**JUSTIFIED BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST**

Galatians 2:11-21

Key verse 16a

 “know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.”

**Introduction**



 This passage is about a long description of Paul’s rebuke of Peter. Paul made the most of this event to help the Galatians to stand on the truth of the gospel. Then Paul shared his own personal testimony that reveals his secret to live by the truth of the gospel. May the Lord help us to follow his example in our practical lives.

1. Read verses 11-14. Why did Paul publicly oppose Peter? (11-12) How did Peter’s behavior affect others? (13) How can we act in line with the truth of the gospel? How did Paul rebuke Peter? (14)

1-1, Read verses 11-14.

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. **12** 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. **13** The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

**14** 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?

1-2, Why did Paul publicly oppose Peter? (11-12)



 ***When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 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.***

* Peter had approved of Paul’s gospel and ministry when Paul came to Jerusalem. and God taught Peter himself to welcome Gentiles without condition. ([Acts 11:1-18](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Acts+11:1-18&t1=en_nas)).
* Peter went to Antioch where Paul and Barnabas preached diligently. We don’t know why Peter went there. Maybe he wanted to see the great work of God there.
* They must have welcomed and prepared food for their precious guest, Peter. Peter joined the eating fellowship with them and the Gentile believers in Antioch church. It must have been like our fellowship meeting after our Sunday worship.
* While Peter was eating together with the Gentiles joyfully, certain men from Jerusalem arrived. They were the circumcision group, representing James. Then Peter’s attitude changed.
* Instead of asking these people from Jerusalem to join the eating fellowship there, Peter drew back from the Gentile believers and ate only with Jewish Christians, because he was afraid of them. His behavior was reminiscent of his denial of Jesus.

1-3, How did Peter’s behavior affect others? (13)

 ***The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.***

* Seeing Peter’s hypocrisy, other Jews and even Barnabas did the same thing. Peter’s hypocrisy made the Gentile believers feel that they were not worthy to eat with the Jewish believers.
* Peter’s hypocrisy teaches us that living by the truth of the gospel is not easy at all. Even Peter under pressure could not stand on the gospel truth. Instead, he became hypocritical and led others astray.

1-4, How can we act in line with the truth of the gospel? How did Paul rebuke Peter? (14)

 ***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?***

* When Paul saw what Peter was doing, he realized that Peter and other believers were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel.
* Peter had the truth in his heart, but his action was not in line with the truth. We see here that knowing the truth is one thing, living the truth is quite another.
* Paul rebuked Peter openly. It was not easy for Paul to rebuke Peter, the pillar of the Christian church. Paul had a clear attitude about the truth of the gospel.

1 Timothy 3:15 reads,

 “if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

* No matter how high Peter was respected by the believers, Paul stood firm on the truth of the gospel for the church is founded on the truth of the living God.
* If Paul ignored this matter, young Gentile believers would think that the gospel was not enough and that they should follow Jewish customs. Then it would egg on a possible division between the Jewish believers and the Gentile believers.
* So he rebuked Peter in public, saying, “How is it that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?”

2. Read verses 15-18. What difference does Paul highlight between justification by faith and the works of the law? (15-16) How did Paul help those who misunderstood the gospel? (17–18)

2-1, Read verses 15-18.

“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles **16** 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. **17** “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! **18** If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

2-2, What difference does Paul highlight between justification by faith and the works of the law? (15-16)



 ***“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 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.***

* We were destined to die, face judgment, and go to eternal condemnation. To be justified by God is not a small matter. It is a matter of eternal life rather than eternal death.
* How can we be justified by God? Is it possible by observing the law? Is it possible by human effort? No! Absolutely not!
* The only way to get out is to receive help from someone else. While we were helpless, our merciful God provided a way out through Jesus Christ.
* God justifies sinners freely by his grace through faith in Christ alone. We can only thank God for his grace.
* To God, all people are sinners. All are destined to die for their sins and face eternal condemnation. God shows no favoritism based on human conditions or distinctions
* Both Peter and Paul knew that a sinner would become not guilty before God by faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by circumcision or some other good works.
* Both Peter and Paul had put their faith in Christ. Because of their faith, not of their works they were justified before God.
* We were all condemned because of our sins. We were cut off from God, and suffered from guilt and shame.
* Paul had a personal experience on this. He found himself guilty of coveting based on ten commandment. No one knew his coveting, but God and Paul himself knew it.
* Although Paul recognized his coveting through the law, he was too powerless to overcome it and save himself.
* He was deeply troubled because he could not obey God’s command and he was condemned. He said, “What a wretched man I am.”
* But through faith in Jesus, he was completely justified and not guilty before God. Paul realized that by works of the law, no one would be justified and that sinners can be justified only by faith in Christ.
* In the exactly same way, the Gentiles can be justified by faith in Jesus alone.

2-3, How did Paul help those who misunderstood the gospel? (17–18)

 ***“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!***

* Paul’s answer here is great. First, we seek to be justified by Christ, and not by Jesus plus our own works. Second, we ourselves also are found to be sinners. We acknowledge that we still sin even though we stand justified by Christ. But absolutely no that it certainly does not make Jesus approve of sin in our life.
* A Christian is not somebody who has no sin, but somebody who fight the good fight thanks to his faith and trust in Christ who is the very mediator. Amen.

