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Sermon Notes

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The True Gospel Produces True Unity if Truly Followed

Galatians 2:11-21

We live in a fractured world... sin has interjected an explosive force like a fragmentation grenade, causing things to fly apart... especially people from one another

But the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that supernatural unity that it alone can produce... a unity on display every single week

- As the sun makes its 24 circuit around the world today, celebrating the Lord's Day and a weekly reminder of Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead, there are astonishing gatherings of peoples in every region
- These gatherings fly in the face of all logic... they bridge centuries of hatred and strife... they transcend all efforts at a political solution or diplomacy
- They are simple gatherings of Christians, transformed by the gospel, able to forgive each other, love each other, worship Christ with each other
- In the Balkans, in Bosnia there are small evangelical house churches in which Serbs, Croats—former Muslims and orthodox—who would have been at each other's throats were it not for the grace of the gospel, simply worshiping together today by the power of the Spirit
- In the Czech Republic and in Romania, former security guards under the Iron Curtain communist regimes are worshiping together with Christians they used to hunt down and torture... a similar thing has happened in China
- In Rwanda, Hutus and Tutsi have been able to display supernatural forgiveness through the gospel of Christ, and they worship together today

- In Palestine, former Lebanese Muslims and formerly unbelieving Jews have been transformed by the gospel and assemble in small house churches to worship Christ by the power of the Spirit
- And in America, former racists, both black and white, have been healed of their racism and now openly embrace each other by the power of Christ's cross... they stand side by side and sing worship to Christ

I. The Threat to Gospel Unity: Peter's Hypocrisy and Inconsistency (vs. 11-14)

A. The Gospel Under Constant Attack

B. Paul's Overarching Purpose in Galatians 1-2

1. Goal: To prove that BOTH his gospel and his apostleship come from God, and not from man... they are independent from human authority or influence
2. Galatian churches were Gentile churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) that Paul and Barnabas planted on their first missionary journey
3. After Paul left, false teachers called Judaizers came in and questioned Paul's gospel by questioning Paul's calling as an apostle
 - a. They said in effect that Paul was a "second-hander", a second-generation disciple of the Jerusalem Apostles (Peter, James, John) who imperfectly learned the gospel and messed up some of its key issues
 - b. The centerpiece of the Judaizer's false gospel:

Acts 15:1 Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."

Acts 15:5 Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses."

4. So, in Galatians 1-2, Paul is walking a tightrope: trying to prove that BOTH his gospel and his calling as an Apostle came directly from God; not by man nor through men... so he is INDEPENDENT of Jerusalem, and accountable directly to God for his ministry and his message... BUT ALSO, that he is UNITED with the Jerusalem Apostles... that they are serving the same Lord and preaching the same gospel

- C. Galatians 2:1-10: The First Attack Came from False Brothers Who Infiltrated with a False Gospel... key issue: circumcision

Galatians 2:4-5 This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. ⁵ We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.

The issue: they wanted Titus to be circumcised as a test case for ALL GENTILE CONVERTS

- D. Galatians 2:11-21: The Second Attack Came from True Brothers Who Acted Hypocritically and Did Not Walk in Line with the Gospel... key issue: dietary regulations

1. This was “Cephas” = Peter, the central leader of the Jerusalem church, one of the Twelve Apostles chosen by Jesus during His ministry
2. Bitter lesson: Attacks on the gospel can come from BOTH outside the church AND inside the church!!

- E. The Problem Described

1. Place: Antioch

Galatians 2:11 When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. (lit. “he stood condemned”)

- a. Antioch was the second most important center of Christianity in the world at that time
- b. It was on the cutting edge of the spread of the gospel to Gentiles
- c. It got its start as described in Acts 11

Acts 11:20-21 men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

- d. It was a launching pad for Paul and Barnabas to reach out to the Gentile world
- e. It was also a place of remarkable Jew-Gentile unity initially
- f. There in Antioch, Jews and Gentiles fellowshiped together in the richness of gospel unity

2. Love Feasts and Unity

- a. Peter was a prime example of this amazing Jew-Gentile unity

Galatians 2:12 Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles.

