



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 2: 11-14

Galatians

“Courage to Correct”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our passage is Galatians 2. We’re going to look at verses 11 through 14. If you're a visitor, we’re going through the Book of Galatians, and we’re in a section in the book where Paul is defending his apostleship.

A group of Jewish teachers, who consider themselves or call themselves Christians, had come to this region of Galatia where Paul had brought the gospel on his first missionary journey. They preached a different gospel. They preached on in which a person must obey the law as well as have faith in Christ. Specifically, they taught that a person must be circumcised as well as believe in Christ to be saved.

And so Paul is defending the true gospel against that, but one of the ways in which they sought to promote their view was to deny that Paul was a true apostle in which case the gospel that he preached was not one with apostolic authority and so Paul has been responding to that attack on the gospel by establishing his genuine authenticity as an apostle.

He’s continuing that argument in this chapter of Galatians in verses 11 through 14, “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the gentiles, but when he came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof fearing the party of the circumcisions. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

“But when I saw that they were not straight forward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas, in the presence of all, ‘If you being a Jew live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?’”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for this time together this morning, this opportunity that we have to be here, to worship as the Body of Christ, to sing hymns of praise, to recall your great blessings to us and then to read the scriptures and consider the meaning of the text that we have read.

Father, we pray your blessing is upon us as we do that and that you guide us in our thinking, that you'd instruct us and build us up in the faith and help us to understand the things that we've read and the importance of what Paul did there in the City of Antioch when he confronted Peter about his hypocrisy.

Help us to recognize the importance of defending the gospel and help us to understand better the purity of the gospel and what it is that we have believed and believing in Christ and how we're to live our lives. It's a great privilege, as I say, Lord, to study these things, but it's an equally great privilege to be able to come before the throne of grace, as we're doing now, and pray for ourselves, pray for your blessings upon us in this hour but also to pray for others and to pray for not only our spiritual welfare but the material things of life and the material concerns that we have, and we have many.

We thank you for what you give us. You give us much, and you give us abundantly. We live in a rich land, and we have many of the good things of this life, and we thank you for that. We thank you that you have made life in many ways very comfortable, and with that, you've given us many opportunities to serve you with the things that we have.

And so we pray that we would be of that mind and that we would do that and that the things of this world would not become too important to us, that we keep things in perspective and not think more highly of the material than we should but use the material as it should be used to bless others. We pray for those that are without, those that are lacking material things, those who are in difficulty because of a lack of employment. We pray that you bless them and provide for them and provide an opportunity for work. Give them diligence in that and may they see your hand in guiding them to a place of employment.

We pray for those that have lost health, who are experiencing sickness. We pray that you give them encouragement and that you'd give healing. You are the one in whom we live and move and have our existence. We obtain every breath of life

from you, and so, Father, our health depends upon you. And you can correct it, and you can get give healing to those who are sick and those who are recovering from surgery and a variety of difficulties. There is no difficulty that is too difficult for you.

So we pray for those that are sick, that you give healing, that you give encouragement, that you give comfort, and, Father, there are a variety of problems that we face. We pray that you would bless in the midst of whatever difficulty your people are in. Help them to look to Christ and remember the great promises that we have in him.

We ask you, Lord, to bless our land, bless our nation bless our government. We pray that you give wisdom to those whom you have placed in authority over us. We think of our military. Pray for the soldiers abroad, that you protect them and use them in a good work to establish peace in a troubled land, and we pray that you would protect them in doing that. We pray that particularly for those who come out of this church, those who have parents here. We pray for them that you'd protect them, and we think particularly of your own people, Christian men and women in the Armed Services, that they would have the good witness in that place and wherever they are.

Lord, we look to you to bless us now, prepare our hearts, to align our thinking that we would be ready for this time of study together and that it would be not only a time of learning but a time of worship. We pray in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] In Proverbs 9:8, Solomon says, “Reprove a wise man and he will love you.” Even wise men need correction but it takes courage to do that, to reprove, correct a person. Takes a man like John Knox, the great Scottish reformer of whom it was said he never feared the face of man.

Paul was a man like that. It's probably better to say Knox was a man like Paul. He never feared the face of man, and he demonstrated that once in Antioch when he opposed Peter to his face. He had already shown great courage in Jerusalem when he stood against influential men who demanded that Titus, a gentile convert, be circumcised.

