

# EXPERIENCING GOD'S GRACE

## PART 4: CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST?

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**MAIN IDEA: Being crucified with Christ means that we are no longer under the penalty of the Law. That penalty was paid by Christ on our behalf.**

When Christ was crucified, it was as if we were crucified with Him. The penalty was fully paid—just as surely as if we had been crucified for our own sins. When Christ rose from the dead, we rose, too. Now the risen Christ empowers us to live for Him in a way that pleases God. We used to seek life through our own works, but now we “live by faith in the Son of God” (Galatians 2:20).

### I. GALATIANS 2:1-21 (NIV)

#### A. Paul meets with church leaders (2:1-10)

*“Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also.<sup>2</sup> I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain.*

<sup>3</sup> Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.<sup>4</sup> This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.<sup>5</sup> We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

<sup>6</sup> As for those who were held in high esteem-- whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism-- they added nothing to my message. <sup>7</sup> On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised.

For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. <sup>9</sup> James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. <sup>10</sup> All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

## **B. Paul publicly confronts Peter (2:11-14)**

<sup>11</sup>"When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.<sup>12</sup> For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.<sup>13</sup> The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.<sup>14</sup> When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

## **C. Paul reminds them of their justification (2:15-21)**

<sup>15</sup>"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles<sup>16</sup> know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. 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. <sup>17</sup>"But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! <sup>18</sup> If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker. <sup>19</sup>"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. <sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. <sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

## II. COMMENTS

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### A. Paul meets with church leaders (2:1-10)

Paul met privately with the church leaders. They were most likely the Jerusalem Council to make sure they were all in agreement about the gospel<sup>1</sup> (2:1-2).

Most believers in Jerusalem were Jews, and many refused to forsake their Judaistic religion ("false ones"). They had been circumcised when they were eight days old according to the Mosaic Law. They now saw Christianity only as an extension of Judaism

In the minds of the Judaizers, Jesus Christ only added new teachings to their existing law and religion,<sup>2</sup> but Paul's gospel was complete and needed nothing else (2:6).

The leaders of the church had nothing to add to what Paul was preaching (e.g., circumcision, etc.). "Their reputation as great leaders made no difference to me" (Gal. 2:6 NLT) probably means Paul never saw himself as apostolically inferior.<sup>3</sup>

The church leaders in Jerusalem (James, Peter, John) unanimously affirmed Paul's gospel (2:7-10)

The point to note is that these great pillars of the church were now standing together proclaiming...(1) that salvation by grace through faith alone was the true gospel, (2) that God was the person who called Paul to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter was called to preach to the Jews, and (3) that Paul and his co-workers should keep on helping the poor.

### B. Paul publicly confronts Peter (2:11-14)

When Peter came to this Gentile church (Antioch), he began eating and spending time with them...this was a big deal for a Jewish man like Peter (2:11-14)

Under the old covenant, God had intended to keep Jews from intermingling with Gentiles and being corrupted by their idolatry and immorality. Also, Gentiles ate certain foods that were forbidden (unclean) to the Jews, and even sitting at the table with them was considered by some to be impure. That is why the Jews were astonished to see Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners<sup>4</sup> (cf. Mark 2:16)

But when Judaizers came, pretending to be friends of James, Peter stopped eating with the Gentile Christians and ate only with fellow Jews. As a result, several others did the same thing (2:12-13)

Following Peter's lead, other Jewish Christians (those living in Antioch), including Barnabas did the same thing. Why? Because they were afraid of criticism (2:12) from Jewish Christians who still wanted to add the law to Paul's gospel.

Peter's hypocrisy effectively caused a split with that church (Christian Jews vs. Christian Gentiles). A church that is not united is a church divided. Paul then

publicly confronted Peter with a direct question; “why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?” (v. 14)

### **C. Paul reminds them of their Justification (2:15-21)**

Paul reminds Peter that they, as Jews, did not find salvation through the law, but only through faith in Jesus Christ (2:15-16)

Jesus said we are free from the law but if the law is still in effect, as the Judaizers taught, then to break it is a sin. So is Jesus leading us into sin by telling us that we are no longer under the law? (2:17-18)

If the Judaizers were correct, then Paul, Peter, Barnabas, and all other Jewish believers had fallen back into the category of sinners because they had been eating and fellowshiping with Gentiles, who according to the Judaizers, were unclean.

Peter, by separating himself from Gentiles, affirmed Judaizer's view that sitting with Gentiles was a sin. So did Jesus lead a Jew into sin if he sat with a Gentile...absolutely not! By dying to the law, the believer is now to live for God by being crucified with Christ (2:19-20).

## **III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

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1. Read Galatians 2:1-5. In this passage, what points is Paul especially striving to get across?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why was it wise for Paul to keep meeting with the church leaders privately?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. If Paul received his gospel directly from God, why was it necessary to see if the church leaders agreed with him?

4. What is significant about the apostles' response to Titus?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How could Paul have been found to be "running his race in vain"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Paul implies that giving in to false teachers would mean a descent into slavery. In what senses could a Christian today become like a slave?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. It is best to compliment publicly and to correct privately, so why did Paul publicly confront Peter? Shouldn't he have confronted him privately?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Optional discussion leader's question(s).

## IV. APPLICATION

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### A. Being crucified with Christ means that we are new \_\_\_\_\_.

- "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- The old life is dead and gone. We walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

**B. Being crucified with Christ means that we have a new \_\_\_\_\_.**

- The lusts of the flesh and the love of the things of this world have been crucified (Galatians 5:24).
- Now we love Christ, though we have not seen Him (1 Peter 1:8).

**C. Being crucified with Christ means that we have a new \_\_\_\_\_.**

- We are dedicated to the service and glory of the Lord, and that dedication destroys selfishness and surpasses ties to family and friends.
- We have taken up our cross to follow Him (Matthew 10:38).

**D. Being crucified with Christ means that we have a new \_\_\_\_\_.**

- At one time we “followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Ephesians 2:2).
- But that way of life was nailed to the cross.
- Now we follow Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and we seek to please Him in every way (Hebrews 12:2).

### Sources used in this study

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### End notes

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<sup>1</sup> The word *gospel* (Gk. εὐαγγέλιον *euangelion*) means "good news" which is God's message of salvation and eternal life based on his grace not man's works (John 3:16).

<sup>2</sup> (Leadership Ministries Worldwide 46)

<sup>3</sup> (MacArthur 18)

<sup>4</sup> The term "sinners" used by the Judaizers was referring to Gentiles (Gal. 2:15).

<sup>5</sup> Keep in mind, however, that justification is not the same as sweeping sin under the rug and pretending it never existed. God knows it exists. Sin has a penalty, but that penalty has been paid and the record of your sins was put on the cross of God's Son. That's why we are accepted before God through faith in Jesus Christ (Platt and Merida 48)