

Galatians 2:11-21

Face Off

Good morning church. So good to be with you as we continue our time of worship through the Word. If you have a Bible or a device, go ahead and turn to Galatians 2:11-21. If you're on a device, I'd encourage you to go to the CSB translation.

READ Galatians 2:11-21

¹¹ But when Cephas^[d] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.^[e] ¹² For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. ¹³ Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas^[f] in front of everyone, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?" ^[g]

¹⁵ We are Jews by birth and not "Gentile sinners," ¹⁶ and yet because we know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ,^[h] even we ourselves have believed in Christ Jesus. This was so that we might be justified by faith in Christ^[i] and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no human being will^[j] be justified. ¹⁷ But if we ourselves are also found to be "sinners" while seeking to be justified by Christ, is Christ then a promoter^[k] of sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ If I rebuild those things that I tore down, I show myself to be a lawbreaker. ¹⁹ For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body,^[l] I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

PRAY.

I. First, a little background

Background:

- If you remember how the church at Antioch was formed
 - Stephen, the 1st Christian martyr, was killed, persecution broke out, and the disciples scattered.
 - Ordinary Christians scattered, and shared the message of Jesus with people everywhere they went.
 - One of the places they went was Antioch. They preached, people responded and a church was born.
 - Paul & Barnabas would spend a lot of time at Antioch, and eventually would be sent out as missionaries from the church at Antioch to evangelize the world
 - So Antioch was an important place to Paul, and was predominantly a Gentile or non-Jewish area.
- Cephas/Peter
 - We also need to remember the journey Peter has taken. The ups and downs of his ministry. Incredible highs and incredible lows.
 - Back in Acts 10, long before any of the churches at Galatia were ever planted, back in Acts 10 Peter gets this vision of a sheet being lowered and all kinds of animals on the sheet. Peter hears a voice that tells him to kill and eat – but Peter resists – he's never eaten anything impure

because he's a good Jewish guy that followed all of the dietary rules. But the voice says again "What God has made clean, do not call impure."

- And immediately following this experience – we see the Holy Spirit poured out on the Gentile believers – just like it was poured out on the Jewish believers.
- And in Acts 11:17-18 They acknowledge the work of God in the "even the Gentiles"
 - ¹⁷ If, then, God gave them the same gift that he also gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, how could I possibly hinder God?"
 - ¹⁸ When they heard this they became silent. And they glorified God, saying, "So then, God has given repentance resulting in life even to the Gentiles."

But if we know anything from Peter's life, we know that he's not always the most consistent brother. His life and ministry really was characterized by a series of ups and downs. But Paul, he's a bulldog for the Gospel – hyper-focus. He sees an issue and runs at it as hard and as fast as he can, and he ain't messing around.

II. The Face Off

Peter – at some point, motivated by fear, withdraws or pulls back from eating with the Gentile brothers and sisters. Like the kid in school that would only be your friend when there weren't cooler kids around. I had lots of "friends" like that when I was a kid.

See Pete's afraid of what the brothers back at home would think of him. So persuasive and fearful, it says here that even Barnabas was led astray. Now Barnabas was a solid dude. Strong dude. Missionary partner with Paul. But even the strongest of people, motivated by fear, can make terrible mistakes. **Just as an extra credit point here – fear is a terrible motivator.** Rarely do you hear someone that makes a great decision say, well I was so afraid...

But Paul calls him on it. Not just because Peter and the others were showing poor manners – I mean they were being jerks, but there's something more important at stake. They were deviating from the truth of the Gospel.

III. Deviating from the Truth

So, in the Jewish law, being considered clean was of HUGE importance. And they were careful about everything. What they ate. What they wore. What they were allowed to touch. How they dealt with sick people. Think of it like COVID in April 2020, times about 10. And not just for a season but forever.

Not just about food... And according to this system, just eating with non-Jewish people (called Gentiles) would have made you unclean. Because there was this thing about eating together. Not just the meal – more than that it conveyed acceptance. If you and I ate together, I accepted and approved of you, and vice versa. Remember in the Gospels how the good religious people were so shocked that Jesus was eating with "sinners". They couldn't believe that he would offer them grace and mercy. It wasn't just about the meal, it was about the relationship.