Paul recognized that that was really an attack on the gospel, that they were trying to add a requirement to salvation that adds some other work to man's faith, and Paul opposed that. He opposed these men who were enemies to the gospel, but he also had the courage to oppose and correct friends when they were wrong, and that can take

even greater courage because, when we do that, we risk losing friendships and alienating ourselves.

But Paul was willing to do that for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of his friends, for the sake of Peter. For those reasons, he opposed him to his face. The Anglican minister and theologian, John Stock, called the incident, recoded in Galatians 2:11-14, without doubt, once of the most tense and dramatic episodes in the New Testament. Rudyard Kipling evidently thought, so he wrote a short story about this incident entitled *The Church that Was at Antioch*.

It was a great church but a church that was in danger of a major split. We sometimes hear it said that doctrine divides but love unites. It's probably fair to say that that's the motto of the modern evangelical church. Sometimes men are very fearful about taking a difficult stand.

Well, it wasn't Paul's motto. Not because he was a contentious man. He was not. Just the opposite Paul wrote, 1 Corinthians 13, the classic chapter in the Bible on love. He wrote the book of Philippians in which he urges united, but Paul knew that unity, at the expense of the gospel, at the expense of pure doctrine, at the expense of truth was too expensive. Unity in error is worthless. In fact, it is fatal.

And so it was out of love that Paul took his stand and rebuked Peter for his lack of courage, his lapse in good judgment, and he stood firm in that opposition. He loved Peter. Peter was a very dear friend of his and a man he respected greatly, but the time came when he had to put their friendship on the line for the sake of the gospel.

And I'm sure that Paul knew that, in reproving Peter, he was reproving a wise man who, in the end, would love him for it. Paul records the incident for a purpose, and that purpose was to defend his apostleship. The Galatians had been told that Paul was not an apostle equal with the 12, and therefore, his gospel was not one to be taken seriously because it didn't have apostolic authority. He was not equal with Peter. He was not equal with John or with the others of Jerusalem.

And so, to show that he was an apostle in his own right equal with the others, he recounts this incident in which he corrected Peter, one of the pillars of the church. The setting of this incident changes from Jerusalem, which we saw in the previous passage which was the capital of the Jews, to Antioch, a city in Syria where the great work of God was happening.

Antioch was an important city in the Roman Empire, a cosmopolitan city known for its paganism with its temple of Apollo and its immoral religious rights, and yet, it soon became a center of Christian activity. This pagan city became a place of great light. Apart for Jerusalem, no city played as important a part in the life and growth of the early church than did the City of Antioch.

Many gentiles in that city were converted, but interestingly, they were not converted through the ministry of the apostles. Acts 11 describes unnamed people carry the gospel there, simple Christians. Luke identifies them as men of Cyprus and Cyrene who went there and began to speak to the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus Christ.

This was the first time that this had happened, first time that Jews had begun speaking to Greeks. That was what made it particularly notable to Luke in the Book of Acts. We don't know who these people were that did the speaking, that did the evangelizing. That is what makes it kind of an intriguing and I think very significant event in the history of the church.

They weren't apostles, as I said. They weren't apostolic legates, men that had been sent out by the apostles. They were perhaps businessmen or people who had family members there in the City of Antioch. Maybe that's why they traveled. We do know they were Jewish people, but they weren't officials. They weren't apostles. They weren't leaders from Jerusalem. They were simple believers who, on their own, spoke about Christ, and the result was a great revival. Large numbers believed and turned to the Lord, Luke writes.

Now that's the power of the word of God. Doesn't take a professional to preach the gospel. It doesn't take a person who has been ordained. Just a Christian telling others about the Lord Jesus.

The results were so significant that they caught the attention of the church in Jerusalem which was surprised and puzzled by these unexpected, unplanned, unauthorized developments, but that's the way the Spirit works. The Holy Spirit moves in unpredictable ways. His movements are like wind. He blows where he will as our Lord says in John 3:8. He follows his own plans not ours.

He raises up people that we wouldn't expect to be raised up to do a great work. He goes places and does great things where we're not expecting great things to happen. His plans are his not ours, and that was certainly true in this great event in Antioch.

And so to learn what had happened, learn about these striking developments, the leaders in Jerusalem sent Barnabas there to examine the situation, find out about it, and he did so. And after witnessing the grace of God in that city, this great work that the Lord was doing, Barnabas stayed there to oversee the work.

