

“Freed to Unite” // Galatians 2:11–21 // *Freedom in the In- Between #3*

Mission Report

Good to see everybody... I wasn't here last weekend because I was in Germany and Ukraine and Poland, where I visited 3 of our church planting couples there.

- First was in Germany where I visited **Rich and Julia Rudolph** and **Adam and Stephanie Parken**.
- Two very different settings. Rich and Julia with a new network of churches just South of Frankfurt, right on the border of France, planting churches among Germans and the growing refugee population there. It's an amazing area—looks like a scene right out of the sound of music—right across from their house there are these rolling green hills, and sheep and windmills.
- Then we went up to see **Adam and Stephanie Parken** who live in Berlin, sometimes referred to now as the atheist capital of the world. I was really encouraged by them because they just took the vision of using his job strategically for the mission looked for a job where he could be involved in a church plant. And now he and Stephanie and their 3 kids have an amazing ministry there.

Works Consulted:

- “Christ in You, the Hope of Glory,” Louie Giglio
- “Maximizing the Cross,” Tony Evans
- “Gospel Unity,” Tim Keller (from Galatians for You)
- “Living in Line with the Gospel,” Tim Keller (from Galatians for You)
- “The Heart of the Gospel,” Tim Keller
- “The Gospel and Licentiousness,” Matt Chandler

- Both really need a couple to be with them and I want to challenge someone here today to do that.
- Finally, I went **on to Ukraine and Poland** where I spent time with Russell and Ingrid Woodbridge, two of our very best, who work with a network of pastors in Ukraine. I spoke at a conference for 600 college students and young professionals they put on about how to live out the implications of the gospel—in a **nation in the heart of the former Soviet Union**.

We have mission trips going to all these places and some of you should get involved.

God is doing some amazing things through our people and I'm **more energized about our church's mission** than ever... so you might strap in for a 45-minute message...

Introduction

Galatians 2, if you have your Bible...

While I was there I was reminded that **whenever cultures come together** in close proximity, as we do in a church, inevitably there is some misunderstanding, and confusion, and conflict. Not the least of which occurs around **language**.

- I was with a **Ukrainian church pastor** who told me he was visiting the United States and he didn't know much English but he wanted to be friendly, and he saw a woman in a Starbucks with a big, beautiful dog and he wanted to ask her what her dog's name was. He could barely speak English, but he wanted to be friendly, and

he said in Ukrainian the word order is different—so he said, in this thick, Ukrainian accent, “What is your name, dog?” I almost created an international incident—and he wants you to know if you are here he’s really sorry.

- It **won’t surprise you that I tend to make a number of these verbal mistakes** in other languages, too. I told Veronica that my philosophy about overseas communication comes from a TED talk I heard a few years ago that claimed that 80% of communication is non-verbal, which means that I am automatically 80% fluent in whatever country I am visiting, so I just say what I want to say as well as I can and hope for the best.
 - **I was visiting a family that had a 10-year-old girl who obviously** had her mom’s perfume on, so I tried to tell her dad, “Your daughter smells good.” Except instead of the word for “smell” I used the word for “kiss” so I what I said was, “Your daughter kisses deliciously.”

These are the joys of cross-cultural ministry.

Of course, language is not the only thing that causes conflict. As **we often experience** here in our own country, when people from different backgrounds, religious upbringings and cultures are brought together in close proximity, it can cause conflict.

This was **the practical problem** Paul was writing about in **Galatians 2**.

And the **way he answers it illustrates** the truth of one of our **Summit plumbines**: “**The gospel is not the diving board; it is the pool.**” What we mean by that is the gospel is not just the way we begin the Christian life, but also the way we grow in the Christian life.

- **Like a well**

Paul is going to deal with the practical problem of division in the church by taking them **deeper** into the gospel.

