

Verse 2:11: 'Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³ And ***the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.***'

When the Church was born, as we see in Acts chapter 2, with the Holy Spirit coming upon, and into, all of the believers who had gathered in the 'upper room' to pray and to wait, 40 in number, the newly born Church was made up entirely of Jews. Then, when Peter stood up to preach to the many other Jews who had come to Jerusalem for Pentecost, 3000 more were added to their number and again, they were all Jews.

So here were, first, 40 newly saved Jews who had been filled with the Holy Spirit, believing in the promised Messiah Who had come, had been crucified and risen again; they were speaking in other languages, previously unknown to themselves, but were, in fact, the native languages of all the Jews who had come to Jerusalem from around the known World. They had gathered around the 'upper room' after hearing the strange sound '*as of a mighty rushing wind,*' followed by the strange sounds of all the new believers now speaking in other languages, unknown to themselves, but clearly understood by the 'foreign' Jews who had come to Jerusalem. Then Peter stood up to preach, leading 3000 more Jews to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

These Jews were all the beginning of the Church, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ but all they knew was that they were Jews who now recognized, and believed, the truth that Jesus Christ was the long awaited Messiah. They had no thought of their being anything beyond saved Israel, or 'completed,' Jews. None of them knew anything at all about something to be called 'the Church.' They were Jews, God's chosen people, Israel, and they believed in the Messiah. When Peter stood up and preached, it was a Jewish message for Jewish people, period. At the end of Acts 2, it says: 'And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.'

They continued living as Jews; they gathered together on every Sabbath; they observed the feasts and until the Temple was destroyed by Rome, 35 years later, they continued going to the Temple just like Jesus did. Later, through a vision, Peter was led to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, where he discovered that Salvation in Jesus Christ was intended for the Gentiles, as well as for the Jews.

As an aside: Acts 13:48 says: 'Now when the Gentiles heard this, (the Gospel) they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. ***And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.***' (No human works involved!)

In the beginning, the Church was almost exclusively Jewish. They did not understand, as we do, the differentiation between Old Testament and New Testament. They continued being Jewish and living their regular Jewish religious life.

In other words: at the beginning of the Church, no one understood that the Church was even a thing. Jesus had said, 'I will build My Church,' and, that 'I am sent to the House of Israel.' All that the disciples had heard was, 'I will build my group of Jews who believe in Me,' so it's perfectly understandable that they, at first, thought Salvation was only a Jewish thing and that all Gentiles were lost and headed for hell.

Paul, on the other hand, after his conversion, was taught, by Jesus Christ, the full gamut of the Gospel of God's Grace, Mercy and Love. Paul, as a leading Pharisee of his time, had studied, and knew, all the writings of Moses and the Prophets; he should have even known, from Scripture, that God's Salvation was intended also for the Gentiles.

Isaiah had written: 'Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; ***I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,*** that You (Messiah Jesus Christ) should be ***My salvation to the ends of the earth.***' Isaiah 49:6

Catholicism teaches that Peter was the first pope, the foundation upon whom the Church was built.

Charismaticism teaches that upon receiving the 'baptism of the Holy Ghost,' sometime after conversion, one is endowed with ongoing power for courage and that past sins will no longer beset one.

Here, Peter effectively disproves both of those teachings. Before receiving Eternal Life, accomplished by the Life, Death and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter showed himself to be a coward when he denied his

Lord three times on the night before the Crucifixion. Here, once again, even after Salvation and receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter displays the same besetting sin; he was cowardly; he was afraid.

This episode, which Paul recounts in Galatians 2, is after the Council of Jerusalem where they decided the huge controversy over whether or not Gentiles, to be saved, must first adhere to Jewish religious strictures. Remember, the council, including James, John *and* Peter, wrote: ' Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must be circumcised and keep the law*"—***to whom we gave no such commandment***—²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you ***no greater burden than these necessary things***: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. (that's it!) If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.'

Peter was part of the leadership who penned that message. He was the Apostle specifically sent to the Jews while Paul was sent to the Gentiles. The Gospel which they preached was the same but their methods of teaching differed; Peter's message was tailored to Jews while Paul's was to the Gentiles.

