

The Gospel Confrontation

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 February 2010

Preacher: Jonathan Smith

[0 : 00] All right, good. We're doing 10 weeks on Galatians. This is week 3. Just to catch up to speed with where we're at, we're obviously starting chapter 2.

In the previous two weeks we've seen really that the object of Paul's letter was to remind the Galatians about the truth of the gospel. This book is all about the gospel. The Galatians, just so you know, were a church that Paul had planted around the year 46 or 47 AD.

He had been moving throughout the region planting churches. Galatians is in probably the southern part of Turkey. He had planted the church there and then he wrote this letter in the year 48, only a year after that time.

And he's really pretty ticked off because where he had planted the church on a firm foundation about the gospel, other teachers, false teachers had come in.

We call them the Judaizers because they came in and said, in addition to faith in Jesus Christ, you also need to, if you're a man, be circumcised. No matter who you are, you have to obey the law of Moses and so on.

[1 : 13] And so they were really trying to get these Christians who had been saved by grace to go back to old ways in observing the law. And Paul is really keen that they do not do that.

In the first week we saw that Paul said that what they're talking about, observing the law in order to be saved, is so different from his message that those men who are preaching that false message should be damned to hell for what they're saying.

So this is serious, serious stuff. Paul is really concerned that they know the gospel, that they stand firmly in the truth of the gospel. And tonight he is, he's pretty worked up all the way through this letter, but he gets really excited.

So if you didn't follow where Jenny was going with the reading, you can join me. Because Paul, when he gets excited, just writes like a thousand miles an hour. He doesn't finish sentences. He tries to cram a lot of stuff into short sentences. And so what we do here at the church is preach through the Bible book by book, verse by verse. And tonight I'm literally going one verse at a time for the most part.

[2 : 15] Because it's pretty complex. There's a lot jammed in there that we can benefit from knowing. And so what I really need to do is ask God for help, both for me and for you guys.

So let's pray to start. And then we'll jump in and get to work on verse 1. Father, please help us tonight. We need your help. We know that faith comes by hearing and by hearing the word of God. We acknowledge that this is your very word to us. We thank you for Paul, that he wrote it for our benefit, as well as the benefit of the Galatians. Please remind us tonight about the truth and centrality of the gospel.

Please help us to understand, particularly the places where Paul gets pretty excited. And please encourage us in our faith to stand firm in our faith at all times, in all seasons, that we would not be hypocrites.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. So make sure you've got a Bible in front of you. If you don't have one, get up, find one. There'll be one here for you. So we're at verse 1, chapter 2, and he says this.

[3 : 18] Then after 14 years, so this is 14 years after his first trip to Jerusalem. Probably worth doing a little bit of background. If you remember from last week, these Judaizers are not just preaching false gospel, but in the Galatian church they are accusing Paul of being like a B-grade apostle.

Like he sort of picked up what the real apostles, the Jerusalem apostles, were saying, and he sort of made up his own story. They're accusing him of that. They're accusing him of not really being a

Christian and of taking this freedom in Christ thing too far.

And so what he said in response is, actually, I've only ever met the apostles once, and that was three years after I got converted. And his point was that Jesus, in his conversion, you read about it in Acts chapter 9.

Do that in your own Bible study. In Acts chapter 9, Saul, who later becomes Paul, gets saved by the grace of God. Now, he wasn't looking for Jesus.

Jesus just burst onto the scene and saved him, and he communicated the gospel to Paul at that point. And Paul went off and started planting churches. He never met the apostles until, I think, three years later.

[4 : 30] And so his point was, the apostles didn't tell me this. I'm not adjusting what they've told me. This is actually what Jesus has said to me. We're going to see tonight that actually what Jesus said to Paul and what the Jerusalem apostles were teaching was the very same thing, which really validates Paul's gospel that he has for us here.

We'll get to that. So 14 years after that initial journey to Jerusalem, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.

These two men, Barnabas and Titus, they'll feature, well, at least Barnabas features throughout the book of Acts. Acts doesn't mention Titus, but elsewhere in Paul's letters he mentions Titus.

Barnabas was a Jewish convert to Christianity. He was from Cyprus and one of the very first Christian converts. And his name means son of encouragement.

