

3.17.2024

Chapter 2 – No Confidence in Man

Devoted to Truth – Hypocrisy Condemned (vs.11-14)

Galatians 2:11-14: “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Well, you can't read the book of Galatians without comprehending that this is a message about telling us that this gospel is not of man; man doesn't have anything to do with it. Whether it's the agency of man that brought it, couldn't have been, it had to be God, or the messengers that sent the message. How were they called? Who told them to go? It had to be God. Everything is all God. Once you begin to take out the man in the message, you begin to realize what a wonderful message it is. Unfortunately, when you go to church oftentimes, the emphasis is on man. When that begins to happen, you can't even hear the message anymore. It seems to get lost in the aggrandizement of man rather than the lifting up of God. So, all the way through this wonderful epistle, we're being reminded the power is of God. This is a message of God; you need to listen to God.

As you look at the beginning for me to remind you in Galatians 1:1, it is a reminder that Paul is an apostle not sent by man. He goes on to tell us that the grace and the peace that we have (verse 3) is from who? It's from God, not from man. It's a good reminder to me that I can't really comfort anybody; I can't give peace to anybody. This is why it's so important that we introduce people to Christ. I don't have the answer to people's problems. I mean, we can kind of give a band-aid to some of the needs and problems that people have, but I'm not the answer. I do know that if I introduce them to Christ that Christ can change everything in their lives. He's the only one that can grant favor and peace in their lives. He's going to repeat over and over again, it is this gospel that cannot be mixed in any way with man; it is the gospel of God.

(Galatians 1:9) “As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

(Galatians 1:10) For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

(Galatians 1:11) For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.

(Galatians 1:12) For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.”

In fact, he will go as far to say in verse 15,

“But when God, who had set me apart...”

How did He do that? Did He send somebody to him?

He said, “No, it was in my mother’s womb.”

Man didn’t have anything to do with that.

“... called me through His grace, was pleased

(Galatians 1:16) to reveal His Son in me....”

The wonderful thing about the gospel here again, we’re reminded of Romans 1:16, that the gospel is the power of God.

According to 1 Corinthians 1, the world is going to debate you about this. They’re going to see it as foolishness. They’re going to say, “Are you telling me this one died on the cross to save me from my sins, and by receiving Him I have everlasting life, and this will change my life?” and we’ll look at them and say, “Yes, we believe that.” Then they’ll go, “That’s the dumbest thing I ever heard.” That’s the way they feel about it and why Scripture says that to man it’s foolishness, but to us it’s the power of God. We’ve seen the power of God. We’ve witnessed and partaken of this power. When we received Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, there was a change in our desires; there was a change in our pursuits. Things began to change, and we realize “Ok, that wasn’t me” because it now has been a lasting change. We know that man tries to change all the time and can’t seem to get it to stick, but the Spirit of God is faithful within us and won’t let us be unfaithful. Though there are times that we fall, He keeps picking us back up. Though there are times that we run, he keeps bringing us back in for God is faithful even though we are faithless. It’s that Spirit of God that keeps us there. This is the power of God and what we bear witness to. In fact, ultimately, if we bear witness to this truth, if you look at Galatians 1:24, it will bring glory to God through us. In other words, God will use our lives to

point to Him. That's one of the ways that you know that you have the genuine real; that if it pointed to me then it wouldn't be a gospel of God, but if it points to God, it obviously is about Him. The wonderful truth of our faith is that this glorious, good news transforms our lives to the point where God is elevated.

We come into chapter 2, and the emphasis now begins to go into the realm of the confidence of man, and how man will oftentimes, once again, stick in his proverbial finger and mess up everything in this realm of the glorious gospel of grace and peace that can transform people's lives. When man gets in there, he begins to think that he has something to do with it. When that begins to happen, then everything gets messed up. By the time we come to the passage that we're looking at today, we're going to be dealing with a word called "hypocrisy;" something that you've heard before. "Hypocrisy," once again, is a Greek word in which actors on a stage would wear a mask, "*hypokrites*," where we get the word "hypocrisy." The mask would put them in a particular character so that they could not be themselves, but somebody unreal. So, hypocrisy really is being unreal. We're going to see in the context of where we're looking at that hypocrisy really is literally living a lie; so that you might proclaim something, but you live a lie, and it doesn't match what you proclaim. Therefore, that would be putting on a mask according to the crowd that you're with; the people that you find yourself having relationships with. It's interesting how people will change the way that they act depending on who they're with. So, as we come to this passage, we're going to see the way that it transforms. I just want to remind you of this particular chapter because he starts off with saying that you don't want to put confidence in yourself, and you don't want to put confidence in the hubris of man; that is to say, when man is really bold, arrogant, pushy and demonstrative in his speech, the tendency is to back away, and you go, "Well, you know, he's kind of an expert. So, I'm not going to say anything." And Paul says, "You can't listen to man."

