

(2) I went up because of the revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the Gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in --- who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery --- to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you.

(6) And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) --- those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the Gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the Gospel to the circumcised (for He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

(11) But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the Circumcision Party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the Gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

(15) We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

(17) But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law, I died to the law, so that I might live to God.

(20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who 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 were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Think on these things:

- 1) When Paul made his first trip to Jerusalem after being saved, why did he seek a meeting with the Christian Church leaders (Peter, John and James [Jesus' brother, not the disciple])?

He shared with them the Gospel as he believed Jesus had revealed to him on the Damascus Road so that he would not preach or teach inaccurately. He sought their confirmation and approval to become the apostle to the Gentiles. (NOTE: James, the first named of Jesus' brothers [and sisters], became the leader of the church at Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection. It was neither James the son of Zebedee nor James the son of Alphaeus, His disciples.)

- 2) Who showed up at this meeting to challenge Paul? What was their agenda (vs. 3, 12)? Who "won" the challenge (v. 5)?

False brothers, i.e. Jewish Christians, who believed that Gentiles must become Jews first, by circumcision, before they can go on to become Christians. Paul referred to these folks as the Circumcision Party within the church, and he defiantly refuted them! Jerusalem agreed with Paul – Gentiles don't first have to become Jews by circumcision to become Christians.

- 3) What essential truth about God is declared in v. 6?

God shows no partiality!

- 4) What decision was handed down to Paul at this meeting (vs. 7-10)?

Paul and Barnabas were approved to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, while Peter, John and James focused on reaching the Jews.

- 5) What was the gist of the conflict between Peter and Paul (and Barnabas) in vs. 11-14? Can you think of any modern-day conflicts between The Salvation Army and other Christian churches?

Peter freely fellowshiped and ate with Gentiles until --- the Circumcision Party of Jewish converts showed up. Fearing their disapproval and censorship, Peter pulled away from doing these things with Gentiles.

Modern day struggles among churches (and individual Christians) could relate to which and how sacraments should be observed. Reconciling our faith positions with public issues and politics that we vote on. For Salvationists, the debate between Arminianism and Calvinism.

- 6) What focal truth about salvation is declared in v. 16? How do you stand "justified" before God?

No one will be justified before God by trying to obey all the Jewish Laws in the Old Testament (and the Talmud) because --- nobody can do it! "Justification before God" will only be granted to people who put their saving faith in Jesus.

- 7) What do we need to do with our pasts (vs. 18-20a; Philippians 3:13)?

We need to put the past → in the past! After seeking God's forgiveness, we need to forget about it and move on as a "new creation" in Christ Jesus. We must be crucified with Christ, dead to the Law, so that we might live to God!

- 8) How are we to live today while in the flesh (v. 20b)? **Live by faith.**

- 9) Can you be saved by obeying God's laws in the Bible (vs. 16, 21; Ephesians 2:8-9)? **No.**

People and situations I want to pray for this week: