

## Paul and Peter at Antioch: Galatians 2. 11-21.

### SCRIPTURE

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

For before certain came from James, he was in the habit of eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those of the circumcision.

And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that they were not walking straight according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before all:

If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

We ourselves are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles.

But, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Now if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we also have been found to be sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin?

Perish the thought! For if I rebuild what I threw down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

For through the law I died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died to no purpose.

### INTRODUCTION

#### (i) Two uncertainties.

In interpreting this passage, we face two uncertainties. The first concerns a 'when?' and the second concerns a 'where?'

**First**, we cannot be certain when the event recorded in the second half of the chapter took place.<sup>1</sup>

For our present study, we will assume that the incident follows sometime after that recorded in the first half of the chapter and that the incident takes place during the period recorded by Luke towards the close of chapter 15 in the Book of Acts, when 'Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of God'.<sup>2</sup>

The incident is sandwiched, therefore, sometime between the so-called 'Council of Jerusalem'<sup>3</sup> and that sad moment when Paul and Barnabas, following 'a sharp disagreement', parted company.<sup>4</sup> It couldn't have been easy for Paul to be involved in two disputes—albeit very different disputes—within such a relatively short period.

**Second**, we cannot be certain where Paul's words to Peter end—whether, that is, *the whole section from verse 14 to verse 21* records his words to Peter or whether he addresses *only the latter part of verse 14* to Peter and then grasps the opportunity to expand his argument for the benefit of the Galatians.

For our present study, I shall assume that the whole section is addressed to Peter.<sup>5</sup>

#### (ii) Two purposes.

In the context of the letter overall, our passage serves two distinct purposes:

**First**, it reinforces the main point that Paul has been making through *the earlier part* of the epistle—that is, it plays an important role in Paul's defence of *his independent apostolic authority*.

Paul has previously pointed out:<sup>6</sup>

(i) that he had been converted not, as was (and is) usual, through some human channel, but as a result of the direct intervention of the risen Lord;<sup>7</sup>

(ii) that, following his conversion, it had been three years before he saw any of the apostles, and then only Peter—together with James, the Lord's brother—and that for only two weeks ... certainly not long enough for him to be trained to become a disciple of the Jerusalem apostles;<sup>8</sup> and

(iii) that, when, after a further fourteen-year gap, in a private session, he set before the three most prominent leaders of the Jerusalem church the substance of the gospel which he preached,<sup>9</sup> they recognized three crucial points:

(a) that they had 'nothing to add' to him and his gospel,<sup>10</sup>

(b) that his gospel was the same as theirs—that he had been 'entrusted' with the very same 'gospel' as had Peter,<sup>11</sup> and

(c) that, on account of 'the grace' given to him (to preach to the Gentiles<sup>12</sup>),<sup>13</sup> his authority was in no way inferior to their own— an acknowledgement expressed when, as has been said, they 'shook hands as equals'.<sup>14</sup>

And now comes the clincher. For Paul's independent apostolic status—his parity with the other apostles—receives the most dramatic demonstration in the showdown at Antioch,<sup>15</sup> when he had occasion to 'rebuke' Peter, one of the leading apostles, and, what is more, to do so publicly<sup>16</sup>—in marked contrast with the previous private meeting at Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup>

**Second**, and perhaps more importantly, Paul's words to Peter are directly relevant to the central issue currently facing the churches of Galatia. Clearly, therefore, it suits Paul for the Galatians to sit in as spectators on what happened at Antioch, for that which he said there to Peter provides a summary of the very heart of the gospel of grace which he is to expound and defend in the following section of this letter. In this way, therefore, our passage forms a transition—a bridge, if you like—between the personal/historical section and the doctrinal section of the letter.<sup>18</sup>

It is probably for this reason that Paul doesn't record the sequel to the incident. No mention is made of the reaction of Peter, Barnabas or the other Christian Jews present. The apostle is far more concerned about the present effect of his words on the Christians at Galatia than he is about any past effect which they had on the Christians at Antioch. His narrative account is, therefore, directly followed by his no-nonsense address, 'O foolish Galatians'.<sup>19</sup>

## EXPOSITION

The opening verses of our section<sup>20</sup> briefly set the scene and introduce us to two separate parties who came from Jerusalem to Antioch; first, 'Cephas' (alias Peter<sup>21</sup>) and then, 'certain ... from James'.

Antioch is, of course, the place where the Gentile mission first began,<sup>22</sup> and where the disciples were first called Christians,<sup>23</sup> flagging the fact that the followers of Jesus were no longer to be regarded as merely a sect of the Jews.<sup>24</sup>

### Verse 11.

**Enter party number one.**<sup>25</sup> Peter comes to Antioch, presumably on one of his many travels<sup>26</sup> and, more than likely, as was his practice, accompanied by his wife.<sup>27</sup>

Sadly, Paul is soon to discover that the battle at Jerusalem (reported in the first half of the chapter and in Acts 15) has hardly been won when he needs to fight a second battle and that, this time, Peter will be his foe and not his ally.<sup>28</sup>

It may strike us as strange that Peter acts as he does at Antioch, so soon after the prominent part which he played in the Council at Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> But then, to some extent, this is the very basis of Paul's charge against him; namely, that of Peter's blatant inconsistency and hypocrisy.<sup>30</sup>

Paul records how he 'opposed' ('resisted', 'withstood') him because Peter 'stood condemned'.<sup>31</sup> Peter's conduct, that is, condemns him; what he does is wrong in itself.<sup>32</sup>

When in Jerusalem, Paul had been concerned only with Peter's 'right hand';<sup>33</sup> now, in Antioch, he has to concern himself rather with Peter's 'face'.<sup>34</sup>

### Verse 12.

**Enter party number two:** 'certain from James'.<sup>35</sup> It is worth reminding ourselves of words which James and the other leaders wrote to the Galatians among others following the Jerusalem Council, concerning 'some who went out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, to whom we gave no commandment ("no charge"; "no instructions"<sup>36</sup>)'.