If you look with me in chapter 2 in putting confidence in man, I think it's to be noted in verse 2 that Paul is saying, "Even though this wonderful revelation that I had from God was given to me, I didn't put confidence in myself. I went to the church, and I said, 'This is the same thing, right?'" Now, his point is that when God does a great work in our lives, the tendency is to feel like we're superior. Obviously, that's not true. His work within us is doing a great work and He loves us abundantly, but it doesn't make us superior. Oftentimes, there is a tendency, I've seen this in the realm of Christianity; somebody gets saved, give them a few weeks or years, and they begin to think, "Now, I'm the expert." Then they begin to "help" people run their lives instead of their own. So, as they go out into this world, you begin to find that they become hyper-critical and all of these kinds of things; of course, ultimately, hypocritical.

When we come into this passage, one of the things that Paul is stating in verse 2 is "I went up and I submitted to the church." That's an interesting point because here again, how many of us

have literally seen God on a road to Damascus? I don't even live in Damascus but forget about that part. How many of us have actually seen God? The point is we haven't. I mean, He hasn't spoken to us in a great light like that. Of course, Scripture tells us he spent years with Him in the desert. So, have you had that ability? Ultimately, Paul will share with the Corinthians that he was caught up in the third heaven. How many of us have done that and come back? If you've come back, let me know and we'll work something out here. How marvelous that must have been. But Scripture tells us that he was given a thorn in the flesh so he wouldn't boast about himself or in that particular circumstance. Why? That it would all be about the gospel; the power of the gospel. So, Paul is going to submit to the body of Christ, he's going to submit to the church. He's not going to get a big head in this.

In Philippians 3:3 Paul says he will "put no confidence in the flesh." That's a great way of putting it, isn't it?

The way that Scripture goes on to write in Psalm 19 as the psalmist realizes that because there might be hidden faults in his life, he's not going to boast beyond. Paul will even say, "I can't really think of anything that I'm guilty of, but I'm not by this acquitted." It is that sense of "I don't trust myself" because before long that pride gets in there and you begin to think that you're somebody. Of course, Galatians 6 will say, "When you think you're somebody when you're nothing, you deceive yourself." So, he's going to zone in on that fundamental truth in Galatians 2:2.

As Proverbs 28:26 will say, "He who trusts in his own heart is a fool".

So, Paul is saying, "I subjected myself to the church." He also goes on and talks about, we use the word "hubris;" that is to say this arrogant boldness that people have of declaring themselves as superior. He says, "We didn't let them take footing." Sometimes the perception of a person that is humble is they let everybody do what they want to do, and that's not necessarily a person that's humble. When Scripture talks about a person that's humble, it's talking about, "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He might exalt you." When you go back to the Old Testament, who was the humblest person on the face of the earth according to Scripture? Moses. Well, he didn't let the children of Israel walk all over him. He was going to do the right thing; he was going to do what God told him to do and that's what made him humble. Oftentimes, what God tells you to do will be at odds with many of the people around you. So, obey God; listen to God.

So, Paul talks about this in Galatians 2:5 when he talks about those that are bold in their pushiness.

"But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour..."

Why? So that the truth of the gospel would not be compromised in any way.

Clearly in verse 1-5, we're trusting neither in self nor the hubris of others and we're not distinguishing according to appearance.

(Galatians 1:6) "But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) ..."

Man does. We take notice, "Wow, that's a really important person." But God doesn't. If in fact we're operating in the realm of the gospel, we must not. We call ourselves Christians, followers of Christ, servants of our Lord; if that's true, then we should be walking according to the truth of the gospel.

If you look at John 3:16, the truth of the gospel is God so loved the world. There is no distinction there. There is no partiality with God. The thought is that some people perhaps in people's minds are more valuable and some people are less worthy. By virtue of their appearance, the things that they have, or the titles that they hold we perceive them to be more important, but God says, "That's not according to the gospel." Therefore, if you start living that way, you're living a lie. The gospel says there isn't anyone that's more important.

