

2. Pass the Bacon!

Key Principles for Christian Fellowship Galatians 2:11-21



The problem with Peter

Jews and Gentiles had very different eating habits. Everything a non-Jew touched or ate or did was considered unclean. Besides, Jews had very strict rules for what they could eat. Whatever you do, *don't* pass the bacon! It's in this strange and mundane area of life that the complaint that "*Christians are hypocrites*" was first aired. In Galatians 2, Paul tells us about a very public confrontation he had with his colleague Peter. Quite bluntly, Paul calls Peter a hypocrite - someone who says one thing, and does another. Ironically, Peter's hypocrisy is that he's doing something that looks socially **right** rather than something that looks **wrong**. It's just that social rights and wrongs have somehow been turned upside down by the gospel.

These days...

What sort of behaviour do people usually identify with Christian hypocrisy?



What motivates hypocrisy? Why are Christians so often guilty of it?

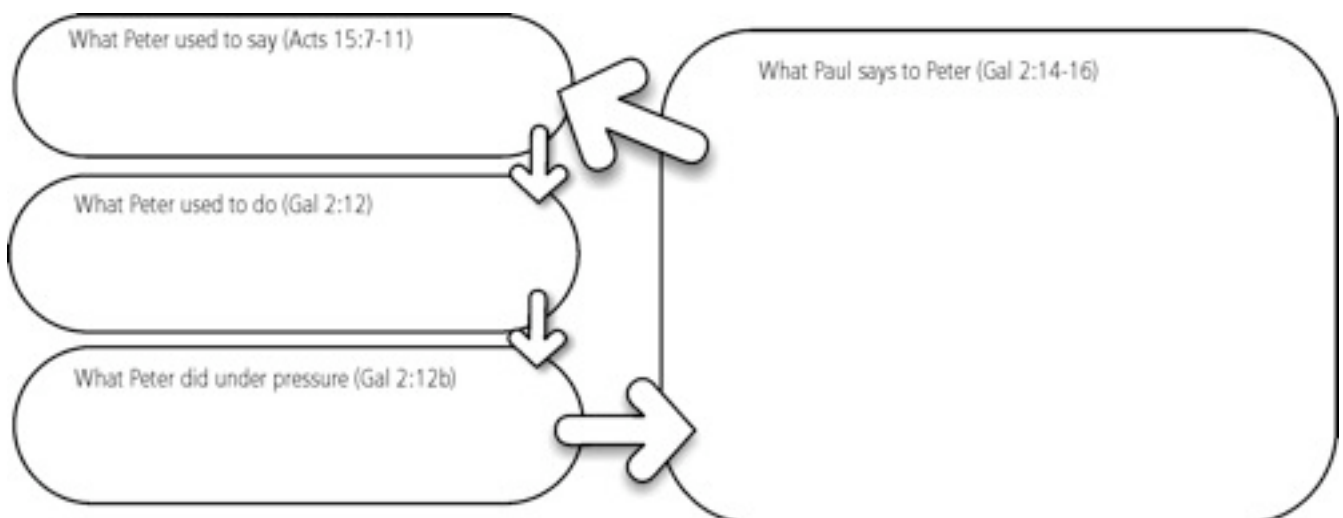
Read about Paul's showdown with Peter in Galatians 2:11-21.

What is it about Peter's actions that make him a hypocrite? What's so wrong about what he's done?

What is he afraid of?

What does this show about the tensions over gentiles coming into the church?

Fill in the chart...



An Apostle - Afraid?

This is remarkable! Peter, the leader of the Jerusalem apostles, has buckled under pressure. According to Paul's words to Peter, there are two kinds of people in the world, and two ideas about how to get right with God. What are they?

Carefully follow Paul's logic in verses 14 to 18 and answer these questions...

- a) How have **Jews** like Peter and Paul been saved?
- b) Who will **not** be justified by observing the law?
- c) How have those they called '**gentile sinners**' in the church been saved?
- d) What have Peter and the "men from James" been forcing the Gentiles to do?
- e) Because both Jews and "Gentile Sinners" are saved the same way, what can Paul - and Christ - be accused of?

The Law that Showed Their Sin

Israel always *failed* to live under God's law. That's the sad story you read in the Old Testament over and over again. Going back to **the Law** is the path that makes their past sin obvious! Rebuilding the law just highlights their guilt under the law all over again. (v18)

Paul knew this issue had to be sorted out once and for all. The Gentile Christians in the church were saved by faith in Christ, just like Peter and Paul were - and the Old Testament law played no part. So, says Paul, we must not act in a way that says or even hints at the fact that the Gentiles need to now take on the law to be acceptable. It's not as if gentiles are "saved by faith" and then have to "live by law." Peter needs to rethink his position.

Read verses 19 and 20...

- a) What do you think it means to "die to the law"? (v19)
- b) Will "living for God" involve taking on the Old Testament law? Why, or why not?
- c) According to the second half of verse 20, what will the daily life of a Christian look like? What is our reference point if it is not the law?

Think Again...

Sometimes we assume the main opposition to Paul (and Peter) came from Jews who did NOT believe in Jesus. But the evidence from Acts 15:5 and Acts 21:20-21 gives a different picture. According to James, "Many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are **zealous for the law.**"

Their zeal for the law is what puts them in conflict with Paul. Their zeal for the law - and their desire not be contaminated by eating with "Gentile sinners" - is also what makes Peter fear them... and turn into a hypocrite!

Many Christians today likewise have a 'zeal for the law' which ultimately brings them into conflict with other Christians, and the gospel that saved them!

Back in Chains?

In what ways are Christians today in danger of “rebuilding the law”?



Most people think “being a Christian” means “keeping the ten commandments and being good.” How does this idea “set aside the grace of God?” (v21)

How do you think this idea became so widespread?

What does Paul say to people who think this way? (v21)

To Peter, refusing to eat with the Gentiles seemed the right thing to do. But he was ultimately denying God’s grace. What self-righteous, grace-denying barriers are there between you and other Christians? What do you think Paul would say to you?



Re-connect!

What attitude-barriers can you see between Christian brothers and sisters in our church? What steps can we take to make sure they are broken down?



What stops you taking the initiative to ‘re-connect’ across barriers of age or style or dress-sense?

Avoiding the Hypocrisy of Religion...

Later in the letter, Paul says the most obvious kind of “christian hypocrisy” is to claim you follow Jesus while you continue in immorality and sin. That’s to be avoided at all costs. But there’s another sort of hypocrisy that’s just as dangerous and a little more subtle... living by “religious laws,” and relying on your own efforts at goodness in a way that makes Christ’s death for you pointless. It usually means you’ll be looking down at other people who don’t meet your own high standards. When you do that, you can actually look very good - in fact, you might even seem very religious. But it’s a sort of hypocrisy to avoid at all costs!

