

True Freedom 4

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[0 : 00] Keep your Bibles open there at Galatians chapter 2. You might have noticed we just stopped saying the this is the word of the Lord, thanks be to God, bit of things, because it's just getting a bit more too religious for my likings. We want to just try and keep the religious rituals away from things, but it is no less the word of God and for that reason we need to be thankful for it.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you for your word and we pray this morning as we come to it that you would teach us, rebuke us, correct us and train us in righteousness and equip us to live thoroughly righteous lives. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well the message to Galatians is one that the true gospel of Jesus is being threatened, right?

Threatened in a couple of ways. One, by a different gospel coming and being preached, not just verbally but also threatened by people living in contradiction to the things they affirm.

Now the big point of this passage is simply this, our conduct must be in step with the gospel. That's the bottom line of this passage, right?

Especially if you are a leader of God's people, for the stakes are pretty high. I mean, if a banker gets things wrong, well then people are going to lose their life savings and that would be a tragedy.

[1 : 30] But if a Christian leader gets things wrong, then someone's eternal life is at stake. So the stakes are much higher.

Which is why faithful Christians in leadership will always be contending for the truth. It's a wearying battle, let me tell you.

But a battle that must continue until Jesus returns. Now the story so far in Galatians is this, the gospel has come to the region of Galatia, that's the map here hopefully you'll see.

Galatia is a region, right? And there's a few key towns in there, Phrygia and those kind of places there as well. But it's a region. And the gospels come there. And in so doing so, it's brought deliverance from the present evil age and brought people, transferred them into the kingdom of God, which is under the reign of King Jesus.

Which brings about then, one new nation. Not a political party, but one new nation. That's what it brings about.

[2 : 41] And Paul has brought this gospel message to them. The message that Jesus is Lord, that Jesus King of Kings, the only true God. And that the way into that kingdom, the way into that nation, is by trusting in the Lord Jesus.

Submitting to Him as Lord. His Lordship has been established by Him suffering and by Him being raised from the dead.

In His suffering, He dies as the sacrifice for sin. In His rising, He rises victor over sin and death. And so all who submit to Jesus as Lord and Saviour are okay.

That is the short word for justified. They're okay with God. And so we receive a new life that lasts forever in the kingdom of God. Not by works.

Not by nationality. Not by religious affirmation. Not by becoming a Jew. It's by faith in what Jesus has done.

[3 : 46] This is the good news of the gospel. And that's the news that Paul preaches. And it comes directly from Jesus.

Not from men. And so it's the message, as we've been taught, from the new age for our present age.

You leave your old master, your old Lord, and you now follow a crucified and risen Jesus. Leave every other religious affiliation.

Follow Jesus. Stop worshipping the gods of Rome. Start worshipping Jesus alone. Stop worshipping idols of the nations. Start worshipping Jesus alone.

Stop worshipping the devil. Start worshipping Jesus. Stop worshipping the gods of power and posterity and pornography. And start worshipping Jesus alone.

[4 : 48] And there's no second class believers in this family, in this nation. For we are all one in Christ Jesus. It's one nation made up of Jews and Gentiles.

Here's a bit of a slide I've tried to put together, explain it more visually. In the Jewish mindset, the world consists of Jews and Gentiles. Jews are a little peaceful. Gentiles, rest of the world.

Right? But when people put their faith in the Lord Jesus, they then become into the new people of God. Christians. Made up of Jews and Gentiles who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Right? But now, there's something more. Right? In this new nation, there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Right?

It is just those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One nation. One nation. One nation. One new culture. One gospel-shaped believer.

[5 : 52] Christian. It's not multicultural. Right? It's not multi-ethnic. For that would be to deny the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ altogether. Now, Paul can't change this gospel message.

There's only one authentic gospel that brings about this one new nation who are Christians, not Jews, not Gentiles. leave that behind.

It's one new nation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We mustn't change it. We mustn't change that message. For to do so would be to be a failure as an apostle. Now, last week, we learnt that Paul went up to Jerusalem and met with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem.

The inner circle, if you like. The disciples of Peter, James and John. James, the brother of Jesus. Paul was concerned.

