

A Historic Gospel Rebuke

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[0:00] If you would open up your Bibles to Galatians chapter 2, we're going to be looking at verses 11 through 14 this morning, which is essentially a historic gospel rebuke.

One apostle rebuking another apostle. And it's for us in Scripture. You know, anniversaries are special occasions.

It gives us time to pause and reflect and celebrate. I mean, your birthday is kind of an anniversary. Every year it rolls around. And we're told in Psalm 90 to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

And so your birthday rolls around and gives you an opportunity to ask the question, am I living my life for what matters most? The days I have left, how am I going to live them?

Well, it kind of applies to kind of a wedding anniversary as well. You know, your wedding anniversary rolls around. And you've got to ask the question, am I being faithful to my vows that I made before God to this person?

[1:03] And are we living out our marriage for the glory of God? Is our marriage a blessing to those around us? So it gives you time to pause and reflect. For a church anniversary, it gives us a moment to pause and reflect.

Are we living for what matters most? Are we, as a church, walking together according to the truth of the gospel?

So the question I want to ask this morning is, how are we doing? How are we doing as a church in living for Jesus?

Now, Galatians 2 is going to help us with this. And just, if you're new with us this morning, just to give you a little background on the book of Galatians generally, the apostle Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles.

And so he showed up in southern Galatia and started sharing the gospel in cities like Iconium and Lystra and Derbe. And there was this response to the gospel of these Gentiles, these non-Jews.

[2:15] And he planted churches in these churches in southern Galatia. And so he established them on the truth that the gospel, Christ died for these Gentiles.

And the way you respond is by faith alone and God's grace alone and what Christ did on the cross alone. And so after he leaves to go plant other churches, what followed was a bunch of false teachers.

And these false teachers started teaching these newly converted Gentiles that in addition to believing in Jesus, they also had to be circumcised and they also had to eat kosher foods, no pork for you.

They also had to start observing Jewish holy days. And so in addition to their belief in Jesus, they had to obey these particular commands from the Old Testament. And when they would do both, then they would be declared righteous in God's sight.

They'd be accepted by God. And so they were teaching a salvation by faith plus works equals you're okay with God.

[3:25] Paul gets wind of this and he writes the letter to the Galatians. It's what we have in our Bibles. And he corrects these young Christians on what the gospel is and how to live according to the gospel, to be living by faith in Jesus, not by the law.

And so what we're looking at this morning is essentially a rebuke. The Apostle Paul rebukes the Apostle Peter for straying from the gospel. And so for us this morning, I can sum up verses 11 through 14 in this sentence.

We as a church, on this anniversary Sunday, moving forward, we must keep in step with the truth of the gospel.

Our freedom depends on it. We must keep in step with the truth of the gospel. We must not drift from the gospel.

We must be shaped by the gospel. And so the way that we're going to walk through these verses is very straightforward. I want you to see some things.

[4:42] I want you to notice the calendar. When this happened. And then I want you to understand where on the map this is taking place. And then we got to get down to the kind of what's the hubbub here?

What's the big deal? The big deal is something that happens basically in a cafeteria in Antioch back in the mid to late 40s A.D.

Something happened there. And it matters for us now. And then I want to help you see why this matters.

It's about the gospel. And so after I walk you through this passage, I want to help you apply this passage in four ways.

Four lessons. So let's now get into this passage. Galatians chapter 2 verses 11 through 14. Paula, thank you so much for reading this.

[5:40] So let's walk through this. Remember, this is about staying true to the gospel as a church. We must not drift from the gospel.

We must stay true. Keep in step with the truth of the gospel. So notice when this takes place. In verse 11, we read the two words, But when?

When? When does this take place? Well, this is taking place after the historic handshake between Paul, Peter, James, and John, which we just learned about last week in Galatians 2, 1 through 10. And so there's this snapshot in verse 9. Peter, or Paul, has laid out the gospel that he preaches, that this gospel that Jesus gave himself up for our sins, when received by faith, God declares that sinner righteous in his sight forever.

It's based nothing on what this sinner does. It's only based upon their faith in what Christ has done. And when Paul explains this, Peter, James, and John eventually extend him the right hand of unity, fellowship.