(John 7:24) "Do not judge according to appearance..."

Now, He goes on to tell you how to judge, "... judge with righteous judgment."

I think one of the problems that we have is that we're so visual and concerned about what everybody else is thinking. He goes, "You've got to let that go." You need to literally think in terms of, as Paul will write to the Corinthians, "we recognize no man according to the flesh anymore." No more, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what their background is. It doesn't matter where they came from. It doesn't matter what they look like. God shows no partiality.

He really hits upon this in Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Once again, he's not saying that He has not made distinctions by creating us different, but he is saying that in the gospel, there is no distinction; that Christ came to save all, and none is more valuable than the other. Christ gave His life for us. So, we're not distinguished according to appearance.

Now, it's interesting that when he ultimately conveys this truth, he's reiterating to the Jews that this is a fact. He says, "We went to the church in Jerusalem, we proclaimed these things. They agreed with us about these things." As it goes on, "There's no distinction and God doesn't show partiality." So, you have to realize that God is doing all the work and even the church in

Jerusalem recognized that we were entrusted this gospel by the power of God. It was God in us, not us pushing ourselves.

Of course, we talked last week about the fact that there's no reason why Paul would want to go to the Gentiles, and it just doesn't make any sense that Peter, being a fisherman, would be really good with the Jews. He doesn't have all the learned ability that should have been there with somebody that was working with these individuals that were so much smarter on the law than he was. Nevertheless, that's what God called them to do. He says, "The church recognized this power."

The interesting thing about the text, if you look in verse 10 is, "When we finished our discussion and we all agreed that it was God's gospel, it was God's power that was working in us; that He's the one that effectually did the work within us and empowered us to do it, they only asked us to do one thing." Did you pick up on that?

"They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do."

That almost seems like an oversimplification. "We're agreeing with you that the gospel is all God, the power is all God. If we give you any advice, just remember the poor." Why would they say that? The answer is pretty clear if you understand the passage. When you're focusing on people that can't give anything back to you, when you're thinking about helping people that really will not elevate you or put you in a position of recognition, will not give you any great title (unless you do it on the street corner and let everybody know), you realize that you have to drop the whole superiority thing and go into the whole servitude thing. So, when we're talking about "poor," we're talking about the poor, the downcast, weary, weak, people that are broken and contrite; we're not talking about people that can really do anything for you. Quite frankly, we might as well say we're working with repulsive people. I mean, you're going to be working with repulsive people, the refuse of society. I think society would probably refer to them as "good for nothing." You're going to be ministering to people that according to Scripture are Samaritans and tax collectors. You're going to be dealing with women off the streets so to speak according to Luke 7, and maybe an outcast like the woman at the well.

Even by the time you come to Mark 14, you're ministering to lepers. Who wants to minister to a leper? I mean, raise your hand. We need volunteers to go into leper places. You begin to think in these particular terms, and you go, "Wow, there are things I really don't want to do." Scripture says, "You want to know what the gospel looks like? There is no respecter of persons."

"How will I know that I'm not a respecter of persons?"

"Remember the poor." That's how you know. When you think about it, it is the way of Christ.

In Matthew 11:28, we hear Christ calling people. You know, if you're going to form a church, you don't want to form a church with the wrong people, right? So, how do you form the church? Well, surprisingly enough,

"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."

Now, the weary and heavy-laden could be anybody clearly, but the point is that he's not looking in the realm of appearance or status; it's the heart and the people that are broken and ultimately, those that are desiring a physician.

You see the same thing with Christ in Luke 4. He goes into the synagogue of His own hometown; he pulls out the book of Isaiah and He begins to read from it.

(Luke 4:18) "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME..."

How do you know that the Spirit of the Lord is upon you? How do you know that it's God's gospel working through you?

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,
AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND,
TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

(Luke 4:19) TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD."

How do you know it's the gospel working in you? How do you know it's the power of God? You're going to find yourself working with people that you never thought you were going to work with. You're going to find yourself sacrificing. I would say, you're going to find yourself caring for people that at times would be perceived as repulsive to you if you were in the flesh. The power of God will say that even though in the flesh you perceive this ministry as repulsive and even costly to you, perhaps in some aspect in your own mind, putting you in some kind of harm's way or maybe just plainly inconvenienced too. I mean, if it's a dignitary, "Ok, I'm glad he woke me up at 2:00 in the morning," but if it's just a nobody, "What is he doing bothering me in the middle of the night?"