And that's really what he was to Paul for most of the time. Really a journeyman with Paul and an encourager of Paul, standing up for Paul, preaching with Paul. So he's taking him with him to Jerusalem and also Titus.

[5 : 36] He's a Gentile convert and he stuck with Paul through thick and thin. He was really one of Paul's right-hand men. He was the 2IC guy for Paul.

And he travelled all throughout with him on his dangerous journeys. He's going with him to Jerusalem as well. And he's going to be the centre of controversy when it comes to circumcision a little bit later on because he is in fact a Gentile and not a Jew.

But we'll get to that. So let's keep moving through. We've got verse 2. He said, So what he says is, I received a revelation and that's why I went to Jerusalem.

We don't really know if this was a direct revelation to Paul like he received on the road to Damascus when he was saved or whether this came through the church. If you've read Acts, you'll remember that there's a guy, a prophet named Agabus who gives Paul a revelation.

It might be that one that he's talking about. But who it's from and who it's to, or who it's from, it needs to be from God. But who it's to, whether it comes to the church or straight to Paul, doesn't really matter.

[6 : 54] But the fact is that he's received a revelation. Revelation, in our understanding, looking at sort of the biblical theology of revelation, first and foremost, we believe that this Bible here, this is God's revelation to us.

So this is God's word to us. We can trust it every time we read it. This is what God is saying to us. It is infallible in all matters of theology. It's how we get to know God.

It's the way he communicates primarily to us. But in addition to that, God also speaks directly to some people in some times. People might receive audible words from God, words of knowledge. You might have received through someone else a word of knowledge for you from God that we ought to pray about and to test. But revelation primarily through the Bible, but also through God's agents, sometimes known as prophets, sometimes just your average Christians who have a word from God for you or for a particular situation.

And so that's what he's received here, a revelation, a word from God. And as a result of hearing that, he's going to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus. And so what he's going to do there is lay before them the gospel that he proclaims to the Gentiles.

[8 : 11] And the reason that he wants to do this is so that he knows he's not running in vain or has not run in vain. And what that means is not that Paul doubted that he was preaching the right gospel.

He knew that what he was saying is true. But rather that for him, if anything he was preaching was going to divide the church, like divide the Jews and the Gentiles or divide factions in the church, that would be a really, really sad thing for him.

That would be as if he was running in vain, if what he was preaching was going to divide Christians. And so he wants to go there so that he can present the gospel and see if they're on the same page. So that's why he's going. He wants to go there. He wants to say, this is what I'm preaching when I do my evangelistic service at my church or when I meet the guy at the pub or when I do my Bible study community group.

This is what I'm preaching. What are you guys preaching? Are we on the same page? So go to verse 3. He says, But even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.

[9 : 18] The reason he wants to highlight this, remember, is that he's writing to Galatia, to the Galatians, and there are these false teachers in the church there who are saying, you need to be circumcised if you're going to be a Christian.

Okay? So he's deliberately mentioning in this letter that they got to Jerusalem and Titus, who's not circumcised, not a Jew, was not compelled to be circumcised.

You with me? The Judaizers, these false teachers in the church in Galatia are saying this. The real apostles are from Jerusalem. They're the big dudes.

So that's James, John, Peter, also called Cephas in this letter. They're the real apostles. They were with Jesus. They know the deal. And what Paul is preaching is not what they're preaching.

Or what they're preaching is more than what Paul's preaching. So he's really concerned to say, we got there to Jerusalem, to the place that these guys think they know about, and no one told Titus to get circumcised.

[10 : 22] So there. That's a really big point. He's landed a big punch. He's going to land a few, actually. But this is a big argument against these Judaizers. Everyone has to be circumcised if they're going to be a Christian.

Paul says, no, no. We went to Jerusalem. No one made Titus get circumcised. Big point. Remember that. Let's go. Verse 4.

Just keep motoring through. Let's do 4 and 5. He says, But because of false believers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us, we did not submit to them even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you.

So this is where the issue of Titus' circumcision has come up. They've gone into the church in Jerusalem. The people who matter, the real Christians, are saying, oh, he's not circumcised. Not a big deal. We probably don't even need to talk about it. It's a little bit uncomfortable. So that was a joke. But their point is, don't worry about it, Titus. You're okay with us.