[7:05] They're saying, we're on board with that. Yes and amen. Amen. And so what happens is, this took place in Jerusalem, that handshake, and just days, weeks, months later, there's this situation that arises in Antioch that's really confusing.

So for you to understand, first of all, Peter has already agreed to what the gospel is. He himself has been saved by it. Now I want you to notice where this takes place.

A few days, weeks, maybe even a month or two after this historic handshake over the gospel that took place in Jerusalem, we read in verse 11, but when Cephas, that's another name for Peter, so when Peter came to Antioch, this isn't happening in Jerusalem.

This whole hub-hub happens in Antioch. Now Antioch was about 150 miles north of Jerusalem, and where Jerusalem was this highly Jewish area, Antioch was a highly Gentile area.

In fact, one writer believes that Antioch at this time had a population of about 250,000 people. It's two and a half times the size of our city.

[8:33] And estimates say that a tenth of them, 25,000, were Jews. And so Antioch was primarily a Gentile city. And so Peter, the apostle to the Jews, soon after the handshake of unity on the gospel, finds himself down in Gentile land in Antioch.

And notice what they're doing. Verse 12. He was eating with the Gentiles. We'll come back to that. Here's what you need to know about Peter. In Acts chapter 10, there's this guy.

His name is Cornelius. He was a Gentile. He was a centurion. A position of great influence.

And God speaks to him. And says, He says, Cornelius, you got to send some guys to Joppa to get this dude named Peter. And so Cornelius, the Gentile, in Caesarea, sends his dudes to get Peter, who's in Joppa.

And as they're on their way, Peter has this vision in Joppa of descending from heaven was this huge sheet filled with unclean animals.

[9:54] And this voice from heaven said, Rise, Peter. Eat it up. And Peter's like, No, it's unclean. I can't. I'm going to break your law. But God says, Eat. Three times God says eat.

So Peter comes out of the trance and knocking on his door are these guys sent from Cornelius saying, Come with us to Caesarea to talk to Cornelius about the gospel.

So Peter's been given this vision that all foods have been made clean. He goes to Caesarea. He walks into Cornelius' door and he says this, First thing he says, You yourselves know how unlawful it is for me to associate with or visit anyone of another nation.

This is a Jew speaking to a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call any persons common or unclean. Peter walks into Cornelius' house.

He preaches the gospel to them. They respond in faith. The Holy Spirit is poured out on them. And it is clear. God is saving Gentiles through the gospel.

[11:08] Peter's already experienced this. That happened before Paul's visit 14 years after his conversion to Jerusalem in the right hand of fellowship. So this Peter, who had this vision, who saw Gentiles come to faith in Jesus, he makes his way from Jerusalem to Antioch.

And now we get to the whole hubbub. I don't know if it was in a cafeteria or not, but it had to be somewhere where a lot of people were eating together.

Because Peter comes down, and we read in verse 12, for certain men came from James, Peter was eating with the Gentiles.

Now if you're not familiar with Jewish eating, dietary regulations, they were very strict. There's certain only things that Jews could eat and they could not eat.

It was eating kosher. And so when we read here that Peter was eating with the Gentiles, there's two things going on.

[12:19] Not only is he with the Gentiles, but he's eating off of the Gentile menu. He's not ordering from the kosher menu.

What you need to know about these dietary restrictions was that they're kind of like circumcision. It was a way for Jews to identify themselves as being God's people.

It marked them as being belonged to God. And so one of the Old Testament dietary laws meant that Jews could not eat pork.

So Jews couldn't eat bacon, they couldn't have a ham sandwich, and they definitely couldn't eat a barbecued pulled pork sandwich. And so when we read verse 13, and the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically, what we're going to see is Peter is doing something that seems strange to these men who came from James.

So Peter comes down to Antioch, he's eating with these Gentile Christians in Antioch, he's eating all the barbecued pulled pork sandwiches he can get his hands on because he's like, I can't believe that Jesus has made all these clean.

[13:46] This is so good. You know what this means? Peter's living in some gospel convictions.

Peter's living out the gospel. This Jewish apostle is eating pork with Gentile believers in Antioch. And this is where it gets messy.

