

Galatians 2:11-21 (NLT2) ¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?" ¹⁵ "You and I are Jews by birth, not 'sinners' like the Gentiles. ¹⁶ Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law." ¹⁷ 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! ¹⁸ Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

It is possible for great leaders of the faith to make terrible mistakes, publicly and privately, inflicting great pain on the people of God. And when a leader or leaders make these sinful errors the ripple effect is much broader and wider than a non-leader. When the President of the United States makes a blunder in a speech the whole world hears it. When a person in the general population makes a mistake, a blunder, very few if any hear of it except those in his or her immediate circle. The act of slapping a person on national television was seen everywhere for the cameras were on. The more important position you hold, the greater the ripple effects when you blow it royal.

So far in Galatians we have learned that Paul had to do damage control for the church. Paul presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the people of Galatia. Paul saw himself as a steward of the Gospel and it was his primary task never to remain silent about Jesus and the Christian faith but to give it to as many people as possible as long as he had breath. God used Paul to bring people into the Christian faith and they became born again into a living hope, the

hope of Christ's return. Several churches were formed by Paul in the area of Galatia. He poured his heart, soul, mind, and strength into the church. God birthed it through Paul.

Sadly, after he left, false teachers call the Judaizers slithered their way into the church like Satan slithered into the Garden of Eden. The Judaizers taught in order to become a Christian you had to first become a Jew, be circumcised, and follow the laws of the Old Testament, plus believe in Jesus. They accused Paul of being a false apostle and leading the people away from the truth. When you read the New Testament, we are warned over and over and over to watch out for false teachers. **1. The spirit of anti-Christ was alive and well then and I say even more so today.** Why else would we have atheists serving as chaplains in the armed forces?

Paul defended his apostleship to the churches in Galatia and offered them grace and peace. Paul reestablishes in this letter the truth of the Gospel. Believers are justified by faith in Christ, not by being circumcised and obeying all 613 laws of the Old Testament.

In today's passage Paul tells of a happening in the church of Antioch, the church that Paul and Barnabas started and pastored together for a time. It was in Antioch that the people who believed in Jesus were first called Christians. There was a gathering in Antioch that Peter himself attended. I quote, *¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.*

God previously flooded the heart of Paul and Barnabas with love for the lost Gentiles of Antioch. Paul and Barnabas cared enough to speak to the Gentiles, and they won a whole

group over to Christ. Paul and Barnabas lived among these converts and ate with them. More than likely, they shared the Lord's supper together. Theirs was a close-knit fellowship.

Paul writes, *"But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision."* James is the half-brother of Jesus. I can make the case that these people called themselves friends of James but lied about their relationship with James or if they were true friends of James, they hid what they truly believed. These friends of James ended up being Judaizers saying salvation is only for the circumcised and they would not eat with the uncircumcised believers in Christ. When you refuse to eat with someone you are making a huge statement. These friends of James felt superior to the Gentile converts and did not accept them as true believers. Peter felt so pressured that he got up and left eating at the table with the Gentile believers and only sat with the circumcised people who thought they were saved by good works plus believing in Christ. Peter was filled with fear because he wanted to be accepted by the friends of James back in Jerusalem. Fear overtook Peter when he denied Christ three times in public and now Peter was denying the sufficiency of Christ's death and resurrection for salvation at the church in Antioch. Peter sided with the Judaizers and was even able to convince Barnabas to do the same. **2. God takes seriously our witness of Jesus Christ done publicly.**

To put it mildly, Paul went ballistic. The Gospel of Jesus Christ would crumble if the Judaizers won the day. Salvation would be lost. All of Paul's work would be in vain. Eternity was at stake. Sometimes it is best to call people out on the carpet. I will let Paul speak for himself after repeating a verse. *"Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to*

Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?" In other words, Peter, how can you publicly deny the true Christian faith in front of the true believers and side with the false Christians. You were eating and fellowshiping with the Gentile believers and now you are rejecting what we have taught to side with the enemy. Peter your hypocrisy is overwhelming and dangerous to the entire church. Peter knew about grace, especially after leading the Gentile Cornelius and his family to Christ. But he blew it by siding with the non-grace people at Antioch,

Paul has the authority of an apostle and felt led by God to rebuke this public sin of Peter directly in public. Dr. MacArthur writes, "Because Peter's offense was in public, Paul rebuked him in the presence of all, unmasking the hypocrisy before the whole congregation" (Dr. John MacArthur, Galatians pg. 54 "where are you"). "Augustine said, 'It is not advantageous to correct in secret an error which occurred publicly'" (ibid. pg. 54). 1 Timothy 5:20, *"²⁰ Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also will be fearful of sinning."*

Paul states beautifully the heart of the Gospel. **3. ¹⁶ Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law.** And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law." Paul continues, ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die."

I call this one of Paul's finest hours. He spoke the truth clearly for all to hear and understand. In no way was Paul a people pleaser. He lived solely for God. He understood grace better than anyone. He saw the false teachers as from Satan. There was such an integrity when Paul spoke, the authority of Jesus Himself. Peter bowed down to peer pressure in public. He had to be corrected.

This failing of Peter was a word of encouragement and comfort to Luther. Luther writes, "For it is a great comfort for us to hear that even such great saints sin – a comfort which those who say that saints cannot sin would take away from us. Samson, David, and many other celebrated men who were full of the Holy Spirit fell into huge sins. Job and Jeremiah cursed the day of their birth. Elijah and Jonah grew tired of life and pray for death. Such errors and sins of the saints are set forth in order that those who are troubled and desperate may find comfort and that those who are proud may be afraid. No man has ever fallen so grievously that he could not have stood up again. On the other hand, no one has such a sure footing that he cannot fall. **4. If Peter fell, I too, may fall; if he stood up again, so can I**" (Todd Wilson, Galatians- Gospel - Rooted Living pg. 72).

I wish to say a word about this particular verse that stands out to me. ²⁰ *My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.* As believers we are so identified with Christ that our lives are hidden in Christ with God. We died with Christ, and we were raised with Christ. Our lives are lived in Christ, Christ lives through us.

I believe this verse separates the mature believer from the immature believer. Most often a young believer tries to do great things for Christ, excited to the hilt, but after awhile grows weary and loses his or her initial joy. Then Galatians 2:20 comes along and picks that young believer up and matures that believer in Christ. Reality hits. **5. I cannot on my own might or power live the Christian life.** I have been crucified with Christ. My sinful nature has been crucified with Christ and now I have a new nature living inside of me, the life of Christ. I no

longer live by my own power or strength but by the Presence and Power of Christ's Spirit within me, namely the Holy Spirit. I have God's power within and therefore I don't have to do this all on my own. **6. The resurrection power of Jesus inside of me raises me up to fulfill God's will. I can't do it but Christ can in and through me.**

I also believe that the power of Christ in us crucifies our sinful nature, our sinful ways, our sinful habits, our sinful attitudes, putting those things to death in us. Then God raises us up to live holy lives unto Jesus. God is forming within us the image of Jesus that becomes clearer and clearer through the continual death and resurrection process in our lives. This is the crux of the Christian life, first dying to self and secondly, Christ's resurrection power, the Spirit of Christ, living in and through us until grace leads us home. We no longer live but Christ lives in and through us. Amen and Amen.