

A Seat at the Table

Text: Galatians 2:11-14

Summary

In this sermon, we looked at Peter's moment of hypocrisy in Antioch as he pulled away from Gentile Christians because of the fear of man. This story reveals how peer pressure tempts us to walk out of step with the truth of the gospel as well. Like Peter, we frequently fall into the anti-gospel patterns of people-pleasing, mask-wearing, and wall-building. The call for us is to walk in step with the gospel we confess, trusting in the unmerited, freely given grace of God as the sole requirement for a seat at God's table.

Sermon Outline

I. Introduction: A Seat at the Table

- The childhood anxiety of choosing which lunch table we sit at reveals a deep human desire for acceptance.
- Earning a seat at different tables often requires becoming whoever the group demands.
- This struggle transitions into adulthood, with cliques forming at the office, the neighborhood, and the church based on our preferences.
- The Apostle Peter faced this same temptation and allowed peer pressure to dictate his actions.

II. Catch-Up: Defending the Gospel

- False teachers infiltrated the Galatian churches, instructing Gentile believers to submit to Jesus plus the Old Covenant.
- Paul vigorously defended the true gospel of grace, a message he received directly from Jesus, a message the Apostles in Jerusalem agreed with (like Peter...)
- Paul shared the story of his intense confrontation with Peter to demonstrate his authority

III. The Narrative: The Incident at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14)

- Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant and ushered in the New Covenant, though the transition was difficult for many Jews.
- God gave Peter, a Jew, a vision of unclean animals and explicitly instructed him that God had made these things acceptable (Acts 10:9-15). Peter understood that this meant Gentiles were no longer "unclean" as well (Acts 11).
- Peter fully embraced his New Covenant freedom and habitually lived like and ate with his Gentile friends.
- When Jewish believers from James arrived, Peter withdrew from the Gentiles out of fear of what they would tell the circumcision party back in Jerusalem. This hypocrisy led Barnabas and others astray.

- Paul publicly rebuked Peter for his crooked walk because his conduct blatantly contradicted the truth of the gospel.

IV. Misstep 1: People Pleasing

- Peter pulled away from the table because he feared the circumcision party and their potential rejection.
- Fearing man makes God small and people big.
- People-pleasing surrenders personal identity to the demands and expectations of the crowd. It lets them control us, not God and His word.
- **Diagnostic Questions:**
 - Whose opinion matters most to you when you walk into a room?
 - Who are you afraid of disappointing or offending?
 - What truth are you willing to compromise to keep the peace at your table
- Submit entirely to Jesus' guidance rather than changing behavior to secure earthly validation.

V. Misstep 2: Mask Wearing

- Peter and the Jewish Christians acted hypocritically by playing a part to maintain an image.
- Mask-wearing actively hides true beliefs, personal struggles, and past failures.
- Jesus died for the real, flawed version of every person.
- **Diagnostic Questions:**
 - Where do you feel the most pressure to pretend you have it all perfectly together?
 - What version of yourself are you projecting to your home group, your coworkers, or your neighbors?
 - If people saw the real you behind the mask, what are you afraid they would think?
- Put down the masks and allow God to use your authentic, transparent self to bless the world.

VI. Misstep 3: Wall Building

- Peter created a dividing wall by functionally making adherence to the Law a requirement for fellowship.
- Wall-building occurs when believers use secondary issues, such as political affiliations or parenting styles, as gatekeeping metrics. It takes what may be the implications of the gospel and makes them requirements to even sit at the table.
- Jesus intentionally broke down all human-made dividing walls of hostility (Ephesians 2:14).
- **Diagnostic Questions:**
 - Who have you quietly decided does not belong at your table?

- What extra cultural or behavioral requirements are you adding to the gospel before you truly accept someone?
 - Who makes you uncomfortable, and why do you feel the need to keep them at a distance?
- Repent of gatekeeping and ensure grace is the sole requirement for entering the community of God.