Twelve, for before certain men came down from James. Here's what was probably going on. Word has gotten back to Jerusalem that Peter is behaving rather Gentile-like.

And so James, who was the Lord's brother and one of the three that shook Paul's hand in the right hand of fellowship over what the true gospel is, James hears about this and says, okay guys, you need to go check this out.

And the question is, why? Why does it matter? Well, one of the possibilities is this. Peter's conduct, his behavior was getting back to non-believing Jews in Jerusalem and so is making it difficult for the Jerusalem church to witness to them.

[15:10] That's one possibility. What we have here though is these men from James come down and something happens. for before certain men came down from James, Peter was eating with the Gentiles but when they came, he drew back and separated himself fearing the circumcision party.

There's a dramatic change of behavior in Peter when these men come down. Before they come, he's enjoying pulled pork sandwiches with his Gentile brothers and sisters but after they come, he separates themselves from them.

He's no longer eating the food nor is he being spending time with these Gentiles over food. And Paul said he did it out of fear of the circumcision party.

Those people who are making a case that in order for a Gentile to be converted, they also need to be circumcised. So it was this thinking that you needed to be obeying the law in addition to believing in Jesus in order to be saved.

We don't know the details of how all that stuff was working. What we do know is this. Peter's action were not born of faith in God, it was born of fear of man.

[16:36] And so when someone acts out of the fear of man, it usually doesn't end well and we see that in verse 13. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him so that even Barnabas, a Jewish Christian, was led astray by their hypocrisy.

So apparently there were other Jewish Christians here in this cafeteria eating pulled pork sandwiches with these Gentile brothers and sisters in Christ and when Peter withdraws himself it's a domino effect because there are other Jewish Christians that pull out including Barnabas. Barnabas and he was a good buddy of Paul. And this is why we've got a problem. This behavior was resulting in division.

Now what Paul isn't saying here is that Peter is some kind of a false teacher. He doesn't condemn Paul in the sense of may God's wrath be upon you like he says in Galatians 1, 8, and 9.

But what Peter is doing is he's being false to the gospel. His behavior is inconsistent with the truth of the gospel. Let me put it this way.

[17:59] If you were a newly converted Gentile Christian in Antioch who's been eating pulled pork sandwiches with Peter and all of a sudden he gets up and leaves and doesn't come back and he brings his Jewish Christian buddies with him, what are you thinking?

Here's what I would be thinking when I do wrong. This is confusing. The Jewish apostle guy isn't eating pulled pork with us anymore.

Do we need to be eating differently? Is believing in Jesus Christ not enough? Do I need to give up pork in order to be accepted by God?

Do I need to believe in Jesus and perform in order to be made right with God? So you can imagine how this confusion leads to fear.

Peter's dining habits in Antioch were not only confusing the Gentile Christians there, they were so in confusion among the Christian Jews there too.

[19:24] Peter definitely isn't connecting the gospel dots here. So you know who does? The apostle Paul. Paul. He's going to connect the gospel dots for Peter and that is why he rebukes him publicly.

This is a public event and there were multiple people led astray and confused by this. That's why in verse 14 you read about Paul speaking to Cephas in front of everyone.

Everyone needed a gospel rebuke here. But so we get to now the why of this rebuke.

Here's the number of it. What's at stake here is the very gospel itself. How does a sinner get right with God?

That's what's at stake. Is it a sinner needs to trust in Jesus plus obey laws and then God will accept them based upon their obedience and belief in Jesus or is it trust in Christ alone plus nothing else and then God justifies you?

[20:44] Which one is it? Peter was sending a missed message so Paul's going to make it clear. And next week you will see just how clear Paul makes it.

But what Paul is going to say is it's just trusting in Jesus plus nothing else. Then God justifies you. It's based on trusting in Christ's finished work at the cross. And on the basis of that work God justifies you, completely forgives you all of your sin, and accepts you fully and totally based on the perfect righteousness of Jesus.

you're accepted. God declares you, the judge of all time in the courtroom of all time declares you innocent forever based upon the finished work of Jesus.

That's what's at stake here. You think it's like, okay, come on, just get over the food thing. It's about the gospel. So Paul he confronts Peter and says in verse 14, he first saw that Peter and the other Jewish Christians conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel.

