



Week 4: Galatians 2:11–21

GOSPEL TRUTH

Even the esteemed Peter, a pillar of the early church, wasn't immune to missteps. As Paul continues his letter to the Galatian churches, he recounts an incident where Peter distanced himself from Gentile Christians for reasons of ceremonial purity. Paul uses this incident to highlight that our salvation comes not through our own actions or external religiosity, but only through faith in the sacrifice of Christ.

THE SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 2:11-21

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" ¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. ¹⁷ But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

^d **justified** – appearing twice in verse 16, and once in 17, this is an enormously significant word in the New Testament. Used outside of the Bible it conveys the sense of being declared innocent or righteous within a court of law. Here in the New Testament justification is always paired with faith in Christ.

¹ Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 4

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of a time when a good friend corrected you for something that you did or were doing wrong? How did that make you feel at the time?
2. Have you ever given into pressure and, before others, acted insincerely about something? Why did you do this?

DIVING DEEPER

3. Some time has passed after Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, and now we learn of a conflict between he and Peter (Cephas) in Antioch. Reexamine verses 11-13. What was the nature of this conflict?
4. According to verse 12, what appears to be Peter's reason for withdrawing from the Gentile believers in Antioch?
5. In verse 13, the word 'hypocrite' appears in two forms. What does that word mean? Can you think of an example of how that word could be used today?
6. Read Galatians 2:14-16. What made this issue worth the danger of a public confrontation by Paul? Why would this issue, if left unchecked, have been potentially so divisive?
7. What is the difference between Paul's response to Peter in this passage in Galatians and his lack of response mentioned in Philippians 1:15-18?

8. In some churches believers hesitate to confront each other, and in others they confront each other too quickly. What are the spiritual dangers of each approach?
9. In verses 16 and 17, Paul introduces a key term in his letter: justified. Imagine your friend has just committed her life to Jesus; how would you explain this word to her in a simple and clear manner?
10. Why do you believe that God connects our justification to our faith or trust in him? Why didn't God connect it through our obedience, or our devotion, or even our love for him?
11. Galatians 2:16-21 is a rather dense passage containing many rich truths. Perhaps most critical to the passage is Paul's statement in verse 20. Try to rephrase this verse in a way that makes sense to you. Share these among your group.
12. Reflecting further on verse 20, what do you think this statement by Todd Wilson means:

"If there's no death in our life, there's probably no gospel either."
13. Consider verse 21. Why would Christ have "died for no purpose" if righteousness could be gained through keeping the Law?

¹Wilson, Todd. Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living. Preaching the Word. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 87.