I think it highly unlikely, therefore, that James would now have sent these particular men to Antioch—the more so if (as is probable) he was aware that the apostle Peter was already there.

Luke describes Paul's opponents at the Council in Jerusalem as believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees.<sup>37</sup> To the Pharisees, avoiding eating with outcasts and Gentiles represented an important barrier against defilement;<sup>38</sup> hence their loud grumbling against the earlier practice of Jesus and His disciples<sup>39</sup>—including Peter, of course.<sup>40</sup>

It seems that, notwithstanding the ruling of the Jerusalem Council,<sup>41</sup> the stricter Jews still maintained that it was both right and necessary for Jewish believers to avoid table-fellowship with the Gentiles<sup>42</sup> unless the Gentiles first submitted to circumcision and thereafter complied with the Old Testament food laws.

The tenses used by Paul add no small colour to the narrative.<sup>43</sup> First, Peter, we read, 'was in the habit of eating with the Gentiles'.<sup>44</sup> This was, that is, his regular practice, no doubt at ordinary meals as well as at the fellowship meals of the church (the so-called 'love feasts').<sup>45</sup>

A different issue concerning such special fellowship meals arose later in the church of God in Corinth. *In Corinth*, the believers were divided and segregated on the basis of their position and wealth (with the rich refusing to wait for the poor, so that some went hungry while others were drunk)<sup>46</sup>; whereas, *in Antioch*, the believers were divided and segregated, not on the basis of their social standing but on the basis of their nationality and ethnicity (with the Jewish Christians refusing to sit and to eat with the Gentiles).

But, if what happened at Corinth was bad (and it was, for it was 'to despise'—'to treat with contempt'—the church of God<sup>47</sup>), what happened at Antioch was a thousand times worse—certainly, in its implications.

I said above that the tenses which are used by Paul add no small colour to the narrative. This is true, second, of his description of how Peter both 'gradually withdrew ("drew back", "shrank back"<sup>48</sup>) and gradually separated<sup>49</sup> himself'.<sup>50</sup>

Earlier, Paul had asserted that it was *God* who had 'separated' *him* (from before his birth) to 'preach Christ among the Gentiles';<sup>51</sup> now he has to report that *Peter* 'separated' (the same word) *himself* from his fellow-believers who were Gentiles!

Peter's chosen course of action was especially sad given his remarkable experience at Joppa some ten years before—which experience is recorded no less than three times in the Book of Acts ... once as part of Luke's own narrative in chapter 10 and twice as told by the apostle Peter himself—first, to 'those of the circumcision' in chapter 11 and, second, at the so-called 'Council of Jerusalem' in chapter 15<sup>52</sup> ... a clear indication of the importance attached to that experience by the Holy Spirit.<sup>53</sup>

The 'vision'<sup>54</sup> of 'something like a great sheet'<sup>55</sup> had then taught Peter, not only the relaxation of Israel's ancient food laws<sup>56</sup> but also the worthlessness of the traditional teaching of the Rabbis which forbade Jews from ever eating with Gentiles.<sup>57</sup> At that time, Peter had not only visited Gentiles in their home and then stayed with them 'for some days,<sup>58</sup> but also 'ate with them'.<sup>59</sup>

And when 'those of the circumcision'<sup>60</sup> take the apostle to task over his acceptance of Gentile hospitality, he gives a lengthy and spirited defence of his action.<sup>61</sup> 'But Peter', I feel like saying, 'if it was **then right** to eat with *Gentile enquirers at Caesarea*, whyever is it **now wrong** to eat with *Gentile believers at Antioch?*'

Peter shrank back, Paul observed, from 'fear' of 'those of the circumcision'.<sup>62</sup> Most likely, he was afraid of their own disapproval and the possibility that they would take back an adverse report to Jerusalem—which could well affect his standing in the eyes of the church there. If this were so, then, to Peter, as, alas, to many of us, 'the fear of man' indeed brought 'a snare'.<sup>63</sup>

The Book of Acts portrays Peter as a man of outstanding personal courage,<sup>64</sup> but, on this particular occasion, his courage failed him.

If we find it difficult to believe that the Peter who we know from the Book of Acts could ever act in the way that Paul describes, we have only to recall that *it was this very same man who*, having declared himself ready to lay down his life for the Lord Jesus,<sup>65</sup> and having bravely—if foolishly—drawn his small (dagger-like) sword<sup>66</sup> in the Lord's defence,<sup>67</sup> *went on soon after to deny three times that he even knew Him*.<sup>68</sup>

And so we find that the same Peter who once failed his Lord out of fear of two servant girls *at* Jerusalem<sup>69</sup> now failed Him again for fear of the circumcision party *from* Jerusalem.

Personally, I find the following analysis interesting:

'Before Jesus' death, Peter (i) rejected the idea of Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 16. 22); (ii) refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet (John 13. 8); and (iii) denied that he knew the Master (John 18. 15–18, 25–27).

'Afterward, even in a vision-experience, Peter (iv) saw himself refusing the heavenly voice with a characteristically oxymoronic response to the Lord's command: "By no means, Lord" (Acts 10. 14).

'Peter was called to preach the gospel to a group of Gentiles (the God-fearers in the house of Cornelius, centurion in the Italian Regiment). To a faithful Jew, that would have seemed outrageous—like eating the flesh of an unclean animal.

'Peter's every instinct was to refuse the Lord, just as he had done before and would, apparently, do again (see Gal. 2. 11-14).

