

Confronting The Heart With The Gospel

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- [0 : 00] Last week I had an opportunity to go to Belshill and had not been to that lovely town before, but I was speaking to the Belshill Baptist Men's Fellowship, a room full of men getting together for a monthly supper.
- And I introduced myself as Phil Stogner, minister from America who is working with the Free Church.
- I'm on staff at Glasgow City Free Church, have been here two and a half years, and I'm from the south of Glasgow.
- There was a retired Baptist minister at one of the tables, and as we were beginning, he heard my aunts and my yaws, and he said, Did you grow up in the south? And I said, Oh yes, the deep south.
- He said, Where? I said, South Carolina. He said, That's a part of the Bible Belt, isn't it? I said, Yes. And I grew up in Greenville, have family there still and a home there, which is known as the Belt Buckle of the Bible Belt.
- [1 : 23] The Bible Belt being, at one time, populated as a culture with Christian fundamentalism. And I said, It was so strict where I grew up that in America, as a Presbyterian Reformed minister, I would not be coming to speak except trying to convert you all Baptists.
- I said, I'm the great unwashed in your eyes in America, in a fundamentalist Baptist church, because I've not been baptized by immersion.
- I'm either not yet saved, or I'm still wanting in the eyes of God. I'm unacceptable.
- I'm a second-class citizen. And you certainly would find it difficult to worship in a Presbyterian church where we don't practice submersion. And eating together is a big deal, because it's a sign of intimacy and a fellowship and an agreement with one another.
- He said, I know a little bit about what you're talking about. They're called blue laws, aren't they? And I said, Yeah, it's a little different. But yeah, we, in the Belt, Bible Belt, we practice something called blue laws.
- [2 : 47] Now, blue laws were things like you can't sell beer, wine, things like that, or roped off, or the store is closed on Sunday.
- But also, you could not sell automobiles. In fact, you were discouraged from traveling by car except to church. I knew parents that would discourage their kids coming home when school was in session from the university because they would have to drive back on Sunday for classes.
- And they would say, We don't want you to violate the Sabbath by doing that. These laws became more than just a preference of not cutting your grass on a Sunday or a certain style of worship.
- For instance, a morning service and an evening service or an all-day service. It became more than simply a preference.
- It grew in the Bible Belt to become a prescription. It grew to become a prescription so that only Christians do this practice.

- [4 : 12] And if you do a practice that is not our way or our preferred way, you're a second-class Christian.
- You're unacceptable. But that's not what the gospel teaches. Not an application. The big idea of this text that we're going to look at now is this.
- The gospel is that there is nothing you can do. If you're a Christian, if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, if you've given Him your heart and taken His life and death and resurrection for yourself, the gospel is there is nothing you can do to be more acceptable in God's sight.
- And, almost sounds heretical, there's nothing you cannot do that would make you less acceptable than you are in God's sight.
- Because, in God's sight, we're in Christ. So, as Christians, we accept one another in all of our myriad of differences, different styles, different preferences, different tastes, different practices.
- [5 : 48] But, as Christians, we accept one another as we are accepted, we are accepted by God.
- Now, I want to tell you, out of Galatians, and it's really the whole book of Galatians, but I want to tell you, now, I want to tell you two stories involving two parties, principally, Paul and Peter.
- And in these two stories, it involves two separate congregations. And what is emerging from these two congregations is a new gospel.
- So that there was to be one gospel, there's only one truth, but there's another gospel, another way that we're accepted by God starting to emerge.
- And Paul opposes that. I want you to see three things. First of all, I want you to see the truth of the gospel. Secondly, I want you to see opposition to the gospel.
- [7 : 09] What that looks like. And then lastly, I want you to see the line of the gospel. So the truth of the gospel, the opposition to the gospel, and the line of the gospel.
- Look with me at our scripture. For the truth of the gospel, you'll see Paul uses that language in verse 14 of Galatians 2. And you're going to want to have your Bible for this first point.
- I'm going to throw a lot of scripture at you that we did not read. In verse 14, he says, I saw that there, plural, conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel.
- That's the ESV. Now, what is the truth of the gospel? He uses this terminology, he introduced it back in verse 5 of chapter 2 when he said, to them, this is that same plural group, we did not yield in submission even for a moment so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved or protected or exclusive for you.
- What is the truth of the gospel? Story number one. It's a back story. The apostle Paul, in verse 1 of chapter 2, went up to Jerusalem.
- [8 : 40] And we're going to see in story number 2, Peter comes down to Antioch. Jerusalem is where the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, around Jerusalem, the holy city, were worshiping.
- Antioch is primarily a Gentile church. Christians, new, born-again Christians coming out of a life of idolatry and paganism.
- No Jewish history at all. And a division of labor seems to be created. It's as if Peter is the bishop over all of these Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, and Paul is the bishop of these new church plants and Gentiles who have become Christians.
- Two different congregations, Paul, Peter. Paul goes up to Jerusalem. I won't read to you now, but you might be familiar with Acts 15.

