

GALATIANS 4
Paul's Opposition to Peter
Galatians 2:11-21
By Ron Harvey
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INTRODUCTION

Paul first preached the gospel to the churches of Galatia on his second and third missionary journeys. And Paul preached the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

That was Paul's clear message to the Gentiles of Galatia. And the Gentiles gladly accepted this message. These Gentile converts had no association with the Jewish law and they joyfully received the free gospel.

But after Paul established churches in Galatia, he left and went on to other places. And while Paul was gone, some Jewish teachers came in and they began teaching the churches that faith in Christ was good, but it was not quite good enough for salvation. They taught that it was necessary for these Gentile converts to be circumcised. And if they believed in Christ and were circumcised, then, and only then, were they saved.

This was the crucial issue in the early church. Is the gospel "faith in Christ alone," or is it necessary to incorporate elements of Judaism? Did Christ come to modify Judaism, or did he come to do away with it?

We have been studying the book of Hebrews for several months now. And we have found that the message of Hebrews is that Christ is the sum and substance of which Judaism was the picture. Christ is a better deliverer than Moses. Christ is a better conqueror than Joshua. Christ's rest in heaven is better than Israel's rest in Canaan. Christ's sacrifice is better than the sacrifice of animals. Christ's priesthood is better than the Levitical priesthood. On and on Hebrews goes to show the preeminence of Christ.

All of these rituals and religious practices under Judaism were types and shadows. They were not the real thing - they were the pictures of the real thing. People were not really saved by circumcision. They were not

saved by being a descendant of Abraham. They were not saved by offering animal sacrifices. They were not saved by sprinkling the blood of animals on the mercy seat once per year. Those old human Levitical priests were not effective mediators between God and man. They were sinful themselves. They were merely pictures of that great high priest – Jesus Christ.

Now all of us must know this intuitively because we don't practice Judaism, do we? We must know that the day of Judaism has expired, because we don't practice it. We don't bring lambs and goats to church for a sacrifice, because we know that our sacrifice is Jesus Christ. We don't have priests, because we know that Jesus Christ is our priest. And the book of Hebrews teaches us that that whole Jewish economy, that whole religious system, gave way to something better in Christ.

Judaism was always intended to be temporary. Remember that God dealt with mankind for 2,500 years before God ever established Judaism. From Adam to Moses, there was no such thing as a Jewish nation. There was no Mosaic Law in force for 2,500 years. Look at Galatians 3:19.

Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.
Galatians 3:19

Now, when the seed came, there was a sudden and natural expiration of the Mosaic Law. It was only added until the seed should come. And when the seed came, its usefulness expired. When the sum and substance appeared, the picture was done away.

And because the very existence and definition of Judaism came by the Mosaic Law, when the law expired, Judaism expired. It all makes very good sense. Since Christ has now come and offered himself once for all for sins, what further need is there to offer animals? The very purpose of the ceremonies was to prefigure Christ. Now that he is here, the types are done away. To continue to observe the types is to say that Christ has not come.

And this is exactly what the masses of Jews did. Christ came unto his own and his own received him not. The Jews said, "This man Jesus is not the Messiah. Kill him. We are waiting on someone else. We will continue in

the rituals of our religion because our Messiah has not yet come.” And so they kept right on with the ceremonies. They kept right on with Judaism even though the substance of Judaism had already come.

And when you take the coming Christ out of Judaism, you are left with an empty and useless bag of ceremonies. They mean absolutely nothing if they don't mean Jesus Christ. And the Jews went right on with their Christless Judaism. And they were left with nothing but a religion of works.

The exposure of Peter to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone

Now Peter was well aware that salvation was by faith in Jesus Christ.

I. God appeared to Peter in a vision. (Acts 10)

Remember that God appeared to Peter in Acts 10 in a vision and showed him that there were no more restrictions on foods for eating. (10:13-15)

Furthermore, it was illegal under Jewish tradition for Peter to keep company or to go into the house of a foreigner. Yet Peter was sent into the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. (10:28)

By this, Peter understood that God is no respecter of persons. (10:34)

And, when Peter spoke the gospel to Cornelius and his household, he witnessed the Holy Spirit falling on these Gentiles. And so, Peter was well informed and was a personal witness to the salvation of Gentiles by faith alone without the encumbrances of the Jewish law.

II. Peter's meeting with Paul three years after Paul's conversion. (Galatians 1:18)

III. Peter had met with Paul about 14 years before in Jerusalem and spent about 15 days with Paul. I am sure that they had long discussions about the new economy in Christ.

IV. Peter was at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 where they had a huge debate over the necessity of imposing circumcision on the Gentiles for

salvation and they decided at that meeting that circumcision was not required for salvation.

