One of the commonest causes of failure in Christian life is found in the attempt to follow some good man whom we greatly admire. No man and no woman, no matter how good, can be safely followed. If we follow any man or woman, we are bound to go astray. There has been but one absolutely perfect Man on this earth-the Man Christ Jesus. If we try to follow any other man, we are surer to imitate his faults than his excellencies. Look to Jesus and Jesus only as your Guide.

R.A. Torrey

GALATIANS CHAPTER TWO

Prayer Study #458

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Galatians 2 New King James Version (NKJV)

Defending the Gospel

2 *Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.* ***2*** *And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.* ***3*** *Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.* ***4*** *And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),* ***5*** *to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

6 *But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me.* ***7*** *But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter* ***8*** *(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),* ***9*** *and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.* ***10*** *They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.*

Fourteen years after his conversion, Paul returns to Jerusalem a second time. This was probably the time of the council in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15, when Paul and Barnabas and others went to Jerusalem to deal with the question of circumcision.

Circumcision of the Jewish male was required as a visible, physical sign of the covenant between the Lord and His people. In Old Testament times any Jewish male not circumcised was “cut off from his people” (Genesis 17:14) and regarded as a covenant breaker (Exodus 12:48). Other cultures had the rite of circumcision, including the

American Indians, but for them this rite was a rite of passage or coming of age or initiation into manhood and was performed when a boy was about twelve. The Jews, however, performed the rite on the eighth day of a boy baby's life.

According to *The Open Bible,* the only time when the Jewish nation did not practice circumcision was when they were wandering in the Wilderness, perhaps as a sign that the nation had broken their covenant with God by their disobedience. Even then, however, Moses challenged the Israelites to *circumcise their hearts*, a reference to repentance. *"If their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guild," God declared, "then I will remember My covenant (Leviticus 26:41-42; Deuteronomy 10:16).* Also, Jeremiah characterized the rebellious nation in his day as having *"uncircumcised ears"* (Jeremiah 6:10) and being *"uncircumcised in the heart"* (Jeremiah 9:26).

The council, which Paul and Barnabas and Titus came to in Jerusalem, is addressing a situation that happened in Antioch, where the disciples were first called *Christians*. The Judaizers at Antioch insisted that a male person had to be circumcised, according to the Mosiac law, or they could not and would not be saved. Some have suggested that 2/3rds of the New Testament revolve around the issue, "*What must I do to be saved*?", which centered on circumcision.

Besides the Judaizers at Antioch, there were also Judaizers in Jerusalem, who confronted Paul and insisted that Titus, who was a Greek and therefore uncircumcised, should be circumcised. Titus was a young, Gentile convert, probably led to Christ by Paul, and a preacher. Jim Staley suggest that these Jews were saying these things because they wanted to claim Titus as one of their converts, not Paul's. Both Paul and Titus stood their ground, even after some pressure from others for Titus to go on and be circumcised to keep the peace between the brethren. In the end, even Peter (also called *Cephas*, which is the Aramaic surname of Peter, who officially was named Simon Barjona or Simon, son of Jonah) argued that the Gentiles should not have to go through circumcision to be saved.

The council agreed in the end that James and John and Peter were called to the *circumcised,* or Jews, and that Paul was called to the Gentiles and that the Gentiles did not need to be circumcised. The only requirement the pillars of the Church, (i.e. the leaders: James, Peter and John), gave was to remember the poor. Paul did come back later to Jerusalem with an offering for the Church there because they had been so bitterly persecuted and were in bad condition. Paul brought it by his own hand, even though it brought great danger to him to return to Jerusalem, because before he was converted, he led the persecution of the Church, and he wanted them to know he was truly converted, and because he was fulfilling this requirement given by the leaders at the Jerusalem Council.

From this passage, we see that Paul went to Jerusalem by *revelation*, or as we would say, *being led by the Spirit.* He shows a willingness to submit to the authority of

the leaders, approaches them respectfully and courteously, and wants to make sure that he is preaching proper doctrine. But he also shows that he is determined to follow God and not men, no matter how important these leaders may seem to the world. He will not be intimidated from doing what he knows the Lord has called him to do.

No Return to the Law

11 *Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;* ***12*** *for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.* ***13*** *And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.*

14 *But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?* ***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 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.*

17 *"But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!* ***18*** *For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.* ***19*** *For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.* ***20*** *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* ***21*** *I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."*

The Church at Antioch was comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. The early Christian tradition was to have a love feast or meal before the Lord's Supper, called the *Agape feast*. They pooled all their food resources and had a fellowship meal. For the slaves who were present, this meal was probably the only decent meal they got during the week, and since in Christ, there is no distinction between free or slave, they were treated equally with the richest person there.