'What was going on in Peter's life that he could say, "No, Lord"?

'At the heart of the issue lay Simon Peter's struggle to come to terms with both the cross and its implications. All of his moments of "refusal" seem to have involved an inability to grasp what the gospel really means'.<sup>70</sup>

In any case, clearly Peter hadn't thought through the implications of his action—the result of which action was catastrophic.<sup>71</sup>

### Verse 13.

Peter was, to say the least, a very important person in Christian circles ... one who exerted an enormous influence. We have only to remember the effect which his declaration, 'I am going fishing', had on six other disciples at the Sea of Galilee shortly after our Lord's resurrection.<sup>72</sup>

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that now in Antioch, the other Jewish Christians present, including 'even' Barnabas, followed his example—or, more accurately, joined him in his 'dissimulation', his 'insincerity', his 'hypocrisy'.<sup>73</sup> And 'hypocrisy' it certainly was. 'The underlying Greek word was that used of actors hiding their true selves behind the role they were playing'.<sup>74</sup> And, unquestionably, Peter was acting contrary to his real convictions.

'So that even Barnabas' was swept along<sup>75</sup> by the current that day.<sup>76</sup> And Paul's use of the word 'even' reveals how keenly Paul felt the inclusion of Barnabas.<sup>77</sup>

'Even Barnabas', I hear Paul say.

'Even Barnabas, my longstanding companion and colleague, who first introduced me to the apostles and the church at Jerusalem'.<sup>78</sup>

'Even Barnabas—who brought me to Antioch in the first place'.<sup>79</sup>

'Even Barnabas, who, on many occasions, suffered persecution and endangered his life<sup>80</sup> as my partner in evangelizing the Gentiles'.<sup>81</sup>

'Even Barnabas, who fought shoulder to shoulder with me recently—both at Antioch and at Jerusalem—to preserve the Gentiles from being brought into the bondage of Judaism'.<sup>82</sup>

'Even Barnabas—whose very name means "son of encouragement"<sup>83</sup> but who that day in Antioch proved anything but an encouragement to me'.

'Even Barnabas'!

### Verse 14a.

Unlike the others (and Peter himself), Paul is quick to grasp the implications of Peter's action. To Paul, it was not only a case of weakness, inconsistency and hypocrisy—it also endangered the very 'truth of the gospel'<sup>84</sup> for which he had recently contended at Jerusalem.<sup>85</sup>

Peter and those with him were not 'walking straight'<sup>86</sup> according to the gospel. They were deviating from the straight course of the gospel, with special reference, in context, to the doctrine of justification by faith.

Peter's conduct was proclaiming that he considered uncircumcised Gentiles unfit to have table-fellowship with him—that, in his eyes, Gentiles may not need to live as Jews to have communion *with Christ* but they most certainly needed to live as Jews if they were to have communion *with Jewish Christians*. By his action, he was, that is, requiring the Gentiles to put themselves under the law and to live as Jews or else to continue as second-class citizens in the church.

Paul must have realised that taking public action such as he did would necessarily be embarrassing, painful, and fraught with danger. Peter was a prominent and highly respected leader and, no doubt, in the eyes of many, a public rupture between the two men might well jeopardise the peace and unity of churches far and wide. But, as Paul saw it, his stand that day was essential to safeguard and preserve that very peace and unity on a sound basis.

And so (as I said earlier), in marked contrast with the previous private consultation he had had with others (including Peter) at Jerusalem,<sup>87</sup> he rebukes Peter 'before all'.<sup>88</sup>

The rest of the chapter (from the second half of verse 14 onwards) sets out, in summary, Paul's argument.<sup>89</sup>

#### Verse 14b.

Peter, though born and bred a Jew, had—with very good cause<sup>90</sup>—laid aside Jewish food restrictions and *normally lived as a Gentile*. Why then, Paul asks, by force of his example and influence, did his fellow-apostle effectively constrain<sup>91</sup> Gentile believers to do as the Judaizers insisted and to put themselves under the law and *to live as Jews*?<sup>92</sup>

#### Verse 15.

As I read it, Paul thereafter included in his rebuke all those Jewish Christians who, along with Peter, had beaten a retreat to the kosher tables, requiring them to consider their own situation. They were—as he—'Jews by nature' (not mere proselytes, that is) and, in their eyes, they didn't, therefore, belong to the category of 'sinners',<sup>93</sup> as they once proudly dubbed the Gentiles in contrast with themselves.

#### Verse 16.

'Yet', Paul emphasised, '*even* highly favoured people like ourselves<sup>94</sup> had discovered that we couldn't be justified by the works of the law, but only by faith in Christ'.<sup>95</sup>

We can hardly miss that Paul mentions (i) 'justified', (ii) 'the works of the law' and (iii) faith in the Lord Jesus *no less than three times each in a single sentence*.<sup>96</sup> Now, that is some going!

One commentator draws attention to the way in which 'there is an ascending scale of emphasis—first *general*—'a man', then *personal*—'even we', and finally *universal*—'no flesh'.<sup>97</sup> 'It would be hard', he says, 'to find a more forceful statement of the doctrine of justification than this'.<sup>98</sup>

When Paul said, '*even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ*', he may well have been reminding Peter of his (Peter's) own words at Jerusalem, where he had recently affirmed that 'God ... made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.... *we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they*'.<sup>99</sup>

#### Verse 17.

'Peter', Paul is saying, 'In the process of "*seeking*" to be justified by Christ, we discovered (much to our surprise<sup>100</sup>) that we ourselves were "*found*" to be something ... and what, pray, were we found to be? I'll tell you what, Peter ... "Sinners", that's what!