[11 : 29] The Gentiles are becoming Christians. You don't need to fulfill the law of Moses. We're free to. It's not a big deal. But after that's happened, false believers who have been planted in the community there, people who say they're Christians but they're not, they have tried to turn that around and force Titus to be circumcised or at least push the point so that they might enslave us.

The reason Paul is saying that is really because the gospel is about freedom. I said this a couple of weeks ago. The gospel is about freedom. If you're here and you're not a believer or you went to university and did philosophy or any of that, you probably heard that Christianity is really about rules, regulations, doing this, not doing that.

Actually, Christianity is all about freedom. And in the Old Covenant, in the Old Testament, being part of the people of God really was about observing this law or that law, though God honoured faith above that observance.

But it really was, you know, you were circumcised because that's the law or you did observe the Sabbath because that's the law. So, Jesus instituted the New Covenant and Paul's preaching that gospel that actually we're saved by grace.

It's not what you've done. It's not what you'll do. It's not because you observed this or that law. It's not even because you came to church tonight. It's not even because you came early at 5.30 and prayed at church tonight.

[13 : 01] That hasn't earned you any points as far as your salvation goes. God's salvation comes to you by grace through faith. And so, to go back and say, well, actually, grace, yeah, it's got something to do with Jesus, but it's also got something to do with the law and circumcision, that is enslaving Christians.

That's making them go back on the leash, back on the chain. And so, he says, these false believers have tried to come in and talk about circumcision and the law so that they might enslave us. And his response is, we did not submit to them even for a moment. He saw them coming and he shut them down. He told them to shut up and get out of the community so that their poison might not be spread.

And he says, the main reason they did that was so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. If he had given in and just said, well, all right, Titus, off you go.

It's not going to be pretty, but you're going to need to get circumcised. If he had said that, not only might Titus, you know, have left him, but the people back in Galatia, the false teachers would have said, see, Paul agrees with us.

[14:19] You have to get circumcised. He didn't do that so that the truth of the gospel might always remain with you. That's the first confrontation. It's with false teachers and he didn't yield to them for a moment.

We've got another confrontation coming up. But before we get there, verse 6, he says, and from those who are supposed to be the acknowledged leaders, what they actually were makes no difference to me.

God shows no partiality. Those leaders contributed nothing to me. We can read that in a really sarcastic tone, like Paul's really looking down on the leadership of that church in Jerusalem.

I don't think he's doing that. He's not making little of church leadership. Actually, Paul has a lot of time for church leadership.

The Bible prescribes for us a church hierarchy. Hierarchy church isn't democracy. It's not a flat line hierarchical chart. We actually have pastors, elders, teachers and deacons and things are ordered that way according to God's will.

[15:22] That's how we do it here at the church. And Paul's not making a mockery of that. What he's trying to say, again, the context is so important. Remember, the false teachers are trying to make little of Paul's authority.

They're trying to say he's not an apostle. He's not on the A team and he's inferior to the apostles. So that's why Paul is saying there were acknowledged leaders there.

They are apostles. They are people like John and Peter and James. But, you know, whether they're leaders or not makes no difference to him. He's not inferior to them.

And in addition to that, they contributed nothing to him. And what he means by that is, they didn't add anything to my gospel message. They didn't say, you got that right about Jesus coming and living and dying and rising again.

What you're missing is the bit about circumcision and the law and slaughtering goats in church.

They didn't say that. They didn't add anything to Paul's gospel. You're going to see that a little bit more in a couple of verses time.

[16:26] But that's what he is paying to communicate to them. Even in Jerusalem, even with the big guns, even with the disciples, now apostles, they're not adding anything to him.

Let's continue on mid-sentence, verse 7, or continuing on from that sentence. Let's go 7 and 8. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, that's the Greeks, the Gentiles, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised, that's the Jews, for he who worked through Peter making him an apostle to the circumcised also worked through me in sending me to the Gentiles.

Again, over and over again in this passage, he's drawing a correlation between himself, Paul the apostle, and Peter, James, John, the apostles in Jerusalem.

He really wants his people to know we are on the same level here. We are all apostles of God.

We've all been commissioned by God to be apostles. And he also wants to make clear, not only are they the same level in terms of hierarchy, but they've got the same gospel, they've got the same God, they worship the same saviour, they've got the same master, they are on the level with one another.