That's called the Jerusalem Council. It's the first presbytery meeting where all of the Christian leaders, all of the spiritual leaders, what are called even in verse 9, the pillars, James, the brother of Jesus, Peter, the disciple, Cephas, and John, the beloved disciple.

[10 : 15] Paul goes to this meeting, this gathering. Why did he go? Verse 2, I went to set before them the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

He wasn't going to say, guys, am I getting this right? Is this gospel that I've been preaching? That we are made acceptable to God through Jesus Christ full stop.

that we don't have to do Christian stuff? Is my gospel that says you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are then saved by your repentance and faith, and then you obey out of a response to that good news?

Is that right? I'm kind of fuzzy. no, he was going with this gospel as he says, I wanted to preserve it. I wanted to make sure that everybody in the church was aligned around this gospel or else we're going to create not just a different congregation, not just a different denomination, you're creating a different religion.

Paul earlier, now he has with him, it says in verse 3, Titus, as well as Barnabas. And he says Titus is kind of a case study.

[11 : 54] Titus is a Greek, and he's very Greekified. He's not circumcised, but he's a Christian.

And he said, I went with Titus to say, riddle me this, Batman, he has put his faith in Jesus Christ, but he's not circumcised, so is he completely acceptable in God's sight, or is he just halfway acceptable?

And they said, no. Gentile or Jew, any man, any woman, anyone that comes to faith in Christ is completely acceptable.

And that was the truth of the gospel. Paul in chapter 1 had said, there are, be sure, there are, or is, another gospel.

Multiple gospels. He says, in verse 6, he calls it a different gospel. In verse 7 of chapter 1, he calls it a distortion, a distorted gospel.

[13 : 07] It's twisted, he says, he says, it's a contrary gospel. It's against. It doesn't fit nicely with this gospel that says, you are completely accepted by God.

Completely. Nothing's left wanting. There's nothing that you have to add to it or do. God is completely pleased, now and forever, because of Jesus Christ.

God is in verse 11 of chapter 1, he calls it man's gospel. This is what Paul, going up to Jerusalem, put before the council.

In Acts 15, it says that those men, Peter included, all agreed. And they said, there's no difference in being accepted.

It doesn't matter what your background is, and it doesn't matter what your current practices are. There's not two classes of Christians. what is the gospel?

[14 : 16] Before I leave this, I mean, this really deserves a sermon on just justification, that word, and what justification by faith alone looks like.

But Paul, in verse 14, through verse 16, tells you doctrinally what the gospel is.

For the first time, he introduces a word to his readers, and to this church, to his listeners, and that word is justify.

Now, the Galatian church is primarily a Gentile church, but these Jewish Christians would get this letter as well as it circulated to all Christians.

John Stott and J.I. Packer together defined justification very simply like this. It's a legal declaration of being found clean, acceptable, not guilty, and righteous.

[15 : 36] righteous. It's a legal declaration by a judge that pounds the gavel and says, you are not guilty.

In fact, you're clean, you're righteous, you're completely acceptable to me. It's the opposite of condemnation.