'Yes, we came to see that there is no hope of our ever being justified by the works of the law,<sup>101</sup> and that to be saved, we need to take our place as "sinners"— to see ourselves, that is, as no different from the Gentiles.

'But what is more, Peter, it was Christ Himself who—through His gospel—taught us to think this way. Does this then make Christ to be a minister ('a promoter'<sup>102</sup>) of sin?<sup>103</sup>

'Did our Lord Jesus make us "sinners" when—through His gospel—He revealed to us our sinful condition? Perish the thought.<sup>104</sup> No way! A thousand times, "no", to such slander on His name.<sup>105</sup>

'The truth is, Peter, that, although (in common with the Gentiles) we Jews have been "sinners" all the time, we didn't see ourselves that way until Christ revealed it to us.

#### Verse 18.

'And, far from Christ making us "sinners", when (as His gospel required) we abandoned the law as the way of salvation, it would be a grievous sin for us to return to that law again.<sup>106</sup>

'Peter, as you know, I once attempted to "destroy" the faith which I now preach,<sup>107</sup> but, since my conversion, I have set out, rather, to destroy—to "throw (to 'tear', to 'pull') down"—the scheme of salvation by works.

'Make no mistake, Peter, it is not in tearing down this scheme that I would make ("constitute", "prove") myself "a transgressor", but in rebuilding that which I previously demolished.

'And you, Peter, by your earlier practice of eating with the Gentiles declared plainly that neither they nor we are bound by all the restrictions of the law—declared that you, as I, had set aside the law as the standard of Christian conduct.

'Yet now, today, by your refusal to eat with Gentiles, you retract that earlier declaration and you build up what you once threw down.<sup>108</sup>

'But, Peter, if we go back on that which Christ taught us to do, then we are “transgressors” to the nth degree.<sup>109</sup>

#### Verse 19.

'But why, you may ask, should returning to trust in the law prove me to be “a transgressor”? For the simple reason, Peter, that “I died to the law”—that I am dead to the very system I would then be building again.<sup>110</sup>

'Indeed, my brother, ironically, it is through that very law that I died to it.<sup>111</sup> For, as far as I and my sin are concerned, the law did many things—although not the most important.

'The law not only exposed me as a sinner,<sup>112</sup> but also, on account of my sinful nature and tendencies, it actually provoked and incited sin in me.<sup>113</sup> And then, to cap it all, the law pronounced God's *judgment* on me'.<sup>114</sup>

'The law did all of these things but one thing it never did ... it never provided me with a remedy for my sin.<sup>115</sup> What it did was to drive me to despair of myself and of my own efforts,<sup>116</sup> and, in so doing, drove me to Christ and His gospel that I might live before and for God.

#### Verse 20.

'Embracing Christ by faith united me to Him. His death was my death. And death, as you know, Peter, nullifies all the claims of the law on a person.<sup>117</sup> And so, because, by faith, I am associated with Christ in His death, I am now beyond the reach and range of the law. I am “dead to the law through the body of Christ”<sup>118</sup>—through that body in which He bore our sins<sup>119</sup> and reconciled us to God.<sup>120</sup>

'Not, of course, Peter, that I am free to live as I want—to live to or for myself. Certainly not! I now live the kind of life which God wants me to live, a life consecrated to Him.

'Let me explain what I mean by the great paradox: “I died ... that I may live”.

'You see, Peter, to me the death and resurrection of Christ is not only a historical event. For I see myself as having been “co-crucified” with Christ, if you like ... just as were the two malefactors who were literally “crucified with Him” at Golgotha.<sup>121</sup>

'And, although, brother, this happened as a past event, the effects continue into the present;<sup>122</sup> I was and I *am* still crucified with Him. It is as if, Peter, I am still hanging on the cross with Christ.<sup>123</sup> And yet, simultaneously (and most wonderfully), I also share His resurrection life. For, by His Spirit, the risen, living Lord lives in me.<sup>124</sup>

'Just as it was by faith that I first received life in Christ, so it is by faith also that I continue to live that life. My new life is sustained by faith—not faith in the law but faith “in the Son of God”.

'For He, none other and none less than the Son of God, loved me and gave Himself up for me. Oh yes, Peter, as an individual, I am able to appropriate to myself personally both that great love and that great act of self-sacrifice which together extend to and embrace all believers.<sup>125</sup>

'You and I know well, Peter, that, in one sense, Judas delivered up the Lord Jesus out of base greed;<sup>126</sup> that our leaders, the chief priests and elders, delivered Him up out of envy;<sup>127</sup> and that Pontius Pilate, the Roman prefect, delivered Him up out of weakness and cowardice.<sup>128</sup>

'But we also know, Peter, that, in the final analysis, He delivered Himself up<sup>129</sup> out of love! He gave up Himself to shame and mockery, to condemnation, to the scourge, to the crown of thorns, to the nails, to the judgement and the forsaking of God, to death itself ... and—wonder of all wonders—it was all for me. He thought less of Himself than He did of me!<sup>130</sup>

#### Verse 21.

'I said, Peter, that “I died” with Christ “to the law”. Peter, let me say it bluntly—if it is possible for me (or anyone else) to be made right with God by keeping that law, then, frankly, Christ died “to no purpose”—He died “in vain”—He died “for nothing”—He died, Peter, “without a cause”.

'Make no mistake, Peter, if we aren't justified "without a cause", by God's grace,<sup>131</sup> then our Lord Jesus most certainly died "without a cause"!<sup>132</sup>

'If any man (whether Jew or Gentile) can be saved by the works of the law, then God's grace is worthless and Christ's death is superfluous.

