees or priests in order to corrupt this threat to traditional Judaism. In any case, Satan, as always, was the primary instigator of the subterfuge. The Judaizers were first of all the devil’s agents, whatever their human associations and loyalties.

Their specific purpose was to undermine the **liberty which true believers have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring them into the bondage** of legalism. The verb (*katadouloō*) is a compound and conveys the strong slavery of a works system. The Judaizers could not tolerate a gospel that was not tied to Mosaic ritual and law, because their view of salvation was centered in what they could self-righteously perform to earn favor from God rather than in what God could do for them.

**In Christ Jesus** believers have **liberty** from the law as the way of salvation and **liberty** from its external ceremonies and regulations as the way of living. Because Christ has borne that curse (3:13), they also have **liberty** from the curse for disobedience of the law, which God requires all men to obey but which no man is able to perfectly keep. Christians are under an entirely different kind of law, “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus [that sets them] free from the law of sin and of death” (Rom. 8:2).

Freedom is a much-repeated theme of the New Testament. In Christ believers “have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6), because “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). “If therefore the Son shall make you free,” Jesus said, “you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Christian freedom is not license. When we become free in Christ we lose our freedom to sin, of which we were once a slave. In Christ, “having been freed from sin, [we] become slaves of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18). “For you were called to freedom, brethren,” Paul explains: “only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). Peter expresses the same truth in these words: “Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond-slaves of God” (1 Pet. 2:16).

Paul **did not yield in subjection to** the legalistic bondage of the Judaizers **for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you** Galatian believers (and all others), untainted and unadulterated. **Remain** is from

*diamenō* and emphasizes a permanent state. In regard to methods of ministry and issues

of no spiritual importance, Paul became “all things to all men, that [he might] by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). But in doctrinal matters, especially those relating to the heart of the gospel, he was intransigent. He would make considerable concessions in order to accommodate weak Christians, but he would not yield an inch of truth to accommodate false Christians. And the leaders of the church at Jerusalem were wholeheartedly in agreement with Paul’s gospel, as their declarations in the council indicated (Acts 15:13–21).

#### PAUL’S COMMISSION

**But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)-well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, (2:6–9a)**

Again Paul refers to the other apostles as **those who were of high reputation**, apparently a favorite phrase of the Judaizers. In going on to say, **what they were makes no difference to me**, he was not depreciating those godly men. He respected them or he would not have sought a private audience with them, nor would he have sought their public confirmation so that people would know he was not running in vain. He rather was defending himself against the depreciation of the Judaizers, who accused him of not comparing with the Jerusalem apostles and of being a false, self-appointed, and inferior apostle. His point here was that, although those twelve men were personally appointed apostles by Jesus Christ, so was he. He did not need their approval for his own confidence, nor did he need to seek their confirmation to convince himself, and in that regard who or **what they were** made **no difference** to him and his ministry. He had no doubts about his calling and revelations.

It may be that the Judaizers put Paul down by reminding him that the Twelve had been with Jesus for the entire course of His earthly ministry, whereas he had not (cf. 1:19) The twelve were also leaders in the Jerusalem church, which understandably was held in high regard by Christians as the first and leading congregation. But, Paul goes on to say, **God shows no partiality**, as Peter had learned with some difficulty (Acts 10:9–48). The unique privileges of the twelve therefore did not make their apostleship more legitimate or authoritative than Paul’s.

Paul was not being proud or boastful but was simply stating a truth. He knew that all he was and had was entirely by God’s grace (Gal. 2:9). He acknowledged himself as the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15) and “the least of the apostles, who [was] not fit to be called an apostle, because [he had] persecuted the church of God” (1 Cor. 15:9). But under God’s grace he was equal to all other believers, and in his calling he was equal to all the other apostles. In 2 Corinthians 11:5 he affirmed, “I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles.”

The Twelve had **contributed nothing** to Paul’s knowledge or understanding of the gospel or to his authority to preach it. For seventeen years he had preached the gospel without their having had the least part in it. When he finally went to Jerusalem to testify to what he preached, it was not for approval or correction but simply for recognition-and that not for his own sake but for the sake of those who had been deceived by the false accusations against him being spread by the Judaizers.

**But on the contrary, seeing that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised,** the apostles in Jerusalem recognized he was entrusted with preaching the true gospel. At that point the Judaizers' contention that Paul was preaching a deviant message was refuted once and for all. As Luke explains, not only did the Jerusalem Council vindicate Paul's message of grace apart from law but they entrusted him with the primary responsibility of reporting their decision to the churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia-areas where his work had been severely criticized by the Judaizers (Acts 15:22–24).

Because some versions, such as the King James, have translated "the gospel of the uncircumcised" and "of the circumcised," many liberal interpreters have suggested (for this and other reasons) that Peter and Paul preached different messages. But that idea is disproved by Galatians 1:6–9, by the decision of the Jerusalem Council, and by Greek grammar. The Greek article (*tēs*) is here an objective genitive and does not indicate definition ("of") but direction (**to**), as in our text and most modern translations.