[22:10] It is this not in step with the gospel, in step with the gospel, it's a beautiful word in Greek. It literally is ortho walk. Have you heard of an orthodontist?

The guy that makes your teeth straight? ortho walking is walking straight. Walking in accord with the truth of the gospel.

The gospel just doesn't justify me. The gospel shapes the way I live my life. And what Paul sees here is that Peter's dining habits, his withdrawing from these Gentiles, that is not ortho walking, it's confuso walking.

It's distorting the gospel of grace. So Paul says to him, Cephas, what are you thinking?

He says, if you, Peter, though a Jew, live like a Gentile eating pulled pork sandwiches and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

[23:37] Being a hypocrite, Peter, that word force shows up earlier in Galatians 2 when Titus did not feel forced to be circumcised.

Now we have other Gentiles feeling forced that they need to eat according to Jewish dietary regulations in order to be justified in God's sight.

And Paul says to Peter, you're being a hypocrite. You can't do that. You're sending a mixed message. I mean, this is the same Peter who had this vision in Acts 10.

This is the same Peter who saw the Holy Spirit fall upon Cornelius in his household. They were saved. This is the same Peter who just weeks earlier shook Paul's hand over what the gospel is. What happened? His fear of man eclipsed his gospel convictions. Slipped. Peter should have done.

[24:47] Peter should have stood up to these men from James and he should have said something like this to them. Hey guys, the gospel of Jesus Christ has changed everything.

You guys know that? I have been set free by the gospel from living under the law to perform for God.

Jesus has freed me to enjoy pulled pork barbecue sandwiches with these Gentile brothers and sisters in this cafeteria in Antioch.

We're all justified by faith. Jew and Gentile. Justified by faith alone and God's grace alone in Christ alone.

Do you guys want a pork sandwich? I can imagine if Peter stood his ground, he should have said, hey, you can go back and tell James that, hey, I understand things may be confusing and difficult in Jerusalem because of what the gospel has freed us to do here, but you know what?

[25:56] You've got to deal with it. But I'm not going to send a mixed message to my brothers and sisters in Christ here. what we see going on here is Peter's fear of man overruled his gospel convictions.

And all of us in the room know what that's like. And so because of that, Paul confronts him that his conduct was not shaped by the gospel and it was distorting the gospel.

It was misleading Jews and confusing Gentiles and it required public rebuke. And Paul does just that.

Why? Why would Paul do this? Why does Paul care? Why would Paul get up in Antioch in front of all these people and rebuke Peter like this?

Why would he do that? In a word, love. Paul loved Peter. And Paul did not want Peter to live under the slavery of the law when he in fact was freed by Christ to live for God.

[27:26] Paul loved the Gentiles in Antioch and Paul didn't want them living under slavery to the law but he wanted them to live in the freedom of the truth of the gospel that they have been justified by faith alone in Christ's law.

But it doesn't stop there because this account of what happened in Antioch is an account in a letter written to a bunch of Gentile Christians in Galatia.

So obviously this situation would happen in Antioch has a lot of bearing what's going on in Galatia. And so Paul is using this story in order to love the Gentiles in Galatia and say to them do not be misled by this false gospel.

It's not faith in Jesus plus your works that make you right with God. It's faith in Jesus alone that makes you right with God. But it doesn't end with the Gentiles in Galatia because here we are Gentiles in Kenosha.

You see God moved through Paul to rebuke Peter and Paul God moved through Paul in order to love those Gentiles in Antioch and God was moving through Paul through this letter to love the Gentiles in Galatia and God is moving through this letter to love us Gentiles today here in Kenosha to clarify for us that this same gospel is by faith alone in God's grace alone in Christ alone.

