

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab them. Galatians, chapter 2. We'll pick it up in verse 11. Here at week four of this series, we're to that place now where I can't recap the entire series before we move forward, or that would be the sermon in and of itself. So now at this point in Galatians, I'm just going to recap what we said last week, and then from there, we'll get going in a, once again, spectacular breakdown of the gospel of grace versus the law.

Last week we basically said one of the arguments against the gospel... Just to be clear, the gospel is the free grace and mercy of God toward you in Jesus Christ. You can be justified before God by no act of your own, by no boasting you could ever boast in, by no series of obediences could you ever be acceptable before God, and so Christ has come, and in Christ, his perfect life is imputed to you, and the wrath due your sin is taken from you in his cross and in his resurrection, so if you are justified before God, it is by no act of yours, but by a divine act of God alone. That's the gospel, and there are a couple of arguments against that gospel.

One of those arguments is what we tackled last week out of the first 10 verses of chapter 2. The first argument against the gospel is... *The law is holy and divine. The law was given by God, so how can you remove the law from the equation when it comes to being justified before God? Since it was God who gave the Law to Moses, since it was God who gave the law to us, how can you then turn and say the law has no bearing on our justification?*

Well, the way we unpacked that last week was to give you a word picture, but to tell you what the law has the right to do and what the law has no right to do. The law has every right to command of you to love God, to love your spouse, to not covet, to not steal, and to not lie. The law has every right to make those requests of you. The law has *no* right to save you and to rescue you from your rebellion against the law. It doesn't possess that ability.

The way I tried to unpack it with the word picture was in my journey with cancer. I have the seizure, get rushed to the hospital, and I get put in an MRI machine that reveals I have a small mass on my right frontal lobe. Now when I got out of that tube, it wasn't over. Right? The MRI simply showed I had a problem, but the MRI was powerless to actually solve what it identified the problem as being. It took something else to attack what the MRI showed.

Now this is a great picture of the difference between the law and what Christ has done for us in his life, death, and resurrection. The law is diagnostic in its gifting to us. So yes, the law is holy and divine, but only inasmuch as it does its job. When you ask the law to do a job it cannot do, you put on yourself a burden you will not bear up underneath. The reason why so few of us walk in the fullness of the joy of our salvation is, instead of running to and clinging to what heals us, we continually run back to and cling to the diagnostic.

The diagnostic says, repeatedly, "You are sick. You are broken. You do fall short. You are a liar. You are a God-belittler. You do prefer other things to God. You do covet. You do steal." Of course you're going to get beat down if you continually run back to the scan rather than running to the healing work of Christ on the cross, so in the heavenlies, God sees you as perfect, spotless, blameless, and completely forgiven. There is no condemnation for those of you who are in Jesus Christ. *How is that possible?* It's possible because of Christ, because the diagnostic says you're sick, but Jesus says, "No, I healed them."

Our joy flourishes when we run to the healer and not to the diagnostic, and it gets weighed down when, through church activity and practice... I'm not against church activity and practice, but when we use it as a kind of, "See? I'm saved! See? God owes me. See? God and I are cool. Look how often I'm at church! Look at how often I'm doing the things I'm supposed to be doing..." When we use it as justification, it's exhausting, or it breeds in us a type of self-righteousness that judges those around us as not being as good as we are, which ultimately takes away from our freedom and the joy that was meant to bring us into the fullness of Jesus Christ.

Now with that said, we need to attack the second argument against the gospel of grace, and it's going to come out of what I believe probably is one of the more awkward moments in Christian history, so let's look at it. Galatians 2, starting in verse 11. **"But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch..."** Now just stop. I want to talk a little about Antioch. Antioch, in the ancient world, was like Little Rome. Almost all the Caesars had put a ton of cash and a ton of resources into Antioch, and so Antioch was a very metropolitan area. It had everything from an arena to a large library. These are things that are so common to us, we miss out on just how spectacular Antioch was.

It was a city with a ton of diversity. In fact, almost all historians would agree that the church in Antioch is split down the middle, 50/50, between Jews and Gentiles. There was a large Jewish population in Antioch, but they weren't the only ones there. Now with that said, let's keep going. **"But when Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party."**

Now there are a couple of things we need to do here. First, I don't think you care about Greek tenses, but this is what's happening. The picture that is being painted in the Greek here is... Paul is going to leave, and he's going to go somewhere. We don't know, in the text, where he goes. You can kind of dig around in Acts, and maybe he's on one of the outlying towns and cities, preaching the gospel. But when he leaves, the Jews and Gentiles are mingling together. They're sitting at and sharing tables together. They are interacting with one another on a level that shows they are equal with one another in Christ.