The church continued to grow, many more souls were brought to the Lord, and the work got so big that it was more than Barnabas could handle alone, so he went to Tarsus. He found Paul. He brought him back, and the two of them began ministering together in the church at Antioch.

It was there that the name Christian was first coined. Luke mentions that in Acts 11:26. “The disciples,” he writes, “Were first called Christians in Antioch. It means Christ followers.”

The church became a great blessing to the world. When prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch and revealed that there would be a great famine over the world, the church of Antioch responded to that, and they gave a significant contribution to the church in Jerusalem for famine relief. Luke records that in Acts 11. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to deliver the gift, and that was when Paul and Barnabas had this conflict with the Judaizers there, the party of the circumcision that wanted Titus circumcised, and they stood their ground.

And the apostles agreed with Paul and Barnabas, and Paul says, “They extended us the right hand of fellowship,” but the occasion for that was the church of Antioch responding to the needs of the Jewish churches there in Jerusalem and Judea and helping them.

They were a great help to that church, and, as I said, that church in Antioch was a blessing to the world because, from that church, Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their first missionary journey. It was from there that they took the gospel to Galatia. It was there, from that church, that great missionary activity took place. In fact, it became the center of world evangelism.

And so, when we read in verse 11 that Cephas came to Antioch – Cephas, as you know, is Peter – it is understandable that he would have gone to that city to that church to see this great work that God was doing among the gentiles. He had heard about it from Paul and Barnabas, and he wanted to see it firsthand.

What he saw impressed him greatly, a large vital church that the Lord was building in the middle of a pagan city. Unlike the church in Jerusalem which was

almost exclusively a Jewish church, the church of Antioch was a mix of Jews and gentiles and predominantly gentile. It was what Paul would later describe in Ephesians 2:13-14 as, “Two groups made into one new man.”

And this is what the church is, one new man or one body composed of all kinds of people but united in one new man. These Christians in that church were witnessing in that city, and as a result, pagans were being saved, and in the church, the division that existed between Jew and gentile was abolished. And the divisions between the two were great, just in the secular world, the Jews looked down on the gentiles, called them dogs, would not have any associations with them, did not socialize with the gentile, and the gentile was deeply offended by that and looked down upon the Jew, despised the Jew.

So there was this great division between the two, but in this church at Antioch, the wall that divided the two was broken down, and they were one body, unified and active. And Peter, as he witnessed that, was very pleased with what he saw, very impressed. He began to associate freely with the gentile converts, going to their homes, having meals with them.

You can just imagine how the Christians in Antioch received him with great warmth and hospitality. They were no doubt very honored by the presence of an apostle from Jerusalem and particularly this apostle Peter coming to their city, coming to their church, coming to their homes, and so they served him with the best of their cuisine which may have been a challenge for Peter as he sat down to eat what they brought him which very likely would have been something like pork.

You can just see these gentiles wanting to put on a nice spread for Peter, and they bring out a roast big with an apple in its mouth. And there, for the first time in his life, Peter sitting down to a non-kosher meal, and, as I say, it must have been a challenge to him. He must have hesitated for a moment before taking a bit, but he did. He exercise his Christian liberty, and he ate pork. At least seems to be the meaning of verse 12 where Paul states that he used to eat with the gentiles. He was eating their food, eating a non-kosher diet.

Now that was a big step. Peter had been raised on the dietary rules of the law of Moses, and he had kept them faithfully all through his life. The Jews had very strong scruples about such things. We see that in the Bible. We see it in Daniel 1. You’ll remember that well known story of Daniel and his three friends in the City of Babylon,

had this privileged position, kind of elite group of young men who were being trained for government positions in the empire. And they sat at the king’s table, but they refused to eat the king’s food because it was non-kosher food. They put their lives on the line literally not to violate the scriptural prohibitions on certain kinds of food.

During Israel’s history, they have similar examples of that. During the Maccabean revolt against the Greeks some 200 years before Christ. Devote Jews resolved not to eat unclean food, and they suffered for it. There’s an account in 2 Maccabees of a mother and her seven sons who were martyred because they refused to eat pork.

Many years ago, there was an interview in the Dallas morning news with a rabbi, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz. I don't know who the rabbi is, but I read the article and found it very interesting because in it he gave his attitude and the Jewish attitude about pork. The pig is abominable and disgusting, and our souls are horrified by it he said. The pig was created to symbolize godlessness, lies and hypocrisy and a lack of physical and moral hygiene. Other than that, he loved pigs.