**For He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised,** Paul continues, **effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles.** The same Holy Spirit (**He**) who energized (**worked**, from *energeō*, to be at work, to produce results) and empowered **Peter** energized and empowered **Paul**, and the Spirit has but one gospel. When Paul returned to Jerusalem several years later, "the brethren received [him and those with him] gladly," and when he "began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry," James and the other elders "began glorifying God" (Acts 21:17–20). After the Jerusalem Council there was never a question about Paul's message or apostleship. In his second letter Peter highly commended Paul as a wise and beloved brother and ranked Paul's letters with "the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Pet. 3:15–16).

**Recognizing the grace that had been given** to Paul, the other apostles and the church at large could only conclude that this man was a divinely commissioned and blessed instrument of God. Only God's **grace**-His free, sovereign, and undeserved blessing-could account for the mighty spreading of the gospel and building up of the church that the Lord had accomplished through this mortal.

#### PAUL'S COMMENDATION

**James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They only asked us to remember the poor-the very thing I also was eager to do.** (2:9b-10)

Still again Paul refers to the reputation of **James and Cephas (Peter) and John**-those **who were reputed to be pillars** (a Jewish term used to refer to great teachers). As already mentioned, the somewhat sarcastic reference does not reflect against these men but against the Judaizers. Because those false teachers apparently used the term **pillars** (emphasizing their role in establishing and supporting the church) when referring to the three Jerusalem leaders, Paul throws the term back in their faces He demonstrates to them and to the Galatian believers they were trying to turn against him that he was in perfect doctrinal harmony with those three **pillars** and with all the other apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

He not only was in doctrinal harmony with them but in personal harmony with them as

well. There is only one gospel, and those five men (who wrote 21 of the 27 New Testament books) demonstrate that truth. They **gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship**, Paul says as he continues to confound the false claims of the Judaizers. In the Near East, to clasp **the right hand** of a person was to make a solemn vow of friendship and was a mark **of fellowship**, or partnership. The “pillars” at Jerusalem recognized Paul not only as a true preacher and teacher of the gospel but also as a beloved partner with them in Christ’s service. They had different fields of service—Paul and Barnabas ministered primarily **to the Gentiles** and the Jerusalem leaders primarily **to the circumcised**—but they proclaimed the same gospel and served the same Lord in the power of His Spirit. That act of affirmation both of Paul and of his message was a devastating blow to the Judaizers. In fact, Paul’s apostolate to the Gentiles was recognized as the equal of Peter’s apostolate to the Jews.

The only request made of Paul and Barnabas at Jerusalem was that they **remember the poor**. The request was not doctrinal but practical, a reminder about the special needs of believers in Judea, especially Jerusalem. Even before the widespread famine (see Acts 11:28) for which Paul was called to bring relief, the Jerusalem church faced a serious problem of feeding and caring for its members. Its ranks were swelled by hundreds, perhaps thousands, of believers who had been converted while visiting the city and who then decided to stay there rather than return home. Many had little money, and they soon discovered that, because they were Christians, it was sometimes difficult to find employment. In the early days of the church those who had money and other possessions generously shared what they had “with all, as anyone might have need” (Acts 2:45). But those resources were rapidly depleted as the number of converts grew. For many years, therefore, the church at Jerusalem had been economically pressed.

To take care of the poor is not only a practical but a spiritual responsibility, because to forsake that responsibility is to disobey God’s Word. “Whoever has this world’s goods,” John declares, “and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” (1 John 3:17). James says that it is a sham believer who says to “a brother or sister ... without clothing and in need of daily food, ... ‘Go in peace, be waged and be filled,’ and yet [does] not give them what is necessary for their body” (James 2:15–16; cf. Ex. 23:10–11; 30:15; Lev. 19:10; Deut. 15:7–11; Jer. 22:16; Amos 2:6–7; Luke 6:36, 38; 2 Cor. 8–9).

Paul was therefore **eager to do** all he could to fulfill the request of James, Peter, and John, as his numerous and constant collections for the poverty-stricken saints in Judea attested. His command that “if anyone will not work, neither let him eat” (2 Thess. 3:10) pertained to the lazy, not the helpless and needy. He continually encouraged believers who were more prosperous to give financial aid to fellow believers who were in need; and he heartily commended those who were generous (Acts 11:29–30; 24:17; Rom. 15:25–26; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–6; 9:1–5, 12). “For if the Gentiles have shared in their [the Jerusalem saints] spiritual things,” Paul explained to the Roman church, “they are indebted to minister to them also in material things” (Rom. 15:27).

**But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the**

**Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 delivered Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (2:11–21)**

Guilt is a universal plague of sinful mankind. Every person feels guilty. Consequently every person tries in some way to alleviate his guilt. Primitive tribesmen seek to assuage their guilt by appeasing the imagined gods who are supposedly angry with them. Cultured, sophisticated people may take the escape route of psychoanalysis or some other form of human counseling. Some people try to salve their guilt by positive thinking and self-confident, self-indulgent living. Others try to escape through sex, alcohol, or drugs.

Millennia before Jesus Christ came to earth and died for man's sin, God foreshadowed His perfect sacrifice through the offering of slain animals. He apparently began by instructing Adam to offer blood sacrifices as symbols pointing to the true and effective shedding of Christ's blood on the cross. The sacrifice of a ram, goat, lamb, or other animal never had power to forgive and cleanse sin—nor was it ever meant to. Such sacrifices were only outward, symbolic acts of obedience that, unless accompanied by a humble and contrite heart, were not acceptable to God. Without reverential trust in the God to whom he offered the sacrifice, the offerer engaged only in meaningless ritual (Isa. 29:13).

