

A Gospel Walk

Galatians 2:14

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Joshua Koura

Camden Valley Baptist Church

www.cvbaptist.com

Galatians Chapter 2:11-21. Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed; but before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! If I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Father, we ask now that You would send the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding, to shed light on Your word, that our hearts might be met with the truth of God, that our hearts might be stirred, challenged, brought to worship, be humbled, and that we might be found as Your people, submitted to Your word and in love following after You. And we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Last week, we considered Paul's confrontation of Peter, that these two Apostles, as it were, had a disagreement. And Peter, who was led by fear into hypocrisy, was not walking according to the truth of the gospel, and Paul confronted him to his face, and he was to be blamed. And we saw how the relationship between fear and hypocrisy is one that we need to be mindful of in our own lives. That if we allow fear to grip our hearts and we look

towards certain people to inform our actions and not to the Lord and to His word, we will find ourselves doing things very contrary to our own convictions and will be acting in a way that is contrary to our convictions and our own conscience, and then obviously, as Peter in this case, be playing the hypocrite.

Now, the thing that was happening here at Antioch was that Peter was eating with the Gentiles as normal for quite some time when he was visiting at Antioch. But as soon as some certain Jews came up from Jerusalem, Peter got afraid, thinking what they might think of him. And so, just because the Jews and the Gentiles don't eat together, so Peter all of a sudden was finding himself on a table with Jews only, and the Gentiles were eating on their own little table somewhere else. And this was a sin, the sin of hypocrisy, which led others that were with Peter to also sin the same.

Now, the way that Paul interprets this event is somewhat maybe different to how we would at first sight interpret this event. You see, for Paul, this was an attack, a direct attack on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter's hypocrisy was not just any kind of sin that could be categorized among other sins. What Paul keenly understood and was aware of, that troubled him, is that what Peter was doing was actually an attack and a front on the gospel itself. Now, even though Peter himself didn't say anything that would be contrary to the gospel, even though Peter did not say any heresy or did not teach any heresy, and in fact, Peter believed truth—we just see that in the previous verses of chapter number two, that he and Paul's gospel was the same—yet nonetheless, Paul acknowledges that Peter's sin is an attack on the gospel. And the way that we know this is from two ways in this context.

First is from verse 15 to 21, because when Paul addresses the very issue itself, his hypocrisy and what was actually happening there, Paul does so by expounding the gospel. He doesn't give an exposition on hypocrisy; he doesn't give an exposition on fear. He basically says, "Peter, what you are doing right now is undermining the very gospel of Jesus Christ." And so he goes on to expound to him, in front of them all, the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and talks about justification by faith and how Jew and Gentiles have both believed in Jesus.

Another way in which we know this is that in verse number 14, which we will be looking at more particularly this morning, it says that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel. So he looks at this situation, and he says that Peter and all the Jews that were following him by segregating themselves from the Gentiles, they were not walking straightforward in a straightforward manner in relationship to the gospel. What he's basically saying is that Peter's actions spoke louder than his words, that even though he confessed and professed the gospel of Jesus Christ, he actually

lived as though, at that very moment, at the least, as though he denied it. And Paul saw this. He saw Peter's actions, he saw Peter's behavior, he saw Peter's hypocrisy as a direct attack on the very gospel itself.

And so, in verse number 14, we look at this crooked walk that Peter had. Look at it, it says in verse 14, it says that he walked not straightforward, or they walked not straightforward according to the truth of the gospel. "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel," now I'd like to just say that this is an unfortunate translation that it says he did not walk, he did not—I was not straightforward about the truth of the gospel. And I think it can be better translated as the ESV does, or even the King James Version does. And the ESV puts it this way: "They were not in step with the truth of the gospel." So they're not in step with the truth of the gospel, or as the King James Version puts it, "They walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel."