'In conclusion, let me make it clear, Peter, that, unlike those who pin their hopes on the works of the law,<sup>133</sup> I do not "nullify" ("I do not set aside", "I do not make void") the grace of God. Rather, in trusting in Christ and in Him alone, I magnify the grace of God'.<sup>134</sup>

## CONCLUDING QUOTATION

For my part, I close with a quotation from Martin Luther.



When commenting on chapter 2 in his famous '*Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*', the great Reformer wrote:

**'I must hearken to the Gospel, which teaches me, not what I ought to do (for that is the proper office of the law), but what Jesus Christ the Son of God has done for me: namely, that He suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death ... Moreover, this He did out of inestimable love'.<sup>135</sup>**

**Well said, Mr Luther.**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Our section opens with the expression, 'But when', which stands in contrast to the word, 'Then' (ἔπειτα)—a word which occurs three times previously, Gal. 1. 18, 21; 2. 1). The word 'Then' definitely indicates chronological sequence, but the word translated 'when' (ὅτε, Gal. 2. 11) does not necessarily do so. Having described his relations with the Church at Jerusalem and in particular the seeming pillars, Paul now speaks of his relations with Peter personally and individually.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 15. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 15. 2-29.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 15. 39.

<sup>5</sup> It may be that, from verse 15 to the end of the chapter, Paul also looks over Peter's shoulder, as it were, and includes in his comments the whole company of Jews present at the time.

<sup>6</sup> 'He has said that he received his commission and gospel immediately from the same source as did the other apostles; that he owed nothing to them; that he did not on his conversion rush up to Jerusalem and seek admission among them, or ask counsel or legitimation from them; that three years elapsed before he saw one of them, and him he saw only for a brief space; that fourteen years afterwards he went up again to the metropolis, when he met them, or rather three of the most famous of them, as their equal; that he did not and would not circumcise Titus; that the original apostles gave him no information and no new element of authority, nay, that they cordially recognised him, and that he and they came to an amicable understanding as to their respective departments of labour', J. Eadie, *Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians*, page 146.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. 1. 11-16; note his emphasis on divine 'revelation', Gal. 1. 12, 16.

<sup>8</sup> Gal. 1. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Gal. 2. 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Gal. 2. 6.

<sup>11</sup> Gal. 2. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Eph. 3. 2-8.

<sup>13</sup> Gal. 2. 9.

<sup>14</sup> 'The right hands of fellowship', Gal. 2. 9; 'shook hands as equals in the work', A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, comment on Gal. 2. 9.

<sup>15</sup> 'At Jerusalem, I owed nothing to the Apostles of the Circumcision. I maintained my independence and my equality. At Antioch I was more than an equal. I openly rebuked the leading Apostle of the Circumcision, for his conduct condemned itself', J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, Second Edition, W. F. Draper, 1870, page 238.

'Such opposition was, of course, quite inconsistent with a subordinate relationship on the part of Paul', C. F. Hogg and W. E. Vine, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, page 81.

<sup>16</sup> 'Before all', Gal. 2. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Gal. 2. 2.

<sup>18</sup> The epistle can be broken into three main sections:

Chapters 1 and 2 are *personal*. They take form of *autobiography*.

Paul counters the claim that he was a second-rate apostle.

Chapters 3 and 4 are *doctrinal*. They take form of *argument*.

Paul counters the claim that circumcision is necessary for salvation and that his gospel was defective because it rests on faith and not the law.

Chapters 5 and 6 are *practical*. They take form of *application*.

Paul counters the claim that his gospel encourages immorality and license.

<sup>19</sup> Gal. 3. 1.

<sup>20</sup> Gal. 2. 11-12.

<sup>21</sup> Cephas is the Aramaic name for Simon Peter; Petros (Peter) is the Greek translation of this name. The apostle Paul frequently uses 'Cephas' in his letters (1 Cor. 1. 12; 3. 22; 9.5; 15. 5; Gal. 2. 9), whereas the Gospels and Acts primarily use 'Peter' (or Simon)—but see the one exception, 'you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called *Cephas* (which means Peter)', John 1. 42.

<sup>22</sup> Acts 11. 20-21; 13. 2-3.

<sup>23</sup> Acts 11. 26.

<sup>24</sup> For the word 'sect' (*αἵρεσις*), see Acts 5. 17; 15. 5; 24. 5; 26. 5; 28. 22. 'In Josephus, too, *αἵρεσις* is used of the religious community of the Essenes (*The Wars of the Jews*, 2, 118). Indeed, Josephus sees all the Jewish religious schools in terms of the Greek philosophical schools, the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees being the *τρεῖς παρ' ἡμῶν αἵρέσεις*', Heinrich Schlier, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Volume 1, page 181.

<sup>25</sup> Gal. 2. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Acts 9. 32.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor. 9. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Acts 15. 7-12.

'The opening word "But" indicates a contrast to what went before; despite all that had taken place this is what happened', J. Hunter, *Galatians to Ephesians: What the Bible Teaches*, page 31.

<sup>29</sup> Acts 15. 7-11.

<sup>30</sup> Gal. 2. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Gal. 2. 11.

<sup>32</sup> 'His conduct carried its own condemnation with it ... The condemnation spoken of is not the verdict of the bystanders, but the verdict of the act itself', J. B. Lightfoot, *ibid.*, page 239.

<sup>33</sup> Gal. 2. 9.

<sup>34</sup> Gal. 2. 11.

<sup>35</sup> Gal. 2. 12.

<sup>36</sup> 'Οὐ διεστειλάμεθα', Acts 15. 24.

"To order", "to give precise instructions or commands", K. H. Rengstorf, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Ed. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Volume VII, page 591.

<sup>37</sup> Acts 15. 5.