When Cain offered his sacrifice of grain to the Lord, he sinned both by disobeyingly bringing the wrong kind of offering and by offering it in the wrong spirit. Rather than bringing an animal sacrifice as God had obviously commanded, he brought the fruit of his own labor, proudly supposing that this offering of disobedience was just as acceptable to God as the one He had prescribed. His was the first act of works righteousness, the forerunner of every such act since his time. Every person of every era who has tried to come to God on the basis of his own merits and works, or by some humanly designed religious prescriptions, has followed in the unbelieving, grace-rejecting steps of Cain. By rejecting God's prescribed animal sacrifice, Cain rejected God's provision of substitutionary salvation in His Son toward which that blood offering pointed.

Abel, on the other hand, by obediently offering the blood sacrifice God required, in faith leaped across the centuries and touched the cross. God accepted his offering not because it had any spiritual benefit in itself but because it was presented in faith and obedience.

Since the time of Cain and Abel the two divergent lines of works and faith have characterized man's religious life. The person who follows the way of man, whatever it is,

follows Satan's lie and the way of Cain. The person who follows God's way follows the way of Abel, the way of grace and forgiveness.

Those two lines of approach to God can be followed throughout the Old Testament. The builders of the tower of Babel followed the unbelieving and rebellious way of Cain, whereas Noah and his family followed the believing and obedient way of Abel. The vast majority of the ancient world followed the ungodly way of Cain, whereas Abraham and his household followed the godly way of Abel. Within the nation of Israel there were always the same two lines of human achievement and divine accomplishment, of trusting in what man can do for God or of trusting in what God has done for man. Those who follow the narrow way of faith are always a minority, but for that faithful remnant, God's blessings never cease and His promises never fail.

At the time Jesus was born the believing remnant included Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Anna, Simeon, and many others whose names are unknown to us. They placed their trust in the God of Israel for their salvation and implicitly believed the Old Testament as His divinely-revealed Word. They faithfully and willingly conformed their behavior to God's prescribed ceremonies and standards, all the while demonstrating that their trust was in the Lord Himself, not in the keeping of those ceremonies and standards, important as such outward testimony of obedience was under the Old Covenant.

But when Jesus was born the vast majority of Israelites, whether in Palestine or other parts of the Roman Empire, continued to pervert and add to Old Testament revelation and to put their trust in themselves, looking to their own goodness and accomplishments to make them acceptable to God. The great body of rabbinic traditions was grounded in works righteousness, in the idea of attaining merit before God through strict observance of an almost endless list of man-made regulations and ceremonies. Most Jewish leaders, epitomized by the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees, proudly believed their religious works placed them in God's special favor and gained them forgiveness for their sins.

It was from among that vast group of legalistic Jews that the Judaizers arose, claiming to follow Christ but teaching that a Gentile had to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic law before he could be saved and that all believers, Jew and Gentile alike, had to continue observance of that law in order to maintain their relation to God. Their teaching not only corrupted the gospel but also the teaching of the Old Testament, in which the way of salvation was always and only by obedient faith in God. At no time in history has a person been saved by his own merit. Both before and during the time of the Mosaic covenant men were saved by faith alone. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, the godly judges, kings prophets, and every other Old Testament saint were saved only on the basis of faith. All of those people, whether man or woman, Jew or Gentile, "gained approval through their faith" (cf. Heb. 11:1–39).

The Judaizers were therefore not teaching Old Testament doctrine but the cardinal doctrine of Satan, that a person can by his own goodness and works gain favor with God. That is why Paul referred to the Judaizers as "dogs, ... evil workers, ... the false circumcision" (Phil. 3:2). "False circumcision" translates *katomē*, which is used only there in the New Testament and refers to pagan sexual mutilation. Paul was declaring that for an unbeliever, no matter what his Jewish pedigree and attainments might be, circumcision amounted to no more than pagan mutilation. "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter" (Rom. 2:28–29). Since the coming of Christ only Christians can be "heart circumcised." "We are the true circumcision," Paul

explained to the Philippian believers, “who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3).

No person of his day had more reason than Paul to boast in his Jewish heritage and accomplishments. He was “circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law a Pharisee; ... as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith” (Phil. 3:5–9).

The Judaizers recognized Jesus as the Messiah, but because their view of the Messiah was corrupt so was their view of Jesus. They did not look to the Messiah as the Lamb of God who would take away their sin, because they did not believe they had sin that demanded such sacrifice in order to be forgiven. As circumcised, ceremonial Jews they were convinced they already had the full favor of God and were spiritually and morally acceptable to Him just as they were. That common Jewish view is reflected in the argument of the book of Hebrews, in which the writer goes to great lengths to persuade his Jewish readers that the Messiah (Christ) is superior to the prophets, to angels, and even to Moses (Heb. 1:1–3:6). He was not simply another great Jewish leader. He was of a completely different order, the very Son of God and Savior of the world, whose saving sacrifice was necessary for anyone to be right with God.