Romans 8.1 says that when we become Christian, there is therefore now no condemnation to those or for those who are in Christ Jesus.

None. Absolutely none. None. None. I wonder, as I leave this point, the truth of the gospel, do you hold this to be the gospel truth?

And it can't be, there can't be any competition. There can only be one truth. You can't have two truths. If you believe that this to be true of you, then it will warm and strengthen your heart, but it will also give you an ability to be accepting to your peers who are Christians but who have a different worship style, who dress differently, who do things differently, and it will challenge your heart to ferret out those areas where we are feeling acceptable, more acceptable to God because we feel a little superior to other people.

[17 : 25] In other words, God likes me because I know he doesn't like that, but I'm doing this, and so I'm more acceptable to God than you. And it feels good, but that's a man's gospel, that's a false gospel.

It's saying that I need to do things, Christian things, in order to be acceptable to God. Paul says that's a distortion of the gospel, and you can imagine these Gentile Christians hearing this, or seeing this, as we move to story number two, Peter and the bacon roll.

So imagine next week that Peter has come, and he has led our service, and he has preached the good news to us, that he believes this truth of the gospel, and then we invite him as Gentiles, one and all, to come and have a bacon roll lunch.

We've got other pork products there as well. And it's also there that our church, if we were keeping with the Galatian practice, we would call that a love feast, that lunch in the hall next week.

But we would also there fit in the Lord's table. And Peter would say, with the benediction, as he walked out, I can't join you there, because that's unclean.

[18 : 56] It's an unclean practice, and it makes you unclean, and I'm acceptable to God, and that's not acceptable to God, so you must not be acceptable to God.

Peter's much more dramatic in his action. It says that in verse 12 that he drew back. That's a term meaning an army withdrawing from the fight, withdrawing in retreat.

And it is a moving away from the gospel. And he separated himself. And that's how he earned the label, along with others, in verse 13, of being a hypocrite.

Because in his heart, he believed that he, the very denier of Christ, having been one of his disciples, that now because of Christ, he was completely accepted.

He knew because he had had a vision, you might recall, with a sheet that was dropped down, with all this unclean food, that God had declared, rise up, kill and eat that bacon.

[20 : 09] You can do that now. And don't ever call unclean what I call clean. In his heart, he knew that the Gentile sinners were completely acceptable, I mean, Christians were completely acceptable and clean, called by God through Christ.

God is a hypocrite because his outward piety, as John Bunyan said when he practiced Christianity prior to becoming a convert, that everybody was impressed by his practice of Christianity, but he said, I was a painted hypocrite.

That his outward separating himself and looking down his nose at the Gentile Christians, it was not a match for what he really believed in his heart.

We could explore, so he opposes, as it were, by withdrawing and separating in his judgment out of his feelings of his way was superior, more acceptable God, he's opposing the gospel.

But there was also, it says in verse 12, certain men, and that's where it really began. Now, these certain men, it says, came from James.

[21 : 41] It doesn't mean that they shared James. James found the gospel to be true. He believed in the true gospel. He didn't believe that they have to practice certain conditions or do certain Christian things in order to remain acceptable to God.

Sometimes the lieutenants get the, they have a different message from the captain. These men, in verse 12, if you were to look at Acts 15, 5, they're identified at that Jerusalem council.

This is as if they were sitting on one side of the room as Paul began to speak, but it says they were Christian Pharisees, Pharisees who had become Christians. So these are actually recovering Pharisees trying to still separate out.

Yeah, don't, yeah, yeah, yeah, we're saved by grace alone, by our faith alone, by Jesus alone, but don't you have to do stuff? I mean, don't I have to look like a Christian?

Isn't there a certain way to eat or drink or not drink? don't I have to be a teetotaler? Don't I have to wear a tie?

[22 : 59] Don't I? Some of these things, I know they sound silly to you, but Wendy and I were driving over from our flat this morning, and I find my own Pharisee heart kicking in.

We live across from the Cross Maloof cricket field. Sunday morning, you can't get a parking spot on our street because of all the children with their families to observe them in their sports.