Now, here, after that dispute was settled in Jerusalem, Peter had come to Galatia followed by men, pharisaical legalists, *supposedly from James*, the 'pastor' of the Jerusalem Church; *supposedly saved 'brethren,'* came to the Galatian churches to spy out the liberty which Paul preached. Before they came, Peter had obeyed God in accepting that the Gentiles were full members of the Body of Christ, without any observance of Jewish Law and customs. When these men came, Peter fell back again into the same sin: the 'fear of man' and the sinful rejection of the full fellowship with Gentile believers: 'What will people think? How will people see me? How will this affect my standing and my position of leadership? What will people say about me?'

As we can clearly see, Peter's sin was the same sin that crouches at everyone's door: *the fear of man*.

Peter feared more for his reputation in Jerusalem than he did for his reputation before God.

When these men came, Peter, fearing what they would think and say, withdrew from the Gentiles. Perhaps he convinced himself that he just didn't want to offend the 'brothers' from Jerusalem. But in fact, his actions were highly offensive to God and also to the Gentile believers. And since Peter was one of such stature and authority, one of the '*Twelve*,' his actions caused others to also fall into the same sin, *including* Barnabas.

Even when we don't know it, others are watching us: wives, husbands, children, grandchildren, friends and neighbors. Every action and decision we make affects those around us.

Paul courageously stood up to Peter's hypocrisy, right up in his face. He didn't whisper; he didn't complain behind Peter's back; he didn't fear Peter's position of authority. Paul doesn't seem to have *ever* feared men.

Verse 14: 'But when I (Paul) saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the Gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'

Here, in Galatia, Peter was having a vacation of liberty, living in the freedom of the true Gospel of Grace. Back in Jerusalem, he may have been feeling the oppressive bondage of Judaism with the idea of their still being Jewish, under Jewish Law and restrictions, not yet understanding the true nature of freedom in Christ. But when the 'legalizers' had come from Jerusalem, he felt compelled to step back into that bondage, back into that '*fear of man*.'

Through Peter's actions, and hypocrisy, he was denying the truth of the Gospel of God's Grace. He, like the Judaizers, was ripping the heart out of the Gospel in front of these Gentile believers. Peter knew the truth; he'd had the vision which led him to the house and family of Cornelius; he'd been in attendance and authority during the Council of Jerusalem; he knew the difference between right and wrong; he chose the wrong; he chose these evil hearted legalists over the simple faith of the Gentiles. God was not happy and Paul was incensed; he would have none of it. No one, not even the great Peter, one of the Twelve, and especially these legalistic Judaizers were going to come into this Gentile congregation of believers, for whom Paul had suffered great persecution in leading them to Christ and for whom he felt a great responsibility as their spiritual father,

to deny the truth of the Gospel for which, eventually, most of the Twelve, and even Peter and Paul, themselves, would be martyred.

Again, Peter knew the truth, God had specifically shown and told him the truth that he could actually live like the Gentiles but there were, perhaps, still twinges of guilt over not observing all that he had been taught from childhood.

This is the same as we encounter with legalistic Christians who declare that we must observe the Ten Commandments, that we must observe the Sabbath, that we must not eat shellfish, that we must do this and this or not do this and that, and on and on. Those of us who understand the complete truth of the Gospel live in a freedom which others cannot comprehend. They will claim that we want to use our freedom as a license to sin but never understanding that if this is what rises up within their hearts and consciences it betrays the truth that there is within them a dark desire to engage in some sin or other.

We had a caller, in the past, who was distressed that *'Those people out there, those unbelievers, they got to drive red Corvettes and they 'got to sin' while he could not!'* which clearly showed that he had a real desire, still, to engage in his favorite sin which happened to be, smoking crack and meth. When we are truly born again, we are, rather, free not to sin because God has placed in us, His Holy Spirit Who convicts us of sin and gives us the desire to flee from sin.