Here we go:

¹¹ But when Cephas (Paul’s nickname for Peter, it means ‘rock’) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he was to be blamed.*

¹² For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. **Here’s what happened:** Peter had had this **dream in Acts 10** where God unrolled this gigantic sheet and in it were all kind of **unclean animals**, like rabbits and shrimp and pigs, and the voice of God commanded Peter, “Kill and eat.” (I call it Peter’s ‘pigs-in-a-blanket’ dream.)

And at 1st, Peter resists, but God shows him that **Jesus’s death had made all foods clean for the believer**—and **ritual cleanliness** no longer had anything to do with being close to God.

And so, Peter started to eat with Gentiles.

- **(And here’s the thing: once you eat bacon** there is no going back. Amen? That used to be part of **my evangelism strategy with Muslims: Just try some bacon.** You’ll see the truth.)

So, Peter is out every night with the Gentiles, eating high on the hog, literally—**but then some Jews from Jerusalem show up**, and Peter withdraws and goes back to his old ways of not even eating with Gentiles, lest they shake some of their uncleanness dust on him.

¹³ Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas (who loved and accepted everybody!) was led astray by their hypocrisy. When there is a **mist in the pulpit**, there is a fog in the pew! And what happened is that the Jewish Christians began **insisting that the Gentile Christians** adopt their culture if they were going to be real Christians.

Now, watch this... ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone,

Now, this had to be **quite something to watch**, right? Paul taking on Peter? Pay-per-view. I'm sure it was even a little **bit awkward**, but it's the kind of confrontation that sometimes needs to happen in the church.

Listen: Gospel unity is not the same as Southern politeness, where everyone just smiles at everyone and tries to ignore any controversy or unpleasant conversation. **Sometimes** you have to **love people and the gospel enough to get awkward** with them. (more on this in a few minutes).

"Listen, blockhead...If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Paul goes on: You see, Peter... ¹⁶ ...We know that a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ... by the works of the law no human being will be justified.

Paul starts explaining the gospel to him! Which may seem condescending, but Paul is saying, "Peter, at its core, this is a gospel issue." **The gospel is that we are justified** not because of something about us, or something we eat or don't eat or do or don't do, but because we accept Christ's righteousness as our own.

- **The word "justify" means "to declare guiltless"** like you would declare someone innocent in a trial. At that point, you are saying they are not liable for any penalty, but entitled to all the privileges of someone who has kept the law.¹
- When **we receive Christ's righteousness by faith**, we are justified—declared guiltless and perfect in God's sight. We are completely accepted, beloved sons and daughters of God.

That's the basis of our acceptance, and when we really embrace that it tears down any sense of superiority we might feel toward someone else.

¹ J.I. Packer, *God's Words*, pp. 139-140

Paul then concludes: ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

We've called this series "Freedom in the In-between," because the book of Galatians is about the freedom that the gospel alone provides for us.

- **(You say, "Freedom in-between *what, exactly?*"** Freedom in-between when we trust Christ and when he takes us to heaven one day.)

In this story, **Paul illustrates at least 3 kinds of freedom** that we experience when we trust in Christ. (The **1st is the most substantial** so we'll spend the most time on it.)

I. Freed to Unite

Paul explains that **much of our inter-personal strife** goes back to a **failure to understand and apply** the gospel.

He said Peter was ¹⁴ When I saw that ~~they were deviating from the truth of the gospel...~~

Let's unpack that.

Paul is showing us that a lot of barriers between people exist because we try to justify ourselves—to declare ourselves righteous and good—through something about us.

- **Jews did this through the law. They had a whole system** of things that distinguished them from the world **The OT alone contained 613 laws**—and in addition to those Jews made a "hedge about the

law,” essentially rules to keep them from even *approaching* breaking the rules. And **that list got up into the thousands.**

- (I’m not even sure how they remembered all those things. I’m imagine **were like, “How far can we walk** on the Sabbath again? Can we eat **llama meat**—is that unclean? How about **turkey bacon?** And what about wearing **yoga pants in public?** Is that a forbidden fabric, or just in bad taste?

