



## river west church

The Gospel-Centered Life

Galatians 2:11-16

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At River West, we talk a lot about being “Gospel-Centered”. Today, our study in Galatians will afford us an opportunity to take a closer look at what this kind of language actually means.

### **Living in Step with the Truth of the Gospel**

In Galatians chapter 2, Paul introduces an important principle related to the Gospel and the Christian life. In verses 11-16 he recounts an incident in which he was forced to rebuke Peter because Peter’s “conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:14). If we’re not careful, we will miss the astounding implications of this statement.

For Paul, the Gospel was, and is, the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). It is the impact of the message about Jesus Christ in the heart and life of a non-believer. But that is not where the impact ends. Here, Paul applies the truth of the Gospel to the ongoing conduct of a believer. Paul evaluates the actions and attitudes of Peter against the truth of the Gospel, and finds those actions and attitudes to be grossly in error. Peter stands condemned (2:11), not because he doesn’t understand the truth about Jesus, but because he has not brought that truth fully to bear on every aspect of his life.

### **Understanding the Message of the Gospel**

In our study of Galatians, we have focused on how important it is for a Christian to continually grow in their understanding of the message of the Gospel (i.e. the good news about what God has done through Jesus to save us). This focus might be new to many Christians who have traditionally thought of the good news as a message for non-Christians. Many in the church think that “the Gospel is what gets me into the kingdom of God, but then I grow as a Christian through some other means such as hard work and obedience”. I don’t need the Gospel anymore but some other “advanced” truth or message. The problem with this view is the bible. Galatians 2:14 is just one of many instances in which Christ-followers are encouraged to evaluate their manner of living against the Gospel (c.f. Eph. 4:1, Phil. 1:27). More often than not, our problems in the Christian life are really the result of not thinking through the deep implications of the Gospel in all aspects of our lives. In order to do this, we need to really get the Gospel. We need to grow in our understanding of this profound good news. And then, we need to submit to that truth as an authority in our lives.

### **Submitting to the Authority of the Gospel**

Paul opposed Peter not because he felt superior to Peter, not because he was on a power trip, not because he wanted to “one-up” Peter. He opposed him because he believed that the Gospel stands as an authority over Christians, even really mature ones like the Apostle Peter! The Gospel will always be the authoritative standard against which we are to measure our lives. This means that growth in my Christian walk involves applying Gospel truth more deeply into every aspect of my being.

## **Applying the Ramifications of the Gospel**

The fascinating thing about the story in Galatians 2 is that Paul “preaches” the Gospel to Peter. Galatians 2:15-21, which is a wonderful summary of the message of the Gospel, represents the words that Paul spoke to Peter when he rebuked him. Paul records this conversation for the benefit of the Galatians, but the words were originally spoken to Peter. Paul believed that Peter needed a reminder of what he already believed in order to expose and reform that aspect of his wrong thinking. This is a powerful principle for every Christian. As we grow in our understanding of the Gospel, and our conviction of its authority in our lives, we will be able to apply the ramifications of the Gospel more effectively into every aspect our thinking, feeling, behaving etc. This is what we mean by Gospel-centered living. May the Lord bless us as we strive to live this way.