

Freedom from Prejudice and Hypocrisy

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[0 : 0 0] All right, thanks, Blake. Good morning, everybody. Good to see you all, all these new faces to you that I've met. It's awesome to have you with us for the first time. Yeah, that's cool.

All right. A little awkward applause. You know, you either have to go like full in on it or just, you know, that's all right. Those of you who are not with us today, deployment or training or sick, there's been a lot of sickness going around, and you're catching this online later on in the week.

Glad that you're staying up with us. We are in our third week in a series looking at the letter to the Galatian church. And this book, what it does, it reminds us that there's two ways to live.

We see this constant theme that keeps emerging through this letter. There's two ways to live. One, you can live in bondage to fear. Or two, you can live in freedom through faith in Jesus.

That's the two options we have. And apart from Jesus, we are enslaved. We are in bondage to various fears. There's the fear of our past. Our past sins that we've committed that always follow us around and always dog us that we got to keep hidden in a secret place hoping nobody finds out.

[1 : 1 0] And there's also the bondage of fear to our present failures. And our misguided mindsets, right? There is a guy who said that there's three identities that lie to us and that we latch onto in life.

It's this. I am what I do. I am what I have. And I am what others say and think about me. And this isn't just common to a few people. This is something that plagues every single one of us.

And Galatians is what we're seeing. It's this book about the freedom that you and I have in Jesus, through faith in Jesus, from all of these things. He came and he opened up our prison doors to lead us out.

But there is a part of us, if we're honest, there's a part of us that doesn't want that freedom. We get so familiar with our prisons that we're too afraid to walk out of them. Like that movie Shawshank Redemption.

It's a great old movie. If you have TNT, you've probably watched it a hundred times because they seem to show that at least twice a week on that particular cable channel. But it's this great movie. It's like really old school.

[2 : 1 4] I think it was in the 90s, kind of aging myself, telling you where I was at when I was in my 20s. But there's this moment in this movie. These guys are in this prison. And Shawshank is this prison.

And there's this old man named Brooks who's spent his whole adult life in this prison. And now, when he's old age, he's finally coming up to the place where he served his time.

And he's going to be released. He's going to have his freedom. His freedom is literally in his hands. It's moments away. It's days away. But he's too afraid to live free.

And so he tries to do whatever he can, getting himself in trouble, to get back into this prison. And they call it being institutionalized, is what the movie calls it.

You become so familiar with your prison, it becomes your safe place. We spend so much time in our prison. We spend so much time in bondage and chained and prison to sin.

[3 : 12] Ironically, those things actually become a structure of trust and safety. And instead of living in this freedom that's offered to us in Jesus Christ, we want to run back into our prison walls.

But here's the thing about walls, guys. They divide and they isolate. When we stay stuck in our sin and these imprisonment of those ideas, we isolate ourselves.

Or we isolate others from ourselves, putting people into groups, making insiders and outsiders. We create us versus them kind of thinking.

And our fears, our prison walls, they may seem like personal struggles. I mean, these things are just affecting me, but that's not true. That's not true. It couldn't be further from the truth. We're going to see this play out in Galatians chapter 2.

So we're in verse 11. We're going to be working from that. And so, but when Cephas, also Cephas is the name for the apostle Peter, one of his aliases, I guess. But when Cephas came to Antioch, to the church in Antioch, I opposed him to his faith.

[4 : 18] So Paul opposes Peter to his faith 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, who was he fearing?

The circumcision party. He was fearing man. He was fearing people. He was fearing what people thought of him. And so we see that it's actually not just Peter who was doing this.

Others followed him. And it says in verse 13, And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him. So that even Barnabas, Paul's close mate, his right-hand man, his comrade in arms for the sake of the gospel, even he was led astray by their hypocrisy.

And this is what is pointed out to us in this short little passage that we're reading. Fear, what it does, it drives us to judge people and withdraw from them.

What made Peter draw back and separate himself? It's that he was afraid of this circumcision party. Now, if you're new to the church, are you thinking, is that what it sounds like?

[5 : 30] I mean, are you really saying circumcision party? Yeah. That is what it is. These people were really zealous to make sure everybody was circumcised. See, even back then, there seemed to be a cause for everything.

Of all the guys who should have known better, who should not have backed down from these guys in the circumcision party, of all the guys, Peter should have been that guy that stood up to them. He was the first guy to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

The Gentiles is non-Jewish people, those who were not Jewish, ethnically or religiously. And saw, so he preached the gospel to the Gentiles and then saw the Holy Spirit give evidence that God had saved them when they believed.