That they, the heavies, the people who were influential back in Jerusalem, they might have got the gospel wrong.

[7 : 03] They might think that you had to trust in Jesus, Lord and Saviour, and obey Jewish laws to be part of the kingdom of God. And Paul was relieved that they'd not changed the gospel and that they were in agreement with what Paul was teaching.

So, you see there in chapter 2 verse 3, they didn't force Jewish customs on Titus. They didn't force Titus to be circumcised. And so, Paul could continue preaching the gospel and not fear them undermining what he was doing.

There's only one way into the kingdom. One way into this new nation. Everyone leaves their old kingdom behind and become members of the new kingdom of God. And the way that happens for both Jew and Gentile is by faith in the finished work of Jesus at the cross.

And so, then you are declared right with God. Righteous, okay with God. Now, the bottom line is, right?

If there was any other way, any other way to be right with God, then Christ Jesus died for nothing. His sacrifice on the cross was for no reason at all.

[8 : 18] Which then brings us to this morning's passage, verse 11 to 21. And the next real threat to the gospel. See verse 11, And we see Peter's hypocrisy.

When Cephas comes to Antioch, Paul had to oppose him to his face. Peter has got something dead wrong.

And here's the crisis. The second crisis, really. Paul sees that the Apostle Peter has got something wrong.

Now, what do you do as the Apostle Paul when you see the Apostle Peter in the wrong? You don't ignore it.

You don't talk to somebody else about it. You talk to the person directly and say, it's the loving thing to do in this situation when the stakes are so very high.

[9 : 19] For if Peter remains in this grievous theological error, he stands condemned. Along with all who follow him.

And so we see the confrontation of the condemnation. Peter was in a position of being condemned by God. And if he continues in it, he may well miss out on the kingdom of God.

Now, condemnation is a strong word. Strong language. When you look at the word in the Bible, it's a very serious situation to be in. I mean, Jesus was condemned to death, even death on a cross.

Mark chapter 14, verse 64. You've heard this blasphemy. Watch your decision. And they all condemned him as worthy and deserving of death. Hebrews chapter 11, verse 7.

Remember, the world was flooded, wasn't it?

[10 : 32] And all those people who didn't make it in the ark were condemned, judged, dead, missed out on the kingdom of God. They did not repent. And the reason Paul confronts Peter is not because he hates him.

Right? It's not because he hates him. It's because he loves Peter and he loves Jesus. I'm sure that Paul would have been willing to have Peter rebuke him if he was in error.

So, committed is he to the truth of the gospel. You see back in chapter 1, verse 8 and 9. Have a look at verse 1, 8 and 9. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you, let him be accursed.

So, now, Paul's actually included himself in how high the stakes are, if you get it wrong.

If we, or an angel from heaven, he loves Jesus, so he doesn't want the gospel of Jesus to be compromised.

[11 : 52] And he loves Peter so much that he won't want to see him condemned by God, judged by God, missing out on the kingdom of God, judged by God, and finding himself under the wrath of God.

He doesn't want to see Peter accursed, or anybody else who follows him accursed either. If you get the gospel wrong, and you lead others to get it wrong, the stakes are very, very, very high.

And so, the question is, what has Peter got wrong? What's he done wrong? What's his mistake? What's his hypocrisy? What's he doing when it's not in accordance with the gospel?

You see verses 12 to 14, notice the word hypocrisy comes up, twice at least. He's not living in accordance with the truth of the gospel he professes.

See there? The book of verse 12 and 13. For before certain men come from James, he was eating with the Gentiles. And when they came, he drew back and separated himself in the circumcision party.

[13 : 13] And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him. He's not living in accordance with the gospel he professes.

He's separating himself. See what's going on here? Peter is now in Antioch and enjoying the freedom to eat whatever he wants.

And he's eating with the Gentile believers. That is, non-Jewish believers. That's their background. And here Peter is sitting down with uncircumcised believers, demonstrating to the world that there's no second class citizens in God's family.

There's only one new nation, those who live under the reign of Jesus. And then some men have come from Antioch, from James, from the pillars of the faith in Jerusalem.

Here's the map again. So Jerusalem's down the bottom, right? They've come up to Antioch in Galatia. That's where they are now. And when these guys turn up, what does Peter do?

