



**Looking Inwards** (15 mins)  
*Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however: 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!')* for:

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?



**Looking Outwards** (15 mins)  
*Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

- Thanksgiving?
- Prayer?
- Encouragement?
- Support in any way?

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HG102: Pauls Letter To The Galatians  
**Faith Not Law**

Galatians 2:11-21

Home Group Study Notes

26 October 2014 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful.*



**Welcome** (10 mins)  
*Ice Breaker*

Do you ever avoid certain type of Christians, perhaps because of the way they worship, their theology their lifestyle, etc?



**Looking Upwards** (10 mins)  
*Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



## Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

**1:** Under testing even Peter denied what he believed. He chose to be a people pleaser. Have there been times when you have found it easier to please people rather than God?

**2:** Has anyone ever criticised you in public? How did you feel?

**3:** Do you think that we unwittingly sometimes force our customs (rituals) on others, e.g. by the way we pray, the way we dress in church etc. Do these things affect or concern you?

And it is Jesus who gives us our true identity and it is here that Paul gives us one of his most well known beliefs when he says in v 20, *“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.”* Something which is very hard for us to get our head around in the west especially, but for Paul the idea stems from the Jewish beliefs about their kings who they saw as representing the people and what was true of the king was true of the people. He didn't need to expand on this because it was something that was assumed. He is saying that whoever is in Christ, whoever accepts Christ as Lord are the true people of God, the same goes for Gentiles as well as Jew. No longer are they identified by their laws and rituals, if you are in Christ you have died to the law, the old has gone and a new beginning has come about, one lived in and through Christ.

### The Truth of the Gospel

In v 15 Paul says that we are not justified or made right with God by observing the law but by placing our faith in Christ, after all if the Jewish law could have reconciled us to God and made us righteous in his sight then why would Jesus have had to die, so he is saying, do away with those things that separate you, remove the barriers like circumcision and separate eating tables because these things belittle the sacrifice of the Lord and they spurn his generous act of love of dying for us. Peter's downfall was fear, fear of others and what they would think, perhaps fear of losing influence, but his fear was of man not of God. Thankfully our God is a God of new beginnings, Peter made a mistake, we all do, Paul and Peter fell out, we do that too, the good thing is that the truth of the gospel was preserved. Thankfully Peter and Paul made up (2 Peter 15-16) and neither could again accuse the other of not living the gospel they both believed in and preached.

### Conclusion

If Christ is our Lord then we have been crucified with him, our old selves have died and it is Christ who lives in and through us and the challenge to us is to live Christ-centred lives and not self-centred lives. Are we like Peter keen to keep the peace and desperate to keep face worrying what people will think or are we like Paul, defender of the Gospel in every situation and proud of it? Paul wants us to get things in the right order which is put your faith in Christ; be accepted by God; then do good works. False teachers will tell you to put your faith in Christ; then do good works; then be accepted by God. You may be the best at what you do, competent, capable, a brilliant communicator, provider for your family, you may volunteer for every good cause, be loved and respected by all..... but its Christ that saved you, its Christ that died for you and its Christ that made it possible for you to call His Father, your Father.

Emmanuel Text for 2014

*“As we know Jesus better,  
His divine power gives us everything  
we need for living a godly life.”*

2 Peter 1:3

Peter and those who followed him in withdrawing from the Gentiles were setting aside God's grace and the very nature of grace is to give us something they we have not worked for. Once the envoy returned to Jerusalem Peter may have gone back to eating with Gentiles but the damage would have been done, and any unity shattered. Peter was a hypocrite and his hypocrisy like an infection spread. Other Jews joined in with his hypocrisy, even Barnabus, and in the end if left unchecked what would happen?

The Jewish Christians would go back to their old ways because centuries of traditions and rituals are hard to give up and if your leaders are encouraging you to keep them up what happens, the old ways snuff out the new. The Gentiles say, we thought it was too good to be true, we've seen the ways the Jews labour under hundreds of laws, we've seen their finicky eating habits and as for circumcision, well that's a step too far for any Gentile. The new faith was in serious jeopardy.