And the reason why I think that they are, that is a better translation than "they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel," is for several reasons. First is that the word itself carries the connotation—the word straightforward carries the connotation of walking or not being straightforward. And so it takes out the whole picture of this idea of walking or living or acting. It says that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel. What does that not straightforward look like? You mean they didn't talk about it correctly? Well, no, more particularly, they were not in step with it, more particularly, they didn't act in accordance with it, or they were not walking uprightly according to the truth of it. And so that idea of walking comes in here, which the New King James doesn't bring out.

And also, the reason why I think the ESV and the King James have a better translation is because those little words that is translated in the New King James as "about" are translated as "with" or "according to." And why this is important is because it says that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, but if we translate it is as "they were not walking uprightly according to the truth of the gospel" or "with the truth of the gospel," all of a sudden, we see the gospel as a measuring rod and a standard and rule by which one may not accord themselves rightly with. And this is important for us also to understand.

And so, the way that this could be translated is the idea that Peter and those Jews, when they segregated themselves from the Gentiles, they were not walking a straight course with regards to the truth of the gospel, or they were not walking in step with the truth of the gospel, or walking uprightly in accordance to the truth of the gospel. So the truth of the gospel is a standard; it is a rule; it has expectations, and our walk must align itself with that standard and with that truth.

Now, my son is learning to walk, as many of you have been witnessing over the last few weeks. And as he is learning to walk, he does the cute waddles, and he stumbles quite frequently. But last week, he's been improving in his walking. But about two weeks ago, a week and a half ago, Johanan had this diagonal walk. You put him in the middle of the hallway, and he wants to walk to the bedroom, and all of a sudden, he starts veering off to the side. He's gonna go out into the rumpus room and not get straight to the front door where our bedroom is, or he veers to the right-hand side, and he's about to walk into our tiered shelf, their ornamental shelf in our hallway.

Now, I don't know, it's maybe because he doesn't know how to hold his head straight when he walks, and he's looking all over the place, thinking that way you look doesn't affect your walk. But the point is this, that he was not walking straight. He's doing much better these days, but he still struggles to walk straight. He would take his steps, and he would be of a diagonal sort. He would go off onto the side. If he was a car, he would be causing major accidents on the M5 because it wouldn't stick to his lane, and you would hear about him on the news. But thank God, he's not running any marathon or doing any sports activities just yet, or driving. But the point is simply that his walk was not straight.

Now, how did I know that his walk was not straight? That is because we have a standard by which we judge his walk. We know what it's like to walk straight. We're developed in our walking; as we're not immature in our walking, we're not babies; we've been walking for many, many years, and so we master, as it were, a straight walk. And therefore, there's a standard by which I could examine and observe his walking and therefore conclude that he's not walking straight according to what straightness is in terms of a walk. And so, I could apply that standard to his walk and make a judgment.

And in the very same way, this is what Paul is doing with Peter. Paul is taking this gospel, which he and Peter agree with, which the elders at the church, the apostles of the Church of Jerusalem, agree with, which they have established to be true, and he's looking at Peter's life, and he's looking at the Jews that are now following Peter with hypocrisy, and he's saying, "They are not walking straight. Their walk is crooked. They're veering off. The standard of the gospel is being undermined, not just by what they're saying—in fact, not even by what they're saying—but how they're behaving. The way that they're walking is testifying to the fact that they are being crooked in their relationship to the gospel."

In other words, Peter was out of step; he was out of tune; he was marching, as it were, to the sound of a different drumbeat there at Antioch when those

Jews from James came up to Antioch. And Paul, seeing this, blows the trumpet on the situation and says, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, stop here. Something is seriously and significantly wrong. Peter, you testify to a gospel that you're not walking according to. Let's organize this; let's set the record straight; let's adjust your behavior, your walk, your actions to accord with the message that we preach."

Now, the implications of Peter's crooked walk—you might ask then, how was he affecting the truth of the gospel by his walk? It's important for us to get that. How is Peter sitting with the Jews and not with the Gentiles, being a hypocrite, affecting the truth of the gospel? I mean, he still professes the gospel; he still believes that gospel. How is this a major issue?

