

6-5-22

**Galatians 2:11-16.**

What are we to do when our behavior doesn't add up to the gospel? Sometimes we just have a bad day, right? But what about when our habitual behavior doesn't add up to the gospel?

Have you ever had the treat of confronting someone that's behavior just doesn't back up the gospel that they say they believe in? Fun huh?

Today we are going to look at just that, one titan leaders' behavior wasn't adding up to the gospel. Sound juicy?

*"Stand for the truth even when others can't stand the truth."*

**Read Galatians 2:11-16.**

**Background:** Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire, was the main center of Gentile Christianity. **Acts 11:26** tells us believers were first called Christians in Antioch. There was a strong church there, comprised of two groups of people. Jewish Christians had been raised keeping the dietary Law of Moses, and Gentile Christians came out of the pagan religions where there were no dietary regulations.

One day the Christians in Antioch got exciting news. The great apostle, Simon Peter, was coming to visit! Peter who had walked on water; Peter who had seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the grave; Peter who preached on the Day of Pentecost and had 3,000 converts. He was the Christian rock star of this time—and he was coming to visit the church in Antioch.

His visit to Antioch sets the stage for the confrontation between Paul and Peter. As we examine this issue, I want to talk about three of the principal characters, Peter, Barnabas, and Paul. We'll learn a spiritual truth about each of them, and then a personal lesson we can apply to our lives.

What can we learn from Peter?

**I. PETER: Christians can/will go astray.**

- **Reread verse 14.**
- The entire disagreement had to do with what Peter ate, and with whom he ate. It was a food problem and a fellowship problem.
- **Acts 10:13-15**, God gave Peter a dream where he saw all kinds of unclean animals. God said, **"Kill and eat."** Peter said, **"Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."** God had said, **"What God has cleansed you must not call common."** After that Peter understood that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as Jews. He went to the home of a Roman Centurion and ate with him. So, this was an issue Peter had already settled.

- Peter was eating everything that the Gentiles were eating, sitting with them and fellowshiping with them until some “important” traditional Jews came into town. After these VIP’s showed up Peter not only avoided eating things that customary Jews didn’t, but Peter also pushed others not to eat it as well. Peter’s spiritual behavior changed.
- So, when Paul witnessed all of this, he confronted Peter. In verse 14, Paul asks Peter, **“If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel (force) Gentiles to live as Jews?”**
- When Peter changed his behavior, I imagine the Antioch Christians (Jewish and Gentile) were standing there with their empty plates thinking, “What in the what? What up with ‘dat? Peter has been scarfing down pork, shrimp cooked in butter wrapped in bacon and eating with us for the past month! Why the sudden change?”
- Peter was being two-faced. He acted like someone set free by grace when he first arrived. But when the Jerusalem Jews arrived, he reverted to Old Testament rules and regulations.
- Paul wrote that Peter acted like that out of **“fearing those who were of the circumcision.”** In other words, these were the Pharisaical Christians from Jerusalem who demanded Gentile men be circumcised before they could be saved. He was afraid they might report his behavior to Pastor James. So once again we see the same old fearful Simon Peter who denied Jesus three times on the night Jesus was arrested.
- Peter’s behavior didn’t line up with the gospel. Paul used the word ortho-podia. Ortho means “straight”, and “podia” means, “foot.” Orthopedic medicine is concerned with the correction or prevention of skeletal deformities. When two bones are out of line, an orthopedist is called in. Paul was a Christian orthopedic surgeon. When he compared the gospel of grace and Peter’s conduct he said, “These two don’t line up! Peter, your walk doesn’t match your talk!”
- One of the strongest pieces of evidence of the Divine (God wrote the bible, not man) authorship of the Bible is the fact that the Bible doesn’t try to gloss over the mistakes and failures of the main characters. If ordinary people had written the Bible, they would have covered up the faults of the heroes. But this book is full of the stories of great people who failed tremendously. That should give hope to every one of us who have ever failed. We’ve all made poor choices and dumb mistakes, but God can still redeem your life and use you.
- Peter’s sin wasn’t a sin of the flesh. He didn’t lie, cheat, or steal. It was a sin of hypocrisy. Peter showed one face to the Antioch Christians before the VIPs came, and he showed them a different face when they arrived.
- It was also the sin of racism. Peter’s conduct demoted the Gentiles to an inferior status to the Jews. When Paul observed Peter’s conduct, there was something inside of him that made him ask, “What’s wrong with this picture? It doesn’t line up!”
- In **Acts 10**, twice Peter admittedly said, **“God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean” (v.28), “In truth I perceive God shows no partiality.” (v.34) But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.** <sup>36</sup> **The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—**

- Does your walk match your talk about how we are all one in Christ Jesus?