[14 : 25] Well, he withdraws from eating with the Gentile believers. He separates himself from them. Why does he do that? For fear. For fear of the circumcision party that existed back in Jerusalem.

The question then is, who is the circumcision party? We can push on and think about this a bit some more. Literally, it's men of the circumcision.

It's a group of people back in Acts chapter 11 we read about. We read about them last week in chapter 11. We read about going up to Jerusalem in chapter 11. We're not really sure who they are. That's the thing. Come back to Acts chapter 11 and see it with me. It'll take a bit of time, but it's worth seeing. Acts chapter 11. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

I can't hear the pages. I know you're scrolling with your phones. It's okay. Acts chapter 11. Here's the crowd. Verse 11.

[15 : 31] Chapter 11, sorry. Now, the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticised him, saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them. Now, that'll do.

The word party is not really there. It's just the circumcision ones. The circumcision. They're not having a party. It's a circumcision crowd.

We're not quite sure who they are. But if you come to the end of chapter 11, that passage there, you come down to the end of verse 18. This circumcision crew, when they heard these things, they fell silent.

They glorified God, saying, then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life. It seems that this circumcision crew back up in Jerusalem, they're rejoicing that the Gentiles are Christians.

[16:31] So we're not quite sure who this circumcision crew is that's come down from James that is spying on Peter's freedom. And for some reason, Peter's afraid of them.

But he is. Peter himself had explained to them and even uses his dream in Acts chapter 10 to prove that it's okay for him to eat non-kosher food.

Remember in Acts chapter 10, God lets down this vision for Peter to see and he's told to go and eat all these unclean animals. And he goes, yeah, okay, God, I don't want to, but you can and you must.

And then he goes and sees Cornelius converted, who's the first Gentile believer. So now Peter's had it explained to these guys and he knows it's okay to eat anything.

Jewish food, no longer laws apply. He's free to eat whatever he likes, including pork chops if he likes. Bacon's good on breakfast and eggs.

[17:37] And that group had rejoiced, that's good. But now Peter's afraid of this crew. The same group, the Jewish believers, not sure why, but he is afraid of them.

And the key thing, he's afraid of man, not God. So Peter's acting out of fear, not faith. Peter's behaviour is out of step with belief.

It's not in accordance with the truth of the gospel he professes. And being one of the pillars of the faith, his influence leads all the other Jewish believers in Antioch, including Barnabas, Australia as well.

And so now there's a division in the church in the region of Galatia in Antioch. Jewish believers on one side of the restaurant.

Gentile believers on the other side of the restaurant. And it's an indictment on the very gospel of the Lord Jesus that they say they profess in this division in the fellowship.

[18:45] It's hypocrisy to believe one thing, say one thing and then do another. The fruit of the gospel of the Lord Jesus is unity. Unifying diverse people from various groups, cultures, nations, languages into one new people.

And then to divide that new people over non-gospel matters, in fact clear gospel matters, is a terrible sin. It's the sin of actually affirming a different gospel, which is no gospel at all.

The gospel makes one new nation, one new people out of the two. Gentile, you and I, who are not Jews, from whatever nationality, and Jew.

In one new person, one new nationality, with one new passport, with one new king, in one new nation. To divide that nation by saying one thing and doing another is to stand condemned by God. I'll say it again. To divide that nation by saying one thing and doing another is to stand condemned by God. This conduct is not in line with the truth of the gospel.

[20:14] And the people of God need to hear it loud and clear. And Paul is urgently working at bringing people back into line with the gospel.

Stopping the division being established again between Jew and Gentile. And so public sin is worthy of public rebuke. If Peter once used his freedom from the law rightly to enjoy eating with the Gentiles, and now by his action divides the church.

If Peter used his freedom from the law rightly to enjoy eating with the Gentiles, and now make Gentiles live like Jews, then he's clearly out of step with the gospel.

Along with all who follow his example. So, that's the problem. Now let's have a look at Peter's rebuke.

Paul's rebuke. It's pretty clear, the problem, but the rebuke is pretty dense to get a hold of, but it's pretty simple in the end.

