

What does Galatians 2:11-21 say about the following:

- What does Paul’s word “justification” refer to?
- How are we *not* justified before God?
- How *can* we be justified?
- What is the relationship of a Christian to the Laws of Moses?
- What are the consequences of adding a necessity to keep certain laws to our religious practice?

Fill out the following table from vv. 15-21

	At the start of the Christian Life	Throughout the Christian Life
The place of the Law of Moses		
The place of faith in Christ		

Challenges Today

The issues of food laws and Jewish/Gentile relations is not relevant to many today. However, the church continually presents fresh examples of people seeking to add conditions to one’s salvation through faith in Christ.

Q. What examples of “law-keeping” to secure salvation be present in our own situations today?

Q. What are the essentials of the “true” message of the Gospel we must guard fiercely in our time?

#2 A Fraction Too Much Friction

Galatians- Freedom in Christ

Introduction

Gal 2:5

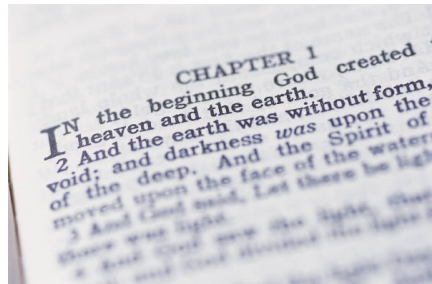
We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you. (NIV)

Recap

Galatia is Turkey, roughly. Paul had founded a church there. He is writing to the Christians because trouble has arisen from a visit from people from Jerusalem insisting on certain religious practices as essential to being right with God. Paul’s own status as an Apostle had been brought into question by the visitors, and Paul had to tell his testimony and explain his relationship to the other Apostles of Jesus. Meanwhile, Paul is on his quest to bring the Gospel of Jesus to the Gentile (non-Jewish) people of the empire. His passion for the Gospel and the clarity of his theology are on show as he exposes the fault of the “Judaizers” and contends for the purity of justification before God by faith in Christ alone. The Judaizers accused Paul of allowing Gentile converts to ignore the law so that he would be more popular with them. Paul, in turn, accused the Judaizers of nullifying the power of Jesus’ sacrifice by adding conditions for salvation. The question they debated was: Does salvation come through Christ alone or does it come through Christ and adherence to the law?

The population of Antioch in Syria was largely Greek. The city became the headquarters for the Gentile church and was Paul’s base of operations. Peter came for a visit, and Paul let him know he (Paul) disapproved of some of Peter’s actions.

In chapter 2:1-10 the issue of circumcision brought to light the issues of what is the true message of the Gospel and the necessary response. In our next section of chapter 2, it is a matter of eating certain foods in certain company that raises the matter again.



By the time this letter was written, Christian Jews and Christian non-Jews, who were poles apart, were sharing life together and calling each other ‘brother’ or ‘sister’. This brave new world raised many questions for the Jewish converts that were played out in the questioning and councils that took place among the church’s leaders in that time.

Understanding Peter

Form two groups:

- Group 1 studies Acts 10:1-35
- Group 2 studies Acts 11:1-18

Q. Before the vision given to Peter, why would he have been reluctant to visit Cornelius’ house? (Acts 10:28)

Q. What was so surprising to the Jewish (circumcised) Christians? (Acts 10: 45)

Q. What statements of new realization does Peter make as a response to these events in chapters 10 and 11 of Acts?

Q. What would you expect his response to be among non-Jewish people as a result?

Conflict with a conscience

Prior to writing the letter to the Galatians, Paul had clashed with the Apostle Peter in the centre of Gentile Christianity in those early days– Antioch. Chapter 2 in verse 11 tells us:

“When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.”

Though Peter had initially shared fellowship with Gentile Christians at Antioch at the meal table (a controversial matter for a Jewish religious person of the 1st Century AD), it became apparent to Paul that Peter had all of a sudden begun to shy away from such activities.

READ Galatians 2:11-21

Q. Why did Peter stop eating with non-Jewish Christians in Antioch?

Q. What was at stake for Paul when he confronted Peter over the issue?

The Big Issue

Paul’s efforts to challenge Peter about eating meals was an opportunity for him to develop his wider argument with the “Judaizers” in Antioch. The big question was between Law and Grace; adherence to rules to please God, or acceptance of a free gift by God’s merciful provision.