



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 10:1-11:17

11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. 12 For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. 13 Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. 14 But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?"

- **"For his defense of the all sufficiency of grace through trust in Christ, Paul turns to an account of his confrontation of Peter at Antioch, which goes to the heart of his dispute with the (rival teachers). For a time...Peter had admitted that trust in Christ was the sole important point in Christianity. Peter did so by his actions, that is, by eating with Gentiles. But then some people came `from James` (the one now leading the church in Jerusalem). Paul also identifies them as the `circumcision party`, so they evidently said that Gentiles needed to become Jews to obtain God's blessing. Peter then withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles. **By leaving the table, Peter demonstrated the very problem Paul would come to face in Galatia: the belief that one needed to be a Jew (and to prove so by obedience to the whole law) to obtain God's blessing given in Christ.**"** [Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature & Theology*, pp. 361-2]
- **"Paul is...pointing to the crux of what Christians really are: those who have realized that *their only hope for a right relationship with God lies in abandoning trust in their Jewish heritage and seeking that relationship with God through Christ.* When Jewish Christians did that, they had, in fact, abandoned the heritage that had marked them as Jews. So Paul is referring here (2:14) to Peter's original decision to follow Christ and his recognition that the law could not put him in a right relationship with God."** [Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature & Theology*, p. 363]

1. The Restricted Diet & Separation from Gentiles for Jews (Lev. 20:24b-26)
2. A Vision That Changed Everything for Jews & Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18)
 - a. Prepared by God in a vision (Acts 10:9-13, 15-16)
 - *“Before the church was to fulfill [its role of sharing the blessings of God with Gentiles], she had to **shed some of the exclusivism** connected with Judaism... **God shows the church that the Jewish idea that anyone not conforming to their national standards of purity could not be saved is no longer valid.** These purity laws may have been needed at one stage of the history of God’s people. But it was now no longer necessary for Gentiles to conform to these regulations.” [Ajith Fernando, Acts, NIV Application Commentary, p. 323]*
 - *“**The coming of the New Covenant age of salvation** means both the **full inclusion of the Gentiles** in the people of God **and the fulfillment of Old Testament laws of ritual purity** (Mk. 7:19; Col. 2:16-17). The vision here previews both these things and opens the way for table Fellowship between Jews and Gentiles.” [NIV note on Acts 10:15]*
 - *“More than just abolishing the Old Testament dietary restrictions, **God made unity possible in the Church** of both Jews, symbolized by the clean animals, and Gentiles, symbolized by the unclean animals, through the comprehensive sacrificial death of Christ.” [MacArthur Study Bible note on Acts 10:15]*
 - b. Struggling with the vision (Acts 10:14)
 - *“The command from Jesus to kill and eat made no sense to Peter, since it would have violated Jewish food laws...God was overturning the old clean/unclean distinctions and dietary laws...**Nothing like this was to get in the way of fellowship with Gentiles...**” [ESV, Acts 10:13 note]*
 - *“...[F]or the Jews the dietary laws are not a matter of etiquette or peculiar culinary habits. They are a **matter of survival and identity.**” [Ajith Fernando, Acts, NIV Application Commentary, 320]*
 - *“Scholars disagree on whether food laws were indeed abrogated by this vision [in Acts 10]. Some think, however, that the vision dealt primarily with food laws rather than with the interaction with Gentiles. Polhill points out that **‘this is to overlook the fact that the two are inextricably related. In 20:24b-26 the laws of clean and unclean are linked precisely to Israel’s separation from the rest of the Nations.’**” [Ajith Fernando, Acts, NIV Application Commentary, p. 320]*
 - *“The food laws underscore Israel’s separation from the nations. **By making unclean food clean, God is showing how table fellowship and acceptance of Gentiles are more easily accomplished in the new era.** The vision symbolizes that what separated Jews from Gentiles is now removed...” [Darrell Bock, Acts, Baker Exegetical Commentary of the NT, p. 390]*
 - c. Visiting Cornelius, a Gentile (Acts 10:23b-48)
 - a. He reminds them of the Jewish/Gentile separation law (10:28a)
 - b. He explains how God made him clearer through the earlier vision (10:28b)
 - *“**A big shift has taken place in Peter’s thinking, for he now realizes that no longer are the typical Jewish distinctions among people significant.** They have been **rendered void once and for all.**” [Ajith Fernando, Acts, NIV Application Commentary, p. 322]*
 - c. He calls Jesus Christ “Lord of all” (v. 36)
 - No longer exclusively a Jewish thing that God is doing, it’s for all people (vv. 34-36)
 - Emphasizing Jesus death & resurrection (vv. 39-40) – the essence of the Gospel
 - Everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins (v. 43)
 - d. The Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles as he was on the Jews (10:44-48; 2:1-4)
 - d. Testifying in Jerusalem how God reached the Gentiles (11:1-18)
3. Peter’s Separation from the Gentile Believers (Gal. 2:11a, 12)
 - a. Regularly eating with Gentile believers (v. 12a)
 - *“**Eating together established a covenant of friendship** and could affect reconciliation between estranged parties. Those who entered this relationship thereby committed to permanent friendship; people were obligated to cherish hospitality ties. So securely did hospitality establish covenant ties that two legendary warriors refused to fight each other because one’s ancestors had entertained the others as guests. To harm someone with whom one had eaten was deemed a heinous act of treachery. **Those***

who eat together at a table should not even betray a friendship by slandering one another.”

[Craig Keener, *Galatians*, p. 157]

- “For a time...Peter had admitted that **trust in Christ was the sole important point in Christianity**. Peter did so by his actions, that is, **by eating with Gentiles**. [Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature & Theology*, p. 361]

b. But then separating from them when “certain men came from James” (v. 12b)

- “If there is [in Gal. 2:12-13] any allusion to the Cornelius tradition (Acts 10-11), then Peter **was going back on the revelation given to him** regarding the acceptability of Gentiles to God (Acts 10:28) which could help explain the charge of hypocrisy (Gal. 2:13).” [James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, p. 472]
- “...[F]rom the perspective of Gentile believers in Antioch, **Peter’s action was serious**: to refuse to continue to share meals together when invited was akin to a **declaration of enmity, breaking the bonds of friendship**.” [Craig Keener, *Galatians*, p. 158]
- “...Paul felt that any degree of **ethnic separation or segregation** challenged the very heart of the Gospel.” [Craig Keener, *IVP NT Background Commentary*, p. 528]

c. Division in the church

- “...[W]ithdrawing from table fellowship with culturally different Christians made them **second-class citizens, violated the unity of the church and hence insulted the cross of Christ**.” [Craig Keener, *IVP NT Background Commentary*, p. 528]
- “A result of Peter’s abandoning table fellowship with non-Jewish Christians...would lead to a **split within the Christian community** between Jews and Gentiles...” [Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green, Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature & Theology*, p. 363]

4. Paul Fights for the Truth of the Gospel (Gal. 2:11, 14)

- a. Christ’s death & resurrection abolished distinctions and created one new humanity (Eph. 2:15)
- b. Now Jew & Gentile alike were welcome in God’s family (Eph. 2:19)

5. Peter’s Recovery (Acts 15:7b-11)

6. Application

- a. Are we making distinctions between people?
- b. God is able to restore us even when we make critical errors