And this next meeting with them is going to prove that. Let's look at it, verse 9. He says, This is a pivotal, pivotal moment.

[18:11] This is a key moment in Paul's ministry. He's come to Jerusalem, he's met with some of the leaders, now he's meeting particularly with James, that's Jesus' brother, who became an apostle and also was really in charge of the Jerusalem church.

He was like the archbishop there in Jerusalem. So he's meeting with James, with Cephas, or Peter, who was Jesus, you know, the rock that Jesus was going to build his church on.

He was the first apostle to the Gentiles, and also to John, Jesus' best buddy, like his little brother almost, that's how they treated one another. Those three big guys have met together and it's a pivotal, pivotal moment.

Because the question is, the question the Galatians are asking and the question that Paul wants to answer is, has Paul, Barnabas, Titus, have they been preaching in vain? Have they got the message wrong?

Did Paul translate the revelation from Jesus incorrectly? And the answer is, no, they didn't get it wrong. Yes, they have the same gospel.

[19 : 18] They've got the same gospel that grew up independently of each other, completely the same. Jesus delivered it to the disciples when he was on earth and he delivered it to Paul in exactly, with the exact same message, though in a different way.

And so, the real pivotal moment is when James and Peter and John extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul and his buddies as well. Let me just say something about fellowship.

This word gets really knocked, especially at our church. Whenever at the end of a service you say, join us for fellowship, people kind of snigger and say, what is fellowship anyway? It's such a geeky Christian word.

But actually, it's a really good word. It's a word that describes the meeting together of Christians, that we meet together, we have the same Lord, the same Master, the same Holy Spirit and fellowship is what happens when we get together and encourage one another.

So, James and Peter and John, they've met Paul but only after they hear that he's a brother in Christ, then they give him the right hand of fellowship. And it's a really kind of beautiful moment.

[20 : 28] They see that they're brothers in Christ, that they're all preaching the gospel and risking their lives together and so they extend that right hand of fellowship and Paul is really saying this so as to demonstrate again to his people that these false teachers are wrong and that him, Paul and the apostles in Jerusalem are on the same page.

He doesn't have a different gospel. It's actually them that have the false gospel. And so they make this strategy together that the Jerusalem guys, James, Cephas, John, they're going to continue preaching to the Jews and converting heaps of Jews and saving heaps of Jews through their preaching and Paul and Barnabas, Titus and his guys are going to keep preaching to the Gentiles, to the Greeks, to the non-Jews and everyone's happy with that.

That's a good church strategy. And that's kind of the strategy that we have here at Holy Trinity as well. We have three English congregations, two Chinese congregations, one of the Chinese congregations is completely in Mandarin and one of them is bilingual and the reason we do that is not because we're racist and not because we think that we need to separate Chinese people from English people or anything like that.

It's purely because it's a good strategy. It's a biblical strategy that they used here. It's the most effective way that we can reach out to people in those communities through that ministry.

It's a beautiful thing and we all agree on the central truths of the gospel. So tomorrow morning at staff meeting I can go to David and Esther, the Mandarin pastors. I can go to Ben and Ivy, the bilingual pastors.

[22 : 03] I can extend to them the right hand of fellowship and say we're preaching the same gospel. This is a beautiful thing even though we have distinctive ministries to distinctive cultures. All right, that's my church plug.

If you're new, if you're visiting, this is a great church. You should join. Okay, let's go verse 10. This is really important. I know it's hot, like I'm struggling to concentrate, but tune in, stay with me.

We're nearly there and this is a really key point. We've seen the centrality of the gospel, now we're going to see also another central tenet of Christianity. Verse 10, they asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.

So they've agreed on the gospel. That's the primary thing. If you met another Christian, another person who claims to be a Christian, you need to say, what do you believe about Jesus?

What do you believe about the Bible? What do you believe about sin? Are we on the same page here? Are we worshipping the same God? Do you believe the gospel? That's central. That's the first thing we want to preach, that's the thing we want to preach week in, week out.

[23 : 12] Matt explained it for us at the very start tonight, that's key. But in addition to knowing the gospel well, we must, must, must remember the poor. So here's what happens.

