

Galatians 2:11-21

Ever Been A Hypocrite?

You know, if there was an “unpardonable sin” of our culture it would have to be hypocrisy. When you Google the words “hypocrisy” and “hypocrite” you get 3,150,000 hits. Number one on the list: “Official website of Sweden's number 1 death metal band Hypocrisy.”

The dictionary defines hypocrisy as *1: an expression of agreement that is not supported by real conviction 2: insincerity by virtue of pretending to have qualities or beliefs that you do not really have.*

The honest truth is that there have been plenty of times in all of our lives that we've been hypocritical.

It's telling though, that the harshest criticism seems to be reserved for religious hypocrites.

I was thinking about that this week as I was preparing, and you know, the more I thought about it, the more I agreed. We ought to reserve the harshest criticism for religious hypocrites.

All other forms of hypocrisy only have a temporary effect. But religious hypocrisy is the one form of hypocrisy that can impact a person for eternity.

Now, if you think that you can't stand hypocrites, listen to what Jesus--usually characterized by his patience and gentleness--had to say about them:

Woe to you... hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness...you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" Matthew 23:27,28,33.

To "pull" a punch is a boxing term which means “to hold back,” to "pull back" on the punch.

Jesus didn't pull any punches, did He? Those are harsh words, and they tell us in no uncertain terms that hypocrisy, whether it's demonstrated in the life of a the guy in the pulpit or the guy in the pew, is an offense to God.

We're several weeks into a study of the New Testament book of Galatians.

Open to Galatians 2 pg 1034

Galatians is a letter written under the inspiration of God through a man named Paul. Paul who was once a persecutor of Christians is now a servant of Jesus.

He shares his faith in a region of Asia Minor named Galatia and church congregations are born.

In time Paul moves on to tell others the Good News of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. It isn't long after he's gone that some guys show up to straighten everybody out.

They take it upon themselves to follow Paul around and correct his teaching.

But, they don't talk with him, instead they show up after him to tell the Galatians that Paul is an imposter. He doesn't have any authority from God and his preaching is all wrong.

Their message was, "You really haven't come to God in God's way. God's way isn't by faith alone like Paul told you. God's way is faith in Jesus plus obedience to the Law of Moses."

It sounded convincing, and the Galatian believers quickly jumped on these Judaizers' bandwagon.

There was only one problem. No one can make themselves acceptable to God. Not even by keeping God's laws. God's laws are perfect. But we aren't. That's why we can't make ourselves right before God by keeping them.

This is the heart of the Bible's message. This is the culmination of what God was doing since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. As we'll see today, it's all about the cross. Everything points to the cross.

Only Jesus' cross can make us right with God. Only Jesus cross can pay for sin.

So suddenly people who had trusted Christ for forgiveness were saying Jesus and his cross were insufficient. They bought into the idea that they could add to what Jesus had accomplished.

Just like God has a plan, Satan has a plan. God's plan is to save and Satan's plan is to destroy. The difference between God and Satan though is that God's sovereign and Satan's not.

So out of this trouble and confusion our sovereign God inspires a letter that becomes an important component of God's truth for us. Not only does God use this letter to solve the immediate problem but 2000 years later He's still using it to keep us straight.

When Paul gets word of what's happening he fires off this letter of explanation.

Here's what we've seen in the past weeks. In chapter one Paul explains how his message came from God and not people. Only God could turn him from persecutor to missionary.

In chapter two he went on to explain that even though he didn't get his message from the apostles in Jerusalem, they all agreed with what he was preaching.

Now in the last half of chapter two Paul includes one more historical incident to back up his message and authority.

As we finish up chapter two this morning I want us to start with this principle:

I. Don't Offend The Conscience Of Another By Your Actions

We saw a couple of weeks ago that a big question in the very early church was what to do with the Gentiles.

The Bible clearly teaches that God chose the Jews to be His people. They were the nation that He singled out for a unique blessing.

He didn't choose them because they were better than other people. He didn't choose them because they were more holy. He chose them just because He wanted to choose them.

He choose them to write the Bible and to be guardians of His truth. He choose them to be the nation that would give birth to the Messiah.

One of the ways that He kept them separate and pure was through His law.

Remember God's law was never given to non Jews.

Jesus was the fulfillment of all that God's law pointed to. He was the High Priest, the sacrifice, the holy place, all in one.

He died for sin and rose again so that anyone, Jew or Gentile could be forgiven and made part of God's eternal family.

The problem was the Jews had a hard time seeing how non-Jews could fit in to God's plan. They though the only way God could accept a non-Jew was if they adopted Judaism first.

In Acts 15 there's an account of a big church meeting where they discussed all this. The conclusion was non-Jews don't have to become Jews by religion. They just need to believe in Jesus.

But that decision didn't solve everything.

Read 11-12

Here's what's going on. Peter and Paul were in Antioch. The early church often held what was called "love feasts." They were 1st century covered dish suppers. Everyone brought food to share and at the end of the meal they would have a communion service.

In Corinth, Greece Paul had to rebuke the church because rather than everybody eating together, they were divided along economic lines.

