

The Book of Galatians
Lesson 4 - Galatians 2:11-21
Gospel Living
“Contending for the Truth”

Paul was right in ignoring the “spiritual positions” of the people mentioned in vs. 6. Even the best leaders can make mistakes, and Paul cites Barnabas and Peter as examples. After the Jerusalem conference, Peter had visited the Gentile church at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas were still ministering. In Acts 10, God had clearly revealed to Peter that no foods or peoples were unclean; but the apostle fell back into legalism just the same. When he first came to Antioch, Peter mingled with the Gentiles and ate with them; but after some visitors came from Jerusalem, he withdrew himself and put up the old Jewish barriers again. Even Barnabas fell into the trap.

Peter and Barnabas were not walking uprightly. Because Peter and Barnabas were confused about spiritual truth, they were unable to walk a straight line. The “truth of the Gospel” is not only something for us to defend, but it is also something for us to practice.

“*You are a Jew,*” said Paul to Peter, “but you used to live like the Gentiles, with no barriers between you and other Christians. Now you want the Gentiles to live like Jews, doing what you did not even do yourself!”

“We Jews have had special privileges and may not be guilty of Gentile sins; but we are saved the same way they are!” We would expect Paul to say, “They must be saved the way we are,” but he reverses the order. Salvation did not mean that Gentiles had to become like Jews, but that the Jews had to go to the level of the condemned Gentiles!

In vs. 17–18, Paul showed Peter the folly of going back to the Law. “You say you have been saved by faith in Christ. Well, if you go back to the Law, you are confessing that you are still a sinner needing to be saved and that Christ did not save you.”

“The Law is not a way of life, it is a way of death. The Law kills us that the Gospel might raise us up again. A Christian is not someone who is trying to obey an outward law. A Christian is one who has the living Christ within. By faith, I am united to Christ forever. When He died, I died; when He arose, I arose with Him. He lives out His life through me as I walk by faith. This is the Christian life! It is not a set of rules and regulations. To go back to the Law is to frustrate the grace of God! If the Law is God’s way of salvation, then Christ died in vain!”

Read Galatians 2:11-21 and answer the following questions

1. When Peter came to Antioch, what did Paul do? Why did he do that? (2:11-13)
2. Paul said in 2:11 that he opposed Peter “*to his face.*” Note that he did not go to the other leaders of the church to “tattle” on Peter, nor did he write letters to the churches warning them not to follow Peter’s example. If you have a disagreement with someone what do you normally do? What should you do? (Matt. 18:15-17) Why do you think that this time Paul spoke to Peter “*in front of them all*” rather than privately?
3. Describe a time someone criticized you in front of others. How did you react?
4. Why did Paul call the behavior of the Jewish believers who withdrew from the Gentiles “hypocrisy”? (2:13, 14-16)
5. In verses 15-16 we are reminded that we are no longer “*under the law.*” Why then should we strive to obey the Ten Commandments? Or should we? (Rom. 7:4-25)

6. What do you learn about the meaning of Faith from the following Scriptures?

Romans 4:18-21

Hebrews 11:1-2, 6

7. Note why Christians are not obliged to keep the Jewish law.

Gal. 2:16

Gal. 2:19

Gal. 2:21

8. If obeying rules isn't what makes God accept us, what keeps us from habitual sin? How does dying to self and accepting a new life in Christ prevent this? (2:17-20)

9. What does "*dying to the law*" mean in verse 19?

10. In verse 20 what is the significance of having been crucified with Christ? What does it mean to God? What does it mean to you?

11. How does having Christ's life within you affect you in practical ways?

12. Note some "takeaways" from this week's study thru Gal. 2:11-21