This issue was so important that Paul could not deal with it privately, a quiet word in Peter's ear was not enough. Paul says in verse 14: *"But when I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel."* This is the crux of the issue and the one that Paul keeps coming back to which is, the truth of the gospel: that we can only be accepted by God on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done for us at the cross. His other issue for us is the challenge of living in accordance with that truth. Paul is pointing out here loud and clear that we can believe the gospel, yet live like we don't and he is asking the Galatians and us to look at how we live to see if we are walking in line with the truth of the gospel. In Peter's case, he wasn't and it was causing tremendous damage. Are there ways in which we live that could cause similar damage, are there things that we do that can become stumbling blocks to others, do we say one thing and do another, and who is watching us, who may we be affecting?

### Who Are We?

The programme "Who do you think you are?" on BBC1 is a programme that helps celebrities research their family tree and answer the question that many people want answered, which is, - where do we come from, what are our roots." We are all different things to different people. We may be mums, daughters, uncles, friends but who is the real me? Paul goes on to tell us who we really are, and he brings it down to this one thing. To the people in Galatia and to us he is saying who you are is not defined by where you were born, how you interpret the gospel, whether you adhere to the Jewish law, if you are supporter of Peter or of Paul or whether you are high church or subterranean. It has nothing to do with your denomination, your nationality or what team you follow . Who you are depends solely on who you are in Christ, - that's it. Once you accept Christ what went before is not important, we are not going to forget it but its not what matters. Paul fell out with Peter because Peter was colluding with those who would place conditions on Christian identity and he is now appealing to the Galatian church not to do the same. What a shame that the church has not listened to Paul down the centuries, a lot of misery and bloodshed may have been spared.

### In Christ Alone

Whether it was permissible for a Jewish Christian to eat with a Gentile Christian reflected a much deeper question and one which Paul was deeply passionate about addressing which was, who are the true people of God. Is it just the Jewish Christians after all they were God's chosen, if so it follows that the Gentile Christians are always going to be second class. Or is it more radical, is it anyone who belongs to Christ? The answer to this question should once and for all settle the matter about circumcision and table etiquette and rituals and laws and so on and so Paul narrows things down even further because as always with Paul, he focuses his attention on Christ, everything comes back to Jesus. Paul says here that God has no favourites, its not about Jew or Gentile, its all about Jesus. God has one Son, one beloved, one faithful, obedient Son, - Jesus the Messiah.

**4:** In v. 21, Paul says, *"if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"* As Christians today, we are not concerned with keeping the Jewish laws but looking at us what additional requirements might an outsider feel they must meet to gain God's approval?

**5:** How can God's acceptance of you help you to be more accepting of others?

**6:** What is the significance of being crucified with Christ? What does it mean to God and what does it mean to you? What impact should it have on your life?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## HG102: Paul's Letter To The Galatians *Faith Not Law*

Galatians 2:11-21

Home Group Sermon Notes

26 October 2014 - Pauline Woolnough

### Introduction

We know from Chapter 1 that Paul visited Jerusalem, Peter's home ground, and they agreed that they believed the same gospel. That it is that it is by grace that we are saved through the finished work of Christ on the cross, nothing else. There were opponents in the Galatian church who wanted to add things or change the gospel and Paul had addressed this problem but Peter and Paul were united and in agreement and they were preaching the same message. Paul's first loyalty was to Christ and his gospel, everything and everyone came after Christ. He had already reminded the Galatians of his background, telling them the ugly truth of who he was before he had met Christ in order to support his claims to authority and his message about the origins of the gospel. Paul may be a saint now but prior to his encounter with Jesus he certainly wasn't. Neither was Paul a hypocrite which is what he accused Peter of being to the Galatian church when Peter refused to sit and eat with Gentile Christians in Antioch 14 years after their first meeting.

### Peter's Hypocrisy

For Paul the gospel was more important than anything and anyone, even bigger and more important than the great Peter, disciple and friend of Jesus and Paul wasn't going to protect and preserve Peter's reputation if Peter was threatening to damage the gospel and hinder people coming to know Christ and be saved. So he accused Peter of being a hypocrite, but did he have to tell the Galatians this, couldn't he just have had a quiet word in Peter's ear? It may well be that those same opponents that wanted to change the gospel were using Peter to promote their case.

