

SERMON OUTLINE

Not in Step with the Truth of the Gospel *Galatians 2:11-21*

We will stumble, sometimes badly, when we try to keep in step with the truth of the gospel... (Galatians 2:14)

How had Peter stumbled? (Galatians 2:11-14)

How did Peter stumble forward? (Galatians 2:11; Acts 15:1-21)

How does Jesus meet us in our stumbling? (Galatians 2:15-21)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Describe an area in your life where you consistently struggle to keep up or keep pace. Maybe consider a car drive or a run/walk or a deadline. Did someone have to bring it to your attention? How did that go? How do you typically respond?
- Describe the chain of events that lead to Paul's confrontation of Peter (Cephas). (Read Galatians 2:11-14).
- Imagine you are one of the Gentile congregation members of "Pastor Peter's" church. For many weeks, Peter has come to your house and joined you and your friends for dinner and has also invited you to his house. But when some friends of his from Jerusalem come, suddenly those meals with you stop, because you and your friends are not eating kosher. How do you think that would affect you and your church?
- Why did this bother Paul so much that he confronted Peter in public? (Galatians 2:11-14)
- If Paul and Peter ("we"), who are law-abiding Jews, could be justified before God only through putting their faith in Christ Jesus, what does that indicate about the role that observing the law has in a person's justification? (Galatians 2:15-20)
- If a person is not made more righteous in God's sight by observing the Jewish law (Galatians 2:16), what does that say to those who faithfully observe the law while also feeling superior to Gentile "sinners"?
- In Galatians 2:17, Paul seems to be quoting an argument made by his opponents: if faith in Jesus makes observing the Jewish law no longer a requirement, then Jesus seems to be encouraging sin (because people no longer need to follow the Jewish law). Paul responds that sin is actually demonstrated when one "rebuilt" what had been torn down (Galatians 2:18). In what way did Peter "rebuild what he tore down" when the people from Jerusalem came? How did that rebuilding prove that he was a "transgressor"?
- In Galatians 2:19-21 Paul describes Christian salvation in personal, striking terms. What words does he use to describe what happened to him, and how does he describe the outcome of this transformation?
- Paul identifies the life he now lives as living by dependent faith in Christ, which suggests that the life he "died" to was a life of independence and self-reliance. What role does Paul say the law had in this process?
- Throughout these verses Paul is driving at an understanding of the law that would have been very surprising to fellow Jews: the law does not enable a person to be righteous before God. Rather, it is part of what enables a person to "die." Why, according to verse 21, must that be the case?
- In light of this, how was Peter's decision to separate himself from Gentiles (and their non-kosher eating habits) an action that was "not in step with the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:14)?
- While most of us may not feel the pull of observing the Jewish law, we likely are tempted in other ways to appear or feel superior to others. What are status symbols or behaviors that have the tendency toward making us feel better than others? How does this passage address that impulse?