I remember in the church in Illinois that my father had pastored, as a kid, we had a bedroom on the second story. I don't remember all of the things that surrounded it, but I remember it was in the middle of the night, probably around 2 or 3 o'clock, and there was this lady on the sidewalk, and she was just screaming at our household. I remember asking my dad, "What's wrong with her?" and he said, "Well, we think she might be possessed" and I remember going out and ministering to her. When you think about those kinds of things, you begin to realize

there are certain circumstances where you go, "I don't know if I want to put myself in that realm." Yet, there are times you sense this gospel saying, "Don't be a respecter of persons. This is a person crying out." It reminds me of Paul when he was in Philippi. Remember the girl that's demon possessed and she's yelling at him and screaming? He was a little annoyed. Scripture actually says he was kind of annoyed about it and put out, but he cast it out of her. Because of that, God begins to lead and even open the door for him to go into jail so that he can start a church. Little did we know that he would start his church with a Philippian jailor and their whole family. For all we know, this little girl became one of the members of the church as well. God uses people that you would never think that He would if you're willing to live the gospel, but it's hard for us to think in those terms because tax collectors, ok, maybe, but lepers, really?

I truly believe it's one of the reasons why when you think of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, that they were so loved by Jesus. We know that they lived in Bethany which was just on the outskirts of Jerusalem far enough for those people with leprosy and other diseases to live. They were not allowed to live in the realm of Jerusalem and had to live a mile or two outside the realm, but Bethany was right there. "Bethany" means "the house of misery" and that's where Lazarus, Martha and Mary lived and probably cared for them. In fact, when you read in Scripture, Mark 14 and Matthew 26, about Simon the leper, where did he live? In Bethany. You begin to realize that they were living among these people that were diseased and I don't think they were wearing masks. It doesn't say anything about it, one way or the other, but the fact that they were ministering there without really concern for themselves. Jesus in His miraculous gospel, we see Him living, breathing and walking among us; the way He embraces the little children just like He does the tax collectors and fishermen. He will even embrace a pharisee. I mean, Nicodemus will come to Him at night. It does not matter. He sees no variance or difference.

It is this point, if you look with me in Galatians 2, that really disturbs Paul because people were actually seeing distinctions. Of course, it was because of the Judaizers that were coming in and breeding this whole sense of superiority. It's probably no different than India's Caste system where some people are thought of as higher than others.

In Galatians 2:11, the name Cephas is an Aramaic term. Probably the reason why Paul is using his Aramaic name rather than his Greek name, Peter, would be because he's acting like a Jew; he's going back to the old traditions of the world.

"But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."

Now, the reason why Paul is stating this is because by this time we're well acquainted with Peter. We know who he is and that he was a disciple of Christ. We know that he was probably one of the closest disciples of Christ. In fact, there are some churches that hold him the highest.

So, our perception is “this is the guy.” Why would Paul give this example that he opposed Peter? Why would you oppose Peter? You couldn’t oppose Peter because Peter was the greatest. Who would ever think about doing this?

One of the statements that he made in Galatians 1:8,

“But even if we...”

So, Paul would even put himself in the mix, right?

“... or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary...”

So, what’s the standard? The standard is the good news of God. That’s the standard that we live by, and we embrace. It is the message that God so loved the world. It is a message without any division. It doesn’t make distinctions.

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

(Galatians 1:9) As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!”

So, what’s the best way to really display the reality of that particular verse? Put Peter on the stand. Give an example of where Peter stepped out of the boundaries.

So, his statement in Galatians 2:11, “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”

Another way of putting that last phrase is “because he knew full well what he was doing.”

(Galatians 2:12) “For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles...”

That doesn’t make any sense. Everything was ok until some of the Jews come.

“... but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.”

He was afraid of what somebody else was going to think.

(Galatians 2:13) “The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy...”

At this juncture, I want to clarify the hypocrisy that is being defined within this passage.

Hypocrisy is you proclaiming a truth and living a lie. In other words, identifying yourself with God; “I’m a lover of God. I’m a child of the King. I’m a follower of Christ. I’m a servant of the Lord.” You’re identifying with and you’re saying, I have embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

What is the gospel of Jesus Christ? Well, the gospel is the good news that God loves you and it's distinguished in four different ways when you look at the four different gospels.

