

Works and Faith

Does he love God?" Chantel asked.

"Yes," replied Shawna.

"But he's an Aries," Breona interrupted, rolling her eyes.

"You're kidding, right?" Chantel said.

"No," said Shawna, reaching for the last slice of bread.

"When are our entrees coming?"

"He seems like a really nice guy," Breona said. "He goes to Pastor Clark's church. He's cute, too."

"He is nice and funny," added Shawna. "We've been out together several times in groups. It's just that he's an Aries, and Aries are my kryptonite. I had two devastating relationships with Aries, and I will never do that again."

"I can understand your being drawn to whom you are attracted to and compatible with," said Chantel. "But we are women of faith. We don't live our lives based on superstition, like the horoscopes."

"The horoscope isn't superstition," protested Shawna.

"Then what is it?" asked Chantel.

"It is a meter that shows people's personality," she replied. "That's why the three of us get along so well. Our astrological signs are in sync."

"I didn't realize you put so much stock in astrology," said Chantel.

"I don't really," said Shawna.

"It sounds like you do," countered Chantel. "Astrology is not based on the Word of God. Honestly, Shawna, you should know better not to live your life by it."

1. What does it mean to place your faith, or trust, in something?

2. In what ways does some worldly pursuit dominate your life when your faith in it consumes your life?

3. What blessings do you receive when you truly place your faith in Jesus?

Opposition to Peter

Galatians 2:11-14, KJV

11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Galatians 2:11-14, NIV

¹¹When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹²For 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.

¹³The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴When 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?"

According to Galatians 1:18-19, three years after Paul's conversion, he visited the apostles Peter and James in Jerusalem. Then Paul returned to Jerusalem with Barnabas to meet with church leaders to clarify how Gentile Christians should relate to the Jewish law (2:1-10).

Sometime later, "Cephas" (vs. 11, NIV) or "Peter" (KJV) traveled to Syrian Antioch, presumably to contribute to the church work going on there. Initially, Peter participated fully with the Gentile Christians, since he had learned not to call anyone unclean (Acts 10:28). Yet, that changed

after some legalists from Jerusalem arrived (Gal. 2:12).

We don't know why James sent these men (the Judaizers or the "circumcision group," vs. 12) to Antioch, but the Judaizers caused Peter to begin drawing back from the Gentile Christians. Once Peter set the example, other Jewish believers in Antioch did the same.

To prevent further damage to the Body of Christ, Paul took action. Since Peter had started the defection by his actions, Paul decided to openly rebuke him. The first part of Paul's strategy was to point out to Peter the inconsistency of his behavior. Paul noted that before the Judaizers arrived, Peter, a Jew, had lived like a Gentile. So why was he now demanding that Gentiles live like Jews? To say one thing and do another was the essence of hypocrisy.

4. *For what reason did Paul openly oppose Peter?*

5. *What negative impact did Peter's behavior have on his saved peers?*

6. *How did Paul confront Peter?*

Justification by Faith

Galatians 2:15-21, KJV

15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,

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

17 But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of

Galatians 2:15-21, NIV

¹⁵“We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles ¹⁶know 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.

¹⁷“But if, in seeking to be justified in Christ, we Jews find ourselves also among

sin? God forbid.

18 For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

19 For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

the sinners, doesn't that mean that Christ promotes sin?

Absolutely not! ¹⁸If I rebuild what I destroyed, then I really would be a lawbreaker.

¹⁹"For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰I 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.

²¹I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

Peter was not alone in his pretense. The other Jewish believers at Antioch, except Paul, also were wrong in this matter. So, Paul broadened his speech to address all "Jews by birth" in contrast to "sinful Gentiles" (vs. 15), which is how Jews in that day commonly referred to non-Jews.

Religious legalists believed they could make themselves acceptable to God by obeying the law. Yet, no one can perfectly obey the law, so no one can be made right with God by rule-keeping (Jas. 2:10). The Jewish believers had learned that sinners can only be justified through faith in the Messiah (Gal. 2:16). It was not just Gentiles who needed the Savior. Jews needed Him, too.