- b. This refers almost certainly to the Christian *agapae* (“love feasts”)
- c. The food they would ordinarily have eaten at home they shared together in fellowship meals; usually, the Lord’s Supper would be the conclusion of such meals
- d. Early on, Peter joined all the other Jewish believers in making no distinction between Jews and Gentiles and sitting at table fellowship with any believer in Christ
- e. This was amazing because of Jewish laws and customs before Christ which separated Jews from Gentiles

3. Jewish Laws and Customs Before Christ

- a. FIRST: Laws of Moses concerning clean and unclean foods (Leviticus 11)... example such as Daniel who refused to be defiled with unclean foods
- b. SECOND: man-made restrictions handed down from generation to generation through rabbis who expanded and clarified their interpretation of the restrictions on clean and unclean... these included rules about what kinds of meats Jews could eat from Gentile meat-markets... kosher regulations; this included special laws established by the PHARISEES emphasizing the need for Jews to be pure from Gentile defilements based on Leviticus 15... this explains the Samaritan woman’s statement:

John 4:9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Along with these were the *halakoth*, “traditions of the elders” which included many regulations for ceremonial handwashings which were especially directed at cleaning Jews from defilement from having had anything to do with Gentiles

- c. Thus it was generally seen by Jews to be positively WICKED for any Jew to eat with a Gentile

4. Jesus Changed All This!!

- a. During His life, Jesus declared all foods clean

Mark 7:14-15 *Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a man can make him 'unclean' by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him 'unclean.'"*

Mark 7:18-19 *"Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him 'unclean'? ¹⁹ For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean.")*

- b. By His death on the cross, Jesus fulfilled all TYPES and SHADOWS of the Law, especially obliterating all MAN-MADE additional regulations that the rabbis had laid on top of the Laws of Moses
- c. Paul would openly teach that the “wall of hostility” between Jews and Gentiles had been removed by Jesus’ work on the cross

Ephesians 2:14-16 *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

- d. This led to “one new man” teaching getting a new name in Antioch

Acts 11:26 *The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.*

- e. The church at Antioch was living out this beautiful truth... including Peter... Jews and Gentiles were openly eating together in the UNITY OF THE GOSPEL... an unforgettable testimony to the power of the cross
5. BUT Note every believing Jew understood or accepted this... there were Pharisees who came to faith in Christ who went to Antioch to end this freedom and bring the believers back under the yoke of the Laws of Moses... some men came down from Jerusalem claiming to be from James and started teaching this false doctrine:

Acts 15:1 *Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved."*

- 6. Peter became afraid of them, and drew back from table fellowship with the Gentile Christians

Galatians 2:11-13 *When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹² Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged*

to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

- a. Picture this in the fellowship times... the love feasts
- b. The men from James confronted Peter, maybe behind the scenes, and intimidated him (legalists can be VERY INTIMIDATING people, because they claim to speak for God and can often cite "chapter and verse" from God's word)... the text says Peter was AFRAID of them
- c. At the next love feast, Peter walked in the room and some Gentile believers cheerfully hailed him and asked him to come sit with them and eat... a strange look came over Peter's face, and he begged off... the Greek grammar indicates that this was a process that went on over a period of time... he "BEGAN TO DRAW BACK" and "BEGAN TO SEPARATE HIMSELF" ... little by little, his bad example spread even to a godly encourager like BARNABAS!!!
- d. Paul calls it HYPOCRISY... that means they knew what they were doing was wrong... they were ACTORS, putting on a mask... they were violating their internal principles

7. Peter's Actions Were REPREHENSIBLE!!!

- a. He KNEW what he was doing was wrong... Paul appeals to that knowledge later

Galatians 2:15-16 "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ KNOW that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.

- b. Peter had been there when Jesus declared all food clean; he had seen Jesus regularly dealing with Gentiles and healing them or preaching to them; he had heard Jesus give various versions of the Great Commission to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth;
- c. AND it had been Peter's privilege to usher the first Gentile converts into church... Acts 10, Cornelius and the vision of the sheet and the lesson of the sheet

Acts 10:11-16 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." ¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." ¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." ¹⁶ This happened three times

Acts 10:27-28 Peter went inside and found a large gathering of people. ²⁸ He said to them: "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean.

Acts 10:34-35 Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism ³⁵ but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Peter had seen the Holy Spirit descend on Cornelius and his household as they heard the words of the gospel

d. Furthermore, Peter had TWICE spoken powerfully about this experience to those who questioned him

Acts 11:2-3 when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them."

Acts 11:15-18 "As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' ¹⁷ So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life."