These things *separated* them from others, and if you did them, you were accepted by God, and if you didn’t, you were rejected.²

Having a list of things that if you do them you’re accepted **is not unique to Judaism,** of course. **All religions** have such a list.

- It **goes back to a soul condition** I’ve described to you like this (BTW, I repeat illustrations like this often because I want you to be able to repeat these things in your sleep!). This one comes from **Augustine:** the result of our sin was a sense of nakedness...
 - **We are always trying to justify ourselves:** to set ourselves apart from others.
 - We **look for something to be our “righteousness.”**
 - It’s like life is one **big episode of Survivor** and we’re trying to convince everyone else we’re not the ones that should be thrown off of the island!

And because of that, we’re in constant competition with others, because, remember, the essence of pride is that it is competitive. To pride it does not matter that I am smart, only that I am smarter than you... or good, only that I am better than you.

- **This, of course, fuels division.** I have to protect and defend my distinctives because they give me value and worth above others.

You say, “That’s why I hate religion. It makes people self-righteous and competitive.” All people, not religious people, do this.

Charles Spurgeon, (the 19th century British pastor I quote so much that some of you have asked if he’s on staff—we consider him “Pastor Emeritus of the Summit Church”) said he saw **three main dividers** in his society (and it’s amazing how true these are still today). He said there is the pride of race; the pride of face and place, and then the pride of grace.

A. The pride of race: For many, their ethnic identity becomes a way of distinguishing themselves above others. So, they take pride in their American-ness, or my blackness, my Southernness, or my Asian-ness, my Indian culture, or Hispanic-ness. Or whatever. A racial distinctive makes them who they are and forms their identity.

Now, hear me: Our cultures are beautiful things, created by God like a many-sided diamond to reflect his glory. But when they become our primary, distinguishing identities, they cause division.

You become really **proud of**—and **protective and defensive** of—your culture, because your culture gives you a sense of identity and sets you apart. It’s part of **what justifies you.**

But, friend do you not understand the gospel?

- There’s only one race of people—the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve.
- We have one core problem—sin. We have one hope—the blood of Jesus that cleanses us all—black, white, Hispanic, Asian, Arab and mixed—alike. **Paul says in Romans 10,** “There is no difference in the Jew/Greek... the same Lord is Lord of all who call upon him for grace. **Where is boasting, then? Where is superiority?**”

² In Leviticus 5:17, it says, “If anyone sins, doing any of the things that by the Lord’s commandments ought not to be done, *though he did not know it,* then realizes his guilt, he shall bear his iniquity.”

- **What gives you your worth and identity** is not your Jewishness or whiteness or American-ness or blackness anymore.
- By the keeping of the law, or the preserving of culture—no human being is justified.
- **After my identity in Christ**, Paul says, all the rest of these defining characteristics, Paul says, are **GARBAGE** compared to the worth of our identity in Christ.
 - Philippians 3 Paul said his **Jewishness was like scubala** to him (kind of word that if your 12 year old Greek son said it you'd wash out his mouth with soap).
 - That's not self-loathing. He loved being a Jew. He loved his heritage. Just **compared to his identity in Christ**, it seems like scubala. It would be like comparing a Timex watch to a Rolex one.

IMPORTANT: When we become Christians, our cultural distinctives don't go away, they just become a lot less important.

- **Tony Evans:** *"The racial application to Paul's teaching here in Galatians 2 is that it is technically incorrect to say, "I'm a black Christian, or "I'm a white Christian" because now you've made black and white adjectives and Christian a noun, and the job of the adjective is to modify the noun, so now you've got to keep Christian looking like the adjective that describes it or it ceases to be Christian."* But black and white culture have nothing to do with the essence of being a Christian. **Better: "I'm a Christian who happens to be white."** Or "I'm a Christian happens to be black."
- **God is not telling Jewish people to become Gentiles or Gentiles to become Jews;** he's not telling **white people to be black people** or black people to be white people.
- **He's telling all people to be kingdom people**, having crucified their whiteness or blackness or Jewishness to the cross and regarding it as scubala in giving them worth or justifying them before God.

