

The Gospel's Order

Gal 2:11-21

So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. Gal 2:16b

Getting on the Same Page

In Galatians 2:11-21, Paul tells of a confrontation he had with Peter. Peter had been fellowshiping with Gentile Christians. However, when the Circumcision Group (Jewish Christians who taught you had to become Jewish/follow the Jewish law in order to be saved) came to Antioch, Peter stopped eating with Gentiles. He gave in to peer pressure because he was afraid.

Paul lovingly reminds Peter (and his Galatian readers) of the order of the Gospel: We believe in Jesus, we are saved/justified by Jesus, then we obey him, not in order to be saved, but because we already are saved.

The Circumcision Group had the order wrong. They taught that a person believes in Jesus, then follows the Jewish law, then they can hope to be saved/justified. Paul reminded Peter of the Gospel's beautiful order. The Gospel of Jesus frees us from the obsession/anxiety that comes with trying to justify ourselves. It frees us to love others.

Paul didn't scold Peter. He didn't tell him he had no right to treat Gentiles that way. Instead, he reminded him of the Gospel; that *he didn't need to* treat anyone this way anymore. He didn't have to please the Circumcision Group. He was free.

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

- If someone asked you who you were, how would you answer?

Study Read Galatians 2:11-21

- Observations? Questions? What was most interesting to you?
- Why would Paul include his confrontation with Peter in this letter?
- There is a right order to the Gospel. Religion says, "I obey, therefore I'm saved. The Gospel says, "In Jesus, I'm saved, therefore I obey." Discuss the great differences between the two. What does each belief tend to produce? Why?
- When Paul says he died to the law, he means he died to it as a way of being saved. When we accept Jesus, what things do we need to die to as a means of justifying ourselves?

- Fill in the blank: Only when I see myself completely loved and holy in Christ will I be able to _____.

Apply

- How would you explain the difference between being moral and being a Christian to someone who thinks being good makes them acceptable to God?
- How could you motivate yourself and other Christians with less guilt and more with the gospel?