Verse 15: *'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 but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.'* Paul, here, is saying that *'We Jews, who have had the great advantage of all the Law and Prophets, we who belong to God's special, chosen race which He created from just one man, Abraham... we have all of that background while the Gentiles' history is that of Paganism and idolatry.'* Gentiles had to *'unlearn'* their Paganism while Jews had the more difficult burden of *'unlearning'* their legalism. It's far easier for a Gentile to come into freedom in Christ, leaving his Paganism behind, than it is for a Jew to come into the freedom in Christ, leaving behind his complete lifestyle of religious legalism. Jews had a 2000 year history under legalism. Pagans had no legalism to leave behind. Gentiles could just walk into the refreshing freedom in Christ. Jews had a much harder time, always feeling like an oppressive cloud followed them with demands of *'measuring up.'* It took Paul and the writer of Hebrews to explain to them how all of the Law and Prophets pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and how He, alone, had completely fulfilled all the Law for everyone who would come to Him in faith. This difficulty is one of the reasons why a national blindness has come upon the Jews which will only be lifted, with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, at Armageddon.

Today, it's far easier to lead someone to Christ who has no religious background at all than it is to lead a Catholic, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness or anyone else who is caught up in a false religious system.

Notice the power in this one verse, Galatians 2:15, in what Paul declares as he is up in Peter's face, out in front of everyone there. Paul could not have been more forceful in his condemnation of legalism than he was in this one verse. Not once, not twice but three times, in one sentence, he stresses that the Law never made anyone righteous, ever! Even the Lord Jesus Christ was not made righteous by the works of the Law. He was and has always been Righteous; He is the Word of God; He is the Righteousness of God. But the Law had two purposes: one, to display the complete Righteousness of God and two, to reveal the complete unrighteousness and the utter sinfulness of every person. Paul said that the Law was meant as a tutor, a teacher, to bring us to Christ, not to make us worthy of Christ. No one is made worthy, holy, righteous or even any better at all by the works of the Law and, in fact, Paul says that anyone seeking to be righteous by works of the Law is, rather, under the full curse of the Law because no one has ever been able to keep the Law and anyone who tries makes himself liable for all the Law and subject to all the curse for breaking the Law. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, has kept the Law perfectly and that, He did, for each of us who have come to Him by faith.

Look at this verse, at what Paul says to Peter: first, generally, *'a man'* is not justified by the works of the Law but only by faith in Jesus Christ. Then, more specifically, he says, *'even we,'* Jews and Apostles, are not justified by the works of the Law but only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and finally, in this one sentence, he

says, thirdly and all inclusively, '**no flesh**' shall ever be justified by the works of the Law but only through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work of His righteous life, His vicarious death for us and His miraculous resurrection in which we share.

Again, to Peter, up in his face: 'We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.'

We should think on this verse the next time we are tempted to believe that what we have done, or are doing, is making us any **more** acceptable to God or that what we have done, or are doing, is making us any **less** acceptable to God. He sees us, His children, as always and only completely righteous and holy; **we are** the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, not merely 'clothed in' His Righteousness: '*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*' 2Cor 5:21

He loves us with an everlasting love that will never change. There is nothing we could ever do to cause Him to love us any more than He does and there is nothing we could ever do to cause Him to love us any less than He does. He loves us with the same complete and everlasting love with which He loves His Only Begotten Son.

Verse 17: 'But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh 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 in vain.'

There it is! Paul explains the Gospel to everyone with eyes to see and ears to hear. Christ died for me and I was crucified with Him. I became dead to the Law and dead to sin. I became alive to God in Christ. I live in Him and He lives in me. I was a dead body; God, through His Holy Spirit, entered that dead body and lived in it and through it. I was a dead bag of skin, crumpled on the ground, and He, by His Holy Spirit, blew into me, inflated me with His Holy Spirit and then began to live and move within me.

As Paul proclaimed to the Athenians on Mars Hill, we see him leading some pagans to Christ, helping them to leave their paganism and come into faith in Christ: 'Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³ for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. ²⁵ Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. ²⁶ And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, (God had appointed the nations' borders') so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ **for in Him we live and move and have our being**, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising. ³⁰ Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, ³¹ because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

³² And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this *matter*." ³³ So Paul departed from among them. ³⁴ However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.' Acts 17:22

The Gospel has gone out to the Gentiles and God is building His Church. Soon that time will end; He will remove the Church and begin completing His Work with Israel during Daniel's 70th Week, the Tribulation.