

Title: "Two Peoples – One Way" (Part 11)

Passage: Galatians 2:21

Theme: Paul's Central Point: Justification by Faith

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{{Read Passage}}

[i] Closing out chapter 2

Spent so much time over t/past few wks. covering t/believer's UxX, I fear we've lost the trees for t/forest.

Zoom out to t/big picture and bring you back to →

[i] The Context of Verses 15-21

Spec. t/context w/i t/chapt.

[a] Remember – chapter 2 begins with Paul describing his second trip to Jerusalem

Barn. & Titus accomp. him on that trip which ended up being a test case for t/Gospel.

"The Litmus Test in Jerusalem"

P/B/T in Jer.

While they were there some false brethren showed up (Judaizers) & began to debate w/them contending that Titus (a Gentile) needed to be circumcised (& keep t/Law) – to be under t/covt.

Put another way, the FTs were claiming that Gentiles had to keep t/ML in order to be saved.

It was a crisis moment. Truth prevailed & these pseudo-Xns were opposed & their false Gosp. rejected.

Peter, James & John (rep. Jews / Jerus.) were in full agreement w/Paul Barnabas & Titus (Gentiles / Antioch).

The Pillars (v.9) and Paul sing in unison!

Unified in doctrine (nature of t/gosp.) // in direction (Paul would focus on t/Gentiles / Peter t/Jews).

[c] Then scene shifts from Jerusalem back to Antioch in Verse 11

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned.

[d] Here we have Paul rebuking Peter his hypocrisy as it related to the Gentiles and the Gospel

Threw a wrench in the gears as far as the “Titus test case” was concerned!

“But” in v. 11. Peter was in agreement; t/gospel of t/KD is salv. in X alone received thru faith alone. That is t/nature of justification.

“But” - some time later, Peter travels from Jer. to Antioch & things change.

[*] Change revolves around table fellowship

For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they came, he began to withdraw and separate himself, fearing those of the circumcision.

[e] Peter “used to eat with the Gentiles”

Not just eating w/them, but eating t/same foods (unclean under t/OC).

That was until some men arrived from Jerus. whom P. either feared directly or feared t/news they brought.

Whatever t/case, once they arrived he departed – he separated from his Gentile bros & sis.

[*] He wasn't acting, he was reacting

To act is to be consistent w/one's beliefs. To react is to bow to peer pressure. Why it was hypocrisy.

Peter's actions were inconsistent w/what he truly believed.

Danger that lurks for us all. We know t/right thing to do but we don't do it. Lurking Danger of Hypocrisy.

Hypocrites in t/CH – here we have a hypocrite w/i t/college of t/Apostles!

[f] Other Jewish Christians followed Peter's bad example

Oh how we as believers should fear reflecting poorly on our Savior. When we do we give t/watching world more reasons to reject X.

Not only that, but we neg. affect other Xns – as we see in v. 13. T/rest of t/Jews & even Barn. were carried away in t/wake of Peter's hypocrisy.

Ultimately, it goes back to t/Gospel →

But when I saw that they were not acting straight-forward concerning the truth of the gospel . . .

I said to Cephas in the presence of all: “If you, being a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how [is it that] you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

IOW – “It was fine before. You lived like your Gentile brethren, eating w/them & treating them as co-equals in God's KD. But now, out of fear, you've gone back to your Jewish ways. When t/Gentiles see your behavior they are compelled to act like you because you're giving t/impression that to truly be a Xn, one must live as a Jew under t/law.”

Set the stage for vv. 15-21 . . .

[ii]. Verses 15 – 21 Are Transitional

These 7 vv. continue Paul's words to Peter in Antioch.

Paul addresses Peter formally and t/Galatians materially.

But t/audience widens. It moves beyond Peter & the others who were there & widens to include t/Gal. CH's & by way of being incl. in t/biblical record – to all Xns t/o history.

[b] This Concluding Section of Chapter 2 is Where the Central Issue of the Gospel Comes to the Forefront

[*] Specifically ==>

* No one can be justified by the “works of the law” (an issue he will tackle in greater depth later in 3:6–29.

* Justification is possible only “by faith in Christ” (a topic that comes up repeatedly in chapt. 3.

Implicit in these 2 points is t/fact that Jews & Gents are equally under sin // cannot be saved by keeping t/law // can only be justified by faith in X.

I. Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians (vv. 15-21)

{Gospel def.}

A. The Universal Nature of Sin (v. 15-16a)

While not a part of t/Gosp. proper, understanding that every human being born this side of Adam is sinful & born etern. separ. from a Holy G. is an essential elem. that sets t/stage for t/Good News of salv. in JC.

Sin is universal. It doesn't discrim.