And when we experience racial division, often at the root is that our ethnic identity has become **too large**.

- Our **identity IN CHRIST has to become greater**—MUCH GREATER—than any other identity we possess.
- You see, for many, they might say that their identity in Christ is most important, but this other identity is so close that it colors everything they do.
- **Diagram** – Identity in Christ: **Black/White American/Asian Republican/Democrat**
- **That's why many of us can't have discussions about politics—are Democratic or Republican solutions better?**
 - **Or racial discussions:** Is kneeling during the national anthem an appropriate protest to racial disparities in our country?
 - **These are good discussions to have**, but you can't have them, because these **other identities are right up here next** to your identity in Christ.
- At the core of our divisions is that this 2nd identity has become too large in our eyes.
 - I've **always found it fascinating** what Paul says in 1 Cor 9, "I became all things to all men that I might by all means save some," even said, *"To the Jew I became a Jew..."* How could that be? His **Jewishness** was so light to him he took it on and off like a garment.
 - **And for a 1st century Jew** their identity was important. They were a small, deeply discriminated against and persecuted group in the Roman empire. Romans ruled them and abused them. Stuffed them in ghettos and split up their families. Threatened to annihilate them. Their Jewishness was precious!
 - **And, like I said, Paul loved his Jewishness.** But next to his identity in Christ, even his Jewishness was like scubala.
 - **You see, if my racial identity carries the right weight in my life**, we can disagree about whether to stand or kneel

in the national anthem, or what the best approach to healthcare is, and it won't divide us.

Well, that was a big one. The other two I won't spend nearly as long on, but they also cause division. Spurgeon says there is...

B. The pride of face and place: We think some personal accomplishment or characteristic sets us apart and justifies us before others.

We tend to see people in **categories:** successful and the unsuccessful, the intelligent and the dull, the beautiful and the ugly, the fit and the fat, the rich and the poor.

- And we **look down on those** who are less than we are in these areas, and feel intimidated by those who are moreso.

But, friend, do you not understand the gospel?

First, do you realize **how little of your talents** you can actually take credit for? Your parents gave you your genes, and God gave you the health and opportunity to pursue them.

- Do you really think if you'd been born as an orphan in a village in Somalia you'd have succeeded like you have? **All that you have is a gift!** So, pride about that is stupid.

Second, do you realize how **worthless our talents where** when it comes to the things that really matter? They couldn't justify us before God!

- **Before God, there is only one kind of sinner:** Hopeless. Dead. If we could have saved ourselves by our merit or good works or beauty, God would have let us do that. **But we couldn't**, and so all that was totally worthless in any real sense.
- And what we **have now in Jesus** is worth infinitely more than any of those things.

- **Who cares if I am not that intelligent now**, I am promised I will inherit the mind of Christ.
- **It doesn't matter if I'm not beautiful now**, I am clothed in the righteousness of Christ and one day he'll make my outside match the beauty he's placed on my inside. I can be ugly for 70 years because I'll be beautiful for eternity.
- **It doesn't matter if I am not successful now**, I have all the promises of God in Christ Jesus.
- **It doesn't matter if someone now doesn't appreciate me**, in Christ I have the undying love of the eternal Father!

So, the pride of race makes no sense; the pride of face and place make no sense...

Maybe worst of all, Spurgeon said, is...

C. The pride of grace: This is the pride that comes from **having lived a moral or religious** life, or having avoided certain shameful sins or mistakes.