<sup>38</sup> 'A Pharisee was forbidden to be the guest of any such man or to have him as his guest ... It was the deliberate Pharisaic aim to avoid every contact with the people who did not observe the petty details of the law ... the strict Jews said, not "There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents", but "There will be joy in heaven over one sinner who is obliterated before God"', William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke: Daily Study Bible*, pages 199-200.

<sup>39</sup> Luke 15. 2; cf. Luke 5. 30.

<sup>40</sup> Ironically, now it is Peter, and not Paul (Acts 23. 6; 26. 5; Phil. 3. 5), who acts the part of the Pharisee!

<sup>41</sup> 'It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality', Acts 15. 28-29.

<sup>42</sup> Some take the view that 'James, while holding that the Gentile converts were not to have the observance of the Law forced upon them, did nevertheless consider that the Jewish believers were still bound to keep it. ... This would be in no way inconsistent with Acts 15, where the emphatic words, "them which from the Gentiles turn to God", tacitly imply that the obligations of Jewish believers continued the same as before', E. Huxtable, *Galatians: The Pulpit Commentary*, page 81.

In support of that distinction, I note James's comments to Paul in Acts 21. 20-25.

<sup>43</sup> Gal. 2. 12.

<sup>44</sup> The imperfect tense ('συνήσθην'), Gal. 2. 12.

'This picture of Peter eating with Gentiles is consistent with the account in Acts of Peter's visit with Cornelius after he was taught by a special vision not to call anything unclean that God had cleansed (Acts 10. 1—11. 18). After that vision Peter knew that God approved of his table fellowship with Gentile believers. In fact, to refuse to eat with Gentile Christians would have been to go against the clear revelation he had received from God', G. W. Hansen, '*Galatians: IVP New Testament Commentary*', page 62.

<sup>45</sup> Acts 20. 11; 1 Cor. 11. 33-34; Jude 12.

<sup>46</sup> 1 Cor. 11. 17-21.

<sup>47</sup> 1 Cor. 11. 22.

<sup>48</sup> Again, the imperfect tense ('ὑπέστειλεν').

'The verb used, especially by Polybius, of the drawing back of troops in order to place them under shelter, itself suggests a retreat from motives of caution ... The imperfect tense is very expressive, indicating that Peter took this step not at once, immediately on the arrival of the men from James, but gradually, under the pressure, as the next phrase implies, of their criticism. The force of the tense can hardly be otherwise expressed than by the word "gradually"', E. De Witt Burton, '*Galatians: International Critical Commentary*', page 107.

Compare the use of the verb in Acts 20. 27: 'I did not *shrink* from declaring to you the whole counsel of God'.

<sup>49</sup> Again, the imperfect tense ('ἀφώριζεν').

<sup>50</sup> Gal. 2. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Gal. 1. 15-16; cf. Rom. 1. 1. See Isa. 49. 1; Jer. 1. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Acts 10. 1-48; 11. 1-18; 15. 7-9.

<sup>53</sup> 'Peter enjoyed fellowship with all the believers, Jews and Gentiles alike. To "eat with the Gentiles" meant to accept them, to put Jews and Gentiles on the same level as one family in Christ. Raised as an orthodox Jew, Peter had a difficult time learning this lesson. Jesus had taught it while He was with Peter before the crucifixion (Matt. 15. 1–20). The Holy Spirit had reemphasized it when He sent Peter to the home of Cornelius, the Roman centurion (Acts 10). Furthermore, the truth had been accepted and approved by the conference of leaders at Jerusalem (Acts 15). Peter had been one of the key witnesses at that time. After his experience with Cornelius, Peter had been called on the carpet and had ably defended himself (Acts 11)', W. Wiersbe, '*Be Free: An expository study of Galatians*', page 49.

<sup>54</sup> Acts 10. 17, 19; 11. 5.

<sup>55</sup> Acts 10. 11; 11. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Acts 10. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Acts 10. 28b.

<sup>58</sup> Acts 10. 48.

<sup>59</sup> Acts 11. 3.

<sup>60</sup> Acts 11. 2; cf. Gal. 2.12.

<sup>61</sup> Acts 11. 5-17.

<sup>62</sup> Gal. 2. 12.

<sup>63</sup> Prov. 29. 25.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Acts 4. 5-8, 17-20, 31; 5. 27-29, 40-42.

<sup>65</sup> John 13. 37. 'Peter spoke of laying down his life for Jesus, but, ironically, Jesus would first lay down His life for Peter (John 10. 11, 15)', Thomas Constable, '*Expository Notes*', comment on John 13. 37-38.

<sup>66</sup> The Greek word is 'μάχαιρα', as opposed to the normal word for sword ('ρόμφαία'), which latter word signifies a larger sword (see Mark 14. 43, 48).

<sup>67</sup> John 18. 10.

<sup>68</sup> Mark 14. 66-72.

<sup>69</sup> Matt. 26. 69, 71.

<sup>70</sup> S. B. Ferguson, '*In Christ Alone*', page 179.

<sup>71</sup> Gal. 2. 13.

<sup>72</sup> John 21. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Compare, 'The leaders of this people have caused them to err', Isa. 9. 16. 'The sins of teachers are the teachers of sins', Thomas Brooks, '*Complete Works*', 1866, Volume 4, page 210.

<sup>74</sup> 'The word used is a colourful one. It means to play the hypocrite together with others. The underlying Greek word was that used of actors hiding their true selves behind the role they were playing. The implication is that neither Peter nor the other Jews were acting true to character when they withdrew', Donald Guthrie, '*Galatians: New Century Bible Commentary*', page 85.

<sup>75</sup> Literally, 'carried away with' ('*συναπάγω*').

