

Galations #10

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[0 : 00] Well, we are going to engage a subject today that I suspect in some quarters at least would be very controversial because it has to do with two well-known, respected apostles, in fact, probably the two most well-known, respected apostles, doing a kind of verbal combat face-to-face in a confrontation that perhaps many cannot even imagine.

But what this passage will do, if it doesn't do anything else, I think, it will illustrate to us that every human being, I don't care how great they are, how notable they are, how accomplished they are, they have feet of clay.

They are human beings, and as a human being, we are flawed, and we often fail in our intentions and in our accomplishments. That's just part of the human condition.

The only one that doesn't qualify in that area is because he was not only fully human, but he was fully God as well, and that is the theanthropic person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who as the God-man dwelt among us as one of us without actually being one of us in our fallenness.

So he maintained his sinlessness, of course, and that's what provided him with the ability to die on behalf of those who were sinners, and that's precisely why he came.

[1 : 29] But everybody else is flawed. Everybody else has feet of clay, including the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul.

And they are going to demonstrate the kind of stuff they're made of. In verse 11, the sheet we're looking at is 3A. The top of the page, the bold print, is the King James traditional version.

Other translations follow under that, and they are identified in an abbreviated form, such as W-E-Y at the bottom of verse 11, is simply a translation for Weymouth and his translation, and T-C-N-T simply stands for 20th Century New Testament.

So there are different translations involved, but we will be just operating from the King James in the bold print, and you are welcome to inject anything you may want to along the way.

The apostle Paul is speaking here as he writes this letter to the Galatians, and then he opens this portion of the letter in verse 11 by saying, But when Peter was come to Antioch...

[2 : 45] Now, Antioch is in Syria. It is, by the way, in the area where there is so much war and bloodshed taking place right now.

Now, capital of Syria is Damascus. That's where Paul was en route to when he had his Damascus Road experience, and Damascus in Syria has the distinction of being the oldest continually inhabited city in the entire world.

It is even to this day. Even more so than Jerusalem, because Damascus was in existence before Jerusalem ever came into being. But Antioch is a different city.

Nonetheless, still in the same country. And the apostle Paul says, I withstood him to the face. This is a face-to-face confrontation.

It is Peter and Paul standing no more than a couple of feet apart, and Paul is giving Peter what for. Now, I suspect in some circles at least, this is unimaginable, because some people hold these apostles, both of them, on such a high pedestal, that they will not allow any kind of fault or wrongdoing to be charged to any of them.

[4 : 08] And that is a misunderstanding of their humanity, because these men, strategic as they were, Peter and Paul, and the rest of the apostolic band that was chosen by our Lord, as recorded in Matthew 10 and other places, these were ordinary human beings.

Well, in some respects, okay, in some respects they were extraordinary, but they were just extraordinary as human beings, still flawed and still failing sometimes. And the tendency is to take these biblical characters and put them on a pedestal that is illogical and ill-advised, because even though they were strategically used of God, and even though they were important contributors to the Bible, they were still just human beings.

The saying goes, they put their pants on one leg at a time. Well, I guess they didn't. The kind of clothing they wore was different than the pants that we wear, but you understand what I'm talking about. So, these guys, they did some very infallible things in their life.

And what those infallible things were, you're able to read. And it's called Scripture. Their infallibility began and ended with God inspiring them to write what they wrote.

And when they took pen to papyrus or whatever it was, and wrote as the Spirit of God directed them, they were writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

[5 : 48] And consequently, what they wrote was God breathed, as Paul wrote to Timothy. All Scripture is breathed of God and is profitable for correction, instruction, and righteousness, and so on.

But their infallibility was limited to what they wrote. In ordinary living and everyday concourse, there was nothing infallible about these guys.

And on more than one occasion, they proved that they had feet made of clay. And you're all familiar with Peter's denial, threefold. Wasn't that gallant? No.