When Paul returns, they've segregated and separated out, and Peter has done the same. Peter is no longer eating with the Gentiles, but only eating with the Jews. Now let me tell you why I think some of this is lost on us. It's because in our culture, the table isn't a central component of fellowship. We are not a culinary culture. We do not set aside a large swatch of our day for a meal. Our lives don't rotate around the dinner table. It's speed and price, for us. Isn't it? It's speed and price. That's what it is. A buck fifty for a burrito with Fritos in it, in my car? I'm in.

But that's not this culture. This culture and the relationships of this culture are built around the table. Dinner was slow. It was methodic. It was thought out. This was a culinary culture. To sit down and eat with someone wasn't just hanging out, but it carried social and cultural implications that don't exist in our culture. In fact, if you'll just think about it, Jesus is often rebuked by his peers for having dinner with people.

So if you're in one of our home groups and you're going through the Galatians study guide that accompanies this, a couple of weeks ago, you were asked to read Luke, chapter 15 (in particular, the story of the prodigal son), but the first part of that text actually helps you understand what's going on in the rest of the text. In the first part of the text, in Luke 15, verse 2, you saw the Pharisees and scribes were in the crowd, and they grumbled about Jesus because he received sinners and...what? He ate with them. This was their problem. Jesus is eating with sinners.

Now I'm a bit brash and aggressive. I have gotten in trouble often as the pastor of this church, but never for having a meal with anyone. No one has ever emailed in, "I saw you at Chili's, and you were with Don. I can't believe it!!! My family and I are changing our membership." That has just literally never happened. Now there have been a ton of other things, but *that* has never happened to me. Why? It's because it doesn't have that type of implication in our culture.

But the table means everything here, and so if we go back now and visit this with this view of the table... Peter is willing to sit with Gentiles as though they were his peers, as though they were equals with him as a Jew. He was willing to eat with them, which means to eat a non-kosher diet. He was walking in the freedom

he had found in Christ, and was willing to eat with other brothers and sisters not of his culture and not of his dietary historical law.

Then these men from James come. By the way, we learn they're not actually from James. If you go to Acts 15 (we don't have time for that), the apostles write out a letter to the Gentiles after all of this gets settled. They write, in the letter, "Some men came out from us who disturbed you. They did not go with our authority. They did not go as our spokesmen." But in the story, they're saying, "Hey, we're from James, and you eating with Gentiles is unacceptable."

So Peter is swayed by these men, and pulls back from table fellowship with the Gentiles. The implication is, "I'm better than you because I'm a Jew. I'm more clean than you are because I am a Jew. Even though we share Jesus Christ, my ethnic heritage puts me above you in regard to human value." That's what's happening at this breakdown in the table. Hear me. If anyone should have known better, it's Peter. Keep your finger here in Galatians 2, but flip over to Acts, chapter 10, with me. Now Acts, chapter 10 was, in some ways, simpler times. There were no Gentile converts before Acts, chapter 10.

All Christians were Jewish Christians, so there are no arguments or debates over circumcision and dietary law for the first nine chapters of Acts, because everybody who believes is a Jew, so they continued to walk in the law, but didn't feel they were justified by the law. Then it's going to get much more complex when an angel of the Lord appears to a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, who is of the Italian cohort. He is a man who fears God and gives alms to the poor. He prays every day, and while he was praying, an angel shows up and says, "Send some men to Joppa. In Joppa, at Simon the tanner's house (he lives by the sea), you'll find a man named Simon Peter. Bring him to you. He has a message for you."

That's all the angel really says. Now simultaneously, Peter is on the roof of Simon the tanner's house, and has a vision. The vision is this sheet being lowered from heaven with all sorts of unclean animals in it, all sorts of what they would call common animals, things they were not to touch and eat. The sheet is lowered, and that's where we're going to pick up the story. Look at verse 13. **"And there came a voice to him..."** If you have a red-letter Bible, notice this is in red letters. This is Jesus speaking. **"Rise, Peter; kill and eat."**

I love verse 14. **"But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord...'"** Are you really going to argue with Jesus again, Peter? I mean how many of these have you already lost, and you're still going to do it? You're filled with the Holy Spirit, and still arguing with Jesus. **"But Peter said, 'By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.' And the voice came to him again a second time, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to**

heaven. Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean..."