<sup>76</sup> 'The position of '*αὐτῶν*' ("of them") is emphatic. Paul means that, if it had not been for their hypocrisy, Barnabas would never have fallen into so grievous a mistake in conduct himself', E. Huxtable, '*Galatians: The Pulpit Commentary*', page 82.

<sup>77</sup> Barnabas was probably the last man from whom Paul would have expected such conduct.

<sup>78</sup> Acts 9. 27.

<sup>79</sup> Acts 11. 25-26.

<sup>80</sup> Acts 15. 26.

<sup>81</sup> Acts 13. 50; 14. 5, 19 ... including the Galatians.

<sup>82</sup> Acts 15. 2; Gal. 2. 1.

<sup>83</sup> Acts 4. 36.

<sup>84</sup> Gal. 2. 14.

<sup>85</sup> Gal. 2. 5.

<sup>86</sup> The Greek word is '*ὀρθοποδέω*' ... "to walk in a straight path" (*ὀρθός*, "straight," *πούς*, "a foot"), is used metaphorically in Gal. 2. 14, signifying a "course of conduct" by which one leaves a straight track, for others to follow', W. E. Vine, '*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*', article 'Walk' 6.

<sup>87</sup> Gal. 2. 5.

<sup>88</sup> Leaders who commit a serious offense openly must be rebuked openly, 1 Tim. 5. 20.

'While the Gospel is something worth contending for, there are right ways and wrong ways to go about this business. When Peter's inconsistency is public and doing public damage, Paul's rebuke is public (Gal. 2. 11-21). When Paul is trying to clear the air, find out what is going on, and present the tenor of his own work, he approaches the others "privately" (Gal. 2. 2). His concern, after all, is the advance of the undiluted Gospel, not his own public vindication', D. A. Carson, '*For the Love of God*', Volume 1, comments for 26 September..

<sup>89</sup> Here 'Paul did not assert his authority as an apostle directly appointed by Jesus Christ or as one of the senior leaders of the church in Antioch. Nor did he appeal to the authority of the decision of the Jerusalem conference. Paul's refusal to follow Peter's example as all the other Jewish Christians did, and his open rebuke of Peter, were based solely on the standard set by the gospel', G. W. Hansen, *ibid.*, page 65.

<sup>90</sup> Acts 10. 9-28.

<sup>91</sup> The Greek word is '*ἀναγκάζω*'—'compel', 'require'. Compare its use in Mark 6. 45.

<sup>92</sup> 'Live as the Jews': 'The verb "Judaize" occurs in the Septuagint of Esther 8. 17, "And many of the Gentiles had themselves circumcised and Judaized [*ἰουδαίζον*], the same word as in Gal. 2. 14] by reason of their fear of the Jews"', E. Huxtable, *ibid.*, page 83.

<sup>93</sup> 'As often in the New Testament, "persons (from the point of view of the speaker or from that which he for the moment adopts) pre-eminently sinful", "notorious sinners", "habitual transgressors of law" ... the heathen are characterized as "sinners" from the Jewish standpoint', E. De Witt Burton, *ibid.*, page 119.

<sup>94</sup> 'Even we'; contrast 'even Barnabas', Gal. 2. 13.

<sup>95</sup> The aorist of the verb points to the time of first making Christ the object of trust.

<sup>96</sup> Gal. 2. 16.

<sup>97</sup> 'His emphatic triple statement in verse 16 is intended to leave us in no doubt about this matter, and (as Luther often said) to 'beat it into our heads'. Not that the repetition is exact and monotonous, however, for there is an ascending scale of emphasis: first, general—"a man", then, personal—"even we", and finally universal—"no flesh". It is (i) insisted upon by the two leading apostles ("we know"), (ii) confirmed from their own experience ("we have believed"), and (iii) endorsed by the sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament ("by works of the law shall no one be justified"), J. R. W. Stott, 'Only One Way', page 63.

<sup>98</sup> J. R. W. Stott, *op. cit.*, page 64.

<sup>99</sup> Acts 15. 11.

<sup>100</sup> The significance of being 'found'.

<sup>101</sup> 'It is necessary here to be quite clear as to the nature of those "works of the Law" which the apostle has now in his view. This is determined by the preceding context. The works of the Law now in question were those, the observance of which characterized a man's "living as do the Jews" and their non-observance a man's "living as do the Gentiles"', E. Huxtable, *ibid.*, page 85.

<sup>102</sup> The word does not mean 'a bondservant'.

"Minister of sin" is not "slave to sin"; that is, not "one who is in bondage to sin" (cf. John 8. 34) but "one who ministers to sin", one who furthers the interests of sin, promotes, encourages it', E. De Witt Burton, *ibid.*, page 126.

<sup>103</sup> The strict Jews were arguing that to claim that faith alone in Christ could save, the law must be set aside completely. To their mind this was impossible. God's law could never be abrogated. It would be sin to do so. Thus, Christ was a minister of sin, not the minister of the circumcision (Rom. 15. 8)! But the truth was that Christ had saved them from their sins, Gal. 1. 4—and not led them into sin.

<sup>104</sup> "'By no means", "let it not be". This phrase, used in the New Testament almost exclusively by Paul (elsewhere in Luke 20. 16 only), is uniformly employed by him to repel as abhorrent to him a suggested thought. He strongly repudiates the slander upon Christ', E. De Witt Burton, *ibid.*, page 126.

<sup>105</sup> Gal. 2. 17.

<sup>106</sup> Gal. 2. 18.

<sup>107</sup> Gal. 1. 23.

<sup>108</sup> 'By going back into legalism, you are building up what you tore down! This means that you sinned by tearing it down to begin with!'