Now that’s a modern Jew speaking about pigs and pork, but I suspect that that probably reflects the attitude that Peter was brought up on. So his willingness to eat pork or any kind of non-kosher food – in fact, just to go into that house of a gentile and sit down to eat with them, that had been verboten, forbidden in Jewish circles. But do that represented a major shift in Peter’s thinking and faith, but something had happened to him.

He was given a vision by God earlier, some months or maybe a few years earlier when he was visiting Simon the tanner in Jaffa by the sea. Luke records it in Acts 10 how he went up one day, one morning onto the rooftop then he was praying there, meditating. It was about noon, and he became hungry and suddenly goes into this trance. And in this trance, he sees a sheep come down from heaven, and it opens up, and it’s full of kinds of unclean animals and then he heard a voice say, “Arise, Peter. Kill and eat.”

Peter was horrified, and he refused to do it. He’d never violated the Mosaic Law on dietary rules, and he said, no, he wouldn’t do it. Then he heard a voice say, “What God has cleansed no longer consider unholy.” That occurred three times, and the point was that a new age had begun. The Law of Moses, which was the regulating

system of life under the old covenant, was finished. That covenant had been brought to a close.

“Christ is the end of the law,” as Paul put it in Romans 10:4, and that’s what that vision was indicating to Peter. But the vision in Jaffa was not only about food and dietary rules. It was about people. It was about the gentiles and what Peter was learning and what was being prepared for is what would take place the next day up the coast in Caesarea, and that is that gentiles were no longer to be considered unclean, that they were to be considered as equal with the Jews.

Shortly after this, Peter does go up to Caesarea. He goes to the House of Cornelius, a Roman soldier, a Roman centurion who heard Peter preach the gospel there in his house and was saved along with the other gentiles who were there with him. It was an important event because Peter saw gentiles saved through the preaching of the gospel. He saw gentiles receive the Holy Spirit, apart from the Law of Moses, apart from any conditions through faith alone. Peter’s preaching, and, suddenly, the Holy Spirit falls upon these people, and they begin to speak in languages just as Peter had done and the others had done on the day of Pentecost.

They were saved without being circumcised. They were saved without being baptized. They were saved without any ceremonies at all, and Peter learned that day that the basis for fellowship between individuals is Christ whom we receive through faith alone. We have fellowship in the Holy Spirit not on the basis of rules and rituals.

Now that occurred sometime before he visited Antioch. So Peter knew well that it was permissible for a Jew to eat with a gentile and to eat whatever that gentile set before him, even if it were pork chops or cheeseburgers. Doesn’t matter.

Christianity is not about food and drink. It’s not about the stomach. It’s about Christ and a new heart. It’s about faith in him, so he understood these things, and he did this. He ate with a clear conscience. He did it in the freedom that he had in Christ, and he did it often because Paul says he used to eat with the gentiles and the idea of that statement is he used to do it regularly. He did it as a practice during his visit there in Antioch.

Now that is why Paul says that what follows in the story was a self-condemning act, an act of hypocrisy on Peter’s part when some men came down from Jerusalem. Paul identifies them in verse 12 as men from James who represented the party of the circumcision. So it’s the same group of people this faction within the church that

advocated the Law of Moses and wanted to impose it on new converts. They're the ones that wanted to have Titus, the gentile convert, circumcised. They insisted that that's part of the gospel, that's necessary for salvation.

So they come down to the City of Antioch and claim to be men from James. Their connection with James is dubious. James did not hold to the position of the Judaizers. He had already identified with Paul's mission and with Paul's gospel, the gospel that Paul preached, James and John and Peter had all said is the gospel that we preach. They extended to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

Later at the counsel of Jerusalem in Acts 15, James declare that the church ruled against the legalists and gave the judgment that the gentile converts were not to be troubled by the law. They were not to be put under the law.

So Paul's meaning here that these men were from James is probably that these men claimed to be from James. They claimed to have the authority of James, but they really didn't. They just posed as representatives of the apostles. Even so, they were men of some significant stature in the church because, when they came, Peter stopped having fellowship with the gentiles. He held himself aloof from them Paul says.

Now Peter didn't do that out of a conviction that this might offend the weaker brother. I'll stop eating pork. I'll adjust my lifestyle to be one that won't offend them and will help them spiritually. That's not the reason he did it. He did it, as Paul says, out of fear. He was intimidated by the party of the circumcision. He was afraid of what might happen to his reputation back in Jerusalem if the people there learned that Peter is sitting with the gentiles and eating the food that they serve him.

