

# BETWEEN THE ROCK AND A GOOD PLACE

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## Galatians 2:11-12

*But when Cephas 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.*

## Antioch

- If Rome is Las Vegas, Antioch is Laughlin. It was a happening little place. They had libraries, stadiums, the Olympics, celebrity weddings.
- It also had a mix of Jews and Gentiles.
- Many scholars have said that the church in Antioch was split down the middle Jews and Gentiles.

When Paul first leaves Antioch, the people are mingling and eating with each other, but when he returns they have segregated and Peter is doing the same. It's like the seating arrangement at your school cafeteria:

If Peter is sitting at the "jock table" trying to get in good with them talking about the upcoming Super Bowl and whether Seattle is going to exact revenge for Super Bowl 49 in 2015 or whether Drake Maye is going to become the next Tom Brady and establish another dynasty in New England, then the Gentiles are at the nerd table talking about why the Lord of the Rings Extended Edition is really the only acceptable way to watch those movies.

I think the whole "eating with \_\_\_\_\_ people" is largely lost on our culture.

We love food, but we do not set aside a large portions of our day to eating together. Our lives do not revolve around the dinner table. We are a fast food culture, speed, price, and convenience are the factors that drive us.

French food is babied, and coddled, and sung to.

American food is "\$2.50 for a taco made of Doritos that comes with a sleeve so that I can eat it in the car!"

We are a culture who eats in the car, and in front of the TV, and in separate rooms.

The culture here in Antioch was not like ours. Dinner was a long slow process, where conversations took place and relationships were built.

So, eating with someone carried with it cultural and social implications that don't exist for our culture.

One of the most scathing rebukes leveled at Jesus by church leaders was for having dinner with "those" people.

I have never received an accusatory email about who I ate with. Why? It doesn't have that implication in our culture, but it means everything in this culture

Peter flip flops, first he's eating non kosher meals with the Gentiles but then these guys "from the circumcision party," which by the way sounds like the worst party ever. Republican, Democrat... circumcision? These guys show up like Pauly and Jimmy in Goodfellas:

"What are you doin? Who's this? I'm not telling you ya where to sit, but you can't sit here with them. Do what you wanna do, nobody's telling you what to do, but you know you gotta sit over here."

Peter of anyone should know better than this.

### **Acts 10**

- sheet of animals
- don't call anything God made unclean
- Cornelius Roman centurion shows up
- Holy Spirit shows up and even the uncircumcised Gentiles speak in tongues
- And now the circumcision party has a problem that Peter is eating with the Gentiles

Peter has already fought this battle and what he told them before is "The Holy Spirit fell, Bro. What do you want me to do, tell the Holy Spirit he can't do that?"

So how does Peter now give in to the demands of this group and returns to legalism

### **Galatians 2:13**

*And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.*

We are all guilty of being hypocritical at times. We all say that we believe one thing and yet sometimes do the opposite. And sometimes like Barnabas it's because we have surrounded ourselves with people who are only nominally invested in following Jesus, and we are too easily influenced by them.

Seeing Peter and Barnabas fall away and come back encourages me that I can do the same.

I love Peter because he's so real. If he is focused on God, he's locked in, dude is a beast! If he takes his eyes off God, he's a buffoon. Just like us.

## AVA

Ava is super smart. When she was five years old she could explain the concept of irony. My girl's wicked smart!

When she's wasn't focused, she'd come out of her room with a bucket on her head and her underwear on outside of her pants.

- Peter walks on water. He's bold to ask to come out there. I wouldn't go out there. Then he sinks.
- Peter is ready to die at Last Supper. Jesus is like "Ok, Bro, but in a few hours you are going to deny me and you are going to use some words that you probably shouldn't use."

When Peter takes his eyes off Jesus, all of the power and authority and boldness that he carries when he is fixed on Jesus is stripped away.

That's what happens at the table. He takes his eyes off the gospel and starts thinking about making people happy. He wants people to like him.

## Galatians 2:14

*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?"*

"Peter, you've been a Jew your whole life and can't live like a Jew, how do you expect them to do it?"

The Law cannot save you. It is diagnostic. It tells you that you are sick with sin. Jesus saves you. And the law becomes a tool to woo you to stick with Christ. It becomes a lamp for your feet and a light for your path. When people see this, the Law becomes a delight.

David knew this. He sang songs about how wonderful the Law was. It's weird. We don't really get it.

The Law is like honey on his lips (Psalm 119:103). I mean, I know we're close to Valentine's Day and all but it sounds kinda lecherous.

## **Matt Chandler joked:**

When was the last time you laid in bed and was like "Don't covet...mmmm, like honey." We fail to grasp what the Law is for us now.

If I'm saved and living for God, "don't covet" is not condemning, it is leading me to joy.

If you are outside the Law, then it appears condemning; when you are in the Law it only serves to bring you closer to God and therefore more joy. It's preaching to the choir.

I am madly in love with my wife and so the commandment do not commit adultery. It's not a punishment. It is pushing me closer to the one who I already wanna be with.

If God sent his son to live a perfect life and die a horrible and unjust death; suffering for your sin, do you think he wants you to spend your time on earth all frustrated and hating life. Because you are trying and failing to fulfill the Law on your own.

I'm was a strict parent. But my rules for my kids are not because I am anti-fun or anti-joy, but because I'm trying to correct things that I think ultimately will lead them away from true joy.

So this puts to rest the idea that the Gospel without the Law leads to licentiousness.

Let's go back to Peter, what will make Peter more happy? Doing what he knows to be right and true? Or giving into peer pressure and doing what he knows is wrong and ultimately becoming a hypocrite in order to please people he already doesn't agree with?

I don't know if you have ever done this; tried to please people you were opposed to. Its exhausting, and you will never find love and acceptance there, because it's not really you who is being accepted, and your heart knows this.

### **Maybe for some of us this morning:**

1. The diagnosis of the Law is that you are terminal. If your faith is not in Christ, it is in something else. It is in you. You think that you know all the answers for life and for yourself or maybe you have disguised it in a cloak of religious activity; so that you never actually have to have a relationship with him. You just do what you THINK He says and are depending on your own self-righteousness to save you. The offer of a former life is still on the table.
2. For others, the diagnostic is that you are pure and spotless and for some reason you are digging your heels in and not allowing yourself to experience the joy God has for you. Because you view the Law as a weight to judge you rather than a light to lead you.

It seems like Peter hears Paul and repents. So I hope the same is true for you this morning if you find yourself in one of these two camps. May the Holy Spirit in His mercy make it clear to you that Jesus alone, not the Law, not your religious activity, Jesus alone saves you.

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## GALATIANS 2:11-14 ESV

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## SMALL GROUP QUESTION

What specifically was Peter doing that Paul confronted him about? Why do you think Paul saw this as a serious issue, not just a personal disagreement?

How did fear of people influence Peter's behavior in this passage? Where do you see similar pressure today—especially in church or Christian circles?

Paul says Peter's actions were “not in step with the truth of the gospel.” What does that phrase mean, and how can actions communicate a distorted gospel even when words sound right?

Why do you think Barnabas and other Jewish believers were led astray by Peter's hypocrisy? What does this teach us about the influence of leaders?

Paul confronts Peter publicly. When is it appropriate to address sin or hypocrisy publicly, and when should it be private? What makes this situation unique?

How does this passage challenge us to live out what we say we believe about grace and unity in Christ? What's one practical way we can “walk in step with the gospel” this week?