

## Galatians: Free Chapter 2:13-21

We're working our way through this letter to the churches throughout Galatia where Paul had planted a number of churches. This is the first of thirteen letters Paul wrote in the New Testament. His purpose is to make the gospel crystal clear. Today, we come to the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Galatians chapter 2.

As we saw last week, Satan is always at work trying to distort the truth, producing counterfeits of varying degrees, that subtly introducing error. And any deviation of the true gospel, Paul says, is cursed. **Why?** Well, because it confuses the only truth that can save people's lives for all eternity.

Like Paul, **Peter** was a preacher of the true gospel. His **preaching dominates the first half of the book of Acts**. **Paul's** ministry isn't really covered until we come to **chapter 12**, and then it fills the rest of the book of Acts. The gospel is clearly preached by these two men and written down into the New Testament by the apostles and their associates.

Interestingly enough, this shift in the book of Acts from Peter to Paul, coincides with the shift historically from the church being a Jewish one to it becoming a Gentile one. And in time, the Jewish church all but vanishes.

It was really difficult for Jews who had been given the Law and the festivals and rituals to let go of these things that filled their relational and civic lives. Because of that, there were forces at play trying to conform the gospel to their comfort level.

So Judaizers, who professed to believe in Christ, His death and resurrection, and who accepted Him as Messiah and Savior, didn't believe that believing in Jesus & His work was sufficient to be saved. You needed to be circumcised, follow the Mosaic law and tradition. That's how Jewish converts did it for thousands of years – ***so why change now?***

Because of the compelling evidence that God had accepted the Gentiles through Peter's message to Cornelius (Acts 10&11) & Paul's further success, there was pressure to compromise their expectations.

What they missed was, the Law, the festivals and the rituals were only meant to **lead them** into an **awareness of God, their sin and need for His mercy and grace**. Keeping it wasn't the means to salvation. Rather, the inability to keep was meant show them their need for salvation = God's mercy and grace.

It was meant to open their eyes to their need but instead, they so focused on it that it blinded them from seeing that only God saves. It was hard to let go.

As we saw last week, this dilemma was infecting the Jewish church. And James and Peter and the other Jewish believers were being influenced by it. So very sad.

So, when Peter came to visit the church in Antioch (a Gentile city and a church predominately made up of Gentiles), **he was eating with the Gentiles.**

He **didn't ask** that they be **circumcised** or that they **follow the laws** of Moses, he accepted them as brothers in Christ. This is a church and these are Gentile believers. **Peter** had no problem.

**But then certain men came from James.** *Now, were they sent from James or did they just claim to be sent by him? I believe it's the first option. Why?*

**Galatians 2:12-13 ESV,** *“But when they came, he [Peter] drew back and separated himself, **fearing the circumcision party.** And the **rest of the Jews** acted hypocritically along with him, so that even **Barnabas** was led astray by their hypocrisy.”*

***Why else would Peter be afraid?*** As the leading Apostle to the Jews he had the authority of Jesus resting on him. Wouldn't the other apostle's support him? But as we can see here, this Circumcision Party had a strong foothold in the Jerusalem church. Peter knew them and their connection to James. If they were not associated with James, if it was a false claim, Peter would have said something – but he did not! Instead, he feared them. ***Not a nice party!***

If you'll remember, this group, along with the other apostles and elders grilled him when he returned from Gentile Cornelius' house after eating with him (Acts 10-11). He didn't want to go through that scrutiny again.

They were aggressive, they were vicious, they had the kind of influence that threatened Peter. How? James! So as soon as they showed up, he pulled back, started acting like a Jew rather than a Christian, isolating himself from the Gentile believers. *How did this party get so strong?* **Saw last week in...**

**Galatians 2:4 ESV,** *“Yet because of false brothers **secretly brought in—**who **slipped in** to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—.”* Sounds like soldiers snuck into camp.

Under the Mosaic law there were rules that necessitated separation from Gentiles: you couldn't eat the same food, use the same utensils, wear the same kind of clothes, sit in the same room or socialize with them. They were the enemy. Jews were uncomfortable with them, had no dealings with them.

But Peter had no problem eating with these folks until these false teachers showed up. They had enough clout to stop Peter in his tracks and that behavior caused **Paul to oppose him to the face.**

Peter's capitulation to the Judaizers is an assault on the doctrine of salvation.

*Peter doesn't say anything here - without saying anything, he took sides with those who taught salvation by faith and works. He fractured this little church by unfriending them – heartbreaking. The church was in chaos.*

***Imagine how you would have felt if you were a new Gentile believer!***

That is when Paul knew he had to say something.

**Galatians 2:14 ESV**, *“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?”*

**Paul was profoundly affected.** His spiritual children were being treated like filthy animals. It wasn't right! Peter was not in step, on track, straightforward about what salvation was or was not! It was undermining people's sense of security in the work of Christ. He was condoning another gospel - accursed.

**Paul was furious.** It was a sin of omission to say nothing Peter and it was a consensual sin to permit that false teaching to cause him to do the wrong thing! **It was done publicly and needed to be dealt with publicly!**

**Augustine said**, *“It is not advantageous to correct in secret an error which occurred publicly.”* He's right. You have to show public condemnation of a public sin; so he does that. It's also gave Peter the opportunity to correct it publicly so there would be no question later.

**1 Timothy 5:20 ESV**, *“As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.”*

So Paul, doesn't just ask Peter how he could get this so wrong, he explains why it was a wrong teaching and why it could not go uncorrected.

**Galatians 2:15-16 ESV**, “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; 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.**”

Important words there. The word “**faith**” is there. The word “**law**” is there. But there’s another word there used for the first time, which is critically essential to the message of this letter and to the gospel. It is the word “**justified**,” and you see it **three times** in verse 16, one time in verse 17, and then it’s repeated even again in verse 21.