Then, in the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15... Peter's experience carried the day:

Acts 15:7-11 After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

e. And Peter LIVED OUT these convictions initially and ate freely with the Gentiles, acting like he was no Jew at all!

f. Peter was the chief of the Twelve, "the Apostle to the Jews"... an influential leader in the early church... so his fear and caving in to these false brothers from James was terrible, and it had terrible consequences:

Galatians 2:13 The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

- g. The beautiful unity of the gospel was now destroyed... the Gentile believers in Antioch must have felt like second-class citizens; even worse, their own status before God was being called into question... they were not yet fully acceptable to God; faith in Christ was (apparently not enough!!)

II. Paul's Remedy: Rebuking Peter for Hypocrisy and Inconsistency (vs. 14-18)

A. Paul's Incredible Clarity, Boldness, and Passionate Persuasion Saved the Day

1. There is a time to be quiet and pray
2. And there is a time to step up boldly and act
3. Paul knew what that situation called for, and did the right thing!!

B. He Publicly Confronts Peter

Galatians 2:14 *When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"*

C. Why the Public Rebuke?

1. Because of Peter's role as a leader
2. Because it would have been difficult if not impossible to clean up the mess he and Barnabas had made without a public rebuke and public confession... he can't go to each person one at a time and make it right
3. Paul's later teaching about bringing accusations against an elder:

1 Timothy 5:19-20 *Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. ²⁰ Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*

D. Peter and Barnabas Not Walking In Line with the Truth of the Gospel

1. Powerful expression
2. Greek: lit. "Straight-footing"... living a life in conformity with the truth of the gospel
3. Key insight: the TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL MUST PRODUCE CLEAR RESULTS LIVED OUT IN DAILY LIFE... and a central issue is the open unity of the church... not factions and divisions

E. Interpretive Question: when does the “quotation” end

1. Clearly verse 14 at least was said from Paul to Peter in Antioch
2. What about verses 15-21?
3. Unclear where to do “close-quote”... but I think it’s best to understand ALL of this up to verse 21 to be what Paul said to Peter in front of them all
4. Paul’s rebuke of Peter carries a timeless message to all Christians all the time
5. The issue: what is the true gospel and what effects should the true gospel have on church unity??

III. The True Gospel: Justification by Faith Alone (vs. 15-16)

Galatians 2:14 I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

A. Issue Number 1: Peter’s Present Behavior Was Inconsistent with His Past Behavior

1. At some point, Peter, the Law-abiding Jew, stopped acting like a Law-abiding Jew
2. He turned his back on the dietary regulations and ate any food he wanted in the freedom of Christ
3. If he now tries to force Gentiles to live like Jews in order to be saved, how does he explain he past behavior... how does he explain why he ever stopped behaving like a Law-abiding Jew??
4. We know it was because of all those factors we listed earlier... Jesus’ own statements, the effects of Jesus’ cross, the vision of the sheet, and the experience of the Holy Spirit coming on Cornelius... in addition, Peter’s passionate defense of his actions in eating with Cornelius, and his doctrine in believing that God had purified Gentiles by faith in Jesus, not by the Laws of Moses
5. Over against that, we have a visit by certain men from James who intimidated Peter into turning his back on his convictions and experiences

B. Issue #2: The Impossibility of Justification by Works of the Law

Galatians 2:15-16 "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ

and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.

1. Now we come at last to the central doctrinal issue in this epistle... indeed the central doctrinal issue of Christianity... JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH
2. What is “justification”?

Justification is the gracious act of Almighty God by which, on the basis of Christ’s work on the cross, He declares a sinner righteous in His sight—completely forgiven of all sin, and legally pure before Him.

The doctrine of justification by faith alone apart from works of the Law says that this declaration by God is given as a free gift to a sinner by faith alone, and that our present or future obedience to the Law can never pay for our past disobedience to the Law.

We cannot earn this gift; it is given freely as an act of grace.

3. The text: we who were born Jews and have lived our whole lives under the Laws of Moses—not Gentile “sinners” (so-called...)—have learned BY EXPERIENCE that we cannot perfectly keep the Laws of God
4. Peter himself made this plain in his powerful speech at the Jerusalem Council
 - a. Peter said that God had PURIFIED the hearts of Gentile believers like Cornelius BY FAITH, making no distinction between Jew and Gentile... (i.e. the ceremonial laws of circumcision and diet had NOTHING TO DO with God purifying the heart)

Acts 15:7-9 Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made no distinction between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith.

- b. Peter also said that the Law was a yoke IMPOSSIBLE to bear!!!

