

1. What would you describe as a healthy approach to honoring our leaders without falling into the trap of putting leaders on a pedestal?
2. How was the unity of the church preserved in this particular encounter?

PETER PLAYS BOTH SIDES (vv. 11-14)

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he stood condemned. ¹² For he regularly ate with the Gentiles before certain men came from James. However, when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, because he feared those from the circumcision party. ¹³ Then the rest of the Jews joined his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw they were deviating from the truth of the gospel, I told Cephas in front of everyone, "If you, who are a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel Gentiles to live like Jews?"

1. How did Peter's actions threaten the unity of the church?
2. What motivated Peter's actions and why is this a particularly deadly motivation?
3. When should we be willing to set aside our freedom in Christ and when should we make a strong stand for our freedom in Christ?
4. What are some freedoms in Christ that you tend to abuse?
5. What are some freedoms in Christ that you fail to avail yourself of?
6. How would you describe a mature approach to the freedom in Christ?

COPYRIGHT 2017 Paul Kemp and Fellowship Bible Church, all rights reserved. Feel free to make copies for distribution in personal and/or small group Bible Study.

Scripture quotations have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible, Copyright 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission.



360 DISCUSSION 01.29.17

OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST

GALATIANS 2:1-14



Do you remember your first moment of true freedom. Perhaps it was when you got to ride your bike to a neighbors house for the first time. Maybe your first sleepover. Your first time away from home for a summer camp or a school trip. Your freshman year at college. While I am sure most of you handled your freedoms really well. I pushed some boundaries.

I really enjoyed my freshman year of college. It was not until the semester was coming to an end that I realized that there was a little more to the college experience than hanging out with friends and tossing the frisbee. I bought a coffee pot, brewed several of the strongest pots I could stand, pulled a few all nighters, made up for lost time, and did well enough on my finals to keep my scholarship. I have been a caffeine addict every since.

Freedom is an incredible gift. But many of us end up pushing the boundaries.

One of the most precious gifts of the gospel is freedom. Paul makes the astounding claim, "For freedom, Christ set us free (Galatians 5:1). What a crazy statement. Think about it. "Why has Christ set us free?" "For freedom." It is as simple as that. We were created to be free. We sacrificed our freedom when we openly rebelled against God and pushed him out of our lives. God has redeemed us and reconciled us to himself, so that we could experience the pure unadulterated freedom he created us to experience in him.

We find Paul's first mention of "freedom" and "slavery" in his letter to the Galatians, in chapter 2. This is as good a place as any to begin a conversation about what freedom in Christ is and what it is not.

BACK TO JERUSALEM (vv. 1-3)

¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ² I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain. ³ But not even Titus, who was with me, was not compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

1. Paul's first trip to Jerusalem was three years after he came to Christ. We can assume that the second journey he mentions is fourteen years after he came to Christ. In other words, 10 years after his first visit. This journey probably corresponds to Paul's journey in Acts 11, to deliver a generous gift from the Gentiles to their Jewish brothers and sisters for relief from the famine in Judea. Paul probably saw this as an opportunity for the Gentile believers to build bridges to their Jewish brothers and sisters, in spite of the cultural differences that threatened their unity.
 - a. How does the gospel bridge cultural differences?
 - b. How do acts of mercy bridge cultural differences?
 - c. How do the two work together to bridge cultural differences?
2. The revelation that Paul refers to may have been Agabus' prophecy that there would be a severe famine in Judea, or a private revelation given to Paul that he needed to go to Jerusalem in order to make sure that the Jewish and Gentile churches had agreement on the essentials.
 - a. According to this passage, what was one potential point of contention?
 - b. Why is it important that we have unity on the essentials?
 - c. Why is it important for us to be gracious in non-essentials?
 - d. How do we discern between essentials and non-essentials?
 - e. What does the fact that Titus did not feel compelled to be circumcised tell you about the essentials of the gospel?
 - f. How would you describe the essentials of the Christian faith?
 - g. How would you describe the non-essentials?

THOSE WHO WOULD SPY ON OUR FREEDOM (vv. 4-5)

⁴ This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus in order to enslave us. ⁵ But we did not give up and submit to those people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you.

1. How does Paul describe those who were stirring up trouble in Antioch?
2. What do you think it means to "spy on the freedom we have in Christ, in order to enslave us?"
3. Can you think of any examples of how this happens today?
4. How would you describe the freedom we have in Christ?
5. How would you describe the limits to the freedom we have in Christ?
6. How should we respond to others who may be abusing their freedom in Christ, without "spying on someone else's freedom in order to enslave them?"
7. What is our role in this process?
8. What is the Holy Spirit's role in this process?
9. How should we respond to anyone who is spying on our freedom in Christ in order to enslave us?

THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP (vv. 6-10)

⁶ Now from those recognized as important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism)—they added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised, ⁸ since the one at work in Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised was also at work in me for the Gentiles. ⁹ When James, Cephas, and John—those recognized as pillars—acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do.

1. Why was it important that Paul and Barnabas received the right hand of fellowship from Peter, James and John?
2. How do you reconcile that with the fact that Paul seems to minimize their importance?

1. What do you think Paul might have learned from Peter?