

## Exegetical Notes – Galatians 2:11-21

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### Galatians 2:11-21

#### Verses 11-13

***<sup>11</sup> When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. <sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. <sup>13</sup> The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.***

- Sometime after Paul's visit to Jerusalem (see Galatians 2:1-10), Peter (Cephas) and Paul were together in Antioch.
- Paul found himself in disagreement with Peter. A group of Jewish converts to Christianity arrived in Antioch. We do not know why they came to Antioch. We do know that they came there under the authority of James, the brother of Jesus, who was regarded as the leader of the Church at that time.
- When this delegation from James arrived in Antioch, Peter's behavior towards the persons in Antioch who had converted to Christianity under Paul's ministry changed. Peter had been openly involved with the Gentile Christians before the delegation from James arrived. But, after their arrival, Peter "drew back and separated" from the Gentile Christians. Jews had no association with Gentiles. They would not eat with or fellowship with non-Jews. Peter stopped fellowshiping with the Gentile Christians when the delegation arrived.
- The text is clear. Peter did this because "he was afraid of these people." It is important to note that Peter and Paul are in doctrinal agreement. Their difference was not over any theological concern. It was Peter's change of behavior with which Paul had trouble and Peter's motivation for his changed behavior was fear of people who seem to be in authority.

- Paul went directly to Peter about this problem. He confronted Peter face to face because Peter's behavior was causing confusion within the church. Even Barnabas, Paul's companion, was confused.

#### Verse 14

***<sup>14</sup> When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"***

- Paul's confrontation with Peter over Peter's behavior was NOT done in private. He confronted Peter in front of everyone. This was because Peter's behavior was affecting them all. It was not a private matter.
- He confronted Peter with the problem. When Peter was not with these "powerful Christian-Jews, he lived like a Gentile. But when these powerful people arrived, he started to act like a Jew and avoid Gentile-Christians, and so, by his behavior, imply that all Christians must follow the practices of Judaism to be saved.

#### Verses 15-16

***<sup>15</sup> "We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles <sup>16</sup> know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.***

- Paul confronted the whole group, including Peter, with the truth. That truth is this: No one is saved by works! All are saved by FAITH in Jesus Christ.

#### Verses 17-18

***<sup>17</sup> "But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! <sup>18</sup> If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.***

- Paul's argument was not against the Law of Moses (see Romans 7:12). His argument was against a fraudulent use of the law. It does not lead to salvation. Works of the law do not save us. We are saved by God's grace through faith in Jesus. This is the essential doctrine of salvation declared by the book of Galatians.
- If the law is raised up as part of the process of salvation the doctrine of grace is destroyed and we are no longer saved by faith. Since we cannot be

good enough to save ourselves by works, ALL are lost and slaves to sin, if salvation is based on our works.

### **Verses 19-21**

***<sup>19</sup> “For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. <sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”***

- This is the great truth of the Gospel. The law shows us how “dead” we are in ourselves. It brings us to the realization that we cannot save ourselves because we cannot keep the law.
- But, in His death, Christ paid the price for us and set us free from the consequences of our sin, death. Therefore, we now live in Christ. Our salvation is found in trusting Jesus and nothing else to save us from sin and death.
- If we teach that one needs to be saved through keeping the law, then Christ’s sacrifice is made null and void.
- Peter knew the truth! He and Paul were in complete doctrinal agreement (see Galatians 2:6-10). But Peter had been confused by his fear of those who were teaching a doctrine contrary to the truth.

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