Well, what Peter was doing is that he was destroying gospel unity. You see, at the very center of the gospel is the redemption and formation of God's new society, the church. God has called out sinners to Himself, gathered them together as God's new society. It is the Church of the Living God. He has redeemed us; He has formed us, brought us together in one body. That gospel goes out indiscriminately to all men, all women of every kindred, every tribe, every tongue, every nation. The gospel, the Bible says, is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first but also to the Greek. Jesus told His disciples that they are to make disciples of all the nations. They are to preach the gospel to every creature. They were not to withhold that message of hope and redemption to all mankind.

God was going to, through this gospel, gather His sheep from the Jewish fold but also from the Gentile fold, as John chapter 10 says, and there will be one fold and one shepherd, upon whom Jesus Christ will lead and shepherd and feed His people. Now, the Bible teaches us that that flock of our Lord would be made up of Jew and Gentile, be made up of male and female, be made up of black and white, and all the colors, as it were, in between, be made up of rich and poor, and all the social statuses that exist in between. There would be, as it were, no distinction among the people of God with regards to acceptance before God on any other rule but the fact that they themselves have come into contact and have believed on the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Ephesians chapter 2 says, these old distinctions that separated Jew from Gentile have now been abolished, and He has made peace through the blood of His cross. And so, we understand, as we know not only in our experience but as we see throughout the history of the church, that at the foot of the cross, the ground is level. No matter if one is a king or a peasant, when they come face to face with the King of kings, with the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, and they believe on His name, they are both brought to the place of humiliation, of recognition of sin, and of faith in the Lord Jesus

Christ, with whom they are united in His death and raised together with Him. So that in a real sense, their ultimate identity is one and the same: they are in Christ Jesus and accepted in the beloved.

And so, out of the wounded side of our Lord Jesus Christ emerges this new society, the Church of Jesus Christ. And it emerges not from circumcision, not from old covenant laws, not because of their lineage that they belong to the seed of Abraham, but rather because the blessing of Abraham has come also upon the Gentiles, that those who believe as Abraham believed in the Lord Jesus Christ will be sons and daughters of Abraham and of our God.

And what Peter was doing in how he was behaving and segregating, as it were, Jew from Gentile, his walk spoke contrary to the very essence of the message of salvation, that it is to bring together a people of God. And in verse number 14, Paul goes on to say these very strong words. He said, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

Now, you might say to yourself, how is Peter compelling Gentiles to live as Jews? He hasn't said a word up until this point. But what Paul is trying to tell us here is that by Peter's behavior, he was speaking volumes. He was forcing and compelling the Gentiles to act and live as Jews, even though they didn't have to because they had been redeemed by the Lord Jesus Christ. And he did this by his life and by his conduct and by his behavior. He undermined that very truth that was established at the council there in Jerusalem when they said that they will be saved just like us. The Gentiles will be saved just like us, according to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will be saved even as we are. They were rejecting that very truth of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ, where it says, "For by one Spirit we've been all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, with a—you know, whatever racial background or whatever may be—and we've been made to drink of the one and the selfsame Spirit."

And all that God did to unite a people to Himself through the blood of His cross, there at that very moment, Peter starts walking contrary to that, and the Church of Jesus Christ is divided there at Antioch. And Paul says, "You are doing something no different to the false brethren that we're doing in chapter 2, verse 4 and 5. You said they compelled Titus to be circumcised, and you are compelling the Jews to live as Gentiles, even though they don't need to. Even though you're not a false brother, Peter, but the reality is you're behaving in a way that is consistent with a false gospel and not according to the truth of the gospel."

You see, at this very moment, Peter was not thinking of the church in

heaven, made up of every kindred, tribe, tongue, and nation that is singing the praises of the Lamb who bought them by His blood. That standard that the gospel taught, he denied by his actions. What that teaches us is that it is possible for any one of us to walk not according to the truth of the gospel. It is possible, as God's people, not to have what may be regarded and called a gospel walk, to live in such a way that doesn't rightly reflect the truth of the gospel.