It was traitorous. That's what it was. And we're familiar with men like David in the Old Testament, who is referred to as a man after God's own heart.

David was a skunk in a number of areas. When he carried on this shenanigans and this illicit affair with Bathsheba, resulted in her pregnancy, resulted in his setting up her husband, Uriah the Hittite, to make sure he was knocked off in battle, and didn't come back.

[6 : 56] That's pretty bad behavior. David, a man after God's own heart, give me a break. How can that be? But he was. Because he had other areas of his life that were of sterling quality.

You see, every human being has a dark side. I don't recall who it was. I think it was J. Vernon McGee who was addressing a group of notables and he said, he was talking about the human heart and what we're capable of.

And he said, if you knew, if you only knew what was in my heart at times, you probably wouldn't even be willing to listen to me speak to you.

And if I knew what was in your heart, I wouldn't be willing to speak to you. But here we are as flawed human beings. And that's the kind of people we have in the Bible.

They were just like us. Lived in a different time, different place, different culture, with different responsibilities, but the human heart is desperate above all things, desperately wicked, Jeremiah tells us, is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

[8 : 16] Who can know it? And then Paul relates to that when he says in Romans 7, sometimes I don't understand myself. How is it and why is it that the things I don't want to do, I do?

And the things I do want to do, I don't. What is going on? Well, that's just part of the human condition. And this is all a consequence of the fall. And all I'm saying is that Peter and Paul were two fallen human beings just like us.

And here, they are having a confrontation. Some people think that because they are naive, they think that Christians should never have occasion to confront anybody about anything. And that's not true.

Because, we see, in Romans 14, the Apostle Paul said, I am confident that you are able also to confront one another.

Why would anybody need to confront anybody about anything? It's because somebody is wrong. Somebody is wrong. And the loving thing to do is call them out on it.

[9 : 32] The unloving thing to do is let it slide. Here, we have got an example of neuthetic confrontation.

And that word, neuthetic, is exactly the word in the Greek that Paul uses in Romans 14 when he writes to the believers there and says, I am confident that you are able to confront one another.

And this requires an enormous amount of caring and love. do you love someone enough to confront them when you know they're wrong about something?

We're talking about a moral wrongness now. And don't use this excuse, well, you know, I'm not perfect either, so I don't have the right to go. No, no, no. You're not coming from a position of perfection.

You're coming from a position of love and care. And maybe the brother that you have to confront about his moral failure today, he may be the same brother who may have to confront you a year from now.

[10 : 44] The point is, do we care enough to engage in the difficult, delicate business of going to someone and saying, I'm concerned about this.

We need to talk. that's what's happening here in this text. When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed.

Now, Paul could have taken the position, well, who am I? You know, Peter was an apostle before I ever came along. In fact, Peter was the chief spokesman of the twelve.

And he was the rock of the three. Peter, James, and John. Who was the big cheese? Peter. And everybody knew it. And who was the guy who came lately who didn't have the credentials?

Paul. So it looks like we've got a lesser confronting a greater, and you just don't do that. The inferior doesn't go to the superior.

[11 : 51] Well, it all depends on how much you care. And listen, there is a lot at stake here. because when a believer engages in some kind of wrongful behavior, it is never limited to that person himself.

It develops tentacles, and it spreads out, and it affects and influences others. So this isn't Paul going to Peter just because of something that Peter was doing that affected nobody else but Peter.

No, no. It affected a number of others. And that's the thing that really concerns Paul here. He's just not able to let it slide. So, he says, because he was to be blamed.

For before, before that certain came from James. Alright, let's plug in a couple of things here to clarify. Who's James? James is the half-brother of our Lord.

James will be the one who is presiding over the council of Jerusalem in Acts chapter 15. James is presiding over that council, and they brought down a ruling.

[13 : 05] Remember the big issue was circumcision, whether or not the Gentiles had to be circumcised. They decided that they didn't have to be circumcised. And James represented the head of the assembly there in Jerusalem.