And then he comes back from that and explains it to the church in Jerusalem what happens. He gives this amazing testimony. Look at what it says in Acts chapter 11, verses 1 to 3. 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, check this out, the circumcision party criticized him. Back then, right from the get-go, right after he had done this, they criticized him saying, you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.

[6 : 41] Notice that the circumcision party's problem isn't that the Gentiles got saved. They're not saying how dare they get saved. No, it's that Peter went to their home and shared a meal with these guys. Now, this seems a little odd until you get into the context of what that meant in that day and age that this book was written.

And even on the surface, let me be honest, this sounds a little racist. We look at that and be like, gosh, man, you guys can't associate with anybody outside your particular ethnic group. Seems very racist, right? But this demand for separation, actually, it was driven by a religious fervor.

As a Jew in that day, your identity was intertwined with keeping the law of Moses. And one big one was that males were meant to be circumcised. Circumcision was this outward sign of God's salvation to the Jews.

And that was all the way back to Abraham, the first patriarch of the nation of Israel. But the Gentiles, they were people that were uncircumcised. They were not a part of God's special people.

And to convert from Gentile to Jew meant you also had to get circumcised along with believing in the God of Israel and obeying the law of Moses, right?

[7 : 53] It's like that, just obeying the law of Moses, just believing in God, it wasn't enough. You also had to snip the tip. So, to eat with circumcised people, for the Jews, it was a big deal.

For the circumcision party, it was a big deal because in that era, mealtime was big time. To share a meal with a person was an act of communicating fellowship, value, and acceptance.

And meals went even deeper than that. Meals were a part of your religion's practice. Many religions of that day, when they ate meals, they would often sacrifice the meal, part of the meal, to their God.

And ask their God to sanctify it or bless it. And then they would eat it. And you add on top of that, the Jews had also these food restrictions. There was a lot of stuff they couldn't eat.

They can't dig on swine, right? Like that one quote from a movie. But, so, eating with a Gentile meant disobeying Moses' law. And thereby sinning against God. And such an act would defile a Jewish person.

[9 : 07] So, why did Peter go to these Gentiles and eat with them? Was he just going rogue? Let's check it out. Verse 5, he kind of explains to the circumcision party, standing up to them.

And he's saying, this is what happened, guys. I was in the city of Joppa praying. And in a trance, I saw a vision. He's not on mushrooms or anything. This is like a, this is a good God-like vision that came to him, okay?

Something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, it came down to me. Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air.

All things Jews were not allowed to eat. And I heard a voice saying to me, rise, Peter, kill and eat. But I said, by no means, Lord. No, no, no. For nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.

But the voice answered a second time from heaven. What God has made clean, do not call common. This happened three times. Poor Peter, man. He's like the apostle of threes, right? It takes three times for him to get everything, it seems like.

[10 : 10] And all was drawn up again into heaven. And behold, at that very moment, three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. Or however you say that word.

And the spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me. So he's saying, guys, I just didn't go by myself. I had my mates. I had these guys that I've been doing, you know, ministry with, and they came with me.

They can tell. You can attest to this. We entered this man's house. And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter. He will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.

And then check out what happens. As I begin to speak. Peter's saying this. As I begin to speak. The Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord.

But I remember the word of Jesus, our Savior, how he said, John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit. If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could stand in God's way.

[11 : 18] When they heard these things, they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life. Man, Peter was the first guy to see God save Gentiles.

And so when the circumcision party criticized him in this moment, he stood up to them. He did it. He got it right. His faith was bigger than his fear in that moment. That whole event that just happened, he was so fresh in his memory, right?

Man, if then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could stand in God's way? But now, fast forward in the not-too-distant future, and we see a very different Peter shrinking back from these same views, shrinking back in fear.

He doesn't boldly stand up to them. He doesn't boldly contend for the faith. He shrinks. He separates. And the tragedy is, is that his actions are dividing the church and denying the gospel.

And he is leading people to sin along with him. He's throwing up walls of fear that divide. He is making insiders and outsider groups. But that's what happens, guys. That's what happens when we live by fear, when we give into fear.

[12 : 33] You don't get freedom. You don't get unity. You end up with segregation. You don't get authentic Christianity. You get hypocrisy.

Fear leads us. That's what it does. It leads us into a false faith full of hypocrisy. Look at verse 14. What Paul says. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas, I said to Peter, even though he was an apostle, I said to him, before everyone else, if you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?

Peter was doing the classic thing we parents like to do, do as I say, not as I do. That's what Peter was doing here. His behavior didn't match his belief. They didn't line up. Now, our job, what we have to do here is we don't step away from this and elevate ourselves above Peter and think, well, I'm not like that.