Romans 3:23 **for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** (“all” in that passage contextually = Jew/Gentile).

Second point / 2d “Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians”

B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)

The Jews had t/Law. That was a good thing. But t/Law could not save. Law itself could not reconcile sinners to a holy God. That was always by faith.

Law had its purposes, one of which was to prepare God's people-Jews and Gentiles-for the coming Savior.

Two Peoples – One Way

Jew or Gentile - there's only one way to be justified before God.

What Paul is saying is this: “*Peter, we know that t/Gentiles were outside the covenant and hopeless before God. But even we as Jews – God's chosen people – had to realize that we could not be saved by law observance. We are also under sin and our only hope is through faith in JC.*”

Goes back to t/age-old question of Job 9:1, ‘**How can a man be just (LXX δίκαιος - right) before God?**’ That's t/? we are all faced with. Reconciliation / forgiveness / Hope of eternity.

Note the shift in persons that goes on ==>

We (Peter/Paul) [are] Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles.

Yet we (Peter/Paul) know that a man (ἄνθρωπος) is not justified by works of the Law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

B. Justification Is by Faith Alone (v. 16)

Give you some relevant quotes from a few mo. ago →

Tom Schreiner observes: “Judges do not “make” anyone righteous. They pronounce on what is in fact the case—if they are righteous judges. In other words, the verbal form belongs in the forensic realm, and Paul does not use the verbal form to denote a righteousness that transforms us or “makes us” righteous.

God declares those who are sinners to be in the right before him if they trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. This is extraordinary because such a verdict violates the normal and just procedure for a judge. Judges who declare the guilty to be righteous violate the standards of justice. Paul, of course, does not think God violates any standard of justice, for Christ bears the curse that sinners deserved...”

Timothy George: Justification should not be confused with forgiveness, which is the fruit of justification, nor with atonement, which is the basis of justification. Rather it is the favorable verdict of God, the righteous Judge, that one who formerly stood condemned has now been granted a new status at the bar of divine justice.

Question 60 of the Heidelberg Catechism: “How are you righteous before God?” Only by true faith in Jesus Christ. In spite of the fact that my conscience accuses me that I have grievously sinned against all the commandments of God, and have not kept any one of them, and that I am still ever prone to all that is evil, nevertheless, God, without any merit of my own, out of pure grace, grants me the benefits of the perfect expiation of Christ, imputing to me his righteousness and holiness as if I had never committed a single sin or had ever been sinful, having fulfilled myself all the obedience which Christ has carried out for me, if only I accept such favor with a trusting heart.

Thru faith alone, t/repentant indiv. is declared to be righteous in God's eyes. The verdict of sin is reversed & he or she is clothed w/the white robes of JC my S&L.

(3) The heart of the Gospel

This essential doctrine of Xnty which has been so misunderstood & perverted is at the heart of t/Gospel. It is all of grace. It refuses all attempts at self-salvation.

Martin Luther said that justification by faith is the ‘most principal and special article of Christian doctrine’. Without it, Christianity is just another religion—an endless effort to get right with God through self-discipline and ritual.

2. To be justified by faith in X = to have saving faith in Him as my sin bearer & only hope of righteousness before God

When a man/woman/young person, comes to believe in JC as aided by t/H.S. It isn't so much that G declare that person “not guilty” in a neg. sense; it's a pos. declaration that the sinner is now “righteous” in His sight because that person is now “in X”.

Aside from all t/contrary voices out there – we have no good reason to see justification as anything other than that which declares a condemned sinner right b4 G.

Justification is God's declaration that we are “right” (forgiven) because of our relationship to another: JC.

This goes back t/believer's union with X (vv. 19-21).

Comes by faith.

6. Here's where the proverbial rubber meets road . . .

After all, this is all about t/Good News. Good News is that JC saves sinners from death & hell by virtue of His gift received by faith.

When your conscience condemns you for your sin.

When you are downhearted because of your failures.

You have failed. As a parent // a spouse; // friend // worker // in your witness of X // in your battle against sin // your prayer life //

You fail to love God as you should and obey Him as you ought.

Yes, t/Law condemns us. You can't keep it. It's demands escape you like sand through your fingers.

Nevertheless, simply by faith our Loving God, out of pure grace, has given you all t/benefits of X's perfect righteousness.

If you are a born again believer: He has credited to you His inexhaustible righteousness & before God it is if you had never committed a single sin or have ever failed to obey any command.

JC carried out t/obedience you never could.

Being in X t/Father can look at you and say of you, as He did of X:
“This is my beloved in whom I am well pleased.”

