



# Faith and Law

Galatians 2:11-21

Tuesday, June 16th, 2020

The Christian Church did not emerge, uninfluenced from the outside, in a vacuum. There were various groups and philosophies that observed this new Christian faith and took ideas from it or even added their own ideas or beliefs. One of these groups were advocates of circumcision who urged the Christians of the nations to also adopt the customs and laws of Judaism. When Peter is eating together with the non-Jewish Christians, suddenly the advocates of circumcision joined them which leads him quickly to separate himself from the community. They would probably criticize the fact that the community does not comply with the food regulations and that he, as a Jew, participates. Actually, he had heard from Jesus himself that not the things we eat are contaminating us, but the things that come from ourselves. (Mark 7:15) But at that moment his fear of their judgment becomes greater than his faith in Christ. I believe that in verse 13 we read why Paul did react so directly and strictly to Peter's behavior.

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

Paul sees that Peter, Barnabas and other Jewish Christians live without a doubt a hypocritical faith. And it's not just about the hypocrisy itself. It is bad enough that they renounce communion with other Christians just to appear righteous before the advocates of circumcision. But Paul knows that the problem is even deeper. Through his action Peter points away from the gospel which only sets us free through faith in Jesus Christ. He advertises, so to speak, for a religion in which the law can help to stand in righteousness before God. However Paul makes it quite clear in verse 21:

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

Paul says that the reason why Jesus had to die in the first place was that the law could not justify us. The news that Peter brought with his action was that the death of Jesus was in vain. That's why Paul had to rebuke him so clearly here. For Jesus' death was not in vain! On the contrary. His death and resurrection are the infinitely good news that really set humans free. It is the most precious news we can proclaim. Therefore let us be careful not to turn away from the Gospel with our words and actions. Instead let us lead ourselves, each other and the people of Freiburg to the great grace and love that God has given us through Jesus.

**Prayer:** LORD, keep us from pointing away from your gospel. Jesus, let us not be hypocritical but instead let us live joyfully in the righteousness that you have bought us through your blood. Make our hearts aware of how precious the good news are and give us opportunities to proclaim it to the people around us. Thank you for your word and your grace! Amen.

**-Finn Langenbach-**