And I'm thinking, that's not good for their soul. They ought to be in church. I'm glad I'm going to church. I'm glad I'm not playing any sports.

Christians shouldn't be playing any sports. Shouldn't be going to any rugby matches or soccer games. Ministers for the longest time, they still are, ask a question as ordinance coming into the ministry, they ask a question, in your observance and practice of the Sabbath, God's holy day, do you play ball with your kids in the front yard where others would see you after church?

They're still asking you to ask that question. Don't forget the order. The true gospel says, believe you are saved completely, completely saved, every bit of you.

[24 : 34] You're acceptable to God now, and out of that we obey. There is obedience. But what the opponents to the gospel had introduced was, you believe, you obey, and you'll be saved.

That's what Paul was opposing. That's the second story. That's Paul coming to Peter when he says in verse 11, I opposed him to his face.

Peter had been in Antioch, and he was actually becoming pretty Greekified. We believe that he would have changed his dress. He would have basically tossed his tie away.

By the way, there's nothing wrong with Archie rocks in a tie. I don't. But it's okay. As long as it's a preference, that's wonderful.

But if you say, God likes me more because I wear a tie and you don't, or if you really want more acceptable, be more acceptable God, change something about your garment, then we're going to a different gospel.

[26 : 01] We're saying this is the way you're saved. Paul calls him out publicly.

And I want us, last point, I want you to see the line of the gospel. I want to give you three points of application, taking it personally, by observing and modeling how Paul confronts Peter so that you will confront your heart with the gospel.

The title of this message is Confronting the Heart with the Gospel. But I hope at this point, before we leave, you'll be asking, what does it look like to confront my heart, not simply a heart, but my heart with the gospel?

I'm not like Peter. Am I? I mean, I don't withdraw from the gospel. I don't separate myself from fellowship with anybody.

Verse 14, the words, their conduct was not in step, is a better translation is found in the NIV.

[27 : 33] I like the ESV, love the ESV. It's what I read, preach, memorize, teach from. But in this case, the NIV is a better translation.

And I don't know if you caught it, Ross was reading from the NIV. So when he got to verse 14, Ross, you still got your Bible open? Yeah. What's verse 14 say?

Oh, you didn't? Well, it says, not in line with the truth. The word is ortho pedia.

Ortho being line, pedia being feet or step or legs or walk. Walking the line, as Johnny Cash would say, I walk the line.

I keep a close heart on this heart of mine. I keep my eyes wide open on that heart all the time. but because you're mine, I walk the line.

[28 : 45] That's what it looks like to walk in truth, walk in line with the gospel. Paul was trying to get the church in Acts 15 in alignment with this one gospel.

And now he comes to Peter and he says, Peter, your heart's out of alignment. That car needs to go back in the shop because because it's shaking us to death.

What does it look like to try to get my heart, your heart, back in alignment with the gospel?

Three things. First of all, confront your heart with the gospel of acceptance by God, not his wrath and his judgment.

judgment. It's that Robert Murray McShane math where he said, for every one look at your sin, take ten looks at your Savior.

[29 : 56] Sometimes we think about God being so displeased with us, so angry, so ready to just say, you're just a weak Christian.

I'm so disappointed in you. That's not what Paul confronted Peter with. He didn't say, God is upset.

This has to stop. You're creating a division. You are separating yourself. You're confusing the Gentiles.

They're wanting to line up now and do anything to be acceptable and fellow citizens with you Jewish Christians in God's kingdom. They're willing to be circumcised.

They're willing to put aside the bacon roll. They're willing to look at their idolatrous still some of those old traditions and lifestyles and they're willing to become they're willing to lose their identity and culture as Greeks to imitate you.

[31 : 06] God's mad, Peter. That is heresy, Peter. No. He says, Peter, remember, walk in line with that gospel.

You are accepted. Start with that. Confront your heart with that. It's what Martin Luther would call preaching the gospel to yourself.

And his instruction to ministers is, this is so important. Beat it into your congregant's head. I think I've done a bit of that.

Number two, confront your heart with the gospel first, first, not the surface sin.

