

**Galatians 2:11-21**  
**(Psalm 49:7-15; Matthew 16:24-26)**  
**“A New Heart: The Personal Dimension of Mission”**

**Introduction**

C.S. Lewis said that he believed in the gospel as he believed in the rising of the sun, not merely because he could see it, but because by it he could see everything else. Apart from the gospel, it is sometimes hard to discern the difference between holiness and hypocrisy – since none of us is perfect and even those who are considered holy people have their own deep struggles of which they are only too painfully aware. Apart from the gospel, it is sometimes hard to discern the difference between the freedom we have in Christ and freedom to do whatever we want. Apart from the gospel, it is impossible to understand the true nature and purpose of the law and of its relationship to various cultural expressions of Christianity; and apart from the gospel, it is frankly impossible to understand the meaning of the cross of Jesus Christ.

This morning, we find the apostle Paul in a mission setting: the first gentile congregation in Antioch of Syria, the congregation that would later send him on his missionary journeys. Paul uses the occasion of his conflict with the apostle Peter – a debate that apparently took place in front of the other disciples in Antioch and must have caused some shock and consternation – in order to shine the light of the gospel on four crucial matters. In his conflict with Peter, Paul charged the great apostle with hypocrisy, not because Paul thought himself a better man than Peter, but because he feared that Peter’s behavior would undercut the gospel that they both held dear, the gospel for which they both lived with courage and passion, and would each eventually die a violent death.

We need to understand that these issues addressed by Paul are still with us, still vexing believers, causing confusion about the very nature of the gospel itself. Until we understand what it means to *be* a disciple, we cannot *make* disciples. Look with me as we shine the light of the gospel on four crucial discipleship issues. The first two concern the behavior of disciples: the difference between holiness and hypocrisy, and the difference between freedom and license; and the second two concern a right understanding of God’s law and of Christ’s cross.

To anticipate where we are going, remember that the heart of the matter is always the matter of the heart. The gospel does not show us how to improve our life. It offers us a radically new life. Paige Benton Brown uses the helpful analogy of a heart transplant. When we receive a new heart, our body tries to reject it, and we must take immunosuppressive drugs in order that our bodies not reject the new heart. Similarly, God gives us the means of grace, not as things we do in order to please him, but as the means through which his new life pours into our new heart and suppresses the world, the flesh and the devil.

## **Body**

- 1. The gospel reveals the difference between holiness and hypocrisy: bounded-set versus centered-set identity (2:11-14).**
- 2. The gospel reveals the difference between liberty and license: self-love versus self-sacrificial love (2:15-18).**
- 3. The gospel reveals the true purpose of the law: an instrument of life becomes an instrument of death (2:19).**
- 4. The gospel reveals the true purpose of the cross: an instrument of death becomes an instrument of life (2:20-21).**

## **Conclusion**

The cross, a cruel symbol of torture and death, becomes for us a symbol of self-sacrificial love and unending life, because at the cross Jesus Christ takes all our brokenness and sin – our old life in its entirety – and puts it to death in his death, giving us his life in its place, a life perfect, holy and free. Disciples of Jesus Christ, then, are those who are living from the new heart, the very heart of Christ, given us in salvation. With Paul, we can say, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:20).

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