Now I'm going to just stop there. While he's inwardly perplexed about this (while he's thinking, *What does it mean that this sheet with all these unclean animals in it was just lowered before me and God told me I could eat of it? What does that mean?*), there is a knock on the door, and it's the boys from Cornelius come to get him. So Peter, along with some of the circumcised Jews from Joppa, goes with him to Cornelius' house, and then once he gets to Cornelius' house...

Let's look at verse 28, just so you can see how clean this divide was. **"And he said to them, 'You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.'**" Now from there, you have this great dialogue between Cornelius and Peter as they try to figure out why Peter is there and why God told Cornelius to bring Peter there. So Peter just goes for broke and preaches the gospel to these Gentile dogs, and look what happens.

We're going to pick it up now in verse 44. **"While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 'Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days."**

Now look at chapter 11, verse 2. **"So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying..."** Listen to this. **"You went to uncircumcised men and..."** What? **"...ate with them."** Now doesn't this feel a little bit crazy? The Holy Spirit falls and converts from among the nations. This is a promise that goes all the way back to the Abrahamic promise and the promise given to Eve in Genesis, chapter 3, that God was going to work this way. Now it has happened. The line between Jew and Gentile has been broken. In the gospel, there is now one holy people of God made up of tribes, tongues, and nations, colors, and socio-economic statuses.

The gospel has broken through on all the great barriers of man, and do you see the circumcision party? "You ate with whom? Who did you eat with? You ate where?" Do you see how ingrained into their minds and hearts this idea of table is? Peter already fought this fight. Peter is going to go on and say to these men who are criticizing him, "Hey, the Holy Spirit fell, dummy! What do you want me to do, tell the Holy Spirit he can't do that?" That's a paraphrase. It doesn't read exactly like that, but that's what happened.

Peter is going to say, "The Holy Spirit fell. Who am I to argue with God? 'You can't save them!' What do you want me to do? I baptized them because the Holy Spirit fell. The brothers were there. Ask them." Peter had already fought this fight, so how does Peter, who has already fought this fight, who has already stood up in the face of this accusation, get wooed out of the gospel and back into a broken way of thinking? That takes us to the next verse in Galatians. Galatians, chapter 2. We'll pick it up in verse 13. **"And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy."**

Now here are a couple of things of note. First of all, nominal Christianity, a life filled with hypocrisy, is contagious. It's just contagious. I think if you examine your own heart, I'm a firm believer that there is hypocrisy in every heart in this room, including mine. There are ways I am not lining up completely with all I say I believe, just like you, and just like anyone else who claims the name of Jesus Christ. But when it comes to a nominal pursuit of Jesus, if your life and world is filled with people who are not serious about the things of God, and have no real desire to pursue him, know him, love him, and worship him, it will not take long for you to join them in their nominal desire to know, love, and worship him.

If I could press, I bet if you get around bold people, ferocious people, people who are sold out to the Lord, it has this effect of drawing that out of you. What you see happening in this text is this kind of subtle drift away from what is the truth in the gospel, back to what is the law. Here's why Peter and Barnabas being caught up in this brings me a glimmer of hope. Maybe you're further along the road than I am, but if Peter and Barnabas could drift away from the gospel and back to the law, it gives me hope for my soul that has a tendency to do the same.

If you catch me on a good day, I tend to be able to preach the gospel well to myself, but if you catch me on a bad day, the accusations on my life (that come from within, by the way)... Most of the accusations against me that make me doubt the gospel don't come from external, but come from internal. I don't know if you're the same. It's not people outside of my heart that make me, at times, doubt the gospel. It's my own heart that makes me doubt the gospel, and there is still in me (God help me) a desire to measure up, and so if I'm not careful, I will feel myself comparing myself with other people, just to make sure I'm there, I'm mature, I'm where God wants me.

"How much do you have memorized? Well, I didn't get to memorize it. When do you get up in the morning? Gosh, I'm a bum! You had your entire neighborhood over for an evangelistic service? How did you get them there? I need to do that!" It doesn't take me long to downshift out of the gospel back into the law. For whatever reason, the law is comforting, because it puts control back on me (doesn't it?) because I have a tangible measure of my godliness according to the law when I'm doing it well.

So since this happens to Peter, and since it happens to Barnabas, and if we're straight with one another, it happens to all of us in here, that should bring some things into view about how we should live our lives. Let me point out something about our boy, Peter. Peter got in a lot of trouble. He was a beast as long as his eyes were fixed on Jesus, but the moment he takes his eyes off of Jesus, he becomes a buffoon, just like us, so let me give you three really clear examples of that.

