

VOTC Sept # 2 – Galatians 2:11-16 “Racism and the Gospel”

Hello listener and welcome to another episode here at Voice of the Church. My name is Pastor Daniel Ventura and today we continue our series in Galatians on the topic of Gospel Freedom. Today we will be considering at how the gospel is meant to promote unity between God’s people of various ethnicities and backgrounds.

Racism and the Gospel

The topic of race or racism in NA is a hot topic issue in our day. If you turn on the news or scroll through your social media feed you can read many conversations around topics like systemic racism and black lives matter. Unfortunately, when it comes to discussions around these topics, we can so easily find our views shaped more by the culture or our political parties, and not by the clear teaching of God’s Word. Galatians has something to say to this

But the barriers here in our text are not only racial, but religious & social in nature. Today, we also want consider Paul’s response to Peter’s sinful separation and learn what it means to walk in union with Christ together.

A Sinful Separation (v.11-14)

1. Here we see the Great Apostle Peter *deny* the gospel, not by his teaching, but by his **conduct**. How did he fall short? The issue before him had do with the *relationship* between the Jews & the Gentiles. This issue had to do with **eating**.
 - a. In Paul’s day, to share a meal together was to express fellowship. When it came to food, the Gentiles did not abide by any kind of specific food laws like the Jews. And Peter had no issue with this, and he freely ate with them, expressing fellowship and unity with them as God’s people. God revealed a vision to Peter in **Acts 10**, & said to him 3x “*that what God made clean, don’t call common*”. So, Peter had no problem chowing down on shellfish, lobster, and ham sandwiches w/ his Gentile brothers and sisters for a time.
2. But something happened that changed Peter’s behavior. Influential men came from Jerusalem to “*check in*” on these Gentile Churches. Perhaps you know what it is like to get **inspectors** at work, it can make things tense. These church inspectors were saying, “*Unless you are circumcised, acc. to the Law of Moses, you cannot be saved.*” **Acts 15:1**
3. This pressure effected Peter. When the circumcision party came on the scene, he **feared** them, drew back & separated himself from the Gentiles, & in so doing he denied the gospel by his conduct. Why did he give in? He didn’t want to be considered *ceremonially unclean* in their sight by eating *unclean* food & assoc w/ *ceremonially unclean people*.
4. His actions led others astray, including other Christina Jews & **Barnabas (v.13)**. By their conduct they were **putting back up the barriers** that Jesus came to tear down by his cross

Often, when we think of Peter’s denial, we think of the gospels and him denying his association with Jesus when he was asked if he was one of his disciples.

Here again, we see that *fear* leads Peter, this great man of God, to deny association with God's people....

5. **1st, Great man of God can fall into sin** – You see this in the Bible. Think of King David's adultery w/ Bathsheba, or Abraham's lie about Sarai his wife which lead to her being capture by Pharaoh. Peter was also a great man of God, he was the first preacher at Pentecost who was personally restored by Jesus, but we learn from his fall the need to be **humble** before tGod
6. **2nd, Churches can fall into sin** – we see here many sinfully separate from each other out of fear and ungodly influence. Sadly, racism is part of the ugly history of many conservative Christian denominations in North American. Many men who were pillars in conservative denominations lived *inconsistent* lives on this issue.

Paul shows us that **holy confrontation** is necessary at times when it comes to issues of the gospel! That's what we see here. Paul opposed the great Apostle Peter TO HIS FACE because his conduct was **not in step with the truth of the gospel**. We learn here that racism or ethnic discrimination is not in step with the gospel, because Jesus came to do away with these ethnic divisions in the gospel! **Eph. 2:14**, "*for he himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation...so as to create in himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.*"

7. The cross not only reconciles us to God, but it also reconciles us to one another. When we believe in Jesus, we gain peace with God, and we gain a oneness with one another that is rooted in something so much deeper than our skin color, or ethnic heritage. We are united in the blood of Jesus and baptized into the same Savior who died for sinners.
 - a. Because of the gospel, Paul would later say in **3:26-ff**, "*for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is nether male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" In the church, the waters of baptism are stronger than our blood ties to one another, and in Christ God is creating for himself by the power of the gospel one people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.
8. This rebuke of Paul to Peter was necessary for helping Peter regain a right view of his brothers & sisters in Christ, and of the practical implications of the gospel for our unity together. How do you view your brothers and sisters in the church who don't look like you, or share your same ethnic heritage? As we step out into the world filled with tensions and hostility in these racial issues, may we share the peace of God offered in Christ's gospel, which not only unites us to God, but to one another.

Conclusion

In the words of Paul from Phil.2, may we be *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace. Not exalting ourselves, but in humility counting others more worthy than ourselves.*

We hope you'll join us next time for our next meditation in the book of Galatians as we continue to think about the freedom God gives to us in the gospel. Until then, as far as it depends on you, may you live at peace with all men. God bless you!