

Gospelling One Another; Bearing Each Others Burdens; Galatians 2:11-16

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on July 12th, 2009

"Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:1-2

Intro

From time to time we talk about "Gospelling" one another. We have DNA groups to help us with that, we may even talk about it in our Missional Communities, but what does it mean? It's a term we use to encourage people to be in one another's lives in order to spur one another to apply the gospel in all areas of our life (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). This is what Christian community does; it meets together enough to be in each other's lives so that we can help one another with the weaknesses we all have (See **Galatians 6:1-2**). Love and encouragement includes the strength to confront one another when we step into sin, with "Gentleness" and humility. It's not accusatory, but it desires the restoration of the other in the truth of the gospel.

In our passage today, Paul confronts Peter for a sin that was truly destroying the truth of the gospel. His confrontation may seem harsh, but Paul's concern is for Christ and the gospel over relationship and appearances. Note the issue in our passage is not just a sin, but the damage it was doing to the gospel, and to those around Peter.

The interpretation of this passage has had many applications in the early church:

Ebionite's: Used it for an attack on Paul

Marcion: Used it as an attack on Peter and his alliance with the Jews

Celsus+Porphyry (Roman Critics of Christianity): Used it to attack Christianity's "Pettiness"

Tertullian (Church Father): Arguing against the Marcionites felt that Paul over-reacted

Origen, Chrysostom + Jerome (Church Fathers): Staged event so to condemn "Judaizers" more effectively

Clement of Alexandria: Thought that "Cephas" was not Cephas/Peter the apostle

Augustine: It is a case of truth (The Gospel) over rank (Assuming Peter was the "Leader")

I am hoping to use this passage today to not only to point out Peter's sin, but to demonstrate Paul's method of "Gospelling" his brother Peter, who had fallen into an old pattern. Our goal as we gospel one another is not to be a busy body, nor to be a self righteous meddler, but to honestly and humbly love one another enough to speak the truth in love.

From the Head...

The Necessity of The Confrontation (**Galatians 2:11-14a**)

What was the problem Peter faced? Antioch was a church established, as a result of the persecution church after Stephen was stoned (Diaspora), by the preaching of the gospel by men from Cyprus and Cyrene (**Acts 11:19-20**). Antioch was a diverse church that Barnabas and Paul were sent to for at least a year to "Establish" them in the faith (See (**Acts 11:22-26**)). This is the first place that the believer's were called "Christians" (**Acts 11:26**), which wasn't necessarily a positive term. It is during this time that the incident of Galatians 2:11-16 most likely took place.

When Peter was with the gentile believers he had no problem eating with them, since his understanding of the dietary laws were deconstructed in the gospel (See **Acts 10-11**). However when the men "From James" (Men from Jerusalem) came he changed his behavior to accommodate their cultural and religious beliefs. Normally this may have been an ok missional strategy (**1 Corinthians 9:19-23**), but in this incident, Peter is dealing with believers and his behavior is hypocritical and unbiblical, and it was hurting the gospel of justification. He was knowingly or un-knowingly making the gentile second-class citizens because they did not worship God the way the Jews did. This is an unbiblical form of "Cultural Imperialism," which can and often does lead to racism.

What is at the heart of Peter's issue?

I think there are two related issues that Peter demonstrates; first is "**Fear**." This appears to be Peter's struggle (See **v.12**). This led to his denial of Jesus when Jesus was arrested. The second possibility is related to the first; "**Fear of Criticism**." Acts 11:2 indicate that these men often came to Peter and criticized him. These men, were from the Jerusalem church (Men from James) who were believers, but who felt that worship should be done according to Jewish custom, even though the gospel had given man the freedom to worship God directly through Jesus, and not the signs of the Messiah. Fear is paralyzing because it allows outside influences to control your decisions. This is not something Paul necessarily struggled with (See **Galatians 1:10**). Paul's issues were more connected to pride, which usually lends to a personality that can confront more easily, but needs to be tamed with a biblical humility.