If you remember when Jesus is walking on the water, if you have a background in church... If you don't, Jesus is walking on the water in the Sea of Galilee. There is a bit of a storm tossing the boat, and Peter, fixed on Jesus, is unbelievably bold. "Hey, can I come out there?" Who in here is going to ask that? I'm going to think that's as cool as can be, that Jesus is walking on stormy water, but I'm not going to want any part of that.

I'd be like, *Man, that dude is legit*, hanging onto the boat and vomiting off the side. I don't want out there with him. I'm just glad he can do it! But not Peter, not when his eyes are fixed on Jesus. "Can I come out there?" The Scriptures are so detailed to let us know Peter starts to walk on the water, and then he takes his eyes off Jesus and begins to notice the wind, the rain, and the waves, and he...what? He sinks.

Okay. Now the second place I'll point out is when Peter has his eyes fixed on Jesus, just transfixed on Jesus, during the Lord's Supper when Jesus starts talking about what's to come. Peter goes, "Even if I must die, I would never betray you," and Jesus is like, "Uh-huh. Yeah, all right, Peter. I hear you, but here's the thing, bro. In just a few hours here, you're not only going to deny me, but you're going to deny me with some words you probably shouldn't use." Sure enough, Peter, with his eyes fixed on Jesus, is as bold as can be.

Now you find him in the outer court after the arrest of Jesus Christ... "Aren't you a Galilean? Aren't you with Jesus?"

"I'm not with this man! I don't know this man!"

"Well, wait a minute. I think you *were* with him. You even speak with that accent. We've seen you with him."

"I don't know this man!"

"Well, wait a minute. I thought I saw you with the other 11, with Jesus!"

"*Blankety-blank*, I don't know the man!" Now where are Peter's eyes in this moment? They're on him. *What happens if they figure out I'm with Jesus? They've already arrested Jesus. What will that mean for me?*

This is why you have to love this guy. Even at his restoration, Peter tends to turn his eyes and take his eyes off of Jesus Christ. If you remember, Peter denies Christ. Christ is restoring Peter and says, "Do you love me, Peter? Do you *agape* me, Peter?" Peter answers, "You know I *fileo* you," so Jesus says, "Do you love me unconditionally?" Peter responds, "Man, you know we're boys."

"Do you love me unconditionally, Peter?"

"Man, yeah! I love you! I *fileo* you, Jesus!"

"Do you *agape* me, Peter?"

"Well, you know I *fileo* you."

"Okay. Well, Peter, there is coming a day when you're going to be led where you don't want to go." Basically, Jesus says, "You're going to die badly, and this *fileo* love you're talking about is not going to be adequate to carry you through to completion."

After that conversation, they're walking. Do you remember what happens next? Do you remember what Peter asked? "What about John? What about John?" Jesus' response was, "What is he to you? If I want him to live till I return, he'll live till I return. Why do you keep doing this, Peter? What is John to you?" Peter has a way of taking his eyes off of Jesus, and every time he does it, all the power, authority, and weight he has when his eyes are fixed on Jesus vanishes, and he stumbles about.

That's what happened here in the churches at Antioch. He takes his eyes off of Jesus. He takes his eyes off the gospel, and he once again begins to be concerned with the approval of man. He wants everyone to like him. He wants to be seen as the guy getting it right. He's not free to just walk in the boldness of the gospel. He takes his eyes off of Jesus, and, once again, he begins to drift. So what should this help us see and understand? Well, I think it should help us see and understand if Peter and Barnabas can drift away from the gospel, then we most definitely can.

So what do we need to do? Well, I think the first should be pretty clear. Repeatedly, in the New Testament, we are going to be really pushed to fix our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12 says, "Fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and the perfecter of your faith." Our eyes are fixed on Christ, because, not only did he save us, but

he is sanctifying us, so we need to understand the gospel isn't just what rescues us, but what continues to purify us.

We fix our eyes on Jesus, not only in Hebrews 12, but also in Colossians, chapter 3. "Let us fix our eyes on things that are above, where Christ is. Let us set our minds on things that are above, where Christ is." You have this call to not take your eyes off of Jesus, to not take your eyes off of his life, his death, and his resurrection. We should meditate on those things. We should surround our lives with those things. We should sit under teaching that points toward those things. We should listen to music and books that make much of those things. We want to feed our soul a steady diet of the gospel. We want to preach it to ourselves a thousand times a day.