In Antioch it was along racial lines.

For centuries this division had existed. For a Jew to eat with a Gentile was considered sinful.

Paul and Peter agreed that God's forgiveness was for Jews and Gentiles alike. All were saved by faith in Jesus.

In Antioch everything was going great. Paul the Jew ate with the Gentile believers without any conflict. The distinction was done away with in Christ.

Peter showed up and he ate with them too. They were all celebrating their faith together, until something happened that put Peter to the test.

Into this church in Antioch came "certain men from James." In other words they came down from Jerusalem claiming the backing of James.

Look back at 1:19

James was Jesus brother. Mary was their mother. When James finally believed that his own brother was Savior and Lord he became a leader in the church at Jerusalem.

So these guys in chapter 2 claimed authority. They're the same guys back in Acts 15 who said Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the Mosaic law plus believe in Jesus to be saved.

Acts 15 says they were Pharisees. They were influential and well respected leaders in Israel.

They come into town and Peter begins to feel pressure. They had a moral objection to this mixing of the races. They were men of influence. Peter doesn't want to rock the boat so what does he do? He backs off from eating with the Gentiles.

Paul was a great proponent of trying not to offend people. We'd expect him to understand Peter's actions. but that's not what happens at all.

He says, "I withstood him to the face." The word translated "withstood" is the Greek word *anthistemi*. It comes from *anti* which means "against" and *histemi* which is the verb "to stand."

He says, "I took a stand. I had to get in his face because he was wrong."

"He was guilty. It wasn't a good thing.

It wasn't even a neutral thing. It was wrong. Peter was afraid."

Look at the result: **Read 13**

Wow. At the start of this study of Galatians I told you you'd find some of the strongest words in the NT in this book. We're looking at some right now.

Peter, the rest of the Jewish Christians, even Paul's missionary partner, Barnabas are all said to act hypocritically.

Our English word "hypocrisy" comes from the Greek verb *hupokrinomi*, which literally means "to answer from under."

It came from the Greek tragedies. Greek actors were all men and rather than wearing costumes, they held up a mask which represented their character. They even showed different emoting by using different masks.

The sign of the theater is the two masks. That's a hold over from the Greek days.

The noun *hupokrisis* came to mean "a stage actor."

Paul said I had to go toe to toe with Peter because he was hiding his real beliefs like an actor conceals his face under a mask.

Peter knew better. God had even used him to open the door of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Now he acted against his knowledge because of pressure and he even sucked Barnabas into being a hypocrite too.

Here's the biblical principle of how we were supposed to live out our lives.

I cor 8 pg 1017

One of the questions Christians had living in a Greek culture was what to do with meat offered to idols. Most of the meat sold in the market was first sacrificed to pagan gods so Christians asked is it OK for us to eat it?

Is there the danger of guilt by association if we eat it? **read 8:4**

Idols are just wood and stone. They're not God even though they're called "gods."

Read vs 8 Meat offered to a pagan idol is just meat. It won't hurt you if you eat it. But... **Read vs 7 & 9-13**

I might know it's just meat, but another believer might not be so sure. They have doubts about whether it's OK to eat but, they see me do it and so they join in.

They eat too but then their riddled with guilt. Final analysis, If you know a fellow Christian isn't convinced that something's OK to do, don't flaunt your liberty.

Turn to I Corinthians 10 read 31-33

This goes for non-Christians too. In other words, you don't invite your Muslim neighbors over and serve ham. That would be offensive.

So now back in Galatians 2, why was this situation different? Why did Paul go toe to toe with Peter on this, and to top it off, right in front of everybody?

It's like, why did meek and mild Jesus blast the Pharisees?

Here's the key.

The People that Peter was trying to please weren't sincere truth seekers. They were false teachers who only had one thing in mind, taking over.

The Jewish Pharisees that Jesus leveled His harshest words at weren't open to discussion. They weren't truth seekers. They opposed God, but they did it under the cloak of serving God.

What's the big deal with Peter ducking out of a church supper? When he did he clouded the truth of the Gospel.

- I. *Don't Offend The Conscience Of Another By Your Actions*
- II. *Don't Allow The Truth Of The Gospel To Be Clouded By Your Lifestyle*

Verse 14a through “gospel”

If I invite my Muslim neighbor over and serve beef instead of ham, I’m not compromising truth, I’m just being sensitive to his religious beliefs. I don’t want to put up any barriers to our friendship. I want to be free to talk about religious issues.

If I was trying to establish a friendship with my Mormon coworker I wouldn’t offer him an iced tea since that’s forbidden by his faith.

If I knew that a fellow Christian thought something wasn’t appropriate that I had no problem with, I would avoid that thing when I’m around them so as not to cause them concern.

Those are all situations in which there’s plenty of latitude.

But see the difference here? By refusing to eat with the Gentiles Peter gave the impression that he agreed with the guys who said God won’t accept Gentiles unless they adopt the OT law.

That was over and against Paul’s message that a person must trust in Jesus Christ alone. That was adding requirements to the Gospel.

Not only that, but while the false teachers looked at Peter’s actions as a victory, the gentile believers looked at it with complete and utter confusion. They had believed that God saved them and made them part of His family.