A problem arose because the Jewish Christians still would not eat anything that was not kosher (ex. clam chowder, cheeseburgers, catfish, shrimp, lobster, ham, bacon, etc), and they especially despised pork and other animals considered unclean and any meat that had been first offered to idols. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were accustomed to eating all of these scripturally *unclean* animals and also meat that had been offered to idols.

Their solution was to have two tables: one with only kosher food for the Jews and another with any kind of food for the Gentiles. Paul ate at the Gentile table because he

wanted all to know that, for him, whether you eat meat or don't makes no difference. It is not a true requirement from Jesus, and it won't make you more pleasing to God, if you abstain from certain foods.

Peter, (perhaps remembering the words of the Lord spoken to him when he was on the roof at Joppa before being sent to the house of Cornelius, the Gentile [Acts 10:13-15], that what He had cleansed was not unclean), initially ate at the Gentile table with Paul. But when the Jewish leaders who were sent from James, the head of the Jerusalem Church, came, Peter and even Barnabas ate only at the Jewish table. In other words, Peter was being hypocritical, and Paul called him out on it. The problem was not whether Gentile Christians must keep the Jewish law-that had already been decided-, it was whether the Jewish Christians had to keep the law as well as have faith in Christ. This whole situation was blatant racism. These Christian Jews had come out of an oral law and tradition, which said that Jews were better than Gentiles and were not allowed to fellowship with Gentiles. The Jews could not even walk across the threshold of a Gentile house without being considered unclean.

Paul's argument was that no amount of observance of the law can save a person. Peter, by his actions, was saying that forgetting about all the Jewish rules and regulations made one a sinner. Yet Christ did not tell you to earn your salvation by what you eat, but only by the grace of God.

We see the word *justified* repeatedly in this passage. *Justification* is a powerful word. Basically, and simply, *to be justified* means *to be made just as if I had never sinned.* Through the blood of Jesus, we are justified, made righteous, just as if we had never sinned. Romans 5:9 says, "*Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we should be saved from wrath through him."*

Verse 20 is a verse that is true of every single believer. However, we are not to seek to be crucified with Christ. We have *already* been crucified with Him. He hung on the Cross to pay the penalty for our sins and to be a substitute on the Cross for all who believe. We live in Christ because Christ lives in us. We live by faith. J. Vernon McGee says, "Christ loved me, but He could not *love* me into heaven. He had to give Himself for me. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ." We are to carry out cross daily, but Jesus was crucified in our place.

McGee comments on this last verse: "The main thought in this verse is simply that if there had been any other way to save sinners, then God would have used that method. If a law or a religion could have been given that would save sinners, God would have given it. The only way that an infinite God could save you and me was to send His Son to die. He was willing to make the supreme sacrifice."

When I was a pastor in Los Angeles, a young man came to me after a service and asked, "Dr. McGee, are you living the crucified life?" I think I rather startled the boy when I replied, "No, I am not." Then I asked him, "Are you?" He hesitated for a moment and then said, "Well, I am trying to." Then I told him, "That is not the question you

asked me. You wanted to know if I am living the crucified life. I told you no. Now you tell me yes or no about your life. Are you living the crucified life?" Once again he replied, "I am trying to." I said to him, "You are either living it or you are not living it. The fact of the matter is you cannot live it. "Oh," he said, why can't I?" So I pointed out to him that there is something interesting to note about crucifixion. You can commit suicide in many different ways. You can hang yourself, shoot yourself, take poison, jump off a high building, or jump in front of a truck. There are many ways to end your life, but you cannot crucify yourself. When you nail one hand to the cross, who is going to nail your other hand to the cross? You cannot do it yourself. You must understand what Paul is talking about when he says, 'I am crucified with Christ.' Paul was crucified with Christ when Christ died. Christ died a substitutionary death. He died for Paul. He died for you. He died for me. Paul is saying, 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I life.' You see, the Law executes us. The Law cannot give us life. Who gave us life? 'I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.' How do you life? 'Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' My friend, that is the important thing. He died for me down here that I might live with Him up yonder and that He might live in me down here. 'And the life,' Paul says, 'which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God.' What kind of life is this? It is a life of faith-saved by faith, live by faith, walk by faith. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit."

J. Vernon McGee

There are two great temptations in the Christian life: and, in a certain sense, the better people are, the more susceptible they are to them. First, there is the temptation to try to earn God's favor, and second, the temptation to use some little achievement to compare oneself with others to our advantage and their disadvantage. But the Christianity which has enough of self left in it to thank that by its own efforts it can please God and that by its own achievements it can show itself superior to others is not true Christianity at all.

William Barclay