Let me just do a little commentary on churches. You get a lot of evangelical churches. So these are the churches that love the Bible, they teach through books of the Bible, they love evangelism, and they do nothing with the poor.

They're big on having the gospel right, preaching the gospel, and yet the poor go unfed, untended to. That tends to happen quite a bit. Then you've got more liberal churches, which they don't even know what the gospel is.

They're not sure who Jesus is, whether he died, whether he's God. They've got really not much idea about that, but they're feeding the poor, they're helping the needy, they're healing the sick, they're doing that work.

And both churches are in the wrong. In the life of Jesus, we see this really clearly. Jesus goes into the synagogue, preaches the good news, goes out to the countryside, inaugurates the kingdom, calls people to repentance.

[24 : 18] He's a great preacher, but he also heals the sick, casts out demons, feeds the hungry. So if we're going to be Christ-like in this church, we need to be covering both of those areas of ministry.

We really do. If you've been around for a little while, you might know what we're better at, out of those two. But we've really, I think, taken some really good strides ahead in the area of helping the poor and the needy.

We've got our impact ministry, Crave Impact Ministry, which we'd love you to support prayerfully, financially, with your time as well. That's a ministry that's headed up by Georgie Sutton and a core team of people that really is committed to reaching out to the lost, to the needy, to the poor, to the sick, with the good news of Jesus and also in very practical ways.

So be praying for impact and get information about that ministry off the website. But we want to be doing both those things. We want to have the gospel right. That's primary. Gospel needs to be right if we're going to help anyone.

But we need to make sure that we remember the poor. We need to make sure that we see Paul, who is very eager to do that as our example. And I wonder just if the apostles saw this guy, Paul, probably came off a little brash, came off a little bit, you know, in your face.

[25 : 42] He's really one of these fiery gospel preachers. I wonder if they just saw him and said, we need to just make sure this guy is remembering the poor. They ask him the question and he says, I'm eager to do that.

I want to preach the gospel, plant churches, get killed for being a Christian and I want to help the poor, give to the needy, help the sick and the wayward and the lost as well. So that needs to be an example for us here at the church.

He passed the test. He's eager to do it. We need to make sure we do too. So that finishes that little pericope, that little engagement there in Jerusalem.

And then he, without really breaking his stride, switches to another time where he met with Peter. This time it was in Antioch. I think you Bible geeks can correct me later.

We'll delete it out of the recording. But I think Antioch was the capital of Syria. So big town, a lot of ministry there. I think it was the first place where Jews were converted. They did a lot of ministry to the Gentiles.

[26 : 45] And so Paul is there as his kind of ministry of operations. And Cephas, Peter, shows up and he tells us what happens.

Verse 11. And we'll just, why don't we just go through to the end. We'll finish on this. He says, But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned. For until certain people came from James, that's in Jerusalem, he used to eat with Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by the hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not acting consistently 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 compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?

And really the central issue here that I want to highlight is this issue of hypocrisy in the church. Paul is running his church there in Antioch, and they've got a lot of Jews, as I said there, and also a lot of Gentiles.

[27 : 56] Coming to faith, and so they're coming together to worship God together, also eat the Lord's Supper together, and just live together, share meals together. And so it seems that Cephas, that Peter, has been there for a while.

He's been staying there with Paul and the rest of the church, and he's been eating with the Gentiles. We know from the book of Acts that Peter was the first apostle to the Gentiles.

God gave him a vision, another revelation, this time a vision, a pictorial revelation about how it's okay for Gentiles to become Christians, and also by implication it's okay to eat with them.

And now he has been eating with them, with these Gentile believers, enjoying food and drink and fellowship, which is really important in the ancient days as it is today.

And so getting along really well, and then out of the blue, some guys come from James. Not that James sent them to cause trouble, but that they've come from Jerusalem, and all of a sudden Peter draws back and doesn't want to be seen with the Gentiles.

[29 : 04] And Paul is ticked. Paul is just seeing a whole lot of hypocrisy in Peter here. A couple of reasons why he tells this story.

Number one, he wants to show again to the Galatians that he is on even footing with Peter, that he can rebuke Peter, that he has authority to do that because he is an apostle.

So again, asserting his apostleship, his authority, that they should trust his gospel once again. But also I think, particularly for us, by way of application, he wants to highlight the hypocrisy of Peter in this situation.