Jerusalem. And when the text says that certain came from James, it's talking about that kind of leadership there in Jerusalem.

Now, we're in Syria. We're clear out of the country of Israel. We're up north from Jerusalem by probably 120 miles. Gentiles. And these men who came from James represent, of course, a Jewish delegation of believers.

I don't have any reason to believe that they were not believers. Probably mixed. Probably some were believers in Jesus as the Messiah, and some were not. But when these came from James, the text says that before this delegation came from James, or from Jerusalem, he, that is Peter, did eat with the Gentiles.

Well, what's the big deal about that? Well, the big deal about that is that is really a big deal. Because a Jew, a bona fide Jew, would never consider sitting down at a meal with a non-Jew and partaking of a meal.

[14 : 37] Just didn't do that. There was the chance of moral and spiritual contamination. The Jew held himself separate and aloft from Gentiles like that. Remember the rhubarb that was caused back in Acts 10, when Peter went to the household of Cornelius and gave him the gospel message?

He didn't want to go. Why didn't he want to go? Because Cornelius was a Gentile. He wasn't a Jew. And Peter says, nothing doing. I'm not going there in this sheet let down from heaven three times before he finally got the message.

And we've got an enormous breakthrough. Because the gospel that was previously limited to the Jewish constituency only was now expanding and going to Jew and Gentile.

That was a bombshell. And that's a cause for a lot of the misunderstanding in the book of Acts. So before this delegation came from James in Jerusalem, Peter did eat with the Gentiles, fellowshiped with them, sat across the table with them, yeah, pour me another glass of wine.

And they had a great time of fellowship. But when this delegation came from Jerusalem, Peter didn't even know these people, ignored them, would not accept an invitation in their home, separated himself from them.

[16 : 02] When they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing. What's another word we can put in there?

He was undergoing peer pressure. What are these men from James and Jerusalem going to think?

if I am hobnobbing with these Gentiles? He separated himself, fearing them. Fearing them. What was he afraid they would do?

Behead him? No, of course not. Read him out? Well, they'd probably call him on the carpet. They would probably have some embarrassing questions. They would probably say something like, Peter, I can't believe you did that.

You know, in some respects, this is a repeat of the scene that took place back in Acts 10 and 11. And it's remarkable. But we've got, fellas, we have got an utterly historic, spiritual, cultural convulsion in humanity taking place here.

[17 : 11] In the inclusion of these non-Jews in this new thing called the gospel regarding Christ. He withdrew and separated himself fearing them which were of the circumcision.

That's just another way of saying fearing those who were his fellow Jews. And we've seen the word circumcision all the time referring to the Jewish people and the uncircumcised referring to Gentiles.

And what his fear was, censorship, he didn't want to contend with their looks of disdain, he didn't want to contend with their frown, you know, an audience can be very intimidating when a speaker reads the body language and the expression on people's faces as he's speaking.

You know if you've hit a nerve, you can see jaws drop, eyebrows raised, people responding in various ways that they're not even aware that they're giving themselves away, but the speaker can pick up on that, and you can get a frown of displeasure or dislike or confusion or whatever, and trust me, it's very intimidating to the one who's speaking.

That's exactly what Peter is dealing with here. He is fearing the response of those, what they're going to say, how they're going to regard him, because we all have this thing called an ego, and we want to protect it at all costs.

[18 : 50] And if somebody comes against us or has a charge or an accusation, it can be demoralizing. Peter knows what it's like to be intimidated.

He was intimidated when that little Jewish maiden said, I think I know you. Aren't you a follower of Jesus? Aren't you from Galilee?

Yes, you are. I don't know what you're talking about. Here is this little Jewish maiden intimidating this big fisherman. What was he afraid of?

He was afraid she was going to point him out, subject him to ridicule, displace, whatever. You know, that's the fear of man. And one of the prophets has an excellent statement in connection with that.