- You feel a sense of pride because you have lived a good life; you've never been to prison or fired from your job. Or, you didn't get pregnant before you were married. Or, you came from a good family where your parents never got divorced.
- And **so now you feel a sense of distinction**, even superiority, over others who have gone through those things.
 - **For example, I know parents** who don't want their kids to date someone whose parents were divorced because, well, you know, that stuff runs in the blood.

Ah, friend, but do you not understand the gospel? In Christ, *there are no "good people" or "bad people"; "winners or losers"; "people who have it together" or "dysfunctional people"; there's only bad, dead, sin-sick rebels, without God and without hope in this world—that God saves by a sheer act of grace.*

And just because God in his grace kept you from some of the worst fruitions of your sin doesn't mean you are made of something different than other people who have gone down that route.

Remember what I've taught you: The seed of every sin is in every heart.³ Circumstances or temptations and relationships water that seed, and just because God in his grace kept you from that doesn't make you different or superior from others.

- Before God, “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, none who instinctively seeks after God, no not one!” And that destroys any **false distinctions between us.**

Where do you get off thinking you are superior? No merit of yours brings you closer to God. It is all the gift righteousness of Christ, imputed to you.

The gospel—that we are justified by faith alone in Christ's finished work—destroys all these types of pride.

So, in Christ, we have the freedom to unite. Let me give you a handful of others; they are a lot shorter, and they tie in to this one. Paul shows us that in Christ we are also...

II. Freed to Confront

Think about it, **Paul confronting Peter** was a **gutsy** move—Peter was the Jesus-appointed head of the church and Paul was an upstart! Peter was the “who's who” of the early church and Paul at this point was the “who's he?” Paul put a lot on the line here in this confrontation.

Paul could do it because he was secure in his identity in Christ.

Because he knew who he was in Jesus, he didn't have to Peter's or the church's approval. I'm not Peter's servant, I'm Jesus' servant.

He had said in Galatians 1:10, “Am I striving to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. *What's Peter's opinion compared to Jesus's?*”

Some of you **can't confront others**, you see, because you are dependent on them liking you or approving of you.

- **Illus.** My story from Krakow, Poland Uber/ambulance-death/testimony/ “Are you a Baptist?” / guts – people over here don't talk about God that way, he's real to you/ I told him, if you think in a city of 1 million this encounter was random...
- When God becomes real to you, you are freed from slavery to what people think!

Some of you **have friends you need to confront with something—** they need Jesus, or maybe they are really making disastrous decisions— and you **need to warn them**, but you can't because you are captive to their opinion.

The only way you'll escape that bondage is to embrace your identity in Christ. **Then other people's opinions** hold less **weight** to you.

And **since we have been talking about race**, let's apply it there, too. (It's about to get real.) **Some of you have family members or friends** who say discriminatory things and you don't have the guts to confront them.

- “Oh, **that's just uncle so-and-so**, and that's how he is.” Or you just don't want to call a friend out.
- But it is **hurting the unity of the body**. But **you say**, “*Well, they are not saying it to those people, so it's not hurting them.*”

³ John Owen

- **Well, first, God hears it**, and it grieves his Spirit, and second those kinds of statements create a culture that you can't really hide. Just ask some of your minority friends if they can sense when they are in the kind of place where that is tolerated.
- So, if we love the church, and the gospel, we will confront people when their attitudes toward others that are not in line with the gospel.
- And, if our identity is in Christ, we'll have the courage to do that, even if it ruffles some feathers.

Third: In Christ, we are...

III. Freed from Insecurity

One of the most famous verses in Galatians is 2:20. It is Paul's ultimate statement of his identity—it comes out of his discussion of this conflict in the church—²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

That's the **essence of who I am**. Crucified in Christ, nevertheless I live—yet not I, but Christ lives in me.

That means **not only do I have a new identity—I'm in Christ**—I have a **new power**—he's in me.

Many of you know you stand accepted by the merits of Christ, but you don't realize you live righteously by the resurrection of Christ. The gospel is you in Christ, Christ in you.