That's not me. I never do that. No. This little text is meant to sober you and me. If you're a Christian, you need to say, okay, I need to watch out. I need to be watchful because, you know what? Friends, you and I are prone to the same hypocrisy as Peter.

We slip back right into that really fast. We are driven by the same fear that lurks in all of us. It's this fear that we aren't good enough. It's this fear that we don't measure up.

[13 : 57] And the great question that we should ask ourselves but we rarely ask ourselves is this, measure up to what? We always have this feeling that we're not measuring up.

Measuring up to what? We feel imperfect but we don't know why. And that is because we don't have this absolute authoritative measure. So instead we go and we measure ourselves against each other.

And that's Peter's mistake here. It is our mistake far too often because the only true measure is the one that we find in the gospel. That is the measure by which we measure ourselves and our lives.

Peter's conduct to withdraw, Peter's conduct to not eat with the Gentiles was, it says, it was not in step. His conduct was not in step with the gospel. And what Paul uses here, that word not in step, it's actually where we get the word orthopedics from.

And if you know what orthopedics mean, that's awesome. You're a nerd. If you don't, I had to look this up too so let me explain it. Orthopedics is the study of bone alignment. So there's proper bone alignment.

[15:02] There's proper structure where things are healthy and right and good. And then there's dislocations and there's fractures and there's deformities. And that's what hypocrisy does, guys. Figuratively, Peter's behavior was dislocating himself from the gospel and from others.

That's what was happening here. And in 1 Corinthians 13, Paul says, you know what, that dissonance, that inconsistency, that's not a blessing. What it does, it turns you into an irritating, clanging cymbal.

Just a loud, noisy, boisterous, nobody wants to hear you. I think this is what Paul had in mind. Hey, want to hear the most annoying sound in the world? Guys, guys, guys.

Fellas. Can I just say I'm so happy that I got to put a Dumb and Dumber clip into the sermon? Here's the point.

When we are out of joint to the gospel, that's what it sounds like to everybody around us. We might think we're doing so well.

[16:15] We might think we're doing awesome. We might think, oh, man. You know, Paul says, if you speak with the tongue of men and of angels and don't have love, man, you're a sounding brass. You are a clanging cymbal. You are an irritating noise like Lloyd.

It doesn't matter what you say. It doesn't matter what you pray. It doesn't matter what you do. It doesn't matter how much you go to church or serve or whatever it is.

When our behavior isn't in line with the gospel, it hurts people and it turns them off to the faith. The church in America, think about this, guys.

The church in America. Man, we have a black eye. We are still trying to recover from, from the way we threw up dividing walls of slavery and segregation with our African-American brothers and sisters.

Philip Ryken recalls this. Our behavior can undermine our belief. It is possible for Christians to believe the gospel in their hearts and even confess it with their mouths, yet deny it with their lives.

[17:10] A tragic example comes from the history of the Southern Presbyterian Church prior to the Civil War. In those days, it was customary for Presbyterian elders to give their parishioners tokens signifying that they were eligible to participate in the Lord's Supper.

Sadly, in some churches, African slaves, which is a whole problem they should have addressed. There shouldn't have been slaves. Sadly, in some churches, African slaves were not given the customary silver token, but one made of base metal.

Nor were they allowed to receive the sacrament until all the white church members had been served. This was a divisive and prejudicial way of handling a sacrament that God intends to signify our union together in Christ.

Whether the elders believed the gospel or not, their actions clearly denied it. Guys, that is a tragedy. That is a tragedy in the history of the church in America.

They were behaving like Peter. They were in a culture where slavery and segregation from those kinds of people, it was acceptable. But just because society says it's okay does not make it right.

[18 : 24] We don't follow society. They're not our authority. God, the gospel, the Bible, they are our authority. And society was telling them it wasn't any big deal to throw up some dividing walls driven by fear.

You know, you white people, you can feel superior to everybody else. You can feel better than by these little cheaper tokens that you're handing out, making sure that you get to the table first before everyone else.

Man, but look at the ramifications of that sinful behavior. It was huge. And it was costly. Guys, today is no different. It doesn't matter what society says.

Sin, fear driven behavior is a big deal. We say here sin acts like a bomb, not a bullet. It does a lot of damage to a lot of people.

And that is why we need to be like Paul here. We need to hold fast to the gospel. We need to measure our lives by that, by the gospel. Now, Christians, we're meant to be nice and loving to everybody.

