

One of the evidences that the Bible is a true testimony is that it records the faults of its prominent characters. Paul publicly, face to face, corrected his friend and colleague Peter, in the third largest city of the Roman Empire—Antioch. Ponder carefully what is before you. Read 2:11-14.

I. Peter, how could you?

A. Peter's visit to Antioch began well. He was eating with the Gentiles, not at restaurants, but in homes and perhaps larger buildings. Peter and the Gentile believers experienced fellowship—for a while.

B. When “certain from James” arrived, Peter *gradually left* the side of his Gentile friends¹. These from James were vigorous conservatives regarding the law of Moses—with particular insistence on the food laws, actual Mosaic laws (Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14), plus rabbinic requirements (Mark 7:2-4).

C. Peter's break was gradual, not abrupt, nevertheless his lead was noticed and followed: 2:13. Therefore, instead of fellowship, *separation took place*. Both the Jews and the Gentiles are shriveling exactly where they should be blooming.

What are these Gentile believers in the gospel of Christ to think? Are we really unclean because we don't keep the food laws? Are food laws part of the gospel? Is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ enough to save us? Why are we now regarded as inferior?

D. That Paul “withstood” (KJV) “resisted” (NASB) Peter meant that Peter attacked the truth of the gospel. Not by changing his previously held beliefs, not by doubting the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Peter knew the doctrinal content of the gospel perfectly well. He denied what he knew was true, **because he was afraid of the consequences of living out the truth before *wrongly conservative Jews***. *It was hypocrisy--play acting. It was an attack, by example, on the truth of the gospel.*

II. Paul to the rescue: 2:15,16.

A. Vs. 15 is concessive. It is conceding something. “The word *sinner*s as used here is synonymous with *Gentiles*. Paul is appropriating the current Jewish conception and linguistic practice. In both there is reflected the Jewish sense of privilege....”²

Even conceding Jewish advantages, can any mortal man achieve his own justification—his own righteous position before God? Psalm 143:2³

Concessions Shredded: vs 16

B. Privileges or not, the whole human race is sunk in guilt before God. As for the privileged Jews, **what did Moses say about them?** Deuteronomy 9:6,7,13. Stiff-necked has the idea of being both *stubborn and rebellious*. And **what did King David say about all “*the children of men*” on the earth?** Psalm 14:2,3.

Was Elijah's view of Israel any more rosy than Moses or David's? “...Or do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down Your alters, and I alone am left, and they seek my life'”? Romans 11:2,3.

1 Homer Kent The Freedom of God's Sons: Studies in Galatians p.70

2 Herman Ridderbos Galatians p. 98

3 Psalm 143:2 “Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous.”

C. 2:16 and the verses following are a discussion about JUSTIFICATION. “Galatians 2:16 is Paul's thesis statement from which everything else unfolds.” Mark Minnick

God is our Lawgiver and Judge of all the Earth; yet through the gospel He becomes God our Father.

“Justification is a legal declaration by God; it is God acting as a judge, declaring that an individual is righteous in His sight.” Wayne Grudem

“Justification is the act of God's pure grace in declaring us one hundred percent righteous through the finished work of Christ.” Frank Sells

Justification is “God's act of remitting the sins of guilty men, and accounting them righteous, freely by His grace, through faith in Christ, on the ground, not of their own works, but of the representative law-keeping and redemptive blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf.” J. I. Packer

Romans 3:26 describes God as “**the justifier** of him that believes in Jesus.” Romans 8:33 states, “it is God that justifies.” God enjoys being the justifier, but repentance, on our part, isn't easy: Luke 15:20.

Hold fast to the following facts regarding justification:

1. Justification is not an experiential matter.
2. Justification makes no changes in you at all. Justification does not make you righteous in your character.
3. Justification is entirely a judicial matter. It is a declaration, a permanent verdict issued by God: Romans 8:33 states, “it is God that justifies.” *Your record in heaven changes* to perfection.
4. Works of any kind, ceremonies of any kind, rituals of any kind have no part at all in justification.

III. Let us reason together: 2:17-21 is an argument defending his thesis.

2:17 If a person seeks justification by works in any measure, it creates a doctrinal disaster: “is Christ therefore the minister of sin?”

What did Paul and Peter both destroy? Their former relationship to the law as a means of being justified, including, and particularly food laws: Acts 10:10-15, 28 (Peter) Romans 14:14 (Paul preached and practiced this freedom long before he penned Romans)

But Peter is hypocritically living as though food laws are necessary and the Gentiles are still unclean—even though they sought justification by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone.

That is the gospel Christ preached (“if you knew **the gift** of God” John 4:10) and sent them to preach, but it left them short at best, and actually made them transgressors. Is Christ the minister of sin?

2:18 “Reconstruction of the same materials (food laws in this case, insisted by the group from James) is in respect of the law not only a strongly implied **admission of sin** in having pulled it down, but it is a **real specific transgression** of the law in all its deeper principles.”

2:19 This is a summary statement regarding how we stand before the law today. Before I read the commentary on this verse, answer this question: How do you relate to God. As Judge or as Father—who justifies and regenerates us according to his abundant mercy, who delights to drop charges: Luke 15:20.

2:19 “As our representative in whom we were chosen, and in whom we suffered, He yielded Himself to the law, WHICH SEIZED HIM AND NAILED HIM TO THE CROSS. When that law seized Him, it seized at the same time all His (including me—I was there, when they nailed Him to the tree) In Him, and through the law THEY SUFFERED AND DIED TO IT.” Geoffrey Wilson p. 45,46

When you die to something, something in that relationship ended, and in this case something new began--living unto God *by rich enabling grace*.

What ended: Two things

1. The rigor of the law whereby it demands most perfect obedience for justification: there are no little sins when it comes to law keeping.
2. The cursing power of the law: the curse of the law cannot touch a justified person.

Something new began: “living unto God” keeping His commandments which are longer grievous.

Want to have good days? The law is the justified person's friend: Ephesians 6:1-3.

Calvin's comments on sons versus slaves is significant.

Do you think God enjoys being a father to well meaning but rather ignorant immature children?

Do you think he takes pleasure in you learning to walk?

Do you think he is ever amused like human parents are sometimes amused by what their children propose?