## II. **BARNABAS: Christians can/will be led astray.**

- Paul wasn't afraid to name names. **(v.13)**
- Hypocrisy is contagious. Peter's two-faced hypocrisy influenced the other Jewish Christians, including Barnabas, to act the same way. Barnabas is an important Christian leader in the book of Acts. In **Acts 4** sold land and put it at the disciples' feet. Barnabas also nicknamed encourager was the first to welcome Paul into the faith, when all the other disciples feared him.
- He was Paul's encourager on the missionary journeys. But despite all the good things about him, he followed Peter's bad example and behaved as a hypocrite in front of the Jerusalem Jews. Paul would have said, "Come on Barney!"
- Personal lesson: *I can't be led astray if I'm following Jesus*
- We need to learn that even the godliest examples like Peter and Barnabas can fall under temptation. If you are following anyone but Jesus, you're setting yourself up to be disappointed.
- And just let me confirm what you already know: I'm am a fallible leader. The only time I speak infallibly is when I'm quoting or reading the infallible scripture, the Word of God. I'm trying to follow Jesus, and if you're following Jesus, we'll be going in the same direction. So, let's all keep our eyes on Jesus because He is the only perfect leader.
- Non-Christians love to point out that the church is full of hypocrites. Sometimes when I talk about Bethel or church in general, often the response is "Oh, the church is full of a bunch of hypocrites." I always smile and say, "You're exactly right, and the biggest hypocrite is the guy on stage preaching! Oh, by the way we always have room for one more!"

## III. **Paul: Graceful Christians help those who are going astray.**

- **Read verse 14 again.**
- Notice how Paul confronted Peter.
- First, he confronted him publicly. When I read this passage for the first time I remember thinking, "Why didn't Paul go to Peter one-on-one?" After all, didn't Jesus give us a plan for reconciliation in **Matthew 18**? He instructed us to go to our brother one-on-one, and then if he won't hear you, take someone else. And then if he still won't listen, then you take it to the church. Why didn't Paul do that?
- If someone has personally offended you or sinned against you, then you should go to them privately. But Peter's hypocrisy didn't just affect Paul: It affected others. And it was a public sin against all the Gentile Christians in the church.
- Second, Paul confronted him gently. He didn't blow his cool and say, "Peter, you're a rotten hypocrite! Paul wrote these impressions years after the confrontation. Notice Paul simply asked Peter a question. "Why are you forcing the Gentiles to live like Jews?"
- Paul handled it fairly, firmly with a mix of gentleness. **(Gal. 6:1)**

- Jesus only gave us one law, and it has two parts. He said to love God with all your being and to love your neighbor as yourself. Love requires us to help someone when they are on the wrong track.
- Personal lesson: *Grace frees me to be truthful to those who stumble.*
- When we notice a fellow believer on the wrong track, we should speak the truth in love. If I see you driving toward a bridge that is out, the kindest, most loving thing I can do for you is to tell you to stop and to go in another direction.
- There have been plenty of times in the 13 years I've been pastoring when I made the wrong call about something. I've made plenty of mistakes and I'm sure I'll make some more. But as I reflect on those failures, I thank God for the friends who came alongside me to help me see the truth. So, be a friend when you see a friend who stumbles. Help them get back on their feet and point them in the right direction.
- So, what happened to these three leaders? Did they separate over this issue? No. The Bible indicates they worked through it and continued to be partners in the gospel. Later Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth and named Peter as one of the important Christian leaders.

**In 2 Peter 3:15 Peter said, “And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,”**

- Barnabas continued to be Paul's partner in their missionary journeys. The goal of loving confrontation is to unite, not to divide, and that's what happened in this case.

## **Conclusion**

My mom used to say, “Before you judge (criticize) someone else, walk a mile in their shoes.”

Of the three characters we spoke about today, whose Crocs are you wearing?

Are you like Paul and you need to help someone who has stumbled?

Or are you in the Crocs of Barnabas and you're following the wrong leader? Take your eyes off a person and put them on Jesus.

Maybe, like Peter, you need to examine your life and make sure your conduct matches what you believe about the gospel.

Do you need some gospel help today to get your lifestyle back in line with your lip-style?

Let's make sure that our actions are consistent with our beliefs.