And so afraid of that, afraid of the influence these men might have, he yielded to the pressure. He did in Antioch what Paul refused to do in Jerusalem. It was what he had done earlier in his life when, out of fear of a maid servant, he denied the Lord three times. Peter knew better. He was a man of character and conviction, but, at this time, he had a moment of weakness and didn't have the courage of his convictions because he feared men. And because he feared men, he betrayed the truth.

So Paul calls his conduct in verse 13 hypocrisy. This word hypocrisy is an interesting word. It comes from the theatre, and in classical Greek, it was the word for actor. Literally, it means to answer from under meaning from under a mask. Now the Greek actors wore masks, and if the play that they were in was a comedy, then the mask had a smile on it. If the play was a tragedy, the mask had a frown on it, so you

knew what you were going to see when you went because of the kind of masks that they were wearing.

So they wore these masks, a happy face or a sad face, and they would speak their lines from behind the mask. So a hypocrite was an actor, one who was playing a part, hiding his true self behind a mask so to speak, hiding his true convictions, and that's what Peter was doing.

He wasn't the only one. Paul says that the rest of the Jews joined him, men who knew better, men who had enjoyed their Christian liberty there in Antioch. They felt just like Peter did. Most surprising of all was Barnabas. Even Barnabas, Paul says, he, too, got caught up in the hypocrisy, and so, for Paul, that must have been the greatest personal disappointment because Barnabas was his closest friend. Even Barnabas, the man he was closest to, he says, the man who had shown such great courage earlier in his life, in fact throughout his life.

Remember it was Barnabas who befriended Paul when he first came to Jerusalem after his conversion. He'd been in Damascus then he'd gone into the Arabian desert for some time, and three years later, after his conversion, he comes to Jerusalem, and everyone there is fearful of him, fearful because he's this man who'd been this great persecutor of the church and yet it was Barnabas that had the courage to meet Saul, meet Paul, take him under his wing and introduce him to the apostles and introduce him to the church. He befriended him when it was difficult to do that. He showed courage then. He showed courage there with Paul in Jerusalem when the two of them stood against the Judaizers, stood for the gospel, stood for the truth.

And this same man, Barnabas, had preached the gospel to the gentiles there in Antioch with Paul and so he knew better. He also backed down before these people in Antioch. Evidently, all of this happened while Paul was absent from the city. It's hard to imagine that he would have allowed things to progress as they did if he had been there.

He may have been ministering in another town nearby, and when he returned, he found the church divided between Jew and gentile. Didn't take long for Paul to understand what had happened. Peter and the others, he says in verse 14, were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel. Literally that means they were not walking straight.

They weren't living according to the truth, living consistently with the gospel. They were straying off the straight and narrow path taking the wrong road, deviating from the truth. Peter and Barnabas and the others hadn't changed their views. They knew the truth. Their convictions about these things were just as strong as Paul's. They believed the same things that Paul did, but, by their actions, while their minds were convinced of that truth, by their actions, they were denying all of that.

Their conduct commended the law as a way of life for the believer, denying our grace and freedom in Christ, putting gentiles under the yoke of the law. Paul knew what he had to do as painful as it would be. Most people, I think, don't like confrontation, and I don't like confrontation. It's difficult, and I don't think Paul liked confrontation, but he knew what he had to do.

And he had to confront Peter. He had to oppose him and do so publically, had to do it to his face. Otherwise, the whole Christian church, as John Stock put it, would have drifted into a Jewish backwater and stagnated. It would have become just another Jewish sect.

So, in a public meeting in the presence of all, he says, probably during a meeting of the church, Paul rebuked Peter. The meeting of the church is very similar to the way we meet on Sunday evening where various men can stand and speak and so Paul took that opportunity to stand and speak and rebuke Peter.

He said, “If you, being a Jew, live like the gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the gentiles to live like Jews?” In other words, Peter knew that he was free from the dietary regulations of the law. He knew that as well as anyone knew it. He knew that better than most people knew that. He'd received that truth in a vision. He'd received that truth directly from God, and he had enjoyed his Christian liberty. He had associated freely and eaten regularly with the gentile Christians.