The **righteousness comes from God**. It is not your righteousness; it is Christ's righteousness in you.

Many Christians seem incorrectly to think that salvation is basically Christ paying off our debt and then leaving it up to you to build a new life. **That's insane.**

Say that I was poor and homeless and my family is starving because I **lost all my money gambling**; and I am an **alcoholic with a terminal disease**; also, I am crippled and blind. And **some gracious rich guy** comes along and says, "OK, I paid off your debt. Now go take care of your family." That's **not really going to help me**. My balance may be 0, but I'm still an alcoholic with a terminal disease who is blind and crippled.

I need not only my debt removed; I need the power of a new life. That's where we are spiritually. Not only were we guilty before God, we are incapable of pleasing God or building a life that will endure.

So, **the gospel is not just about me being in Christ**—where I get his righteousness—**but about him being in me**, where I flow with his power.

You need to wrestle with this. For many of you, your whole identity is based on you—the talents you have; the life you live; what you are capable of.

But that's not the identity of the Christian! The Christian's identity is "I'm in Christ" and "he's in me."

You see, when God sees you now, he mostly sees himself. He doesn't see you.

- He sees someone clothed with Christ's righteousness and filled with Christ's resurrection power.

That's why he asks you to live such a miraculous life: he's not betting on you, he's betting on the possibility of someone in there to live a life of power. Only one person capable of living the Christian life.

So, stop basing your identity on you and start basing it on Christ in you!

You see,

- You may **feel abandoned**, but *in Christ*, you are loved by God.
- You may **feel condemned**, but in Christ, you are spotless and above reproach.
- You may feel **down on your luck**, but in Christ, you are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, all the promises of God are yes in Christ Jesus, and all things work together for good.
- You may feel **neglected by others**, but in Christ, you have been chosen by God. Not a hair... goodness and mercy... he knows the plans he has for you...
- You may feel **defeated** by temptation, but in Christ, you have died to sins power, and Christ now lives through you.
- You may feel **dead and lifeless**, but in Christ, you have resurrection life coursing through your veins.
- You may feel like you **aren't making any difference** in life, but in Christ, you are raised with Jesus and seated in the heavenly places, and he has blessed you to be a blessing.
- You may feel broken, but in Christ, you have been made complete.
- In Christ, you are a new creation.
- In Christ, you are adopted into his family.
- In Christ, you are a partaker of the divine nature.
- In Christ, you are a beloved child of God.

That's who you are. Quit acting like someone else.⁴

So, in Galatians 2, Paul shows us that **when we have a relational problem**—whether that is feelings of division, or insecurity or fear—the **answer** is to go back to your identity in Christ. **Again:**

- The gospel is not just **how you begin** the Christian life, it's **how you grow** in the Christian life.
- Not just the **diving board**, the pool.
- Like a **well**
- Not just the **ABC's**, but the A–Z.
- Whatever your **spiritual illness**, the gospel is the cure.
- Whatever your **diagnosis**, the gospel is God's prescription!

The way you began in the Christian life is also the way you continue in the Christian life.

Luther (who thought of Galatians as his “wife”) – *“To progress in the Christian life is always to begin again.”*

Because of that, over the last few years, I have used a **“Gospel prayer”** for the last few years, something I pray frequently to center myself on the gospel daily. (I even wrote a whole book on it!) I want to briefly re-teach it to you because we're going to use it some over the next few weeks. I'll put it up here... but it will be available on my blog, even downloadable as a graphic or picture and next week we'll have bookmarks, etc.

[The Gospel Prayer](#) (via Gal 2:20)

1. In Christ, there is nothing I could do to make you love me more; nothing I have done that makes you love me less.
2. You are all I need today for everlasting joy.
3. As you have been to me, so I will be to others.
4. As I pray, I'll measure your compassion by the cross and your power by the resurrection.

⁴ Adapted from a similar list by Louie Giglio, Colossians 1