[19 : 26] But in the church, we're meant to be nice and loving to people in the church too. But we have to hold each other accountable to the gospel, right? Paul wasn't, you know what? I don't want to offend Peter, so I'm not going to say anything.

No, man. He called him out. That's what he did. Holding each other accountable to the gospel. Verse 15, he goes on to say this. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know.

No, interruption. Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.

Because by works of the law, no one will be justified. Faith in the gospel delivers us from prejudice and hypocrisy. Paul starts off by pointing out what he and Peter both knew.

Hey, Pete, you and me, we were both born Jews. Get that. We were raised up in it. We were circumcised. We knew the law. We kept the law. We were earning our own righteousness.

[20 : 32] Then, he says, there was an interruption for both of them. Yet. Yet. Peter, remember. Pete, remember. Remember this. We, you and I, we tossed all of that away.

We found something better. We found Jesus Christ and faith in him. Now we know. We know that a person can't be justified by keeping the law. We know that we can't achieve to God's righteousness through our own efforts.

And that is the same gospel, friends, that you and I believe today. That's the same gospel we proclaim. Your birth doesn't matter. Your race doesn't matter. Your works don't matter.

The only thing that matters is faith in Jesus. Because through faith in Jesus, you die to the law that says you are never good enough. Verse 17.

But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners. Is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not. For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor.

[21 : 32] For through the law, I died to the law so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God. For if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Earlier, we talked about how we are driven by an inner fear that tells us we aren't good enough. That fear that works itself out through prejudice and hypocrisy amongst other ways.

And guys, that fear is in there because of God's law. His authoritative, the authoritative measuring standard of righteousness is God's law.

And that is what condemns us. It condemns us. Not because the law is evil, but because we are. I'd be freaked out too.

[22 : 36] We fail to keep it. We fail to keep the law all the time. We fail to love God and others perfectly all the time. And so the solution for us isn't, oh, you know what?

I just got to try better next time. Got to do better next time. Or, you know what? Man, my only hope is, let me look around. You know what? You know, I just got to be better than Haley. Which is impossible, babe.

Your vomit bags are under the seat. Once you break the law once, you are always a lawbreaker. Right? Your standard isn't trying to measure against someone else.

We're not going to stand in line heading to God. He's judging us in heaven. And man, if I could just be behind Hitler, I think I got a shot. See, our measuring standard isn't other people.

It's the law. The law makes no distinctions. Nothing you are, nothing you can do will get you pardoned or get your rap sheet removed. And guys, we all have a really big rap sheet.

[23 : 42] So what is our hope? It's death. Probably not the answer you were expecting, right? But that is the truth.

The only way from getting out from under the law is to die by it. That's what Paul says. For through the law, I died to the law. The law of God demands the penalty of death for breaking it.

And until you die, you will always sense that you're never, ever perfect. To quote Pink. To live in the law is to live under constant condemnation.

And that is why you must be saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus, you are united with him in his death.

His death becomes your death. Through the law, Jesus came, he lived, he came under the law, lived a perfect life, satisfied the law, died under the law, so that through the law, he died to the law for us.

[24 : 51] Okay? He took on all our sin, then was punished for it once and for all. When you die to the law, just like Jesus, united with Jesus in his death, when we die to the law through faith in Jesus Christ, the law has no claim over you anymore.

It can't condemn you. Paul says it this way in the book of Romans. Chapter 8, verse 1. There is therefore now what? For those who are in Christ Jesus.

How can he say that? Because we've died to the law through faith in Jesus Christ. The law has no power to condemn you anymore. It has no power to say, sorry, buddy, you don't measure up.

It's gone. He goes on to say in verse 2 of Romans 8, For the law of the spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from what?

The law of sin and death. I'm not making this up, guys. This is the good news of the gospel. So we are not just dead to the law. We are alive.

[26 : 06] We are living under a new law, the law of the spirit of life. It's a whole new way of living. And that is what Paul is meaning in Galatians 2, verse 19 and 20.

For through the law I died to the law so that I might live to God. I died to the law so that I might live to God.

I have been crucified with Christ, united with Jesus in his death. Now it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live, I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. We, you and me, by faith in Jesus, we are set free from the law that condemns us, from the law that fills us with fear, from the law that tells us we're never enough.

We now live, you and me, but it is Christ who lives in us. This body of flesh that we occupy, that makes us look so unique, right?

[27 : 12] I got my big nose and large head and pasty skin. I look very unique. God made that and he loves that. But when he looks at me to judge me, whether I'm righteous or not righteous, he isn't seeing me.

He is seeing Jesus. And this, which means this for all of us who are in Jesus Christ. Jesus is also in you. So his righteousness is now considered yours by faith.