Paul's teaching that we are justified by faith led critics to charge that he was encouraging Jews to become sinners. When Paul encouraged Jewish believers to have fellowship with Gentile believers, he was allegedly going against Jewish laws. At first glance one might conclude that his teaching did lead people to sin (vs. 17). The critics also claimed that Paul's teaching not only degraded the value of the law, but also disgraced the Messiah. "Absolutely

not!" was Paul's response. Jesus did not further any Jewish believer's sinning simply because the new convert abandoned law-keeping as the way to salvation.

For Christians to revert to the Jewish law is really to break the law (vs. 18). Paul argued that the lawbreaker was not the one who looked to the Messiah in faith for pardon from sin. Instead, the lawbreaker was the one who looked to the law to be declared righteous.

Through the law, Paul realized how spiritually lifeless he was and how much he needed the Redeemer. The apostle stated that, since his conversion, he stopped living for the law, for the law put him to death (vs. 19). When Paul trusted in Christ, he was united with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). As far as the law was concerned, Paul had died. Yet, from God's perspective, Paul was alive to serve the Creator (Gal. 2:19).

All believers have been nailed to the Cross with the Son, have died there with Him, and united with Him in His resurrection. Now that we have been saved, Jesus lives within us and we look to Him for direction in life (vs. 20).

Paul insisted that a person who trusted in the Messiah was changed. Going back to the former way of life was absurd. Although the possibility of sinning remains, Jesus gives believers the power to resist temptation, something the law could never do.

The legalists claimed that Paul nullified God's grace in giving Israel the law when he taught that Gentiles did not have to obey the law. Paul countered that he did not reject God's grace. Instead, he established His grace by teaching that justification and right behavior are possible through faith. Otherwise, Jesus' sacrificial death was pointless.

7. What is the basis of a person's justification?

8. How did Paul respond to the allegation that Jesus promoted sin?

9. What did Paul mean by the statement of being "crucified with Christ" (vs. 20)?

Mark of a Christian

“Jesus is not one of many ways to approach God, nor is He the best of several ways,” declared A. W. Tozer, “He is the only way.” Indeed, Jesus Himself proclaimed, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

In a world in which all ideas are becoming increasingly relative, the reality that only in Jesus can a person be redeemed is an absolute truth that a believer can in no way compromise. In fact, we cannot minimize nor alter our faith in our crucifixion with Christ if we are to fully experience Christ living in us.

The mark of a Christian is Jesus empowering His followers to live humbly and righteously before God and the world. Without His power, we are nothing. All that is apart from Jesus Christ is mortal and invariably meaningless; all that is from Christ is eternal and priceless.

“Crucified with Christ” is not merely a doctrinal statement; such a reality has a powerful and practical application to our lives. Being crucified with Christ and having Christ in us affects how we think, feel, and deal with others. When we are justified through Christ’s sacrifice, it motivates us to live righteously before our Father so that we behave justly in all that we do.

Paul’s admonition to Philippians is a reminder of Christ’s mark on our lives as it guides us in how we live: “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:9-11).

10. *How do you sense Jesus living in you?*

11. *What does it mean to be “crucified with Christ”?*

12. *In what ways do you show that you are “crucified” in Him?*

Live Out Your Faith

Paul scolded both the Galatians and Peter for allowing the Jewish laws to dictate their behavior at the expense of the teachings of Christ. His criticism is a strong reminder to each follower of Christ that our Christian faith must not be on what we seemingly do for God but on what God has done for us through the atoning work of His Son, Christ Jesus.

► *First, reflect on your past week. Did you live out your trust in God? List here briefly about times you did and did not live by faith in Christ. List also ways your faith in Christ crucified will affect what you say and do this coming week.*

KEY VERSE

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

—Galatians 2:20b, KJV

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.

—Galatians 2:20b, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of October 16 through October 22

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals on these passages.*)

- Mon.** Hebrews 2:1-9—So Great a Salvation.
- Tue.** Hebrews 2:10-18—Christ Destroys the Power of Death.
- Wed.** Psalm 1:1-6—Delight in the Law of the Lord.
- Thu.** Ephesians 1:3-14—Blessed with Every Spiritual Blessing.
- Fri.** Ephesians 1:15-23—The Hope to Which We're Called.
- Sat.** Galatians 3:1-5—Receiving the Spirit.
- Sun.** Galatians 3:6-18—Redeemed from the Law's Curse.