In Matthew, you see the wonderful news. Here's really great news according to Matthew, God's standards are the highest. I mean, they are perfect. God not only has standards that say you shouldn't do something, but God has standards that say you should do the right thing in your heart. So, Jesus gives these new laws that really begin to convey this. So, you step back, and you begin to realize the kingdom of God has the highest of standards and that's good news because you wouldn't want to think that God lowered His standards when you come into His presence.

The good news according to Mark is that you have a Savior that loves you enough to serve you. Literally, the prophecy in Isaiah is "Behold My servant." You read the Gospel of Mark, and behold, Jesus is a servant. So much so that people are coming in and crowding around Him. He can hardly catch a breath and His family can't even eat, but He is serving them. How wonderful it is that God loves us enough to keep the standards high, to come and serve us and to give us this honorable, wonderful gospel that changes us into honorable people. Yet, He does it through humility, and that would be the Gospel of Luke. If you'll humble yourself, how wonderfully honorable God will exalt you. God will exalt the servant of them all, won't He?

Then you come to the Gospel of John, and what a great gospel to end with. What's the greatest news? That the creator of the universe would want to have a personal relationship with you. So, you begin to see the glory of His love. "For God so loved you." This is the good news of God. It's all God's goodness and it's all Him changing us, but it's God who does it. Now, the unfortunate thing is that when in fact you and I begin to show distinctions among people and we seem to be more concerned about what other people think than what God thinks, we're living a lie. You might say that you received the gospel or that the gospel was important to you, but that's not true.

(Galatians 2:13) "The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy."

Barnabas was the guy that comes along and encourages people. He encourages his nephew, he encourages Paul, but when it comes to Gentiles, he draws a line somewhere. He then finds himself in hypocrisy as well. Once again, proclaiming the gospel, pretending to agree with it, and yet not living it. I mean, how many times is that true in all of our lives? Obviously, we're dealing with something that is just not true.

(Galatians 2:14) "But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel..."

You see, the gospel is “God so loved the world.” God is the love that is personified through Jesus Christ. Love came to earth and demonstrated Himself and He dwelt among us. Think about that. The word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld the glory of God full of grace, sincerity, truth and genuineness. So, when we saw Christ, the living gospel, we saw somebody that was serving, giving, and washing feet. Isn’t that what we saw? Then we saw somebody that was literally willing to die for us. Now, that’s the truth of the gospel. It didn’t matter who you were, He was going to die for you, for the world. We see Him even embracing people that would be spitting on Him. He would forgive them. It didn’t matter who they were or where they were from. The kind of love that you begin to see was uncompromising, unconditional and quite frankly, it was uninterrupted. There was never a time where you couldn’t depend on the love of Christ.

So, this unadulterated love is living large among us, and it’s called the truth of the gospel. Paul is going to be emphasizing in Galatians this freedom that we have in Christ. Here again, our perception is “Well, good. I can do anything I want to.” Well, what we’re talking about is the spirit of freedom that loves to minister, serve, sacrifice and do all kinds of things that you and I would not normally do. God has freed us up from our selfishness and we now are free to love the way He does. That’s the gospel that we embrace. When you receive the gospel, you said, “Jesus is Lord of my life.” So, when you do that, now a whole different spirit is within you. That spirit will go into realms that you will never ever imagine yourself going into. The freedom doesn’t necessarily mean that you’re always going to like the task. This is where a lot of people get confused. “Oh, I’m not feeling the task here.” That’s like Jesus saying, “I’m not feeling the cross. It’s not feeling good to Me. There’s something about this that’s really feeling uncomfortable.” Well, a lot of time it’s going to be uncomfortable.

Hebrews 12:2 says, “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...”

There’s no text that will tell you that Jesus loved being crucified, but the joy will be described earlier in Hebrews. He knew that He would bring many sons to glory. So, the joy comes from knowing that by obedience, maybe even of putting myself in a very uncomfortable place or even worse, a sacrificial place, that there’s going to be a joy that floods my soul. I’m going to walk away going, “Not only was God pleased, but God’s going to do a great work through this; I know that to be true.” I’m going to tell you what the spirit of freedom does, strange as it may seem, you’re going to be in the midst of something that you literally will hate as far as in the flesh, and you’re going to say something like, “There’s no place I’d rather be.”

“Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...”

Once again, let me translate this appropriately, “thinking nothing of the shame”. It doesn’t say, “despising the same”; it’s saying He thinks nothing of the shame. In other words, when you’re in the middle of doing something that is very difficult for you to do, but God sets before you that wonderful reward of doing it, you’re going to go, “You know what, it doesn’t even hurt. Whatever the shame, embarrassment, humbling, sacrifice, or whatever it is that I’m having to bear at this particular juncture...” It’s going to be nothing because the joy set before you is so grand.

It’s one of the reasons why Scripture oftentimes refers to the final coming of the Lord and the whole process of coming to that point of the birth pains. If you think about a woman going through the suffering of birth pains willingly, it’s almost like the joy of the child coming has just overshadowed any of the pains. So, you don’t think about those kinds of things and that’s the way the gospel begins to work. Here we’re dealing with Peter as well as Barnabas and many of the Jews will begin to feel a little bit of the pain of the gospel. Here’s the pain of the gospel that they were feeling; they were with people that basically were saying, “We’re going to put you out. You’re not going to be accepted or elevated.” Then everybody starts worrying about what everybody else is thinking instead of just pleasing God. Quite frankly, it’s a very uncomfortable position. I get it. You’re worried about what other people are thinking about you. I understand that. Peer pressure is extremely powerful as well as family pressure, but you’ve got to drop that. Let it go and say, “You know what, that’s not the gospel.” The gospel is “I’m willing to proclaim Christ unapologetically and whatever is attached to that gospel, I’m willing to hold onto.” If you think about what’s attached to the gospel; it has no respecter of persons. There’s going to be a boldness that comes in you and God’s going to use that in a great way. Paul will come to the face of Peter, and he’ll rebuke him for this. Peter will change and even talk about the writing of Paul; how some of them are hard to understand and probably sometimes hard to swallow, but Peter will see the value of this. God has already shown Peter that He’s not a respecter of persons by showing him the great vision in the book of Acts. Peter was even sent to Cornelius who was a Gentile, and the passage tells us he even knew he would eat with Gentiles until somebody comes along and puts the pressure on him, which is showing the hypocrisy, once again.

What is the gospel saying? The gospel is saying that “God so loved the world.” Let me just emphasize, “gospel” means good news, and “good” means not only beneficial to you, “good” always means virtuous to you; that is to say, it’s a moral gospel. So, you’ve been transformed to live a moral life; no longer to be immoral or insincere because it’s a gospel of truth; no longer to be someone that’s unforgiving; no longer to be somebody that’s defensive; no longer to be the kind of person you used to be. You need to live the gospel as Christ. You’re a follower of Him; to live in any other way is to not be truthful about the gospel. I would say the worst thing out of that is if any part of the gospel is misrepresented in any way, you and, as Hebrews would say,

insult the spirit of grace. This is the gospel. We cannot afford to misrepresent it in any way. People need to see the love of Christ that has no bounds.

(Romans 12:9) "Let love be without hypocrisy..."

Well, that's the truth of the gospel.

Philippians 2:3 means that you and I hold others in higher esteem than us. To not do that would be to misrepresent the gospel. To not be devoted to one another according to Romans 12, would be to misrepresent the gospel. Christ was devoted to us. He became a servant to us. He revealed His standards to us, and He walked with us. Scripture is telling us how to walk.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we give You thanks once again for Your word that reveals to us the reality of our faith; the reality of the gospel. It is good news. It's beneficial to us in that it saves our souls. It's virtuous in our lives in that it changes our lives. We become like You. We walk in the truth and sincerity of who You are, and we become like You. We don't respect persons, we're not afraid of man, and we please You in all respects. We become a servant just like You. It doesn't matter who they are, we see no boundaries or distinctions. It does not matter to us. We recognize no man according to the flesh anymore.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, you say you believe in it. Do you understand what the gospel is about? Do you know what you've received? Do you know what you've become loyal to; devoted to? Do you know whose life you're emulating? If you understand this, then how wonderfully blessed you will be for God will give you the power, strength and energy to do what He's called you to do that clearly goes beyond the flesh. If you're thinking in your head, "Wow, I can't do this" then you're thinking in the flesh, but if you say something like, "You know what, I love God. I'm going to do whatever He tells me to do and I'm going to live like He lived." Watch, He will give you the power to do it.