[29:15] God that's why I got to tell you we can't drift from this our freedom in Christ is at stake we must live lives shaped by the gospel gospel we must not lose our gospel way we must keep in step with the truth of the gospel in other words we must live out of God's gracious work in us to justify us now I've got four lessons for you here they are this is sobering if the apostle Peter can lose his gospel bearings after visions and dramatic holy spirit experiences and picturesque right hand of fellowship meetings if the apostle

Peter can lose his gospel bearings what does that mean for us we can lose our gospel bearings too we can stray from the truth of the gospel we are prone to wander this is kind of a drift let's call it gospel drift where we drift from the gospel how do we counter gospel drift we counter gospel drift by gospel intentionality we are very purposed to remind ourselves frequently of what the gospel is and so let me give you a suggestion of how you can start doing that today you start memorizing gospel Galatians 2 20 Billy's going to preach on this next week Paul says I've been crucified with Christ it's no longer

I who live but Christ lives in me in the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the son of God who gospel who loved me and gave himself up for me I don't live for Christ in order to earn Christ's love Christ loved me and so now I live for Christ and it's this gospel centrality this gospel in the middle of who we are and all that we do that forms us personally it forms our life groups it forms our Sunday morning gatherings we can't drift we can't afford to drift because if we forget the gospel we will drift from the gospel and when we drift from the gospel we'll either replace the gospel with something else or add to the gospel and when you do that you've got something other than the gospel and then you're enslaved we can't afford drifting the gospel is our emancipation proclamation we've got to live with it in hand like

Christian and dangerous journey on the way to the celestial city Peter can lose his gospel bearing so can we but God's given us the gospel it's our compass that keeps us on line with the gospel second Christian leadership is all about the gospel Christian leadership is all about the gospel Christian leadership essentially amounts to this we keep saying things like this is what the gospel is Christ gave himself up for our sins and when you believe that it changes who you are it changes your very identity and so we say to people the gospel changes who you are and so you live out of that you live out of that freedom you live for God now we see two examples of leadership in this passage

Peter fear of man exercising his leadership whether he realized it or not and it resulted in division confusion and fear but Paul gospel minded Paul exercised his leadership with a rebuke resulting in unity clarity and peace because it's the same Peter who speaks of Paul in 2 Peter 3 15 as our beloved brother Paul so here's what that means elders associate pastors deacons life group leaders moms and dads leading in your homes we keep pointing people back to the gospel and what God has done in his grace in sinners lives and we keep on making those connections next week Peter is going to preach on verses 15 through 21 it's the correction to this rebuke and [34:57] Paul aims these Jewish Christians at who they are in Christ so let's say that you're a life group leader and someone in your life group is looking at pornography you know what you tell them the gospel brother sister you've been changed by the gospel that doesn't rule your life anymore Jesus does we point them to living life shaped by the gospel so in order to live for Christ you've got to give that up the third lesson is right from a text sometimes the most loving thing you can do for someone is to rebuke them out in front of the church is 8th Avenue all around library square is a one way loop every week

I see a car or two driving the wrong direction and I go out and I say you're going the wrong way that's a rebuke stop what you're doing lives are in jeopardy a Christian rebuke is a loving rebuke because it aims us back at the freedom in the gospel and so when Paul rebukes Peter he's saying Peter be free when he rebukes the Jewish Christians with them he's saying be free and when the Gentiles in Antioch heard all this he's saying be free the Gentiles in Galatia be free and for us thousands of years later this gospel rebuke is a be free from living under the law this is an encouragement we live in close proximity with one another let me just strengthen your hand if you're seeing something in someone else's life and it is out of step with the gospel it's confuso walking not ortho walking love them point them to

Jesus fourth and finally on this anniversary Sunday of ours the gospel is to our church as the sun is to our solar system it is the center of all that we do it's the center with which everything orbits it's that which gives us all life it's that which unites us all and so let me close by just saying this when the gospel is at the center of our life as a church not only will we be walking in greater and greater amounts of freedom to live for God we're going to have greater and greater amounts of impact in this city because everyone is enslaved in this city and it's only the gospel that will free them so that they can live for

God and find true joy this morning I've tried to impress upon you we must not drift from the gospel but we must stay true to the gospel let's pray God God in heaven we thank you so much for this rebuke recorded for us God if there is rebuke in us that you intend through this so be it God help us to live in the freedom that Christ purchased for us freedom from sin and fear to live the freedom to live for God to live for you God would you bring this in greater and greater measures in our church would you release people from false ideas of what it means to be saved and to live in the freedom of this gift of righteousness given to those who receive it by faith

God help us help us to live according to the truth of the gospel in Jesus name we pray Amen by George 23