In Galatians 2:11–21, the scene changes from Jerusalem and the council there to Synan Antioch, where the first church in a Gentile area was established and where Paul and Barnabas served as co-pastors, with help from three other men (see Acts 13:1). Paul continues the defense of his apostolic credentials by reporting his exercise of authority on one occasion even over Peter, whom most believers in the early church considered to be the preeminent apostle. And Paul did not hesitate to correct him when he was out of line with the truth. First he briefly explains Peter’s deviation from the gospel and then, from that platform, presents it in its true form.

#### PETER’S DEVIATION

**But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (2:11–13)**

#### THE CLASH

**But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (2:11)**

Because the Judaizers had told believers in the Galatian churches that Paul was not a true apostle, the incident mentioned in this verse is especially significant. Paul not only was

equal to the other apostles but had on this occasion even reprimanded Peter (**Cephas**), the one who was recognizably the leading apostle among the Twelve. Both Peter and Paul had experienced salvation by grace through faith, both were directly chosen by the resurrected Jesus Christ to be apostles, and both had been mightily used by the Holy Spirit in establishing and teaching the church. The book of Acts can be divided between the early church ministry that centered on Peter (1–12) and that which centered on Paul (13–28). But in **Antioch** these two men of God came into head-on collision.

**Opposed** is from *anistēmi*, which carries the meaning of hindering or forbidding, and was usually applied to defensive measures. By his withdrawal from the Gentiles, Peter had, in effect, joined the Judaizers in belittling Paul's inspired teaching, especially the doctrine of salvation by God's grace alone working through man's faith alone. Peter knew better, and Paul **opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned**.

Peter was not **condemned** in the sense of losing his salvation but in the sense of being guilty of sin by taking a position he knew was wrong. He no doubt also **stood condemned** as a sinner in the eyes of the Gentile believers in Antioch, who, because they were well-grounded in the gospel of grace, were perplexed and deeply hurt by his ostracism of them.

Before Peter's compromise with the Judaizers could do serious damage in the Antioch church, God used Paul to nip the error in the bud. In so doing He also provided Paul with perhaps his most convincing proof of apostolic authority. God has a purpose even in the worst of circumstances, and what could have been a tragedy He used for His glory and for the strengthening of His church.

#### THE CAUSE

**For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.** (2:12)

Peter had been in Antioch for some time **prior to the coming of certain men from James**, and during that time **he used to eat with the Gentiles**. The **certain men** were Judaizers who had come to Antioch claiming to be **from James** but were not. As leader of the Jerusalem church, **James** (our Lord's half brother) had summarized the decision of the council against the Judaizers, saying, "It is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" (Acts 15:19). These **men** were of **the party of the circumcision** and not only taught a false gospel but also made false claims of support by the Jerusalem apostles and elders. Like Peter, **James** at times had difficulty giving up his lifelong adherence to the Mosaic rituals and regulations (see Acts 21:18–26), and he perhaps still had remnants of prejudice against Gentiles. But he would hardly have sent a delegation of heretics to Antioch to undermine the true gospel and cause the church there nothing but trouble. He would never have been the cause of discord and chaos where there was the pursuit of such Spirit-induced harmony and unity.

The imperfect tense of the Greek verb indicates that Peter's eating **with the Gentiles** was continuous, that is, habitual and regular over some period of time. He ate whatever was set before him with whoever was sitting beside him. He had no doubt participated in numerous love feasts with Gentile believers and joined them in the Lord's Supper. Until the **men from James** came to Antioch, he was participating with the church in a model fellowship of Jewish and Gentile believers who freely expressed and deeply cherished their love and liberty in

Christ.

It is only a small digression within the broad boundaries of our discussion to say that the Christian church cannot be what it is called to be when ritual, race, class, or other distinctions separate members from each other. The labels men put on themselves and on others are irrelevant to God, and should also be irrelevant to His people. Before salvation, every person is equally separated from God, and after salvation every person is equally reconciled to God. Believers “are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus ... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for [they] are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26, 28). Because believers are all children of God, they are all brothers and sisters, with no exceptions or distinctions.

The claim of some Christian groups that the Bible forbids the mingling of races is totally spurious, and such a claim is a blight on the church, an offense before God, and even a reproach before the world. It is the antithesis of New Testament teaching. If Paul were alive today he would stand as steadfastly against such prejudiced, unscriptural teaching as he did against Peter and the others in Antioch who allowed their prejudices and fears to compromise God’s truth.

Better than any other apostle, Peter should have known that in Christ all foods were clean and all believers equal. He had heard Jesus explain that “whatever goes into the man from the outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart” (Mark 7:18–19). He had experienced the unique and dramatic vision of the unclean animals and the related encounter with the Gentile Cornelius, after which he declared, “I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality” (Acts 10:34). At the Jerusalem Council Peter forcefully opposed the Judaizers, saying, “God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them [the Gentiles, v. 7] giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are” (Acts 15:8–11).

Yet when the Judaizers came to Antioch, Peter **began to withdraw and hold himself aloof** from the Gentiles, **fearing the party of the circumcision**. **Withdraw** is from *hupostellō*, a term used for strategic military disengagement. Polibius used it to describe troops drawing back from the enemy in order to secure shelter and safety. The imperfect tense may indicate that Peter’s withdrawal was gradual and, if so, suggests the idea of sneaky retreat. Acquiescing to both the ritualism and racism of the Jews, he began to drift away from his Gentile brethren and stopped accepting their invitations to dinner. He found excuses not to join with them in other activities and finally held **himself aloof** from them altogether.