Peter's Hypocrisy

I. Peter ate with the Gentiles at Antioch.

Peter came to the church at Antioch and he ate with the Gentiles. Now, not only was Peter fellowshiping with the Gentiles, but the implication is that he was eating right along with them. Peter was eating pork and ham just like the Gentiles. Peter wasn't concerned at all about anything being unclean or forbidden under Jewish law.

Why? Because Peter knew that the rules of Judaism had passed away. God had made everything clean. It was ok to eat anything. Furthermore, God had torn down the differences between Jew and Gentile. God was not a respecter of persons. And so Peter sat down in good fellowship with Paul and the Gentiles and he enjoyed the barbeque and all the good eating that formerly he was forbidden to eat.

II. Peter later refused to eat with the Gentiles.

James, the pastor at Jerusalem, sent a delegation to Antioch to see what was going on. And when they showed up at Antioch, the next morning at breakfast, Paul noticed that Peter wasn't eating with the Gentile Christians anymore. Rather, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles. It says he withdrew. It seems that Peter began to give them the cold shoulder. And he moved to the other room and ate with the Jewish delegation that came down from Jerusalem. And more than likely he went back to eating like the Jews.

The Fault of Peter

I. Peter acted out of fear.

Now Peter knew better. It was not that Peter was still struggling with the truth. But look at verse 12. It says, "fearing them which were of the circumcision."

Poor Peter. This was the same Peter that cowered down when Jesus

was arrested. This is the same Peter that denied Christ three times. And now, some Jewish leaders come to Antioch and Peter withdraws and separates himself from the Gentile tables.

This isn't exactly a ringing endorsement of the Roman Catholic's first Pope, is it?

Paul doesn't excuse Peter in this matter. I want you to take note of how Paul describes Peter's actions. First of all he says,

II. He was to be blamed. (v.11)

This is a blameworthy matter. This is not a mistake. This is not a matter of ignorance. This is not a lack of understanding or a lack of knowledge – for Peter is an apostle of Christ. Peter, along with Paul and the other eleven Apostles, are the highest officers in the church. Peter is well educated in the Christian religion. And so, he was to be blamed.

III. He acted with *dissimulation*. (v.13)

The act of Peter in withdrawing from the Gentile tables is called dissimulation. (v.13) Dissemulation is deception. It is acting in such a way as to disguise or hide the truth. The greek word is *hupokrisis* from which we get our word hypocrite. So Peter was acting deceptively so as to disguise who he really was and what he really knew to be true.

IV. *He walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.*
(14)

This is the worst of the allegations against Peter. Yes, he was acting out of fear. Yes, he is to be blamed. Yes, he is acting deceptively and hypocritically. But the thing which cannot be tolerated is that Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ, is not walking according to the truth of the gospel.

This is what is at stake here. It is the very gospel of Jesus Christ. Is the gospel faith in Jesus Christ alone or is it faith in Christ plus the requirements of Judaism? We must be always on the alert that we are not diluting the gospel by placing other requirements of salvation on men. Peter was acting as though there was still a distinction between Jew and Gentile. Peter was acting as though those old Jewish laws and traditions were still

in force. Peter was acting as though the death of Christ was not sufficient. Peter was going back to the worn out traditions of that old religion. And he was doing harm to the gospel.

Note: When we add other requirements to the gospel, we destroy the gospel. This was why Paul was so angry in this epistle. He is angry because he knows the very integrity of the gospel is at stake. Jesus told Paul to preach salvation by faith alone. And Paul is staking his life on this pure gospel. Paul is not willing to compromise. And any other gospel is really not the gospel at all.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.
Galatians 1:8

And now, I have no doubt that Paul was willing to say, "Let Peter be accursed if he continues by his actions to preach another gospel."

The Authority of Paul in Correcting Peter

- I. Paul confronted Peter face to face. (v.11)
- II. Paul confronted Peter in front of them all (in front of all the other Jews who were also eating separately from the Gentiles).

Now, I want you to notice here that Paul confronts Peter face to face. Perhaps Paul walked right over to the Jewish tables and confronted Peter. This is sort of the thrust when it says that he confronted Peter before them all. Perhaps, Paul called them into his office. But wherever it was done, it is clear that Paul called Peter on the carpet. And he didn't do it privately so that Peter could save face. He confronted Peter in the presence of the other Jews.

Now when Paul confronted Peter this way, it is important because it shows that Paul is not a lesser apostle than Peter. Paul is not subordinate to the original twelve in any way. In fact, it is Paul that corrects Peter in this matter. It is Paul that in every way was equal to Peter and perhaps in some way takes on the leadership from this point forward. It is Paul who is the apostle to the Gentiles. It is Paul who takes the leadership in fighting for the purity of the gospel. It is Paul who writes the lion's share of the inspired

writings.

You can see from this passage alone that Peter is not the head of the church in any way. Christ is the head of the church. Neither is Peter laid down as the sole foundation of the church. The church is not built upon Peter. The apostles and the prophets are the foundation of the church with Christ being the chief cornerstone. And Peter laid no more of the foundation than Paul. In fact, Paul laid more Scriptural foundation than Peter. And in our text it is Paul rising above Peter in his all out defense of the gospel.