But, by withdrawing from them, he was signaling to them that they had to keep kosher in their diet. They had to follow Jewish customs. His actions, therefore, were compelling gentiles to live like Jews, even though Peter himself had the freedom to live like a gentile, not live under those Jewish rules.

Peter's hypocrisy was wrong. All hypocrisy is wrong, but this was dangerously wrong. It was a threat to the gospel because it suggested that faith is not enough, that grace is not enough, that gentiles needed to submit to the Law of Moses in order to gain God's full acceptance and to gain full righteousness.

That is contrary to the truth of the gospel, as Paul puts it, which is that God saves sinners freely on the basis of grace, on the basis of the work that Christ did on the cross no on the basis of law keeping, not on the basis of the things that we do. He accepts us fully, completely and forever at the moment of faith. That’s the gospel for the Jew and the gentile alike.

There is one savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. There is one way of salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ, and there’s one church, one family of God made up of both Jews and gentiles. We are all equal in Christ and equally loved by Christ who died equally for us.

But, by separating from the gentiles, Peter and the others were making the gentiles feel like second class citizens within the church, signaling that they had not yet been fully accepted by God.

William Carey, the great missionary to India, refused to baptized anyone who continued to practice the caste system in India by refusing to share a meal with other Christians of different social classes, different castes within that system. His first convert from Hinduism was a man named Krishna Pal who, when he became a Christian, broke the caste by having a meal with the missionaries.

Now we can hear a story like that or we can read our text here where there’s a kind of caste system between the Jew and the gentile and their attitudes for one another and see that as something in the past, the distant past or a different and distant place, and yet we, in the West, can practice an unofficial caste system.

We may separate from others who are different from us due to race or due to politics and differences we have over that issue or something else. There are many kinds of issues that we may find important and that we differ with another person on, have a different perspective on a particular issue, and we don’t associate with them, avoid them in one way or another.

That’s a terrible sin. It is a denial of the love of God. It’s a denial of God’s plan of salvation which has, as the object of its love, all types of people. Revelation 5:9 states it plainly, “Christ has purchased for God with his blood sum from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.”

In other words, God has love for all kinds of people. He loves them and so we’re to love them. We’re to love his people whoever they are. One of the clearer

lessons of this failure at Antioch is that actions have consequences. They have influence people for good or for bad.

Peter’s example influenced the Jewish members of the church. They followed his lead, and our example influences people. It makes a statement. A statement may deny our true convictions, but it makes a statement, the things that we do. So Paul had to address Peter’s conduct. He couldn’t deal with it privately. He would rather have done that, but he felt that he had to deal with this publically because it had become a very public problem.

And so with his question to him, Paul unmasked Peter and exposed his hypocrisy and his error. It must have been a very embarrassing moment for Peter as well as a painful moment for Paul. He took no pleasure in humbling another apostle, took no pleasure in embarrassing his friend, took no pleasure in recalling this incident, by the way. The only reason he includes it here in the letter is to show that he was a true apostle. He’s equal with the 12. He wasn’t under Peter’s authority, and, in fact, he exercises – at least in this instance, he exercises authority over Peter.

His distaste in recounting the incident is seen in the fact that he mentions it only briefly. He didn’t want to dwell on it. He didn’t want to get into the details, in fact, leaves a lot of the details of it. For example, he doesn’t tell us about Peter’s response, and we might wonder, well, how did Peter respond to that. What was the outcome of this there in the church? He doesn’t mention that.

Now I think it’s clear, from what follows, that we know what Peter’s response was. Peter responded to Paul well. He responded to him with maturity, and I think with gratitude. At the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 which took place after these events and after Paul wrote the Book of Galatians, Peter took the lead in defending the gospel that Paul and defended there in Antioch.

Later in 2 Peter 3, he makes mention of Paul. He calls him our beloved brother Paul and speaks of the wisdom given him. Solomon said, “Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.” Peter was a wise man who had a failure but who loved Paul for the correction.

Now, if Peter could fail, if Barnabas could fail, we can fail. So we must constantly be on guard knowing that we’re weak and be constantly cultivating a clear and strong conviction about the truth of God’s word, but it’s also important to know that Peter not only fell. He recovered from his fall.

Martin Luther drew wisdom and encouragement from that. He wrote, “If Peter fell, I may likewise fall. If he rose again, I may also rise again.” That’s true. God raises us up from our failures and our falls. In fact, he knows our condition better than we do. He knows our weakness. As the psalm put it, Psalm 103, he himself knows our frame. He is mindful that we are but dust, and so he deals with us patiently and mercifully, and he raises us up from our failures and our falls.