Now Peter’s saying they’re not really part.

See how carefully we have to weigh our actions?

So Paul watches all this unfold. When he saw that Peter wasn’t straightforward about the truth of the gospel he didn’t go complain to someone else. He didn’t just grumble to himself. This was a matter with eternal consequences.

He followed the Biblical pattern and went straight to Peter. **Read 14b**

“Peter, here’s a question for you. If you don’t even keep all of the law of Moses yourself, why are you trying to force the Gentiles to keep it?”

Why do we tell people to do things we haven't done?

This is from a youth ministry web site for teens put out by an otherwise good organization. This is their explanation of what to do to be forgiven.

You Must Turn Away From Your Sins... Just as you change directions when you realize you're walking the wrong way, you must repent, or turn away, from you sins. Jesus is the right way. As you turn away from your sins, place your faith in Jesus to receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Through prayer you can: Admit to God that you are a sinner and that you are turning away from you sins; Believe in Jesus by thanking Him for dying on the cross and rising from the dead for your sins; Commit your life to Jesus by asking Him to come into your life as your Savior and Lord.

Think about that. I have no doubt that their well intentioned. There's no question that they love kids and want to see them turn to God.

But the only thing we can turn from to be saved is our false concepts of salvation. That's the meaning of the word repent. It means to have a change of mind. Salvation isn't about stopping sinning. If it is then we're all in big trouble. The Bible says this, speaking to Christians: *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.*

That's not an excuse for not dealing with sin in our lives. God has called His children to holiness. But the wrong road people need to turn away from is their false idea of salvation.

To tell people they have to turn away from their sins before God will accept them is to add works to the Gospel. That's the whole point of the Book of Galatians.

We read it in chapter one. If anybody adds works to the gospel they're under the curse of God.

What need to turn to God all right. We need to turn to God from unbelief. That's repentance. That's the gospel.

If we tell people they need to turn from their sins in order to come to God but

we're still sinners, we're asking the same thing Peter did. We're asking other people to do what we couldn't do.

Now, follow Paul's reasoning here. Remember this is one Jew speaking to another Jew.

Read vs 15

"Peter, we're Jews. We're God's chosen people. We're not alienated from the covenant like the Gentiles."

Read 16

Peter, even you and I, Jews by birth, went outside the law of Moses for salvation. We know it's not by our works, even good works like following God's law. That's why we trusted Christ alone.

But Read vs 17

"If we find ourselves outside of God's law, if we find ourselves condemned by God's law with no where else to go but to Jesus, is Christ a minister of sin for leading us outside God's law? Certainly not!"

Read 18

"If I go out from under God's law with all of it's commands and details and then return would prove that I shouldn't have gone out in the first place. I'm a transgressor."

I hope your following this. "If it's OK to leave the Mosaic law to get saved, then it's OK to leave it for good. If it's not OK to leave it for good, then it wasn't OK to leave it to be saved."

If it's OK to say we're saved by grace through faith apart from any works that we could do, then it's OK to say our good works don't keep us saved.

If it's OK to say that our good works keep us saved, then it's not OK to say that we're saved apart from our works.

Read 19

Paul says, “The demands of God’s law made me face the fact of my sin, which drove me to find forgiveness in Christ.”

Here it is. Why do we need to turn to Jesus Christ? Why do we need a Savior? The only way we can know that, is to measure ourselves with God Himself and His standards. When we do we’ll see how we could never be forgiven by what we do.

- I. *Don’t Offend The Conscience Of Another By Your Actions*
- II. *Don’t Allow The Truth Of The Gospel To Be Clouded By Your Lifestyle*
- III. *Make Your Lifestyle, Christ Living Out His Life Through You*

Here’s one of the most consequential and profound verses in the New Testament.

Read 20

No wonder Paul was so bent out of shape at what Peter had done. Peter was confusing people about the Gospel.

We’re not trying to work for our salvation, we’re forgiven by the work that Jesus Christ accomplished.

We can look back to that historical cross on which Jesus hung, bleeding in our place and say by faith, “I am crucified with Christ.”

He’s my substitute. He died in my place and I’m linked inseparably to Him by faith. But I’m not just linked to Jesus’ death. I’m linked to His life.

How do we live out the life God wants us to while we’re on the planet? By faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us.

I’m forgiven, by grace through faith, and I live a life that honors God by grace through faith.

The one thing that I don’t want to do is deny the grace of God. **Read 21**

If my standing before God comes through what I do, then Jesus' death was in vain. If I could get to heaven by some effort, by some act of sincerity, by some religious accomplishment then Jesus' death was a waste.

Why should the Son of God humble Himself to become a servant? Why should the King of Kings suffer on a cross at the hands of His creation?

If there's any other way but Jesus alone then the cross was the cruelest cosmic blunder imaginable.

Jesus Christ didn't die in vain. He died because He's the way the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father except through Him.

Here's why the Bible comes down with both feet on hypocrisy. If we say we believe God's truth, but live in a way that hides that truth, we're standing in the way of eternity for the people who are around us.