Paul is presenting the **doctrine of justification**, which explains **the truth of the gospel by faith alone versus by faith and the law.**

**Luther said about this doctrine,**

*“If it’s lost, all true doctrine is lost, and the church is lost.”*

*What is this doctrine of justification?*

Let me give you an example. In a court of law, if “**You’re condemned**,” you would understand that this is the result of being **found guilty**.

Now, when someone is found “**not guilty**,” it means that a defendant is **not legally answerable** for the criminal charge filed against him/her. It means that a prosecutor failed to prove, “*beyond a reasonable doubt*,” that the defendant did it. In which case, they **may not be innocent** but their release is justifiable. “They’re **justified**” – not **condemned**.

**Justification is the opposite of condemnation.** Condemnation says you’re **guilty**, **justification** says you are **not legally answerable** for the criminal charge filed against you. **It is a legal term.** In a bench trial – Judge decides.

In the Bible, God declares that sinners who trust in Jesus and His payment for their guilt are **not legally answerable** for the charge filed against them.

The guilty are treated as righteous, better, declared righteous through Jesus.

Now as you **can see here**, Paul insinuates that the Jews didn’t see themselves as sinners like the Gentiles! They didn’t see themselves **as guilty**.

Our **Judaism restrains us**. Gentiles are called sinners because they **lived without restraint**. We aren’t like them.

BUT THEY WERE sinners **and they knew it – restrained** - just **not as bad**.

**Galatians 2:15-16 ESV**, “We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; **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.”

“How can person who is guilty be made righteous before God?” Can a condemned sinner be declared just? How? By the keeping of the Law? **NO!** Paul answers, “**By faith** in Christ **alone. Not by works.**”

So, as a Jew, what place does the Law have in my life? What if I by following Jesus and trusting in Him for my righteousness before God, I ignore something in the law and I sin, am I unrighteous before God again? Shouldn't I be worried about falling into this trap by not following the law?

Paul deals with that next in the next section. Because his wording is hard to understand at first glance let me use a more understandable version...

**Galatians 2:17-19 ESV**, “**But suppose** we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ **and then** we are **found guilty** because we have **abandoned the law**. Would that mean Christ has **led us into sin**? Absolutely not! Rather, **I am a sinner if** I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. For when I tried to keep the law, it **condemned me**. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—**so that I might live for God.**”

So, Paul says, “Suppose the Judaizers are right, and we follow Christ alone without keeping the law, and we end up breaking it, would that mean by following Christ alone He lead us into sin? **Absolutely not!**”

That would be **Biblical double jeopardy**. If the judge has acquitted you, this bars you from being ever prosecuted again for those sins.

**Hebrews 10:10-14 NIV**, “We have been **made holy through** the sacrifice of the **body of Jesus Christ once for all**. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again, and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can **never** take away sins. But when this priest had offered **for all time one sacrifice for sins**, he sat down at the right hand of God...For by **one sacrifice**, he has made **perfect forever** those who are **being made holy.**”

On the cross Jesus paid the penalty for our violations of the Law. He paid the penalty in full. He bore our sins in His own body on the cross.

When we run to Christ as our refuge, we embrace the one who fully satisfies the law of God, the one who bore the penalty for all our sins on the cross, God then, by a judicial act, declares us justified - no longer legally answerable for the crime charges against us. Jesus has answered the charges against us. He became the guilty and died for our sins, so we could be made righteous!

If you've done that, you've been forgiven, cleansed and dressed in the righteousness of Jesus the sin bearer. You've been **made perfect forever**.

**Romans 5:18-19 ESV**, *“Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.”*

**2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV**, *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

Being made righteous, God will continue that work internally - inside of you - to match the way he has clothed you externally. **You're being made holy!**

I love how Paul closes out this chapter, looking at the inner working of Jesus.

**Galatians 2:20-21 ESV**, *“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. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were **through the law**, then Christ died for no purpose.”*

*Do you see any law keeping in those verses? Why return to the law people?* If you've placed your faith in the Son of God, you've been crucified with Him. **And now He is living you and through you.** This verse defines **what it is to be a Christian**.

What a statement; union with Christ. “I'm not the old me. I don't live in a relationship to the Law, I live in a relationship to Christ through faith. I put all my trust in Him; and I seek to please Him, to love Him, to honor Him, to worship Him not the Law. They were zealous for the Law. Paul was too, but he traded it all in and became **zealous for Christ!**”

**Paul says, “Look, you can’t let go of this.”** To embrace the Law is to nullify the grace of God, the free gift of Jesus, His sacrifice for your sin.

If justification comes by anything other than Jesus, then Christ died needlessly. **I hope you feel the power of Paul’s words**, and remember to whom he spoke them: to Peter.

He was a seeming pillar, but the true pillars of the Christian faith are the **grace of God, faith** in Christ, and the **death and resurrection** of Christ.

If anyone insists that he can earn salvation by our own efforts, they undermine the grace of God, salvation by faith alone, and the complete efficiency of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. *With this said, Paul defends the truth of the gospel.*

**Let’s Pray:** *We come to you Lord, thankful beyond expression for the grace that you gave us in Jesus and the freedom we have to live life without the dread of any condemnation. We thank You that You have redeemed us, and that you are regenerating us, making us new, changing us on the inside to match what you see us dressed in on the outside; the righteousness of Jesus.*

*May we, like Paul, be true to the gospel, never deviate, never ever give in one second to those who proclaim a twisted version of it. May we be bold for the truth so that your grace and merit will always receive the honor and the glory.*

Help us to understand the richness of you living in us, give us the strength for that reality to define our lives. In you name we pray, Amen.