[21:23] So, stick with me in it, because this is one of the hardest parts of the Bible to get a hold of, really, but I think, in God's mercy, with Josh's help, I've come to understand it.

So, here we go. Let's work through it. Pick up a verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners.

Who are the we? Well, that's pretty simple. We equals Paul. Hopefully the slides will come through as well to reinforce what I'm saying. Who are the we? It's in the outlines as well.

The we is Paul, Peter, Barnabas, who are the Jews by birth, who are not Gentile sinners, right?

Now, it's important to get the idea of Gentile sinners right here. A sinner is a rebellion against God.

You know someone's a rebel by their actions, and the Gentiles are sinners, but as a category of people who are non-Christians.

[22 : 21] It's a description of people who are without God and without hope in the world. Ephesians 2, verse 12, Remember that at one time you were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and estranged to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

And chapter 4, verse 18, They are darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that's in them, due to the hardness of heart. They have become callous, and have given themselves over to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

As a category of people, the Gentiles are Gentile sinners. And let me tell you, you could just as easily say, Australians and Australian sinners. Same thing applies.

We know, well what do we know? What do we know? They know that a person is justified by faith in Christ Jesus alone, not by works of the law.

That's what we know, verse 16. We know that those who are Jews by birth are only saved by faith in Jesus alone. Right? Everyone enters the kingdom in the same way.

[23 : 33] Everyone enters the new nation of Christians by faith in Jesus. Both Jews and Gentiles are justified, made right with God, declared okay with God, by faith in Jesus. Not by works of the law, not by Jewish rules and regulations.

We know. We know that. But do you actually believe it, Peter? Do you live by what you profess? But, verse 17. Now this starts to get a bit gnarly now, right? So, hang in there with me.

If we are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, but still bound by the Old Testament law, is Christ promoting sin. That's the essence of what's going on here.

The key to getting this right is to seeing this is a hypothetical situation. Imagine if this is true, but it's not. All right? If we, all right, who are Jews by birth, that is, and then we're seeking to be made right with God by faith, see verse 17, right?

[24 : 51] If that's what we're doing, right? No rules and regulations of law, right? If that's what we're doing, but we're actually found to be sinners, now in what way could they be found to be sinners if they're seeking to be justified by faith?

Right? How is it that they could be found to be sinners? Is the question. First, well, hypothetically, not relying on the law for justification.

Here's the thing there. Not relying on the law for justification. That's what they're doing, right?

Second, by rules, the Old Testament still applying to them for salvation as well. And then, what you're doing is having fellowship with Gentiles.

You're a Jew having fellowship with Gentiles, therefore you're sinning according to the Old Testament. Right? Which is exactly what Peter has been doing, by the way.

They're doing something forbidden by the Old Testament law. Now, does that mean then that Jesus is someone who's promoting sin, is an agent of sin encouraging you to sin?

[26 : 27] He's our Christ and he's encouraging you to sin. Because Jesus is endorsing that kind of behaviour.

That would still mean that we're bound by the Old Testament, that our Messiah, our Christ, our King is promoting us to break the Old Testament law.

So, is Christ a servant of sin then? the answer? No! No! Far, far, far from it, right?

No way, absolutely not, it can't be. Cannot get any further from the truth, from what Jesus did at the cross. See verse 18? For, now this is key, right?

This is key, verse 18. For by rebuilding the wall, the dividing wall, will be sinning by undoing what the gospel does.

[27 : 33] Here's the reason, verse 18. This is the thing that unlocks the passage. If he rebuilds what he tore down, now what's he torn down? What's he been tearing down by the gospel?

What's the big point he's been tearing down by the gospel? If he tears down what he, rebuilds what he's torn down, it would be the way of proving himself to be a transgressor, a sinner of the highest order.

Now what's he torn down? Paul has torn down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile.

That's what he's done. By preaching the gospel of Jesus, which brings about salvation and establishes the new kingdom of God, he's torn down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and

Gentile.

That's what he's, the barrier's been broken down. I mean, Galatians 3.28, just come over to the page of Galatians 3.28 and see it. Galatians 3.28, this is what Paul preaches, there's neither Jew nor Greek, there's neither slave nor free, there's neither male nor female, for you're all one in Christ Jesus.

