

TUESDAY 20 Sept. 2022 "Confusion / Clarity" (Gal. 2:11-21)

Hello, my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Have you noticed that no matter where you live in the world, no matter what culture is most familiar for you, no matter what language is your native language, no matter your age or your gender or your marital status, *CONFUSION is a common problem for every person in the world?* We try our best to understand what is intended by the words spoken especially when combined with tone of voice and body language, but sometimes we wrinkle our brow, scratch our chin and simply are confused. In times like that we hunger for one thing... **CLARITY!** *Clear truth erases confusion...at least it should.*

But have you noticed there's something else involved in the battle between confusion and clarity? *It's the matter of INTEGRITY or TRUST!* As you and I process all the information with which we are deluged each day, millions of words, underlying it all is this question: *"Can I trust the person speaking? Have I learned that when they speak, that person speaks truth?"*

I left you yesterday in Syrian Antioch with an increasingly delicate situation. Paul records his memories of that event in his letter to the Gentile Christians in Galatia. The apostle Peter had come to Antioch for a surprise visit. We presume he was intrigued by the reports he had received from Silas and Judas (Barsabbas) upon their return from their special mission of taking an apostolic letter from Jerusalem to Antioch, as we discussed yesterday.

We know Peter was a strong and charismatic personality and highly respected as a very close friend of Jesus and one of the key apostle leaders in Jerusalem. He was evidently welcomed by the Gentile Christians in Syrian Antioch and was given plenty of opportunity to share his stories of his time with Jesus. It appears Peter was enjoying the cultures, and the foods of Antioch Gentiles, especially celebrating the developing unity of relationships among Gentile and Jewish Christians. But then evidently some other Jewish Christians came from Jerusalem and began questioning Peter's friendliness with the Gentiles, perhaps even accusing him of behaving as though he was renouncing his Jewishness. In response, Peter evidently began pulling back from his socializing with the Gentile Christians and that angered Paul. Have you ever seen that happen?

Here's what Paul wrote as he remembered the situation: ***"When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, Peter used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, Peter began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.***

The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray." (Gal 2:11-13)

Paul continued writing, now with a grimace of pain on his face as he remembered this painful tearing of their friendship: ***"When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter, in front of all of them, 'You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?' (Gal.2:14)*** Do you see the confusion and the cry for clarity? *But do you also see Paul was challenging Peter at the deeper level of INTEGRITY and TRUST?*

Peter was perhaps the most famous of all those who had personally been with Jesus. The integrity of the Christian movement, as being an authentic work of God in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, largely depended, at least initially, on the integrity of those like Peter who were the living representatives of Jesus, since they had been with Jesus and carried His message to the world.

Evidently Peter was vacillating and inconsistent both in his words and in his behavior, at least from Paul's perspective. This was so important Paul leans forward and picks up his stylus to write some more of the most painful words in the Bible as he continued his recollection of what he had publicly said to Peter: ***"We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners', know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we too have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified." (Gal. 2:15,16)*** For Paul this had been a very, very difficult truth to accept and it required Paul learning it directly from God Himself. Yet Paul realized this was the line of demarcation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Salvation through Jesus was by FAITH in Jesus and His full accomplishment of paying God's death penalty for sin. No efforts for obeying the Old Testament laws could compare with what Jesus had accomplished in His perfect life and His atonement death and resurrection.

Paul then went on to write one of the most powerful statements he ever made: ***"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Jesus Christ died for nothing!" (Gal. 2:20,21)*** Clarity is spoken here by Paul but it's important we understand it, as those who first heard it did. It does NOT mean Paul was physically crucified up on the cross with Jesus. *It means that as Paul placed his full faith and trust in Jesus to be his Savior, the death of Jesus by crucifixion was applied by God to Paul's life for the forgiveness of Paul's sins.*

But it also means as Paul fully submitted himself to Jesus Christ as both his Savior and his Master, Paul put to death his personal ambitions, his agenda, and gave himself fully to Jesus for Jesus to do IN Paul and THROUGH Paul all that Jesus wanted to accomplish for God's glory. That total act of submission by Paul, resulted in Jesus commissioning Paul to live the rest of his life as Jesus' ambassador and apostle bringing the Gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles. *Thus, every day, every hour of everyday, Paul lived his life in full surrender to the leading of the Holy Spirit in full obedience to Jesus as his Lord.*

That is what took Paul on three missionary journeys into Gentile cities and towns across the Roman Empire. This full surrender resulted in Paul being persecuted, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and imprisoned several times. This full surrender meant Paul never married, never had a family, never became wealthy or famous as he had intended as a Pharisee. It also meant Paul wrote 13 books of the New Testament and eventually died a martyr's death in his refusal to renounce his Lord Jesus.

But I think it's fair to say this one statement Paul wrote was a banner statement, the summary description of his life in one sentence: ***"The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."*** (Gal. 2:20)

Do you hear profound joy and gratitude and celebration in those words? *Do you hear life purpose and a life being lived with overflowing fulfillment?*

So, as we close today, I ask you, my friends? What gives you the greatest fulfillment in your life? What is your passionate purpose in life? How do you describe your relationship with Jesus? Let's pause right there and reflect my friends. *What is making your life worth living?* And here's a song to help us reflect...

Today's Scripture is Galatians 2:11-21.