The old Peter-weak, fearful, and vacillating-had come to the fore again. Here was the same Peter who under divine inspiration declared Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the bring God” but who a short while later rebuked his Lord for saying that He must suffer and die (Matt. 16:16, 22). Here is the same Peter who boldly declared he would die rather than deny his Lord but who, before the night was out, had denied Him three times (Mark 14:29–31, 66–72). Here was the same Peter who was called to preach but who disobediently went back to fishing even after he had encountered the resurrected Christ (John 21:3).

Peter was not **fearing the party of the circumcision** because they might threaten his life or freedom. The Judaizers claimed to be Christians and therefore obviously had no authority

from the Sanhedrin to arrest, imprison, or put anyone to death-as the men did who stoned Stephen and as Paul himself once had done. The most the Judaizers could have done against Peter was to ridicule him and malign him in Jerusalem, as their fellow Judaizers would later malign Paul in Galatia. Peter was afraid of just that-losing popularity and prestige with a group of self-righteous hypocrites whose doctrines were heretical and whose tactics were deceitful.

Peter was not unlike most Christians in finding it difficult to be consistent in spiritual commitment. He would show great courage and conviction and then stumble. He would staunchly defend the faith and then succumb to compromise. When he did that in Antioch he played into the hands of the Judaizers, who must have been elated to have drawn this great apostle into their camp, by practice if not by precept.

Christians who refuse to share the Lord's table with other believers because of fear and prejudice fall into the same spiritual error as Peter did at Antioch. And in so doing they fracture the divine unity of Christ's own Body, the church.

#### THE CONSEQUENCE

**And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. (2:13)**

Peter not only withdrew from the Gentile believers himself but, by example, indirectly induced **the rest of the Jews** to join **him in hypocrisy**. The separation became so widespread and influential **that even** the godly **Barnabas**, who at this time was one of the pastors at Antioch, **was carried away** into the sin. Paul and Barnabas had recently been on a fruitful missionary journey together, had gone with each other to the Jerusalem Council (see the previous chapter), and were now co-pastors at Antioch. They had taught together, prayed together, ministered together, and suffered together. They were the closest of friends and loved each other deeply. It was **Barnabas** who had first befriended and defended Paul when he went to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion (Acts 9:27). Many times **Barnabas** had heard Paul preach the gospel of salvation by faith alone and had preached it many times himself. But even he **was carried away by** the legalistic **hypocrisy** of Peter and the others. It may have been Barnabas's hypocrisy on this occasion that began the eventual rift with Paul that a short while later resulted in their separation over taking John Mark on the next journey (Acts 15:37-40).

Peter was a natural leader, and his public action invariably took others with him. When he acted in his own wisdom the result was tragic, and when other believers put their faith in him as a man the tragedy was compounded. The effect on the Antioch church was disastrous.

The Greek term behind **hypocrisy** originally referred to an actor wearing a mask to indicate a particular mood or type of character. A hypocrite is someone who, like a Greek actor, masks his true self.

Peter and the other Jewish believers who withdrew with him knew that what they were doing was wrong, but they were intimidated by the Judaizers into going against the truth of their convictions and consciences. In seeking to please those hypocrites they became hypocrites themselves, and in so doing brought heartache to their Gentile brothers and to their Lord.

From Peter's failure at Antioch several important truths can be learned. The first is that

even uniquely gifted ministers of the gospel can commit serious transgressions, sometimes becoming guilty of the very errors and sins they once strongly preached against.

In order to maintain the doctrine of the infallibility of the popes, who are claimed by the Roman system to be successors of Peter, some Catholic theologians have insisted that the Peter at Antioch was not the apostle. But he was the same Peter who preached the Spirit-empowered sermon at Pentecost and through whom the crippled man outside the Temple was healed. Despite his divine calling and giftedness, he manifested feet of clay.

Second, we learn that faithfulness involves more than believing the right doctrine. Right doctrine without right behavior always produces hypocrisy.

Third, we learn that truth is more important than outward harmony and peace. Christian fellowship and unity are built on truth, never falsehood. No matter what the beneficial prospect might seem to be from a human perspective, compromise can do nothing but weaken the church. Peace that is preserved by compromising God's truth is the pseudo-peace of the world and is not of God. "The bond of peace" (Phil. 4:3) is not peace at any price but peace based on God's Word and established by God's Spirit.

Fourth, we see that situation ethics is ungodly ethics. God's Word, not a given human situation, determines what is right and wrong. Christians do not make truth; and a group of believers, no matter how large or influential—even if they were to be apostles—who take a wrong position or indulge in a wrong practice are still wrong. Neither expediency, falsely defined love, nor majority vote have any bearing on truth and righteousness.

Fifth, we learn that falsehood is not to be ignored, regardless of the consequences that opposition to it may bring. When the falsehood strikes at the heart of the gospel, as did the heresy of the Judaizers, opposition is all the more imperative. Even leading Christians "who continue in sin" are to be rebuked "in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning" (1 Tim. 5:20).