Again, when we confront someone, we need to keep this type of thing in mind. We may have a personality that allows us to confront, but in our sin we can become prideful because others are not as open and honest as you are. A third issue for Peter (Again relating to his fears) is a form of **Prejudice**. It is easy in our prideful, sinful condition to think of others as inferior to us. We do this with gender, race, ethnicity, education, political interest, artistic opinion, etc. This can be sticky in

the sense we can easily fall into a relativist position on truth, or we can equally fall into a rationalist position on truth, which defies the “Subjective Knower.” It is imperative that we put time in the word, and theology, knowing what we believe, and humbly “restoring” one another when we fall (See **Galatians 6:1-2**).

Paul confronts Peter, because he is harming the gospel, by not aligning himself with the “*Truth of the gospel*” (**Galatians 2:14a**; see too **2:5**; **Colossians 1:5**). Paul’s concern here is first and foremost toward God and His word, and then secondarily toward those that Peter was leading astray like Barnabus and the other believers (**Galatians 2:13**). It is not as though Peter doesn’t know the gospel, or believes in it, but this is an area of his life that he obviously struggles with. We can “Know” the gospel, but not believe it in certain areas of our life, and that often hurts our actions and decisions. What is impressive here is Peter’s attitude. Here is a younger, ex-persecutor of the church confronting him and he is willing and able to hear him.

The Essence of The Confrontation (**Galatians 2:14b-21**)

It is important to note that Paul’s concern here is the gospel, and not some culturally constructed moral issue. When he wants to motivate Peter, he doesn’t hinge on his behavior, but the fact that the gospel of justification calls us to another place in our thinking and our lives (**Galatians 2:15-16**). It is important to note here that Paul is clear that both Jew and Gentile are justified by faith in Jesus and not by any work of the law (**Galatians 2:16**, see specifically “***So also we have believed in Jesus Christ in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.***”). This seems obvious, but there are many now who teach that Galatians is not about “Justification,” but about ethnic spiritual markers such as circumcision, dietary laws, etc. What these Jewish believers were saying is that we are saved through the Messiah Jesus Christ, and through that this is expressed through the Jewish customs and law. Paul is clearly saying that NO, the gospel frees us from the need to carry out the types because the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in Jesus. Peter was living hypocritically because of his fear of those that thought otherwise. His hypocrisy led others astray, because they respected Peter. Paul is attempting to align Peter’s actions with the truth of the gospel. This includes reminding him of his identity, and the fact that he is not “Justified” by the words of man, and the customs of man, but by the work of Jesus on the cross. When we are aligned with this truth, we can live in harmony with others that don’t hold our beliefs and customs, because we don’t need their approval, or the culture’s approval for our self worth. We can live out our biblical convictions, and speak them freely in spite of opposition, because we are motivated by God and His truth, and not the culturally concocted truths that govern every culture and generation.

Basically Paul was saying if you believe in Jesus and not works, then why are you adding cultural customs to believers so they can be right with God? We are right with God because of Jesus, and not what we do!

...to the Heart

I hope we can see the significance of these verses in our own lives and discipleship! First let’s look at the significance of being in line with the “*Truth of the gospel.*”

First, that the gospel is a truth. It includes the fact that we are weak and sinful, that we seek to control our lives by being our own saviors and lords, however, God’s law was fulfilled by Christ for us, that we are now accepted completely though we are still very sinful.

Second, that this gospel truth has a vast number of implications for all of life. It is our job to bring everything in our lives in line with the thrust or direction of the gospel. We are to think out its implications in every area of our lives, and seek to bring our thinking, feeling and behavior in line. Next, the gospel truth is radically opposed to the assumptions of the world. But since we live in the world, we have embraced many of the world’s assumptions. Christian living is therefore a continual realignment process of bringing everything in line with the truth of the gospel.

In this case Peter’s racism is a sin because of the heart issues of pride and self-justification. It is this self-talk judgment that judges our selves based not on Christ, and our sin, but on our cultural “Norms” and others who appear to fall short of them.

It is in these type of areas that we need to help “Restore” one another to the truth of the gospel, so we stop hindering the gospel, and costing undo anxiety in our own lives and relationships!

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