We are covered in Jesus's righteousness. Man, guys, that is amazing news. We don't have to earn that righteousness. Now think about that. Do we honestly think we can do better than Jesus at being righteous?

Of course not, right? And that is the life you and I now live by faith. But that means you also recognize that in everybody else.

Faith in Jesus, this faith, it changes what we see in each other. It changes how we see each other. When God looks at your spouse that forgot your anniversary, he sees the moral uprightness of Jesus, his son.

[28 : 21] That's not a confession. When God looks at your mom and dad who lost their cool and blew up at you, he sees the moral uprightness of Jesus.

When God looks at your friend who betrayed you, if they're in Christ Jesus by faith, he sees Jesus's righteousness. When God looks at his church all over the world, been saved by him, we're holding on to faith.

He doesn't grade us or measure us by what we look like or by our style of worship or what we wear or the rules we keep. He looks down and he loves us and he delights in us because he sees Jesus in every single one of us.

So what do you see when you look at others? I want to ask that question. Is it only the exterior stuff that makes us different? Man, that will drive you right back into fear. Every single one of us drive us right back into fear.

And while fear throws up walls that divide, faith tears them down. Faith gives us a new way to regard others. 2 Corinthians 5, Paul says this in verse 16, From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.

[29 : 35] Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, thought he was just another dude, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come. For our sake, goes on to say in verse 21, he ends the argument this way. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

We're almost there, guys. Our culture may have a hundred different ways to categorize us and tell us how we are different. But the most important thing is that you are in Jesus and that Jesus is in you.

That means you're a new creation. You are no longer under the law that condemns you. You are the righteousness of God. You are a child of God.

These are the gospel identifiers that set us free from fear, that lead us out of these prisons that we love to run back into and break down the dividing wall of hostility.

[30 : 40] If I could have the band come up, I want to invite us to respond. If you are here, you're not a Christian, hey, we are glad you're here. And you are listening, you're leaning in, you're hearing what it looks like to follow Jesus, learning about our faith.

Trust you've been really helped by this morning. And I hope you hear this amazing gospel that we love about this freedom, this unique freedom that is nothing unlike anything that is offered out there.

And I want to say this to you today. Jesus is offering you freedom, freedom from sin and death, freedom from the truth that you don't measure up.

You can't earn it and you can't pay for it. You must believe in Jesus, the only son of God who died for your sins. That is how you were saved and set free. Today, guys, today is the day of salvation.

Man, don't walk out of here saying, you know what, I'm going to put this off till tomorrow. Man, the Bible says today is the day of salvation. Today, God is offering you this free gift of salvation in him.

[31 : 44] He is opening your prison doors to lead you out. I want to encourage you, take that. Put your faith in Jesus Christ. If you're here and you're a Christian, some of us, we need to take a moment and reflect and maybe even repent before we come to the communion table, which is what we're about to do.

I want to ask, have you asked yourself this question? Where have you let fear drive you back into prison? Where have you put up dividing walls of prejudice and hypocrisy so that you can feel better than others?

Where are you living out of joint and dislocated from the gospel? It's time for us to check our hearts, do business with God. And you know what, guys? God is a gracious God.

He's a loving father. He is not going to shame you. He is not going to heap more guilt on you or condemn you. Man, that's what the law did in Jesus Christ. We don't find that at all. We find a God who loves us and accepts us and embraces us and cleanses us from all unrighteousness when we repent.

That's what he does. So do that business, and when you're ready, come take communion. And when you come take communion after you've done business, remember this. Repentance should lead us to thankfulness, that our sins are always forgiven because of Jesus, what he did.

[33 : 04] His body broken, his blood shed. That's what we remember in communion. And because of that, we live free from the law that condemns us. And I also want to add to that in the same spirit of thankfulness, we also get to come and bring our tithes and our offerings, not because we're trying to earn God's grace.

We're not trying to earn anything because we've already received it. And if you're here and it's your first time and you're a guest, man, no pressure to come and give. It's a privilege for those of us who call One Harbor Church home.

And there's three ways you can give. You can give online, you can give on our app, or you can drop it in a giving bucket that are at the communion tables around the room. So, let me pray for us and then respond.

Lord, we thank you. We thank you for your gospel that sets us free. We thank you, Jesus, that you fight for our freedom and you have claimed a victory over our freedom.

You've opened the doors of our prison to lead us out. You lead us out in triumph. You lead us out in celebration. You lead us out with joy.

[34 : 11] That is what we get. And so, we thank you for that. Amen.