#### PAUL'S DOCTRINE

**But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 delivered Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly." (2:14–21)**

The actions of Peter, Barnabas, and the other Jewish believers in Antioch were not simply a matter of personal hypocrisy. Their capitulation to the Judaizers, by example if not by doctrine, was fracturing the church. The fact that Peter and Barnabas were spiritual leaders

made the matter immeasurably worse. For years they had taught salvation by faith alone, and they had exemplified that teaching in their lives. The Antioch church had become a model of Jewish-Gentile fellowship and harmony, and almost overnight it had become the opposite.

#### HIS REACTION

**But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews? We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles. (2:14–15)**

As already noted, the withdrawal of the Jewish believers from the Gentiles was likely gradual; but as soon as Paul realized what was happening he immediately reacted against it. **When [he] saw they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel**, he sharply rebuked Peter (**Cephas**). As an apostle Peter was the most accountable, and it was his wrong example that had drawn the others into the destructive hypocrisy.

**Straightforward** is from *orthopodeō*, a compound of *orthos* (straight) and *pous* (foot) that means to walk straight, or uprightly. One scholar translates verse 14a as, “They were not walking on the straight path towards the truth of the gospel.” In withdrawing from their Gentile brethren, Peter and the others were not living parallel to God’s Word, not walking a straight spiritual course.

Because Peter’s offense was public, Paul rebuked him **in the presence of all**, unmasking his hypocrisy before the whole congregation. Every believer in Antioch, and doubtlessly many unbelievers as well, knew that Peter was no longer associating with Gentiles as he had once done so freely and openly. Augustine said, “It is not advantageous to correct in secret an error which occurred publicly.” Unless the public sin of a believer is dealt with publicly, people will think the church does not take sin seriously and therefore gives tacit approval of it. A church that does not discipline sinning members (including the most prominent members) loses its credibility, because it does not take seriously its own doctrines and standards. A child who is not disciplined when he does wrong soon concludes that his parent’s standards are not really very important, because they are not enforced.

After taking care to determine by several witnesses that a charge against an elder is true, Paul told Timothy, the elder should be rebuked “in the presence of all, so that the rest also may be fearful of sinning” (1 Tim. 5:20). Paul’s rebuke of Peter shows that no Christian leader, regardless of his stature, is beyond discipline by the Body. Public sin demands public rebuke.

**“If you, being a Jew,”** Paul said, **“live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”** In contrast to Peter’s hypocrisy, Paul’s indictment was straightforward. He simply pointed out the obvious inconsistency of Peter’s behavior in Antioch. He reminded him that when he first arrived there, Peter had freely fellowshiped with Gentile believers and regularly ate with them (v. 12). He had openly visited in their homes and joined them in love feasts and Communion, showing no evidence of legalism or prejudice. He had lived **like the Gentiles and not like the Jews**, who were known throughout the world for their separatism.

Josephus reports that the Midianite woman who tried to seduce the Israelites said to them, “Your kinds of food are peculiar to yourselves, and your kinds of drink are common to no other.” For centuries Jews had been known for their strict laws and separation from Gentiles.

Under the Old Covenant God had established certain dietary laws and other restrictions for the purpose of keeping His chosen people from intermingling and intermarrying with pagan Gentiles and being corrupted by their idolatry and immorality. But during and after the time of the Exile, rabbinic tradition had made countless additions and amendments to the biblical regulations. For example, Jews were allowed to buy meat from a Gentile market only if the animal had been slaughtered by a Jew and had not been used in a pagan religious ceremony.

After his vision of the unclean animals and his experience with Cornelius, Peter had no longer lived **like the Jews**, having finally come to realize that even the God-given ceremonial separation taught in the Old Testament was no longer valid. But under the influence of the Judaizers in Antioch he faltered and slipped back into the old ways. When the winds of legalism blew in, he adjusted his sails accordingly and was blown along with them.

Paul had no desire to lord it over Peter or to build up his own reputation at the expense of a fellow apostle. His motive was not to humiliate Peter but to correct him in a serious error that had caused many other believers to stumble with him. He could tolerate nothing that threatened the integrity of the gospel, especially if that threat came from a prominent and influential leader such as Peter.

#### HIS STATEMENT

**We are Jews by nature, and not sinners from among the Gentiles; nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified. (2:15–16)**

The heart of man's spiritual dilemma is that he is incapable of overcoming the total sinfulness that separates him from the holy God. Job's friend Bildad asked, "How then can a man be just with God?" (Job 25:4). How can a guilty and condemned sinner be made righteous and thereby acceptable to God? The provision of justification by faith is God's answer to that dilemma and need.

Paul's rebuke of Peter culminated in one of the most forceful statements in the New Testament on the doctrine of justification—the very doctrine that Peter and the others were in effect renouncing by their hypocritical separation from Gentile believers. In effect, Paul was saying, "Peter, I am rebuking you because you are violating the cardinal truth of Christianity. By your behavior you are condoning works-righteousness, a system of legalism that is contrary even to the covenant given by Moses, not to mention the New Covenant given by our Lord Jesus Christ."