Now, in this particular case, what do we have? We have the gospel that brings unity. Peter is walking away that shows disunity, so it's not walking according to the truth of the gospel. But we all know that the gospel tells us more than just of unity. The gospel teaches us of love, the gospel teaches us of holiness, the gospel teaches us of the justice of God, of the righteousness of God. It teaches us of reconciliation. The gospel teaches us of mercy. It teaches us of servanthood. It teaches us of sacrifice. It teaches us of surrender. It teaches us of grace.

If you just for a moment were to stop and to reflect and to meditate on Jesus Christ, the crucified one, and brought your mind, as it were, to the scenes at Calvary there 2,000 years ago, where our Lord and our Savior was crucified, what truths would ring in your heart? What realities will stir your soul? I would argue and suggest to you that these are gospel truths, gospel realities, that the death of Jesus Christ testifies to us of. But these realities and these truths that the death of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of Christ and the gospel of Jesus Christ tells us of sets a certain standard by which we also ought to live.

You see, when we look at the crucified Lord, it's not just there to say, "Oh well, that's very horrific and terrible situation." That's not how the New Testament uses and develops the gospel for us. It helps us understand that what Jesus was accomplishing there, yes, was our redemption, but it is on the basis of His death and His resurrection that every other Christian obedience springs forth.

It amazes me how people would say things like, "We're not under the law, but we're under grace," which is—I just quoted a Bible verse—which is very true, but they would use that verse to basically teach that we're really not expected to live in any way that's under God and under His authority and by any rule and any law. Well, think about what's being said there just for a moment. To live under grace, to live under the shadow of the cross, to live according to the standard of the gospel, speaks to us of living a life that is totally dedicated and wholly submitted to the authority of Jesus Christ.

As the hymn writer puts it so beautifully, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so divine,

demands my soul, my life, my all." He's saying, "You want to live for God and for Jesus? Look at the cross of Jesus Christ. You go and survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. You know what your richest gain? You will count but loss, and you'll pour contempt on all your pride." Why? Because you'll see there, in the wonder of the cross and the beauty of the gospel, a compelling argument for you to walk in a way that's worthy of the Lord.

And this is the entire method of the entire New Testament. Anywhere you go, at any reading of any of the epistles, you will find the same argumentation made, as it is said in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "It's the love of Christ that constrains us or compels us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then all died. And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." And you know what Paul is saying? "Where do I get the motivation to go on and live for Jesus? Where do I get the motivation and the compelling to give my life, as it were, a sacrifice for Him and to live in accordance with His holy word? I tell you what, it's the love of Jesus Christ that compels me because I look at that cross, and I see love, and it pierces my heart and says, 'How can I not love such a Savior who loved me? He gave Himself for me,' says Paul, 'and therefore I shall just live for Him.'"

This is the argument made, and the New Testament is replete with many, many examples of the cross of Jesus Christ informing and motivating our obedience. Even in love between a husband and wife, we are told, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." He points to the highest expression of the love of God demonstrated in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. As a husband, you want to know how to live? Look at Christ. You want to know what it looks like to love your wife and to lay down your life for her? Look to the bleeding Savior who hung on Calvary for your redemption.

And then he goes on to say in 1 John 3:16, he says, "Okay, you want to love your brother? You want to know how to love your brother?" He says in 1 John 3:16, "By this we know love, by what? Because He laid down His life for us, and we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." How am I meant to love my brother? Look to the cross. He gave His life for us; you give your life for the brothers, for the sisters in Christ.

You say, "I want to walk in humility, and I'm struggling with the concept of being humble." Well, you can have a gospel walk, a gospel walk of humility, by looking at Jesus. Philippians chapter 2, have a read of it when you get a chance, but "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Himself the form of a

servant, and was made in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." And what Paul is saying to the believers at Philippi is, "Walk in humility. Don't bicker and quarrel with one another." And you say, "How am I meant to do this?" Look to Jesus. He left the glories of heaven so that we might be redeemed. He set aside the very things that He could have held on to, those very—the praise and honor and the glory—to come in the likeness of men to redeem us. And you don't want to walk in His way and give up some of your glory, some of your honor, some of your praise, so that you can walk in harmony with God's people?