Acts 15:10-11 Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

5. Paul is hearkening back to this clear assertion that Peter made, and he says WE JEWS KNOW THIS VERY WELL!!

6. We know that we cannot keep the Law perfectly, and that all the Law does is puts a perfect standard of righteousness in front of us, commands us to keep it perfectly, and then condemns us if we fail at any point
7. So, we Jews who have lived our whole lives under this unbearable yoke know from personal spiritual experience that the Law never satisfied our consciences
8. The Law could NEVER justify anyone... it had no power to justify, only to condemn!! Justification has to do with forgiveness and perfect righteousness in the sight of a perfect, all-seeing God
9. Jesus summed up the Law with these words:

Matthew 22:37-40 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

10. Who can honestly say "I have perfectly kept these two summary commands!!"??
11. So, Paul spoke to Peter saying these powerful words:

Galatians 2:15-16 "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' 16 know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified."

C. We HAVE BEEN Justified by Faith in Jesus Christ

1. Without Christ, there was no hope for anyone... Jew or Gentile
2. We were all sinners... those under the Law and those without the Law
3. Forgiveness could only come by the grace of God, and that could only come by the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross
4. Therefore, we desperate Jews have fled from the terrors of the Law to the loving grace of Christ... we have been justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the Law
5. BECAUSE BY OBSERVING THE LAW NO FLESH SHALL BE JUSTIFIED... there was no other way

D. This is the Heart of the Message... Paul Has Destroyed the False Gospel with these Assertions!!

E. So... What Are the Effects of this? He Begins By Clearing Jesus Christ of a False Accusation

IV. The Effects of the True Gospel: Wall of Separation Destroyed Forever (vs. 17-18)

Galatians 2:17-18 "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker.

A. The Centerpiece of This Argument: The Changes That Christ Brought

1. It was JESUS who changed everything!!
2. The ceremonial law was established to set the Jews apart as a unique people so that Jesus could be identified to the world
3. Once Jesus came, there was no longer any need for the ceremonial markers of circumcision and dietary regulations, as well as other laws
4. Thus, believing Jews like Peter, James, John, and Paul came to Jesus Christ for justification
5. There, they learned the FREEDOM of the NEW COVENANT in His blood
6. This freedom led them to act like "Gentile sinners" so-called
7. BUT is it a sin now for Jews to eat pork? Is it a sin now for Jewish parents not to circumcise their sons on the eighth day?

B. Does Christ Promote Sin?

1. The Jewish enemies of Jesus would have said "YES!! He is a grand deceiver of the people, a false prophet"
2. But Paul is talking to and about BELIEVING JEWS... we cannot accept that Christ promotes sin
3. Christ changed everything, but He had the RIGHT to do it!
4. He had the RIGHT to declare all foods clean! He had the right to declare that this was the "New Covenant in my blood"
5. He had the RIGHT to put an end to the sacrificial system! He had the RIGHT to destroy the ceremonial barrier between Jews and Gentiles by abolishing in his flesh the Law with its commandments and regulations!

C. So... Does Christ Promote SIN? MAY IT NEVER BE!!!

1. Through Christ, both Peter and Paul began to live a new kind of life... the life of freedom through the Spirit
2. They destroyed in their teaching and in their practice the barrier between Jews and Gentiles who believed in Christ

D. If I Rebuild What I Destroyed... I Prove that I Am a Lawbreaker

1. Paul is speaking in the first person here, but he's just being gracious
2. The real problem is Peter and Barnabas... by their doctrine and practice they had destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles... now, they were rebuilding it brick by brick!!
3. In so doing, they were proving themselves to be **LAWBREAKERS**... either of the Old Law that God never wanted to halt (that's what the Judaizers claimed), or of the new Law of Love in Christ (what Paul was claiming)... their hypocrisy and inconsistency was deadly!!