In setting forth the true doctrine of justification Paul first states what it is (vv. 15–16) and then gives a defense of it (vv. 17–21). As noted in a previous chapter, because of his intense and emotional concern for the integrity of the gospel and the spiritual welfare of the Galatian believers, Paul's grammar in this epistle is sometimes difficult to reconstruct and his logic difficult to follow, though his meaning is always clear.

**We** is used four times in verses 15–17 and refers to Paul, Peter, and all other Jewish Christians. The first part of his argument here is that, even **we who are Jews by nature ... have believed in Christ Jesus**. "As Jews," he was indicating, "we of all people know what it is to live by the system of law. We know the law as a way of life, what it is to function

continually under the demands of religious rituals and regulations. Yet even **we** were saved by believing **in Christ Jesus**, not by the law. And if **we**, as **Jews**, cannot be saved by the law, how can we expect **sinners from among the Gentiles** to be?"

In referring to **the Gentiles as sinners**, Paul was not using the term in the behavioral sense of public immorality (as it is often used in the gospels), but in the legal sense in which it was frequently used by Jews. In the minds of most Jews, Gentiles were **sinners** by nature because they had no law to guide them in right living and in pleasing God. But with or without the law, Paul was saying, no person is saved who has not **believed in Christ Jesus**.

At the Jerusalem Council Peter declared that same truth in response to the Judaizers. "Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they [the Gentiles] also are" (Acts 15:10–11).

Martin Luther said that if the article of justification by faith is lost, all Christian doctrine is lost. In this last section of chapter 2 Paul was inspired to introduce this most essential doctrine in the epistle, a doctrine he had preached and explained to the Galatians on many occasions. He uses the verb form of justification (*dikaioō*) four times in verses 16–17 and the noun form (*dikaioṡnē*) once in verse 21, where it is rendered "righteousness." In the New Testament these and other forms of the same Greek term are variously translated by such English words as justify, justification, righteousness, just, righteous, and justified.

The basic term was originally used forensically of a judge's declaring an accused person not guilty and right before the law. It was the opposite of being declared guilty and condemned. Throughout Scripture justification refers to God's declaring a sinner to be guiltless on the basis of faith in Him. It is the free and gracious act by which God declares a sinner right with Himself—forgiving, pardoning, restoring, and accepting him on the basis of nothing but trust in the Person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, Paul continues, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.**

No amount of law-keeping can make a person righteous, because the root of sinfulness is in the fallenness of man's heart, not in actions. Man's basic problem is in what he is, not in what he does. Sinful acts are but the outward expression of a depraved nature that contains sinful thoughts. A person who hates is inwardly a murderer, whether or not he ever takes another person's life (Matt. 5:22). A man who has immoral thoughts about women is an adulterer, whether or not he ever commits the physical act of adultery (5:28).

Consequently, no amount of **works of the Law** can save a person, because even the best of human works cannot change the nature of the person doing them. "We know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:19–20). The law is important as a mirror to show us our sinfulness; but it can only reveal sin, not remove it. "But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. ... For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (3:21–24, 28).

Only **faith in Christ Jesus** can bring a person the gracious gift of righteousness that provides forgiveness and salvation. **Faith in Christ** is not mere intellectual assent to the fact that Jesus died and rose for man's sin but is personal trust in His death to remove and forgive one's own sins. It is total commitment to submit to Him as Lord (cf. James 4:7).

Three times in Galatians 2:16 Paul declares that salvation is only through faith in Christ and not by law. The first statement is general: **a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus**. The second is personal: **even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law**. The third is universal: **by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified** (cf. Ps. 143:2). All three affirm the same great reality.

All claims that salvation is through belief in Jesus Christ plus something else are blasphemous, satanic lies. There can be no effective or acceptable human addition to Christ's work. This passage is as forceful and unequivocal a statement of the doctrine of salvation by faith alone as can be found in Scripture. First Paul establishes it on the basis of his apostolic authority. Second, he establishes it on the basis of his own experience. And third, he establishes it on the basis of God's Word in the Old Testament.

HIS DEFENSE

**But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and 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 delivered Himself up for me. I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”**  
(2:17–21)

By their behavior, Peter and the other Jewish Christians at Antioch had given approval to the Judaizers' idea that it was necessary for a Gentile to keep the Jewish rituals before he could become a Christian. Paul's defense of justification by faith in

verses 17–21 continues his contradiction of this Judaistic legalism to which Peter and the others had succumbed.

It is crucial to understand that, as in the previous two verses, **we** refers to Jewish Christians. **But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves**, as Jewish Christians, **have also been found sinners**, Paul asks rhetorically, **is Christ then a minister of sin?**

His first point was to show that, if the Judaizers were correct in their doctrine that believers are saved in part by keeping the ceremonial law of Moses and continue to be bound by that law to maintain their salvation, then, even before the Judaizers arrived in Antioch, Peter, Barnabas, and all the other Jewish believers, including Paul, had fallen back into the category of **sinners** by having freely eaten and fellowshiped with Gentile Christians.

Paul's second point was even more devastating. "If you became **sinners** because of fellowshiping with your Gentile brothers," he implies, "then **Christ Himself became a minister of sin**, did he not?" How? Jesus had clearly taught that no food can spiritually contaminate a person, because food cannot affect the heart (Mark 7:19). Through the vision of the unclean

animals and the dramatic conversion and anointing of Cornelius, the Lord had given Peter direct evidence that Gentile believers are in every way equal to Jewish believers (Acts 10). On many other occasions and in many other ways Jesus had taught that all those who belong to Him are one with Him and therefore one with each other. Shortly before His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus earnestly and repeatedly prayed to His Father that those who believed in Him “may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us ... that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity” (John 17:21–23).