***18 If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.***

* Paul’s answer here is also brilliant. If he were to build again a way to God through keeping the Law of Moses, then he would make himself a transgressor.
* Paul says “There is more sin in trying to find acceptance before God by our law-keeping than there is sin in everyday life as a Christian.”
* This is the great tragedy of legalism. In trying to be more right with God, they end up being less right with God.
* This was exactly the situation of the Pharisees that opposed Jesus so much during His years of earthly ministry.
* Paul himself knew this very well for he had been a typical Pharisee himself.

 3. Read verses 19-21. For what purpose did Paul die to the law? (19) Who lives in those who have been crucified in Christ? (20a) Why is it important for us to live by faith? (20b, 21)?

3-1, Read verses 19-21.

“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, 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 could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

3-2, For what purpose did Paul die to the law? (19)

 ***“For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God.***

* We need to clarify that it isn’t the law that is dead. The law reveals God’s holiness. Nothing is wrong with the law. Paul said that he died to the law.
* He through the law died to the law. He was never able to live up to the law, much less to fulfill its holy standard. For a long time before Paul knew Jesus, he thought God would accept him because of his law-keeping. But he came to the point where he really realized that the law made him guilty before God, not justified before God. This sense of guilt before God “killed” Paul, and made him see that keeping the law wasn’t the answer.
* The problem with the certain men with James was that they were not thinking and living as if they were dead to the law. For them, they were still alive under the law, and they believed keeping the law would make them accepted by God. Not only were they living under the law, but they wanted the Gentiles to live under the law.
* We therefore become a new creation. We die to the law, and the law cannot rule over us any longer. Instead we live for God

3-3, Who lives in those who have been crucified in Christ? (20a)

 ***I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.***



* Here we learn the secret of Paul's success in living by the truth of the gospel. It was not him, but Christ living in him.
* When we accept Christ in faith, he comes into our hearts and unites himself with us. Christ's death becomes my death. Christ's burial becomes my burial. Christ's resurrection becomes my resurrection.
* Since we are united with Christ in this way, we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. Our old selves, that claimed the throne of our lives, have died.
* Christ now lives in us and has given us a new life. Christ is now the owner of our lives. We live by faith in Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.
* Christ always did the will of the Father (John 4:34), and if we are indeed crucified with Christ, we will always do the will of the Father.
* In Romans 6:1-12, Paul expounded how he died and lived with Christ.

 What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? **2** By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? **3** Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? **4** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. **5** For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. **6** For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with,[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans+6&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28075a)] that we should no longer be slaves to sin— **7** because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. **8** Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. **9** For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. **10** The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. **11** In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

* A dead person does not have his or her own will and desire. So Paul said “I no longer live.” We sinners have strong and sinful self in us.
* To live by faith in Christ, first our sinful self must first be crucified and dead. Practically it means that we say “no” to self and “yes” to Christ because I no longer live. Through repentance and self-denial, we can be truly crucified and dead.
* Then we must let Christ live in us. “Christ lives in me.” He meant that Christ is in charge of his life. More specifically, Christ is in charge of his thought and conduct.
* Before living by faith in Jesus, he was a typical Jew with strong Judaic thoughts and conducts. But after living by faith, he abandoned his old way of life and lived with Christ and for Christ.
* Apostle Paul was a “yes” man to his new Lord and King, Jesus Christ
* Because of this Paul could rebuke even Peter and preserved the gospel of Jesus. We must be crucified daily. And we must let Christ be in charge of our lives daily. We must say “no” to self, and “yes” to Christ daily.

3-4, Why is it important for us to live by faith? (20b, 21)?

 ***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.***

* In the past Paul’s relationship with God was founded on what he could do for God - his faith was in himself. Now, the foundation is what Jesus Christ has done for him - his faith is in Jesus.
* Did the Law ever love Paul? Did the Law ever sacrifice itself for Paul? Did the Law ever die for Paul and me? In reality, it accuses me and drives me crazy. In great contrast, Jesus saved me from the Law, from sin and death unto eternal life.
* Paul found such a marvelous person to put his faith in! It is a person who loved him. It is a person who demonstrated that love when He gave Himself for Paul. Paul can give his life to, and living His life for, someone who loves him that much!

***...who loved me and gave himself for me.***

* It is not enough to say that Christ died to save the world, rather each man must claim the effect and possession of this grace for himself personally. Christ is indeed the personal friend of each man.
* Our daily life is not theoretical. We live in the body. It is real. Our life of faith can be real when we have a personal relationship with Christ.
* While in the body, we live by faith in Christ, the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.

Romans 14:8 reads,

 “If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”

***21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”***

* This verse is the conclusion of Paul’s testimony. If someone thinks that he can gain his salvation by his effort, he will nullify Christ’s death and set aside the grace of God.
* God used this event in Antioch church for everyone’s good outcome.
* Paul stayed true and proclaimed the truth of the gospel. Peter was corrected, and as a result became more firm in the truth than before as a pillar of the church. Barnabas was also corrected on this matter. The Jewish believers in Antioch, because they had the truth spelled out clearly before them. The Gentile believers in Antioch was strengthened in their personal faith in Jesus only. It was good for us because the truth still lives today!

**Conclusion**

 Today we have learned how to live by the truth of the gospel. To live by the truth of the gospel, we must overcome fear and stand on the truth of the gospel firmly. Only the gospel alone can save us from eternal condemnation. To live the truth of the gospel, we must be crucified with Christ and let Jesus be in charge of our lives daily. You can’t live the new life Jesus gives on the foundation of law-keeping. You can only live it by faith. May God bless all of us to grow as true Christians who live by the truth of the gospel daily.

**One Word: Live by faith only**