

Galatians 2:10-

So far in Galatians Paul has laid forth 2 arguments validating his apostolic authority, today we will be looking at his 3rd and final argument before moving onto the meat of this letter. So in Galatians 1 we see Paul has appealed to his conversion as his authoritative proof. Claiming the gospel he received was revealed to him by Christ directly. Secondly we see that he appeals to his acceptance as a fellow apostle by Peter, and James, the very ones the false teachers mentioned here in Galatians claimed to be sent by. This argument shows a unification of the gospel message between Paul, and those in Jerusalem, putting to end the argument from the false teachers that they had the true gospel and Paul only had half of it.

So we have Paul's conversion, his acceptance by fellow apostles, and today we will look at his 3rd argument which is the practice of his God given apostolic authority. Picking up where we left off last week in Galatians 2:11, if you remember he just got done recounting the event of his trip to Jerusalem with Titus, the Greek gentile and how even Peter did not compel Titus to be circumcised and to be put under the Mosaic Laws. If we turn to verse 11 we see Paul starts into another account with Peter, but this one is not so positive. Lets turn there and read.

Galatians 2 starting in verse 11.

Here we see Paul recounting this event that I am sure would have sent shock waves throughout all of Christendom. Peter, the head of the church in Jerusalem was criticized publicly by Paul for being hypocritical. Here we see Peter, who understanding the gospel and the freedom in Christ, from the law. Was intimidated by a group of people under the teaching of James and was refusing to eat with the gentiles and instead returned to the Jewish dining customs. This would seem like not a very big issue, surely one can put aside something as small as what they eat, or how they eat it out of respect for another, and indeed we should, but there is more going on here than that. This is not Peter simply trying to be respectful of these law keepers, but rather he is preferring them over the Gentile brothers that he was previously fellowshiping and eating with.

To get a full understanding of the situation here we need to understand a little about the Jewish eating customs. To the Jews, what they ate, and who they ate with was an ordinance given to them from the days of Moses, by God. To them, the observance of these laws was part of their justification, they believed it was something that set them apart, put them in Gods favor above the Gentile sinners. It was a sort of racial supremacy. Israel was God's chosen people after all. They couldn't dirty themselves eating unclean food with gentile sinners!

The Gentiles on the other hand did not have the eating stipulations of the Jews. They were never under the Mosaic law, they never had to observe the dietary laws. Infact, as shown earlier in chapter 2 with Paul and Titus visit to Jerusalem the gentiles were not even required to observe circumcision. So here we have the problem. The Gentile believers have been accepted into the church as brothers and sisters but because salvation is by grace, through Christ, and not of the law the gentiles were not bound by it. Then on the other side, we have Jews converted to Christianity still holding to their laws and traditions, and attempting to force them upon the gentiles. So that is where we find Peter here, stuck between these 2 factions, and now suggesting to those around him to submit to the Mosaic dietary laws. There is a big problem with this. If we turn to

Acts 10:11-20

Right after this vision Peter went to Caesarea to baptize Cornelius, a Roman Gentile convert. God was showing in his vision to Peter that what God calls clean is indeed clean, and that there is no partiality with God. Later in Chapter 10:48 Peter says Truly I understand, that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, Jew and Gentile, anyone who fears him, and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Peter knew better. Peter knew that these gentiles in Antioch were part of God's adopted children he knew that they were, and treated them as equals. He freely ate, and fellowshiped with them, being a Jew himself, and accounting that as nothing. Putting aside the old traditions and meeting the gentiles were they were, fellowshiping and breaking bread with them as equals, not as unclean gentiles, but as brothers and sisters in Christ.

So now, when these men from James comes onto the picture Peter does a complete turn around. Fearing these men, what they might think or say, he quickly cuts off fellowship with the gentile believers. This was a very public thing, and the effect was that it was causing others to fall into this hypocrisy. As Paul says even Barnabas who joined him on his missionary journeys to the gentiles was carried away by this hypocrisy. This was a public offense, that warranted a public address. Peter here was giving in to the Judaizers pretty much just like the church in Galatians was doing, but Peter..being an apostle, who was with Jesus as he ate with sinners and tax collectors should know better and Paul called him out on it.

Paul's argument to Peter is the same that he puts to the Galatian church. In verse 16 he says, Know that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we natural born Jews 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. So why Peter, are you returning back to the law? There is no justification there, what you eat, or how you eat it or who you eat with does not justify you before God! As Christ said himself: It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man, but rather what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man. It is an issue of the heart, not of tradition, or rules but rather what flows outward from you. And here, Peter is going along with these Law keepers, calling unclean that which God has now called clean.

This wasn't just a putting off of his freedom for a weaker brother situation. Peter, a pillar in the church was showing partiality in favor of the Jewish converts and leading others to follow in his hypocrisy. What it comes down to is that Peter was ashamed of the gospel and he did not stand his ground against these Judaizers defending the free grace given to the gentiles, the very same grace that was given to Jewish believers. It was a denial of the gospel.

But Let us not be to harsh on Peter here. For Do we not find ourselves at times also ashamed of the gospel? We may not openly share with those around us as we should, and at times we find ourselves more in line with Peter seeking to take the easy way out, instead of boldly proclaiming the gospel as Paul did.

So as we can see here, this is no small issue and we can see why Paul would confront peter in such a public and open way. Peter was not only condoning the racism found in the Jewish Christians toward the gentiles he was saying that the gospel was not sufficient and that the gentiles need to practice their faith as the Jews did. He may not have said it in so many words, but it is what his actions were portraying.