Notice that Paul didn't come and say, Peter, you're guilty of the sin of racism or nationalism or sectarianism, saying, my church, my way, my worship style is more acceptable to God than yours.

[32 : 14] He didn't do that. mention his sin. You know why? Because whatever that sin, that criticalness, that judgmentalism, that feeling of pride and superiority, I'm a better Christian because I'm a better Christian than you.

I'm more acceptable to God than you. He didn't call out that sin because all of that is on the surface. It's the fruit of what's coming from his heart. And if the heart is not in line with the gospel, it's not going to be able to deal with this.

He, in essence, is saying, Peter, when you think about the good news of your acceptance, you'll realize that God didn't keep you from his table.

He has table fellowship with you. God didn't separate himself from you. So, now you can deal with the surface and how can I separate myself from others?

They're just like me in God's eyes. Thirdly, confront your heart with the gospel and then take the next two steps that are set before you, which are repentance and faith.

[33 : 46] that's the Christian walk. Repentance and faith, repentance and faith, repentance and faith. It's a continual confronting my heart with my actions and the gospel in mind and repenting.

Lord, I have not been walking out of your love. I've been walking out of my own sense of what I think I should be doing.

It's a continual realignment and it starts with repentance. And let's just be specific. I repent of my superior attitude or I repent of the despair that I feel when I failed God again.

I can't get over this sin, this secret sin, this dark sin. I don't want it in my life and I've tried again and I've tried again and God is so disappointed.

I know it sounds crazy, but he's not. God looks at each one of us through the very life of a beautiful Savior, Jesus Christ, and he calls us his beauties.

[35 : 17] That despair thinking that God is wrathful and disappointed in you doesn't lead to a transformation. Faith does.

I want to close with a story. I had a friend, Rick Harper, who came and stayed with me from Austria.

He's a missionary in Austria and his visa was denied. And Nate and Duncan, we spent some time with Rick, but he was staying in my home.

And one evening, I was asking him about his family. And he has three adopted Chinese daughters.

And one has emotional relational disability. by that he means he says she will sometimes when she's afraid or when she gets angry, she will start to scream.

[36 : 33] She will try to pull her hair out. She will beat herself for up to three hours screaming and beating and pulling her hair.

The therapist says it's traceable back to the orphanage that we found her in. He said, I remember well going into that orphanage. She was so small. He said, the striking thing about this Chinese orphanage was what you heard when you went into the children's ward and that you didn't hear anything.

No crying babies. No cooing children. He said because either because of their culture or because they were short staffed or because there were so many orphan babes they no longer cried.

because they knew that no one would come and respond and pick them up. So they just might cry themselves to sleep initially and eventually they stopped crying.

The therapist said, I've got something that I want you to try, you and your wife and the next time your daughter has this screaming fit, recognize that she's probably very anxious.

[38 : 09] Maybe she's even done something that she's worried you're going to take her back to the orphanage. You know, she's adopted so she's not your true child.

So next time, just go to her and hug her. Hold her. and then say, I love you and you are my daughter and there is nothing you can do that will ever change that.

So he stopped right there and I'm dying to know, well, did it work? He said, it works every time. He says, but we have to repeat it. She forgets.

man, Paul is saying, Peter, and we say to our heart, don't forget the gospel.

For that is our life and our faith and we never get beyond this good news. Let me pray.

[39 : 26] Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word. I thank you for this gospel and we thank you for Jesus.

Jesus, you are a beautiful savior. And you're still in activity and work through the Holy Spirit of saving us.

Saving us from ourselves. Saving us from false gospels. holy spirit, would you help us to not forget? Would you help us to live with a view of always keeping in alignment with your acceptance of us?

How can we sin against you who have accepted us? So, at the cost of your own life. Lord, perhaps perhaps they're here today, folks that are listening but have not come along yet to put their faith completely in you, Jesus.

Would you help them to overhear us as Christians to know that it's the same whether you be a believer today or an unbeliever that we begin every day by turning away from unbelief in this gospel of mercy and acceptance and receiving it again as truth.

[41 : 09] To this end we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.