3d EE of t/Gosp. in Gal →

C. The Believer's Union With Christ (vv. 17-20)

Theologian John Frame →

“. . . union with Christ is in Scripture the most general way of characterizing Jesus' work of salvation. Jesus saves us by uniting us to himself.” [Systematic Theology, 913]

In his great work, “Redemption—Accomplished and Applied” Theologian John Murray not only said that “*union with Christ is . . . the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation. . .*” but that UWX “*underlies every aspect of redemption*” [Eerdmans, 1955, 201, 205]

Calvinist minister / former professor of syst. theol. at Calvin Theol. Sem. - Anthony Hoekema wrote that “Once you have your eyes opened to this concept of union with Christ, you will find it almost everywhere in the New Testament” [Saved by Grace. Eerdmans, 1989, 64]

Spent 6 weeks exploring this great doctrine as it unfolds in vv. 18-20, capping it off w/6 practical implications of t/believer's Ux/X.

(1) Salvation (In Christ We Are Righteous)

(2) Sanctification (In Christ We Live)

(3) Satisfaction (In Christ God Is Satisfied With Us and In Us)

(4) Sin (In Christ We Battle the World, the Flesh, and the Devil)

(5) Suffering (In Christ We Endure All that Life Throws Our Way)

(6) Security (In Christ Everyone Gets Home Safely)

That brings us to v. 21 – t/last v. in this chapter.

And t/last point under the heading

I. Essential Elements of the Gospel in Galatians (vv. 15-21)

D. Sola Gratia and Solus Christus (v. 21)

2 of t/5 pillars of t/16th c. Reformation

Sola Scriptura; Sola Fide; Sola Deo Gloria; and [^]

1. Defined

Sola Gratia = solely by grace – salvation from sin is totally, 100% of grace, not works or merit (goes back to v. 16).

Sola Christus = solely by Christ (salvation from sin is totally, 100% accomplished through t/Person and Work of JC).

We could put all 5 in the form of a biblical statement as it relates to t/Gospel itself: **The Bible Alone (Sola Scriptura) is our final authority on all matters pertaining to life and doctrine. Those Scriptures teach us that salvation from sin comes by God's Grace Alone (Sola Gratia) through Faith Alone (Sola Fide) in Christ Alone (Solus Christus) to the Glory of God Alone (Sola Deo Gloria).**

2. Both Sola Gratia and Solus Christus are in view in verse 21

(Word “grace” and “Christ”) →

I do not nullify the grace of God: for if righteousness [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose.

a. What is Paul saying?

I do not nullify the grace of God:

(1) “nullify” = ἀθετεῶ – to do away with what has been laid down

Was a legal term, used in wills and official declarations.

Hebrews 10:28 **Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.**

Galatians 3:15 warns against nullifying a covenant.

I do not nullify the grace of God: for if righteousness [comes] through the Law, then Christ died for no purpose.

(2) To add works, merit, human worthiness to the salvation equation is to render Christ's death meaningless – it's to nullify grace

No room at t/cross for works salvation // Liberal notions that Jesus' death was all about demonstrating His life and willingness to sacrifice for others (moral influence theory of t/atonement) - not about his substitution for sinners.

H. Richard Niebuhr, best-known for his work “Christ and Culture”, famously observed the error of Liberal theology that taught that:

“A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the [ministry] of a Christ without a Cross.”

— H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America*

Sums up much of t/teaching we find in so-called Xn CH's today.

(a) Grace stands alone or it doesn't stand at all

Galatians 5:4 **You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**

b. If you are wondering how Peter responded to all of this . . .

I'm certain that his hypocrisy was temporary. Peter was no sham-Xn; he wasn't cut from same cloth as t/false brethren of 2:4.

(1) Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 (we believe to have happened after Paul wrote Galatians)

In response to the Judaizers: **“Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as [the Gentiles] also are”** (Acts 15:10–11).

Two Peoples and Only One Way

Jew or Gentile - there's only one way to be justified before God.

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D. Sola Gratia and Solus Christus (v. 21)

We can sum all of this up in a single quote by John Piper:

"Therefore since it is true that Christ has absorbed all the wrath of God that was aimed at me, and since it is true that Christ has performed the perfect righteousness that God demands of me, there is now for me no condemnation. Instead, every thought of God and every act of God toward me in Christ Jesus is mercy. The way is open to know him and all the beautiful supremacy of his Son. The cross of Christ has made the supremacy of Christ knowable. The best gift of the gospel is not the forgiveness of sins. The best gift of the gospel is not the imputed righteousness of Christ. The best gift of the Gospel is not eternal life. The best gift of the gospel is seeing and savoring the supremacy of Christ himself. The greatest reward of the cross is knowing the supremacy of Christ." [John Piper, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, 43]