You say, "I'm struggling with forgiveness, and people have hurt me, and they've done me wrong." You know what Paul says in Ephesians 4:32? "And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven you." You're really going to hold that grudge when you look at Jesus crucified for you, when He cries out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? You're going to hold on to that grudge?

The gospel truths, right throughout the scripture, inform all of our obedience. Even so far as giving, it's an amazing thought, but when Paul points to the churches of Macedonia, that they gave themselves first to the Lord, and then they gave their offerings to the poor saints at Jerusalem, he goes on to say in challenge to the Corinthians, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, for though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be made rich." He's saying, "And you hold on to your pennies? Don't want to help those that are in need?" Jesus held on to nothing in order to save us from our sins.

This gospel walk, standard, rule, is found everywhere in the New Testament to inform—in fact, inform our behavior. In fact, the entire epistles are built on that. When you read Romans from chapter 1 to chapter 11, all you have is the unfolding of the glories of the salvation of God in Jesus Christ. He is unfolding God's mercy to us, and how we're sinners, and that we're guilty, and that we're saved by grace through faith, and that we are united to Him in His death and in His life, and there's no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus. And he talks about His saving mercy and all the things that God has done to secure our redemption. And when he gets to the practical part of the epistle, which is chapter number 12—chapter 12, I say, 11 chapters, you've been unfolding the doctrines of the gospel of Jesus Christ—he says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." You know what he says to them? He goes, "I beseech you, and I beg you, according to the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice." He says, "The mercies of God, I've been explaining to you the mercies of God for 11 chapters. Now,

how should you respond to the mercy of God? You should present your bodies as living sacrifices to God."

In Ephesians chapter 1, it's the very same thing. The book of Ephesians, chapter 1 to chapter 3, he unfolds our salvation. We've been elected; we've been called; we've been adopted; we have been brought together in one body; He has bestowed mercy on us. And he says in chapter 4, verse 1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called." And in chapter 4, he goes, "Walk in love, walk in light, walk in holiness, put on the armor of God, fight the good fight." Why? Because you've got to walk worthy of the calling that you've been called to. What calling? The grace of Jesus Christ. He says, "Look at all these great things that Jesus Christ has done for your redemption. Now live for Him and follow in His way."

The question that comes to us is simply this: If the New Testament is built around this very gospel that informs, that shapes, that challenges, that compels us in our obedience, let me ask you this: Is your life and your obedience built upon the same? Does the gospel inform your actions? Does the gospel permeate your passions, your desires, and permeate your obedience to God? Does the meditations of the cross of Jesus Christ drive you to obedience, drive you to submission to His will, drive you to uphold every word that He has made known to us?

You see, the gospel, dear people of God, is not just something to be believed, and neither is it just something to be preached, but it is also something that we ought to live according to. And what Paul saw in that very moment was Peter not walking according to the truth of the gospel. He saw this very message of unity despised by the actions of one who did not walk in unity with the people of God. And Paul said, "There's something wrong with his walk."

What about our walk? You say, "Well, I do this, and I do that, and I don't do the other." Let me ask you this question. I'm not asking what you do and don't do and what boxes you may tick or not tick. I want to ask this question: Does your life spread out the fragrance of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Let me put it in this way: Do others see Jesus in you? When your walk is measured, does your friends, your family, your wife, your children, those that are dear to you, close to you, those that are unbelievers in your community, do they smell the fragrance of the preciousness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and say, "There's something different about this soul. There's a standard to which they live that the world does not know. There is this rule that they subject themselves to that shapes and informs all that they do"?

Or are you like Peter, playing the hypocrite, where we testify to the love and grace and mercy of Jesus Christ, we confess a gospel that we do not live according to? May God help us to order our steps in accordance with this standard. Let us pray.