But if the Judaizers were right, Paul pointed out, Jesus was wrong; if they taught the truth, He had taught falsehood and was thereby **a minister of sin!** Such an accusation must have shaken Peter to his bones. To be called a hypocrite stung enough, but to be called a sinner was unthinkable, and to be accused of making Jesus **a minister of sin** was shocking and repulsive. Yet the logic of Paul’s argument was inescapable. By his actions, Peter had in effect condemned Jesus Christ. He therefore had to forsake his Judaistic sympathies or continue to make His Lord a liar.

To his own question Paul immediately responded, **May it never be!** It must have been painful to Paul to suggest even hypothetically that Christ could participate in, much less promote, sin. But the drastic danger of Judaistic legalism demanded such drastic logic. He knew of no other way to bring Peter and the others to their senses.

By using the term *we* in the previous verses, Paul had graciously identified himself with the compromisers to a certain extent. Now he even more graciously and lovingly softens the blow to his friends by using himself as a hypothetical example. **For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed**, he said, **I prove myself to be a transgressor.** In other words, if anyone, including **myself**, tries to **rebuild** a system of legalism after he has **once destroyed** it by believing and preaching the gospel of God’s powerful grace and man’s sinful helplessness, he proves *himself*, not Christ, to be

**a transgressor.** He proves himself to be a hypocrite and a sinner by abandoning grace for law.

“I could never do such a thing,” Paul asserts, **“for through the Law I died to the Law, that I might live to God.** The idea of legalism clashes with God’s clearest truth and my own deepest convictions. Now that I have accepted grace and **died to the Law**, I could never go back to its system of rituals and ordinances. Otherwise I could not **live to God.**” The law is not the believer’s master; God is. It is not his relation to the law that saves him, but his relation to God.

“Do you not know, brethren,” Paul asked the believers at Rome, “that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband. ... Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead that we might bear fruit for God” (Rom. 7:1–2, 4).

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk

in newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. (Rom. 6:1–14)

In both Romans and Galatians, Paul is referring to the fact that when a person exercises faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, he is placed in transcendent spiritual union with Christ in the historical event of His death and resurrection, in which the penalty of sin was paid in full.

If a man is convicted of a capital crime and is put to death, the law obviously has no more claim on him. He has paid his debt to society. Therefore, even if he were to rise from the dead, he would still be guiltless before the law, which would have no claim on his new life. So it is with the believer who dies in Christ to rise in new life. He is free forever from any claim of the law on him. He paid the law's demand when he died in Christ. His physical death is no punishment, only a release to glory provided in his union with Christ.

Legalism's most destructive effect is that it cancels the effect of the cross. **I have been crucified with Christ**, Paul testifies, **and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**. To go back under the law would be to cancel one's union with Christ's sacrifice on the cross and therefore to go back under sin.

**I died to the Law**, Paul explains, because I was **crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live**. The old man, the old self is dead, crucified with Christ, and the new man lives (cf. Col. 3:9–10). Now **I ... live to God**, because **Christ lives in me** (cf. Rom. 8:9). The life I *received* by faith **I now also live by faith**. The Greek verb behind **live** is in the perfect tense, indicating a past completed action that has continuing results. When a believer trusts in Christ for salvation he spiritually participates with the Lord in His crucifixion and in His victory over sin and death.

That is why, the apostle continues, **the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God**. The true Christian life is not so much a believer's living for Christ as Christ's living through the believer. Because in Christ "all the fulness of Deity dwell-s in bodily form" (Col. 2:9), the fulness of God also dwell-s in every believer, as "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4).

I do not have such a divine life and the magnanimous privilege of being indwelt with the living, powerful Son of God because of anything I have done or merited, but only because He **loved me, and delivered Himself up for me**.

The surpassing motive, therefore, for all spiritual devotion and obedience is gratitude to the sovereign, gracious Lord. The statement who loved me refers to the motive behind God's saving grace. The New Testament is replete with teaching on this great truth (see, e.g., John

3:16; Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:5). The gift of love was not taken from Christ, but **He delivered Himself up for me**, says the apostle. This is reminiscent of our Lord's words in John 10:17–18, “I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down of My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.”

All of this saving work is the gift of God's sovereign grace. Consequently, Paul concludes, **I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly**. In effect he was saying to Peter, “By withdrawing from fellowship with your Gentile brothers you take your stand with the Judaizers and against Christ. You **nullify the grace of God** by denying the need for Christ's death, just as you did when you rebuked the Lord for declaring it was necessary for Him to suffer, be killed, and raised on the third day (see Matt. 16:21–22).

The two pillars of the gospel are the **grace of God** and the death of **Christ**, and those are the two pillars that, by its very nature, legalism destroys. The person who insists that he can earn salvation by his own efforts undermines the very foundation of Christianity and nullifies the precious death of Christ on his behalf.

cf. *confer* (Lat.), compare

pp. pages

v. verse

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