It is possible that the Galatians already knew of the argument between Peter and Paul, news travels fast and everyone loves a bit of gossip. Perhaps they used Peter to reinforce their view that in order to become a fully fledged Christian you first had to become a Jew. Peter unwittingly may have played right into their hands and lent weight to their arguments, after all if Peter, the great apostle, right hand man of Jesus refuses to eat with Gentiles then Paul must be keeping something back, he can't telling the whole story. So Paul has to set the record straight and tell his side of the story because it's not just some silly disagreement between 2 church leaders, it is a matter at the very heart of the gospel and a message that he continually hammers home, that is, that it is in Christ and Christ alone that we are made right with God.

### Peer Pressure

So what was Peter thinking, was he thinking, or had he simply foot his foot in things again? He knew and believed that the gospel was for everyone, Jew and Gentile, male and female, he knew and believed it, yet like us, Peter often lived and behaved as if he didn't whereas Paul also knew the gospel, he preached the gospel but he behaved and lived as if he believed in it. It was because of this when they met again this time on Paul's patch in Antioch, Paul and Peter had a great falling out v 11 "*When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him face to face because he stood condemned.*"

Antioch was about 300 miles away from Jerusalem and one of the great centres of Christianity, its the first place followers of Christ were called Christians and it was customary for Jewish and Gentile Christians to eat together and Peter had been happy to do so, but when a group of men arrived from James, Peter suddenly "*drew back and separated himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.*" v12. Peter had stopped eating with the Gentiles and reverted to the old Jewish customs. Paul was furious and unfortunately for Peter, Paul was not shy about opposing and publicly accusing him of hypocrisy. He went on to embarrass Peter further by telling the Galatians.

### Live Like You Believe

One message that Paul wants us to learn from this is that its not just important to know the gospel, we need to live as if we believe it, and if Peter found that hard at times its not surprising that we do too, its not always easy. For us its probably hard to see why having a meal with one group or another should cause such a problem, we'll go and sit down in a restaurant or cafe and it wont occur to us to wonder about someone else's ethnic background but of course there are places all over the world where people wont sit down with someone else of another religion and its not that long ago when black people couldn't get on the same bus as white people in America. Back in Paul and Peter's time table fellowship was extremely important, even today it is a powerful symbol of association and unity. It speaks of family identity, and of belonging. So does circumcision which although may be carried out on health reasons and is still undertaken in various parts of the world today, mainly, when we think of circumcision we think of the Jewish people, it is symbolic for the Jewish people, and a ritual that's been carried out for thousands of years. It sets the Jews apart and it was a huge issue in the church in Galatia at the time.

Peter had faced a problem and dealt with it rather badly. He had previously eaten with Gentiles which, because the dietary laws were incredibly strict, was a big deal for the Jewish Christians but Peter had disregarded the laws because he knew that the law no longer applied. However, when the important leaders came from Jerusalem Peter caved in to pressure and in doing so started to tinker with the gospel. Peter was hugely important, he was a key leader in the church and his actions would have had great influence on the new young Christians. Jesus had died to remove all barriers between Jew and Gentile now Peter's table manners were putting that unity in danger and the old barriers were being made ready to be re-erected.

### Christ is Sufficient

Maybe it was a case of Peter not liking confrontation, we all know what that's like, perhaps he was just too worried about what others would think especially the other apostles, but it wasn't just his conscience that he was going against, he was denying the revelation that God had given to him when he received 3 visions in which he was told that Gentiles were not unclean because they didn't hold to Jewish rituals. (Acts 10). Peter was rejecting what God had given him in favour of keeping peace with the Jewish Christians and encouraging the Jewish believers sense of superiority borne out of a deep seated racial prejudice that led them to believe that the Gentiles would remain sinners until they converted to Judaism. They believed that their laws and traditions were important and although they knew that Jesus was the Messiah, they also knew that there were still things that they had to do in order to please God. Not as much as the Gentile Christians had to do, because the Jews believed that the Gentiles still had to embrace Judaism.

Peter's actions are saying that Jesus is not enough to save us. His death is not enough and we have to do more, when in fact we know as Paul, and Peter both knew that Jesus *is* enough, he is more than enough, he is all sufficient, Alpha and Omega, the One and Only, the gospel is Jesus. Jesus *is* the Good News.