

Peter's Hypocrisy

Galatians 1:11 – 2:21

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Paul was a zealous Jew who did his best to violently persecute believers in Jesus. Then God chose him to proclaim the good news about Jesus to the Gentiles. Paul did not go to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles. Instead, he went away into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. No one taught him the good news; he received it by direct revelation from Jesus Christ.

A few years later, Paul did go to Jerusalem for a short time where he met Peter and James, the head of the Judean assembly of believers. At that time, the believers throughout Judea only knew Paul by reputation. "The man who used to persecute us is now proclaiming the good news of the very faith he tried to destroy!"

Paul went back to Jerusalem fourteen years later. The leadership there affirmed the accuracy of Paul's message. His commission to reach the Gentiles was seen as equivalent to Peter's commission to reach the Jews.

Then Peter visited Antioch. At first, he was perfectly content to sit down to a meal with Gentile believers. But after some Judean associates of James arrived, Peter wouldn't eat with Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted circumcision was necessary for salvation.

Peter's hypocrisy began to infect other Jewish believers. So Paul called him out on it. "No one has ever or will ever be made right with God by obeying the Law. Justification is available only through faith in Jesus Christ. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. If it's possible to be saved through legalism rather than by God's grace, Christ's death on the cross was pointless."