I remember reading a message that Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached on it, with this I'll conclude. He says, cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of.

[19 : 59] In other words, he's saying, don't back off from a mere human being. Don't be intimidated or scared by a mere human being. You know why? Because his breath is in his nostrils.

That's all he is. Fellows, that's all you are. You are as much breath as is in your nostrils, about two or three inches. And that's the end of you. And if that breath stops, you're done.

Sees ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of. Not at all. That's the conclusion. And that's what Peter and Paul are facing here in this head-on confrontation.

We'll pick it up next week. Any questions or comments? Start your breakfast, by the way. Anyone? Roger. I'm sorry?

Well, of course that can be. You know, there are some people, there are some Christians who think they are called to be somebody else's Holy Spirit.

[21 : 06] And they will tell you, in no uncertain term, what you should and should not be doing. And these are people, for the most part, simply to be avoided. We're not talking about nitpicking details.

We're not talking about minutiae here. We're talking about serious moral infractions. What we are discussing in confronting one another about a failure doesn't have anything to do with taste or style or opinion.

sin, it has to do with the violation of a known biblical moral issue and someone is skating on thin ice with what they are involved with.

Let me give you an example. Go right ahead with your breakfast and just give you an example. Here's a guy who has a habit of taking his unmarried secretary to lunch.

lunch. Now he's married. But he takes his unmarried secretary to lunch. And it might not be so bad except she's a dish.

[22 : 12] You know? And they are approximately the same age. And his defense is, well, we just discussed business. We just talk about business.

It's an additional hour that we don't have in the office to carry on. No. No. That is a moral impropriety.

That is setting yourself up for something that even if nothing does happen, it really looks bad to others. And you don't have a right to do that. Now that's just one case in point and there are several others.

So somebody like that, they need to be confronted by somebody who cares. Hey. And if you think, if the guy thinks it's completely innocent, innocent, and there's nothing there, I assume that his wife knows about it, right?

Well, interestingly enough, she probably doesn't. And do you think she would approve if she did? Not if she's an ordinary, normal, flesh-and-blood woman, she wouldn't.

[23 : 12] So I rest my case. But that's just one example, and there are many more that could be given. Joe. This confrontation thing, was what Paul was afraid of, that the Jews, by acting that way, but Peter, you're acting that way, sending a message that we're still living under the law, like, under the law, and that it's different now, the gospel is different now, the Gentiles are living the way of the gospel of Christ, which is through Christ that we get saving now, and now the Jews are part of believers, you're believing the same way they are.

Exactly. I'm not doing it, you're going back and living like the old Jews. You're right on, and that's going to come out further in the text, too, in this same passage that we're dealing with.

Because what Peter was doing, what Peter was doing was effectively setting the gospel plan back. Yeah. And Paul, with an additional revelation that he has had, says, no, we can't do that, we're not going back, we're going forward.

And Peter wanted to go back. You know why? Because it was more comfortable back there. It was more comfortable. And next week, we're going to see a passage where the apostle Peter talks about this very, I think he's talking about this very issue, but it's in the last epistle that Peter wrote, and he made this tremendous statement.

Peter said that our dear brother Paul wrote some things that are hard to be understood.

[24 : 50] Wow, what does that mean? You're telling me that one apostle is saying that he can't understand what another apostle wrote? That's exactly what he's saying. And why couldn't he understand?

Because the revelation that had been given to Paul had not been given to Peter. Peter had an earlier revelation. Paul had a later revelation. And they didn't coincide.

So we'll explore that later. If you want to look it up, it's in 2 Peter the last chapter. By that time, Peter understood by that time, but he knew how hard it was for him to grasp. And it was hard.

So he knows it's going to be hard for you to grasp because it was hard for me to grasp, but it's going to be hard for you. Absolutely. And fellas, there is one thing that is really a lot harder than learning something new.

And that is unlearning something old. that's a lot harder. And we'll see that played out next week.