The Mosaic Law was so ingrained in the life, and mind of the Jews that to not adhere to it was blasphemous. An epitaph from a 1st century Jewish Tomb gives us a picture of the Jewish understanding of being Justified by the Law.

Here lies Regina...she will live again, return to the light again, for she can hope that she will rise to the life promised, as a real assurance, to the worthy and the pious in that she has deserved to possess an abode in the hallowed land. This your piety has assured you, this your chaste life, this your love for your people, this your observance of the Law, your devotion to your wedlock, the glory of which was dear to you. For all these deeds your hope for the future is assured

As you can see, this mindset was so ingrained in Jewish thinking, that it is your pious life, observance of the Law, and being Jew will get you to heaven. It isn't hard to see why even Jewish Christians would seek to impose the law on the Gentiles. But it isn't justification by grace alone, through Christ alone, if you add anything to the free grace of God and the gospel of Christ, it becomes another gospel that is not a gospel. And here, Peter was going along with it.

There are a few things we can take from this and apply to ourselves today. We live in a time where there is rampant racism, we see it in the news constantly now. We like so surround ourselves by people like ourselves and anyone different is well, an outsider. Racism was a major issue in the early church. You had Jews, who believed that their Jewishness made them God's chosen people therefore anyone not a Jew was a sinner, outside of the God's grace. Now all of a sudden these vile gentile sinners are being accepted into the church? How could this be? To the Jew, Gentiles were dogs, lowly animals barely worthy of table scraps. So they had a problem, now that these unclean, sinful people were a part of the church they felt they had to do something. Well, the logical answer to the Jews was to then make these sinners like them. Put them under the Laws that they saw as what Justified them before God. Instead of glorifying God and rejoicing that the gospel has come to the gentiles, they saw them as a threat to their traditions and way of living. The Jewish Christians would separate themselves so they could maintain and still observe their traditions. They saw the church as having 2 classes of people, Themselves, God's special chosen people...and the Gentiles, the add ons, the 2nd rate Christians.

As I was thinking on this during the week I remembered a conversation I had with someone years ago, they had told me that they were glad that they were smart enough to understand the bible and choose God. In this persons free will salvation understanding they believed it was they, being just a little smarter than everyone else who chose God, for it was the smartest choice. In doing so, they set up a category in their minds that if you don't accept Christ, your just must not be quite as smart as they. Despite 1 Corinthians saying For you see your calling, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty, and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are so that no flesh should glory in his presence. This is like the mindset of the Jewish Christians here, they are just a little bit better than the rest, their nationality makes them preferred of God.

We still have this problem today. Our natural mind likes to classify and put things in categories. We, like the Jews like to take pride in our outward piousness, and look down a little on someone we feel

may not have their life together as much as we do. We have our own internal categories and set up our own lists of requirements of faith. We tell ourselves, sure we aren't perfect but at least we don't do what they do. We start creating different classes of Christians. We surround ourselves with those who are like us, those we are most comfortable with, and we tend to avoid the others. It even affects how people search for a church. Instead of seeking if the word being taught from the pulpit is biblically sound, we seek to find, where we fit in the most and that becomes our highest priority.. We seek after churches with programs to appeal to every age, some activity to draw people in, to keep them coming to church. Some way to make them feel that they fit in. We have seen it time and time again, the first thing asked when someone inquires about a church is what programs they have, and there is little care about information on the churches documents or what they believe. We have become sort of like the Jewish Christians in the new testament, creating little spaces for ourselves where we can practice our traditions and feel comfortable.

This really is not the picture of the church we have in the bible. Yes, a church will mirror the demographics in the society around them, I am sure there were a lot less gentiles in the Jerusalem churches much like there was a lot less Jews in the gentile churches. But that being said there are not different classes of believers. We all once walked according to our own lusts, deserving of Hell if it were not for God's sovereign grace. The gospel should have a unifying effect, for a proper understanding should bring man low, not build ourselves up like the one person I talked to. Every man, no matter their race, social status, IQ test score, we are ALL lost and in need of a savior. We should not care who has the nicer car, tithes the most on Sunday, or dresses the best for church, but rather we should all rejoice in God's saving grace in all our brothers and sisters. We should be able to set aside our differences, and cling to the one true gospel.

It seems popular today for church organizations to join social movements. I have been hearing of churches that are actively seeking ways of racial reconciliation, for the predominantly white denominations to atone for the sins of the forefathers in an attempt to draw in more minorities. Churches are informing their people to join in social movements to fix America's racial problems. Ultimately that is not the answer, it doesn't take much to see in scripture the leveling effect the gospel has on all people. In the bible There is basically only 2 distinct groups. Those who are saved by grace, and those who are outside. The bible is clear that within the church when it comes to God's saving grace there is no distinction between male or female, slave or free, rich or poor, all are counted as equal s. He does not give more saving grace to 1 or the other. The effect of the gospel should be one of unification, for all walks of life, all types of people all across the world, and all through time that have been called into the family of God, are joint heirs with Christ. As Peter learned in his vision, God shows no partiality.

So, in closing let us take a lesson from Peter here. Let us not show partiality toward each other in the body. We are in one body, and that is the body of Christ. But also let us remember to not compromise the gospel as Peter did. We should be bold, to stand up for what is true and right, against false teachers.