I want to surround myself and invite men into my life to point out to me when I'm drifting. I want to have guys in close proximity to me who, when it comes to my marriage, when it comes to raising the kids, when it comes to money, when it comes to opportunity, when it comes to my own heart and my own soul, are able and willing to engage me at a level that says, "You're failing to believe the gospel in its fullness here, Matt."

I want to do that, because drift is possible. In fact, it appears that drift is probable. Don't we even sing this, "Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord; take and seal it. Seal it for thy courts above"? Right? I have a tendency to drift. I have a tendency to wander. I have a tendency to run back to the diagnostic rather than back to the cure.

Now let's get into the second argument against the gospel. Yes, that was the longest intro in the history of sermons. Galatians, chapter 2. Let's read verse 14. The water is going to get a bit muddy here, and if it doesn't look muddy to you, I'm going to muddy it, and then we'll try to clear it up. **"But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"**

I'm not going to spend a lot of time in the back part of 14, because he's simply saying, "Hey, Peter. You're a Jew. You've grown up a Jew. You've been around the law your whole life and can't do it, so how in the world are you now going to expect Gentiles, who have never even heard the law, to actually be completely obedient to the law, when you've known it your whole life and haven't been able to do it?" What I want to point out (and really the thing we have to get to the bottom of, I think, to dissect the argument that the gospel leads to licentiousness or sinful lives) is the first part of 14. "When I saw they were acting in a way that was out of step with the truth of the gospel..."

Now here's why the waters get a bit muddy here. The law says, "Do this; don't do this." Doesn't it? "This is what you should do. This is what you should not do." You'll find both kinds of laws in God's Word. Paul has been arguing this whole time that that's not what the gospel of grace does, but then he comes right back around and says they were behaving in a way that's out of step with the truth of the gospel. So it appears, in the Scriptures, the gospel is wholly different than the law, but there is a way to walk and a way not to walk if you believe and understand the gospel.

Now that's confusing, isn't it? It seems like the law is saying, "Do this; don't do that," and Paul is saying, "The gospel doesn't do this, but if you believe the gospel, you had better do this and not do that." How do you make sense of this? Well, the argument goes that if you preach the gospel as the Bible outlines the gospel, people will use the gospel as an excuse to walk in unrepentant sin. Look right at me. That is absolutely true. That is absolutely true, but inasmuch as people do that, they simply reveal they do not understand, nor do they believe the gospel.

How do we know that? It's because there is a way to walk in step with the gospel. So what does this mean? I want to show you how the purpose of the law shifts for those of us who are in Christ Jesus. The law is a diagnostic. It shows us we have a disease. Christ becomes the healer of that disease, and upon our healing from what the law reveals is broken in us, the law then becomes a wooing into the fullness of life and joy God has invited us into in Christ Jesus.

If I could just kind of walk you through the way it should work (and it will vary in our lives, but at some point, these steps are in the heart and mind of all believers)... The law begins to bear weight on my rebellion. The law reveals I am a liar. I don't just lie; I am a liar. That's why I lie. I'm a thief. I tend to covet. I have a tendency to love other things more than I love God. I am in stark rebellion against the God of the universe. The diagnostic of the law reveals that's who I am. It's not what I do; it's who I am. I do those things because that's what's inside of me.

The offer is that in Christ, I'll be given the righteousness of Christ, and the wrath due me because of that rebellion is put on Christ on the cross so now, when God sees me, he sees me as perfect, spotless, and righteous in his sight. When God looks upon me, in heaven, he sees me as blameless. After that moment of justification that had nothing to do with me and everything to do with Jesus Christ, the law now serves the purpose of a light unto my feet, a light unto my path, and God begins to woo me into how he created the universe to work, for the fullness of my joy and the display of his glory.

When men see this, the law becomes a delight! So David, who saw this coming... You learned that in Hebrews 11. You go read Hebrews 11, and men in the Old Testament saw this coming and put their faith in it. David was one of those, and David sings about the law, loves the law, and talks so strangely about the

law that it's hard for us to get our minds on it. He said the law is like honey on his lips, and he would lie in bed and just mediate on it, like lustfully. When was the last time you were just in your bed and you were like, "Oh, don't covet. Don't do it. Don't you covet. It's like honey"? We don't do that.

It's a fundamental misunderstanding, because, "Don't covet," for me, in Christ, under Christ, is not a condemning command, but is a wooing command into joy. The law does not crush me any longer but leads me into ever-expanding joy, so when the law says, "This is how you look at your wife..." When the law says, "This is how you are to approach children..." When the law says, "Don't do this; do this," I don't stand condemned under that law. I'm spotless. I'm blameless, and so instead, I'm being invited into the fullness of life now and ever-expanding joy into eternity.