<sup>109</sup> Gal. 2. 18. 'If I am right now, I was wrong then; and from the very nature of the case now in hand, wrong exceedingly; no less than an absolute transgressor', E. Huxtable, *ibid.*, page 87.

<sup>110</sup> Gal. 2. 19.

<sup>111</sup> In the usage of Paul, "to die to" a thing is to cease to have any relation to it, so that it has no further claim upon or control over one.

'He had not only repudiated the Law as a means of salvation, he has died to it, so that he cannot return to it!' J. Hunter, *ibid.*, page 37.

<sup>112</sup> Rom. 3. 20.

<sup>113</sup> Rom. 7. 5, 7-11; cf. Rom. 5. 20; 1 Cor. 15. 56.

<sup>114</sup> Rom. 4. 15; Gal. 3. 10.

<sup>115</sup> 'It provides no remedy for the sinner. On the contrary, it condemns him hopelessly, for no one can fulfil all the requirements of the law', J. B. Lightfoot, *ibid.*, page 245.

'It was the law itself—its very ineffectiveness and impotence—which led me to abandon it'.

<sup>116</sup> 'In abandoning the law, I did but follow the leading of the law itself', J. B. Lightfoot, *ibid.*, page 244.

<sup>117</sup> Rom. 7. 1-4.

<sup>118</sup> Rom. 7. 4. As such the law has no more claim upon him, and he has no responsibility to keep it. He is now in a new sphere, living a new life.

<sup>119</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 24.

<sup>120</sup> Col. 1. 22.

<sup>121</sup> The very same expression in Greek as in Matt 27. 44; Mark 15. 32; John 19. 32.

<sup>122</sup> 'A past act with present results', J. Hunter, *ibid.*, page 37.

<sup>123</sup> 'The perfect tense of the verb *συνεσταύρωμαι* points to a continued state of being, following upon that decisive crisis of his life. The apostle images himself as still hanging on the cross with Christ, while also sharing in his resurrection-life; his "old man" is on the cross, while his spirit partakes in and is renewed by Christ's life in God', E. Huxtable', *ibid.*, page 88.

<sup>124</sup> Having explained how he had 'died to the law', he explains how it is that he 'lives to God'.

"This ego is my old self—that which lived in legalism prior to my being crucified with Christ; it lives no longer. The principle of the old life in legalism has passed away, and a new life is implanted within me ... The utterance is not, as might be expected, "I live in Christ", but "Christ liveth in me", J. Eadie, *ibid.*, pages 187-188.

Contrast the following two statements of Paul: (i) 'It is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me' (Rom. 7. 17) and 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me' (Gal. 2. 20).

<sup>125</sup> 'No matter who else was loved, He loved me; no matter for whom other He gave Himself, He gave Himself for me', J. Eadie, *ibid.*, page 191.

<sup>126</sup> Matt. 26. 15.

<sup>127</sup> Matt. 27. 18.

<sup>128</sup> Matt. 27. 26.

<sup>129</sup> The same word (*παραδίδωμι*) in Gal. 2. 20 as in Matt. 26. 15; 27. 18, 26.

<sup>130</sup> Compare Phil. 2. 5-8.

<sup>131</sup> Rom. 3. 24 (literally).

<sup>132</sup> See also: (i) 'Why then do you sin against innocent blood, to slay David *without a cause*?' 1 Sam. 19. 5 (Greek Old Testament); (ii) '*Without a cause* they have reproached my soul', Psa. 35. 7 (Greek Old Testament); (iii) 'They hated me *without a cause*', John 15. 25.

'If there can be righteousness through the law, Christ's death was uncalled for', J. Eadie, *ibid.*, page 196.

'Not to trust in Jesus Christ, because of self-trust, is an insult both to the grace of God and to the cross of Christ, for it declares both to be unnecessary', J. R. W. Stott, *ibid.*, page 67.

<sup>133</sup> The apostle Paul was not making God's grace of none effect; the implication seems to be that, by contrast, the Judaizers were doing precisely that.

<sup>134</sup> As I indicate in the Introduction, no mention is made by the apostle of the reaction of Peter, Barnabas and/or the other Christian Jews present to what he said that day because he was far more concerned about the present effect of his words on the Christians at Galatia than he was about any past effect which they had on the Christians at Antioch.

Although, as far as Peter is concerned, I note, not only that the theme of Peter's first epistle (written some eight or ten years later and which is addressed to the Galatians among others, 1 Pet. 1. 1) is 'the true grace of God' (1 Pet. 5. 12, with the Greek word 'grace' {*χάρις*}) being used at least once in every chapter of that epistle), but also that, in his second epistle, Peter speaks most warmly of 'our beloved brother Paul', who, Peter said, had written 'according to the wisdom given him ... in all his letters'—'notwithstanding that one of those very writings contains the extremely plain-spoken account of that sad fall of his at Antioch', E. Huxtable, *ibid.*, page 91.

<sup>135</sup> Martin Luther, '*Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*', 1833 edition, pages 67 and 133.

Note the following anecdote about Charles Wesley:

'The matter came to head when Charles was staying with a friend, John Bray ... Bray shared with him Luther's commentary on Galatians, which clearly expounded the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith. Charles was astounded that this doctrine, which he could clearly see was in conformity both to the Scriptures and to the teaching of the English Reformers, had been unknown to him until then. He was especially moved by Luther's comments on Galatians 2. 20, in which he stressed the "for me" aspects of the gospel. "At midnight", Charles wrote on the 21st of May, 1738, "I gave myself to Christ; I now found myself at peace with God and rejoiced in hope of loving Christ...I saw that by faith I stood; by the continued support of faith, which kept me from falling"', William L. Kynes, '*Charles Wesley*', accessed at [https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm\\_send/632](https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/webfm_send/632).