Do you know what a hypocrite is? I think it's a Greek word which was referred to a particular kind of actor. So there are these actors in Greek times who would use masks.

And they would play different parts in a play by putting on this mask and they would be the villain, and then they'd change and put this mask on and they'd be the good guy. And that's where we get the word hypocrite, that if you're a hypocrite it means that you would change who you are depending on who you're around or what character you want to play.

[30 : 14] And for Paul, if you read through Paul's letters, this is the thing that gets him almost most angry. It's probably number one, if you've got another gospel, he wants you to go, doesn't want you to go, but he condemns you to hell.

It's probably number one on the list. Number two is probably being a hypocrite. If you're not a believer here tonight, even if you are, you've probably heard the mantra about Christians being hypocrites.

It's probably true. But Paul really wants us to be aware of this tendency to hypocrisy. So I want to ask you tonight, just to finish, are you guys living like hypocrites?

Are you guys living like Christian hypocrites in the world? Have a think about that. Good example for me from my life, and I say this because I bet you're the same, particularly there were times in my life where I would be super Christian at church and then completely leave that behind for the rest of the week.

I used to work a lot of building sites, a lot of labour jobs, used to work in mechanics. It's not the kind of place that's really conducive to opening the Bible and having a prayer meeting. You guys are a tough crowd tonight.

[31 : 37] Am I too dry? Do I need Tullo just to give me... All right. Seriously, I used to be the biggest hypocrite and still find myself in situations tempted to put aside my Christianity when it's going to be a little bit tough.

Peter is in that situation. He's happy to be Mr. Embracing Christian when it's just Paul who approves of it and the others. But as soon as these guys who don't like it show up, he draws back. Barnabas gets caught into it and a bunch of them become hypocrites. And Paul is so incensed because in doing that, they are compromising the gospel.

Let me tell you the worst thing about hypocrisy is that it robs, robs you of situations where you can preach the gospel to people.

Am I right? Jesus, before he ascended to heaven, after he'd been raised from the dead, he commanded his disciples and continues to command us today to preach the good news news to the lost.

[32 : 47] Go out to nations, to all the nations, proclaiming to them all that I've told you. Baptise in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. I'll be with you even to the end of the age. That's our commission from God, to preach the good news.

You have the good news. If you're here tonight and you're a Christian, you know the gospel saves you from your sins. There are people out there who don't know that. And they're the very people that you're going to be a hypocrite in front of.

We don't need you to tell us the gospel apart from encouragement. They need you to tell them. It's the inversion of our natural tendency. You need to be more of a witness, more of a light, more of a Christian in that world than in this world.

If Paul saw you passing up opportunities to preach the gospel or acting in ways out of sync with your standing as a Christian, he would blast you for that.

Just like he did for Peter. He doesn't care who you are. And he blessed me too. So can this be an encouragement to us? Peter's example, as he's wont to do, he gives us a bad example that we should learn from.

[33 : 56] Don't be a hypocrite. Don't have your Christian mask on here that's happy and joyful and claps your hands when you sing. And then when you get out there, you're some kind of other person. Don't be the kind of person who shares your faith with Christians and then passes up opportunities in the world.

Don't do that. Let's keep each other accountable for that. Let's pray about that. Let me do that to finish. Father, thank you for this passage that Paul has written, retelling his confrontations with people.

I pray that you would confront us tonight. I pray that you would confront us about our hypocrisy, where we have lived in the world in ways that aren't consistent with our faith, consistent with the way we behave in this place.

Please, Lord, also save us from our hypocrisy when it comes to our tending to the poor, that we worship a God who cares for the needy and the poor and the afflicted, and yet we don't care for them ourselves.

Please save us from that hypocrisy. Help us really to get real with ourselves in that regard and start making changes. Lord, please save us from the hypocrisy that happens when we favor one culture over another, one ethnic group over another.

[35 : 28] I thank you for this church that has such a heart for multicultural ministry. Lord, please save us from our hypocrisy.

Please save us from pushing back against that rebuke. Please help us to be humble, to be changed by your Holy Spirit tonight. Lord, we ask all these things for Jesus' sake, that you would be glorified, that people would come to know you, that we'd be changed more and more like you.

Amen.