You have to kind of dial in on this reality. If God, at great expense, saved you and rescued you from your sins into his glory, do you really think he's after you just kind of being beat down and exhausted and hating life? "Do you know what's going to bring me glory? It's you being miserable. Frown. Frown! No, frown even more! Now slump your shoulders! Now just grunt a lot. I want you miserable, because when people see your misery, when they see you hate your wife or your husband, but you're gritting it out... When they see you despair of life and long to die so you can come to happy heaven, they're really going to want to follow me, know me, and love me." That's absurd!

The law of the Lord becomes like honey to the saints because it has lost its ability to tell us we're terminal, and instead reminds us of God's love for us. A healthy parent has rules built out for their children that, yes, keep their children safe, but also communicate well the love they have for their children. One of the lines I use most often in discipline, specifically with my two older children, is, "Hey. Does Daddy like to play? Does Daddy like to have fun? Do we value fun and laughter here?"

"Yeah."

"Okay. So if I'm saying no, then, it's not because I'm anti-joy, but rather I believe ultimately that's going to rob you of joy." This is the law. This is what the law does. The law says, "There is greater joy this way! There is greater joy this way! If you come this way, if you walk this way, fullness of life will be yours now, and ever-increasing joy will be yours in the future. This is why we delight in the law. This is why we love the law, and this is why the gospel of Jesus Christ will not lead to licentiousness for those who actually believe it.

Let's put that lens on our story. What do you think would bring the heart of Peter more joy: living according to his convictions and what he knows to be true, or feeling the weight to be accepted by everyone and beginning to play the part of a hypocrite, pretending to be something he's not in order to earn the approval

of people he actually disagrees with? I don't know if you've ever found yourself pretending to be something you're not in order to please other people, but it's a bit exhausting.

You will never receive love in that place, because any love or acceptance you receive by that crowd will have to go through the filter of your knowledge that that's not actually who you are and not actually what you believe. So Peter is out of step with the gospel here. He is acting the part of a hypocrite here, because as the text clearly shows us, he was afraid. He was fearful. He was operating out of a fear of man that says, *Man's approval of me is more important than God's approval of me.* He's not believing the gospel enough.

Just as we close out here, here's what I want you to consider. I think, for some of us, the diagnostic of the law will show us today to be terminal. You have not put your faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. You have put your faith in something else. You have put your faith, ultimately, in you, in one of two directions. You have put your faith in you in that you're just going to live life to the fullest, and you know what's best for you, and you know what's going to bring you the greatest amount of joy, and God should obviously be cool with you, because you're not as much of a bum as other people you know.

Or, you have put your confidence in you under the cloak of outward religion and church activity until you don't really have a relationship with the Lord. You just do what you think the Lord says so you can avoid him and create your own righteousness for you to glory in. Some of you, that's exactly where you are, and I need to herald to you today that the offer of a former life, an offer of, really, new birth, new life, and legitimate righteousness is offered to those of you who put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

But there are others of you today who, man, the diagnostic would read that you are pure and spotless and blameless, but for whatever reason, you are digging your heels in and fighting against your own fullness of life and your own joy because you view the law of God as a weight to judge you rather than a light to lead you into life. The thing I can point out about this text is it appears that Peter hears Paul and repents.

It's my hope, coming in today, that you might be able to hear. Maybe you're digging your heels in about your relationship with your spouse, or something with your money, or a state of your heart where you need to confess sin and you need to do work with the Lord, but you just don't want to. You're digging in your heels and God is wooing you into greater joy, and you're just refusing to go. You just can't have that. You know better. You're smarter. I'm telling you you're out of step with the gospel. You're not believing the gospel enough. May the Holy Spirit, in his mercy, dial you back into really the only hope you have: Christ and him crucified. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, I just pray that you would help us today. For those of us to whom the law would reveal we're terminal, I pray that, Holy Spirit, you would give us the gift of belief, that we would run to you, not from

you, that we would press into those who brought us today, or come up and talk with one of the pastors and ministers, and ask questions and get clarity, and that you might bring new brothers and sisters into the covenant community of faith today.

I pray for those who are just walking out of step with the gospel, who aren't trusting and believing you're for them, you delight in them, you care for them, and ultimately, you're leading them into the fullness of joy and ever-expanding joy throughout all eternity. I pray there would be a glad surrender, finally, to be able to let go and trust you. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

I love you guys.

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