E. Jesus Changed Everything... and He Does Not Promote Sin... Trust in Christ to Continue to Build His Church His Way!!!

V. The True Gospel Applied to the Individual Leads to a New Life (vs. 19-21)

Galatians 2:19-21 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

A. Paul's Personal Testimony

1. Statement 1: Through the Law I died to the Law
2. Statement 2: That I might live for God
3. Statement 3: I have been crucified with Christ
4. Statement 4: I no longer live
5. Statement 5: Christ lives in me
6. Statement 6: The life I now live in the Body I live by faith in the Son of God
7. Statement 7: Who loved me and gave Himself for me

B. We'll Look at Each of these Statements In Detail Next Week

C. My Purpose Here: To See These Verses in the Overall Context

1. They are VERY PERSONAL!!! Twelve times in three verses, Paul uses the 1st person singular... “I” “Me” “My”
2. He is speaking as a SINGLE INDIVIDUAL... a man who has come into a new way of living through faith in Christ
3. He is no longer living for himself but for God
4. He is living this new life completely by FAITH IN CHRIST...
5. That faith in Christ is foundational to both the beginning of his Christian life and its daily unfolding: by faith He died through the Law, by faith he was united spiritual with Christ, by faith he was crucified with Christ, by faith he was raised with Christ, by faith Christ lives out a new life through him
6. He is a NEW MAN living a WHOLE NEW LIFE... it's a life of freedom
7. It is VERY INDIVIDUALISTIC and PERSONAL

Galatians 2:20 the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

8. It also shows the limitation of the Law of Moses
 - a. Through the Law Paul died to the Law... it killed him and brought him to faith
 - b. Therefore righteousness could never have been gained through the Law... if it could, then CHRIST DIED FOR NOTHING...
 - c. More on this next week... but if there was any way we could save ourselves by obedience, God would never have sent His Son to die on the cross!!

D. This Individual Salvation is the KEY TO CHURCH UNITY!!!

1. The exact same thing that happened to Paul as a Jewish believer in Jesus was happening to Titus as a Gentile believer in Jesus... they are each individuals who were justified by faith in Jesus alone... they are not in competition with each other (as legalistic religions always tend to promote), but they are all adopted by the same Father through the work of the same Son by the power of the same Spirit
2. This is the foundation of the supernatural UNITY that Christ had in mind!!
3. So, Peter can walk into the next fellowship meal, look around, and see nothing but men and women who have been saved in the exact same way as he was... and they can love each other freely and openly

VI. Applications

A. Come to Christ!!!

1. Central issue here: justification by faith alone
2. We cannot earn our salvation
3. Look again at the key verses:

Galatians 2:19-21 For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

B. See the Importance of Christian Unity

1. In Corinth, the church was ripped apart by factions, and their love feasts had divisions along socio-economic lines: rich with rich, poor with poor
2. In Antioch, the separation was religious and racial: Jewish Christians over here, Gentile Christians over there
3. The logic of this passage is plain: the true gospel produces true unity if truly followed
 - a. Justification by faith alone levels the playing field for everyone
 - b. We are all equally sinful, equally unable to keep the Law, equally in need of grace; equally forgiven, equally justified by the blood of Christ, equally righteous in the sight of God
 - c. On the basis of this, racism and other forms of prideful superiority are destroyed forever... we are truly one before the cross
4. Paul is powerful and passionate about the need for unity... he is willing to confront Peter publicly to make sure of it

C. Christian Unity Can Only Be Maintained by Great Effort

1. Satan is constantly attacking the unity of the church
2. He is doing this by false doctrine and other attacks from non-Christians
3. He is also doing this by tricking genuine Christians to temporarily do his evil will
4. Paul laid everything on the line to maintain unity between Jews and Gentiles...

5. So at FBC, we will very much need to obey this verse

Ephesians 4:3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

6. And this verse

Philippians 2:2-4 Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴ Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

D. Leaders Are Vital to the Health of a Church... But That Doesn't Mean They Are Perfect

1. Two great leaders took a big hit in this passage: Peter and Barnabas
2. Both did incredible things to build up the Body of Christ by their amazing efforts...
3. But they both did great damage to the church in this incident
4. And yet... it took another great leader (Paul) to lead the leaders out of it
5. It is so important to understand how vital it is to have godly leaders... and how much we need to pray for their wisdom as they lead
6. AND we see how humble truly good leaders must learn to be
 - a. The only healthy thing for Peter and Barnabas to do in response to Paul's speech is repent and seek forgiveness of the Gentile Christians they had offended
 - b. Look also closely at Paul and Barnabas's relationship... it seems they had only two disagreements, and (in my opinion) one of the times, Paul was right and Barnabas wrong (here in Galatians 2); but in the other occasion, Barnabas was right and Paul wrong (about John Mark)

Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Psalms 141:5 Let a righteous man strike me-- it is a kindness; let him rebuke me-- it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it.

7. This is the tremendous value of plurality of elders... we can more easily correct each other and hold each other accountable