Paul’s example has a lesson for us, and that is we are always to stand for the truth and have the courage, if necessary, to correct those who contradict it even if they’re our good friends. Now that can be lonely. It was for Paul.

Everyone joined the other side, even Barnabas, Paul’s close friend. Paul stood alone, but he wasn’t really alone. The Lord was with him. That was always his experience. Years later, when Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and was alone in prison one night, Luke writes, in Acts 23:11, “The Lord stood at his side and said, ‘Take courage.’”

At the end of his life, when he was put on trial in Rome, he wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, some of the last words that he wrote. He wrote, “No one supported me. All deserted me.” That is an amazing statement to me. All deserted Paul, this man to whom so many were indebted, this one who had given the church so much, has given us so much. He stood alone.

People were afraid, afraid to be associated with Paul, so he stood alone. Now he didn’t write that to Timothy to complain about the lack of faithfulness of his friends there in Rome. He wrote that to say, “But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me.”

We can expect the same if we’re living like Paul, if we stand for the gospel in our home or at work or at school. We can expect, at times, to stand alone because it’ll be an unpopular stand that we take. We can expect that. Are you willing to do that? Are you willing for Christ’s sake to stand alone? That’s a question we should ask ourselves.

Well, it’s difficult, but if you do that, you can know this. You’re never alone. Christ will stand with you, and he will strengthen you.

Finally, there is another lesson for us in this incident in Antioch, and one of the great lessons to us is we are free in Christ. We should not submit to rules and

regulations that God has not imposed upon us, and we should not impose rules and regulations on people that God has not placed on us. We are free.

Now that doesn't mean that we're free to sin. Free from the law is not code for antinomianism, lawlessness. We are to live godly, moral, disciplined lives following the principles of the New Testament as set forth by the apostles and by Christ and by the life of Christ, his example to us.

There are rules and regulations. There are principles that we are to follow, and it's a sin to violate them. But there is a tendency in people to go beyond God's word and impose rules for justification and sanctification for salvation and for the life of holiness and development in the Christian life.

Let me just say this. The gospel is sufficient. Christ is all we need for justification. Christ is all we need for salvation. The word of God is all we need for faith and practice. Christ paid it all. He made atonement for our sins at the cross. All that a person must do is trust in him, recognize your need for the savior and believe in him. Those who do are justified at that moment. They are declared righteous at that moment and declared righteous forever, accepted by God fully and completely and forever at that moment of faith.

There's nothing more we need to do to gain further acceptance by God. We are fully, 100 percent accepted by him. I think the problem Christians so often face in life is they think they've got to do something to gain God's approval. There's nothing we can do to gain his approval. Once we have belief, we are fully and completely accepted by him, and based upon justification, then he begins to work and change us, change us in reality in our own experience, change our character.

But our standing with him is complete. It is full. It is as complete as it can be. We should rest in that and take great comfort in that. There's nothing that we can add to the work of Christ. There's freedom in that, freedom for rest and enjoy our relationship with the Lord. That should give us joy.

Do you have that joy? Have you trusted in Christ? Have you recognized that you're a sinner? Don't be terribly offended with me if I say that you're a sinner because we're all sinners. Every one of us has fallen short of the glory of God. Not one of us has reached perfection. Sure, we can admit that.

But, if we're not perfect, then we need a savior because God demands perfection. The savior is Jesus Christ. His righteousness becomes our righteousness

the moment we believe. Person who trusts in him has all of that imputed to him, the work of the cross, the righteousness of his life. His death becomes our death. Experience, it's applied to us.

If you're without faith in Christ, look to him. Trust in him. That's all we're asked to do. The moment you do, you're justified, accepted by God, forgiven of your sins and given eternal life. May God help you to do that.

And those of you who have done that, and I think it's the majority if not all of us here, and may God, by his grace, make us like the apostle Paul and make us like John Knox. May it be said of us that we never feared the face of man and may we live strong and steadfast for the gospel. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the example of the apostle here and how he stood alone, willing to make great sacrifices but no sacrifice was too great for the apostle when it came to defending the gospel and standing for Christ.

We thank you for his example. We pray that we would emulate it, pray that you would help us to understand better the grace of God and better the gospel we believe in and be true champions of it. We pray these things in Christ name. Amen.