[28 : 48] But if Peter, you rebuild that dividing wall up again, well you're rebuilding what, that's a disaster. Ephesians 2.14, have a look at Ephesians 2.14, chapter 2, verse 14, see it with me there?

Okay, see it with me there? For he himself is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.

By abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace.

peace. If Paul rebuilds what the gospel tears down, the division between Jew and Gentiles, that would be completely against the gospel.

That would be sinning against God in the highest order. That would be undoing what the gospel does. So you can see how bad Peter's got a mistake here.

[30 : 19] He is rebuilding the dividing wall that has been broken down by the gospel of the Lord Jesus. And if Paul goes on rebuilding that wall, well, he's actually a great transgressor, sinning in the highest order.

That's what he's getting wrong. For, see the logic keeps going, for, verse 18, by rebuilding the wall, we'll be sinning by undoing what the gospel does.

Does the gospel fulfill the law.

Next point. The law, the law being fulfilled in Christ Jesus and him crucified. Paul no longer seeks to be made right with God by the law as he once did.

So that he might live to God for God. It is the gospel of Jesus that enables him to live an outward God life.

[31 : 40] It's the gospel that's united both he and Peter as Jews with the Gentiles in the kingdom of God. And to reinforce the point, he says the same thing from a different angle in verse 20.

He's been crucified with Christ by faith in Jesus' death was his death. And Jesus' life is his new life as a member of God's new nation.

And you see then the conclusion that otherwise Christ died for nothing. If salvation is by the law then Jesus' death is pointless. To think you can be okay with God by works of the law if you're going to make your salvation by way of works which is what you do if you create division between people based on works of the law expressed by who you do and don't eat with Peter effectively saying that the Gentile believers are not saved but Jews who rely on the law are saved saved and not well if you do that it means that you don't need God's grace at all and you make God's grace of no value at all if you do that you do away the very purpose of Jesus dying because his sacrificial death only ever was and only ever will be to be the one way to be right with

God so the principle still stands there's one new nation under Jesus Lord this oneness must not be divided for any man-made reason any religious custom in general and certainly not by adherence to Jewish food laws in particular because to do that is to rebuild the wall of hostility that was broken down by the cross of Jesus and not only that it makes the cross of Jesus pointless well let's pull a few implications together then all right I would like you to explain that to other people over morning tea because then you'll know that you know it now that I've preached it I know it but let's pull a few implications together even the apostle Peter can get things wrong compromising the gospel for fear of men it's possible for us to do the same thing again and our faith which we profess to believe must actually be demonstrated in our behaviour and that's a massive thing for us all me included right those who profess to be

Christian need to have the gospel shape our behaviour in every area of life we must always be on the side of truth we must not deny the truth of the gospel by our behaviour and in this instance for the apostle Peter it meant that he needed to be repenting of isolating himself from the Gentile believers fearing what a group of other people in Jerusalem might think of him he needed to repent from treating Gentile believers like he would have treated Gentiles when he was a Jew and what he was doing was very unloving to the Gentile believers in Antioch and it was leading others to another gospel which would have them condemned by God he wanted to please a group of people fearing men at the expense of Christian fellowship and ultimately denying the truth of the gospel at one level being ashamed of the gospel which come to the greater price tag of Jesus being ashamed of

me when he comes in his father's glory now thirdly remember this letter is not just written for the believers in

[35 : 55] Antioch this letter was written to the believers in all the region of Galatia so everyone who read this letter would hear it read of what happened in Antioch just as we have it's a great warning to me as a leader of God's people in two ways firstly one to make sure that my conduct is always in line with the truth of the gospel two to not be slow in calling others back to the truth who might be leading others astray we'll do it publicly from the pulpit we'll do it privately with those who disagree but we must do it for the sake of believers in St.

Lucia and more generally our conduct must always be in step with the truth of the gospel particularly with brothers and sisters in Christ so that we fear God and not men let's pray our father in heaven thank you for giving us your living word and we thank you that it thoroughly equips us to live and to work and to behave in accordance with your will please help us to do so we pray in Jesus name Amen