

LINKS PLAYERS

DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR MARCH 9, 2012

FREE TO BE BOLD

When Cephas (Simon Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (Galatians 2:11, NIV)

GOLFERS ARE NICE PEOPLE. Those young players who have played on my high school teams and I have laughed about the difference between this sport and others they have played. One of the chief differences is in how they interact with their opponents. On the golf course, there is frequent camaraderie even between players on opposite teams.

Followers of Jesus are supposed to be nice people as well. The fruit of the Spirit includes the manifestation of kindness, goodness, and gentleness.

So what gave on that fine day in Antioch when an apostolic showdown occurred between Peter and Paul? From Paul's perspective, Peter stood condemned. But even reading Paul's own account of the incident, you can't be blamed for wondering if Paul was the one more out of line. After all, when you read that one man has opposed another "to his face," you have to wonder what happened to Christian cordiality.

Yet somehow Paul knew—in the vein of Jesus clearing the temple of its opportunistic money-changers—that he was justified in drawing such a bead on the man known by many as the leaders of the apostles. He knew because he had the thrust of confidence that comes from knowing the Lord and his purposes.

When we are reborn in Jesus, we move from slavery to sin into the kingdom of freedom in Christ. It is hard to get a full handle on this notion, because rules-bound living is so much a part of our earthly thread. But the big idea is this: what Jesus causes to rise up within you includes a confidence based not on your ability to "pull off religion" by hitting every lawful nail on the head, but rather on Jesus' own perfection and the firm knowledge that, affixed to him, we can approach not only God's throne but also fellow believers who need a reminder of what's what.

And so, appealing to Jesus—and not to some man-made, man-exalting standard—Paul boldly stood for "Christ alone" and saved a friend from grave error. When Christ is being compromised, the kindest thing we can do is to go in his power and make right with those who are wrong.

The anatomy of a Christian conflict

Read Galatians 2:11-21. An earlier version of the NIV chose these words in verse 11: "...[Peter] was clearly in the wrong." From your reading of the passage, what was Peter doing that was wrong?

On what basis did Paul oppose Peter?

Under what conditions do you think you might have to "act as Paul" someday? How will you know it is the right thing to do?

The essence of Christian living

How did Paul paint the picture of a life exchange in verses 19-20? What attributes of the new life are essential for us all?