III. Paul asked Peter a question.

If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Boy, Peter must have been red-faced at this question. Peter was probably acting as though he had never eaten with the Gentiles. When the Jews showed up from Jerusalem, he simply moved his plate from the Gentile tables and began eating with the Jews and they were probably unaware that he had been eating and living according to the freedom of the Gentiles. And now, Paul shows up and just blurts out the truth. Paul said, "Peter, why were you eating with Gentiles before this delegation showed up?"

I am sure that Peter hemmed and hawed for he had Paul on one side and his Jewish friends on the other. And Peter was stuck. Our passage doesn't tell us how Peter answered. But in our passage Paul goes on and instructs Peter in the difference between the Jewish law and grace.

The Correct Theology of Jewish Christians.

I. Jewish Christians (especially the apostles) knew that justification did not come by the works of the law.

A. The Gentiles knew it intuitively because they never had any connection to the law. The Gentiles were never put under the burden of the law. They never participated in the rituals and ceremonies. The Gentiles never had any delusions about justification being by the law.

B. The Jews had come to trust in the law for justification. The Jews knew well that they were sinners and they thought that they could be right with God just by doing all the works of the law. "If we just keep observing the Sabbath, and keeping all the feast days and offering our sacrifices, then we are justified."

C. But those Jews who had accepted Christ and Christianity, had acknowledged that justification is not by the law.

*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,
Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law . . .*

This was the very hard part for the Jew. He had to turn his back on the religion that he had practiced all his life. He had to finally admit that the law does not save him. He had to stop bringing and trusting in ineffective sacrifices. He had to forsake the temple services. He had to abandon that whole economy that his people had been under for 1500 years.

But verse 16 says that those Jews that came to Christ knew that a man is not justified by the works of the law. The law had worked in them a proper response. The law had convinced them, not that they were justified, but that they were condemned. The law had beaten them down and swallowed them up in hopelessness. The law was a minister of death unto them. (II Cor.3:7) The law was a minister of condemnation (II Cor.3:9) not a minister of justification.

But look what else the Christian Jews knew.

II. Jewish Christians knew that justification came by faith in Christ.

These Jewish believers had come to Christ by faith. And they had done so by recognizing that the works of their religion were insufficient to save them. Now the interesting thing is that when they renounced the works of Judaism in favor of Christ, they became like Gentiles to the Jewish nation. They ate the same things the Gentiles ate; they fellowshiped with Gentiles. They went uncircumcised like Gentiles. They disassociated themselves with the Jewish nation.

This is a great paradox. In the Old Testament, after God established Israel through the Mosaic Law, Gentiles could only be saved by becoming like the Jew and worshipping like them. After Christ came, to be saved a Jew was required to become like a Gentile and worship like them – by faith in Christ.

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

Romans 11:33

The Incorrect Theology of Peter and the Jewish Delegation

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.

Those at the Gentile tables who claimed justification by faith alone, were sinning by ignoring Jewish law and tradition.

Now here is what Peter and the Jewish delegation was really saying by withdrawing from the Gentiles and eating separately. They were saying, You Gentiles who are eating over there at your tables are claiming that you are justified by faith in Christ alone. And Paul, you and other Jews are eating over there at the Gentile tables. And you are eating Gentile foods in contradiction to our law. So we consider you sinners because you don't observe the Jewish dietary regulations. We are better than you because we keep the Jewish traditions. By rejecting the Jewish law and following Christ by faith alone, you are found to be sinners. And therefore, Christ is leading you into sin.

Now Peter undoubtedly did not state this in words, but his actions spoke loud and clear. And Paul said, "Is Christ the minister of sin? Is Christ causing us to sin because he has made us free from the Jewish law? God forbid.

The Correct Theology of Paul

A. Peter is the sinner in this matter.

For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. (v.18)

Paul says, when I accepted Christ by faith alone, I destroyed those old rites of Judaism. When I accepted Christ I tore down those old temple walls. When I accepted Christ I knocked down that old Jewish altar. When I accepted Christ I disavowed those old Levitical priests. When I accepted Christ I destroyed the old relics, because Christ is the fulfillment of the law.

When I accepted Christ I wiped those old Jewish traditions away. When I accepted Christ I unfastened the chains of the Mosaic Law that enslaved me and I put on the yoke of Christ. And I find that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. When I accepted Christ I destroyed those old things of Judaism.

And look what he says in verse 18:

If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

Here is what Paul is saying. "Peter, it is you guys, sitting over there at your Jewish tables who are sinning. You are trying to rebuild that old religion. You destroyed it once, Peter, but now you are rebuilding it. And it is not us who are sinning, Peter, it is you."

B. Paul is dead to the law.