So Pete, Bernie and the boys stopped eating with the Gentile Christians – in essence removing their approval from them – because of fear. They were hypocrites. Deviating from the truth of the Gospel – they claimed a certain belief, but their actions failed to align with their beliefs. And that's really the core of hypocrisy – say 1 thing, do another thing all together.

Well Paul's not having any of it. If he were to let this slide, it would undermine not only his ENTIRE ministry, but the truth of the very Gospel on which his ministry is built.

IV. Not By Works of the Law

Paul will bang this drum all day long – that even though they were good Jews – even they had to believe in Jesus for life, because it's not about how good you are, or the rules you follow → salvation cannot be found in the Law.

- Not because the Law is defective – it's not. It was from God and it was good
- It's because no single person can ever completely obey both the letter and the spirit of the law. No single person.
- One preacher I listened to a lot, talks about "10 Commandments Pop Quiz"
 - Ever tell a lie? Ok then, you're a liar
 - Ever desire your neighbor's car, house, bike, wife or husband? Ok then you're a covetous, adulterating liar.
 - Someone ever make you so mad you want to punch them in the face? You get the point. Ok well you have anger issues, and Jesus equated anger with murder so now you're a lying, adulterating, covetous murderer.
 - Even the "best people" are guilty under the law which is why Paul says in V17 – "by the works of the law NO HUMAN BEING will be justified."

See, Pete's not just making a small error here – he's deviating from the truth, that we are made right before God 100% entirely by faith in Jesus. That we believe God. We take God at His Word. We trust in Him, even when we don't know the answers and can't make sense of what's happening. That we know and trust that His ways are always good, and always perfect. Not a little bit of faith and a whole lot of work. Not even a whole lot of faith and a little bit of work. No. Faith alone. By the grace of God – the righteousness of Jesus given to us sinners, as we through faith believe in Him, turn from our sin and trust in Him completely. **To miss this is to miss the ENTIRE point of Biblical Christianity.**

And this faith, real, Biblical, life changing faith isn't just a baptized version of hoping for the best. This type of faith, must be rooted in the character of God as revealed in the Scriptures, as revealed in our own lives experientially, as displayed in the person, work and ways of Jesus.

V. Die to Self, Live for Christ

Re-Read 19-20

The call to follow Christ, the call to believe in Jesus, is a call to die to yourself. Jesus said it, Paul said it. Everything before God, laid open before God. Everything on the table. Everything. To surrender all of our lives to Him. There's this old hymn that I grew up singing: "All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give." All of it. Sadly so many people, maybe many of us here, when it's all said and done we really are saying "Some to Jesus I surrender, some to Him I reluctantly give."

I want us to see something clearly here today – as we die to ourselves and we are called to live for Christ – it's only possible because CHRIST IS ALIVE IN US! We will live lives that bring glory and honor to God only because Christ is alive in us. That's the only way.

To another church, Paul wrote

"God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is **Christ in you, the hope (think promise or guarantee) of glory.**"

For the Christian, if you have turned from your sin and are trusting in Jesus, the moment you believed you had the Spirit of Jesus inside of you. Given to you as a guarantee, or a deposit, of what is to come – the glory that

awaits. How do we live for Christ? We trust the Spirit at work inside of us. Trust the Word of God before us. That's the only way it's possible.

Paul closes this section of the letter, where he describes the face off with Peter, with a reminder, and a harsh warning.

VI. If by the law

Re-Read V21

Set Aside: Some translations differ – they say “I don't nullify” or I don't treat as meaningless.

For Peter to have pulled back from eating with his Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ – was to set aside the grace of God, and in essence declare that Jesus died for no reason. This was a big deal back then and is a big deal today.

To add anything to faith, is to disregard Jesus' offer of salvation.

Closing...

My prayer, is that every single one of us today, can say with Paul, that we have been crucified with Christ...”

PRAY