

Galatians 2:14cont. “No Time for Compromise”

GAL 2:14 “When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "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?”

Last week we left the apostle Peter in Antioch being reprimanded by Paul for pretending to walk in the freedom of Christ by associating with Gentiles, as he ostracized these Gentiles when the Judaizers came from Jerusalem.

Prior to them coming from Jerusalem Peter was acting like a Gentile in the sense that what they ate he ate, and he fellowshiped with them in Christ as another Gentile, not forcing upon them any of the customs and traditions of the Jews.

But when the Jews came to Antioch, all of a sudden Peter makes it look like he was not acting like a Gentile as he pulls away from the Gentiles and will not have fellowship with them. This is what Paul points out in this letter as he relays to the Galatians what took place.

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Paul was accusing Peter of being a hypocrite. He was accusing Peter of playing at Christianity when it was convenient. And obviously it was not convenient to be a free man in Christ, to practice hospitality, fellowship and brotherly love toward Gentile believers, when Jews from Jerusalem came to Antioch.

He showed one side of his life when one group was involved, namely the Gentiles, and an entirely different side when the other group was involved, namely the Jews. That is hypocrisy. It's a hypocrisy, by the way, that even the church today is accused of by the world at times.

Last week I ended the teaching with three points I wanted to raise for today's study:

- 1) How can and does the church today give one message to the world and then practice something different, which is what hypocrisy is?

2) Why did Paul deal with Peter in a public way when rebuking Peter, in light of the teaching Jesus delivered in MAT 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over...."?"

3) How do churches today force believers to do things which are not biblical, not unlike what Peter was doing in Antioch as Paul said to Peter, "how is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

In other words, what are some practical applications for the church today, in light of what took place some 2,000 years ago in the church of Christ?

Let me deal with the second question I posed first; why did Paul deal with Peter in a public way when rebuking him?

This is one of those areas where we can take something out of context and come to a false conclusion. For example, many people in the church today have concluded falsely that we should never judge another brother or sister.

It's true that we should never impose our standard on another believer in Christ and then draw a false conclusion based on our standard. A case in point would be the liberties we have in Christ in areas like what kind of foods we can eat, or what kind of clothes we can wear.

If I decide I want to eat only vegetables, which the Scriptures allow me to do, and yet I then make a judgment about you who eat meat, which the Scriptures also allow us to do, then I have falsely judged my brother or sister in Christ and I have become the standard by which holiness is measured.

Or suppose that I make a judgment on all of you because you're not wearing the same type of clothes I wear to church. In fact, if I say, unless you ladies are wearing dresses, or you men are wearing at least a tie, you are not pleasing to God, I have made a judgment on you which is not biblical.

This is what Jesus was saying in the context of his teaching regarding judgment of others.

MAT 7:1 "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

The measure Jesus was speaking about was a measure we create instead of what the measure God created under which we will all be judged.

If this is not the case then we could never take the teaching of Jesus which we saw a few moments ago where He said, "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you."

How do you show someone their fault unless you make a judgment? You must arrive at a judgment that what they are doing is sinful. Or what about church discipline? How can the elders of a church enact discipline unless they make a judgment?

The answer is, that the only time we can make such judgments is if they are judgments using God's standards, and not our own, which of course is the word of God. And then when we make those judgments we enact them also according to God's word.

And so, if the elders enact judgment on someone in the church who is practicing adultery they don't have the option of flogging them publicly. Why? Because God's word is clear on how we enact judgment in such cases.

Every aspect of our Christian lives, including how we judge, must be done according to God's word, which means that we, for the most part, are not to be in the judging business. Unless someone has sinned against you, or unless you are aware of sin which can affect the body of Christ, we do not have the prerogative to judge people in such a way where we spread rumors or take up an offense.

Unless we are willing to actually become part of the solution to the problem then our judgments only become a self-righteous attempt to make ourselves look holy. Truth without love only produces strife. Judgment without God's truth and love only produces legalism.

This by the way, was Peter's problem. He had made a judgment on the Gentiles without God's truth and without Christ's love. And the only thing it produced was division and hatred, as well as confusion of the gospel of grace.

And so, I've digressed. Let me get back to my point as to why Paul publicly rebuked Peter in light of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18.

We need to keep in mind that what Peter had done in Antioch was a public violation of God's word. He had publicly ostracized the Gentiles. He had publicly coerced the Gentiles to follow Jewish customs.

He had publicly shown his disdain for the truth of the Gospel as he sent the message to the Gentiles that unless they practiced such Jewish customs they were not worthy of Christian fellowship from Jewish believers, thus creating a new standard for Christian fellowship, aside from only believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The other thing we need to consider is that Paul was certainly aware of biblical protocol when it came to approaching a brother or sister in Christ who had sinned, either publicly or privately. In all likelihood Paul did approach Peter in private prior to this occasion.

And he may have approached Peter in such a way as to caution him not to give the Gentiles the impression that there was a separate Jewish club they needed to belong to if they were truly to be spiritual. And I suspect Peter may have agreed in principle and yet his actions continued to be influenced by the Judaizers who intimidated him.

It would be at this point that Paul was well within his authority, as an apostle, to bring this problem to the surface publicly. And this would be in keeping with Matthew 18, where Jesus makes it clear, that "if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

Peter, after being rebuked publicly, and by this we infer publicly in the church setting, must have humbled himself since there is no indication it went any further where he would have been treated as a pagan or a tax collector.

And of course this is language which suggests that he would be treated as an outsider. That's what Jesus had in mind with the terms pagan or tax collector. How should believers treat pagans or tax collectors; in other words, outsiders? We treat them as people who have not embraced Christ and are therefore outside of the fellowship of God's people, which means we treat them as people who need the gospel.

And so, Jesus is not telling us to treat such people as vermin. He's telling us to love them with the truth as we encourage them to

embrace the Messiah. And in a church discipline situation this is what is intended; to eventually see them come back to the body of Christ on God's terms, not their own, as they repent of their sin.

The other thing to consider in Peter's situation is that he was not just a regular member of the body of Christ. He was one of its pillars. To rebuke Peter publicly in effect told the body of Christ that not even an apostle was above such discipline where Jesus Christ's name was on the line.

This would also have established within the church in Antioch, as well as in Galatia, that Paul did have the authority from Christ as an apostle to enact such discipline.

In a sense this is the equivalent of the prophet Nathan going to King David, the leader of Israel, and confronting him with his sin of committing adultery with Bathsheba and then subsequently having her husband killed in battle to cover it up. God then sent Nathan to deal with it.

And Paul has been sent to one of the church's pillars to confront Peter with a sin which may not have involved adultery or murder, but certainly involved spiritual adultery and a wrong message which eternally condemns people to hell.

That's serious enough for God to put a stop to it, and He does as He uses Paul as the prophet, if you will, with authority to deal with this problem.

And so, in God's grace, He corrects Peter and sends a message of hope to the church because He loves both Peter and the church too much to let such heresy crumble away at the foundation who is Christ alone who saves, not Christ plus the law.

And unfortunately, this is what has happened to the church over the years; it has sent a message to the world that Christ is the only answer and yet in certain segments of the church they have an additional message as it relates to how someone is actually saved.

For example, many of the cults we have in America today came about as the result of people who decided that Christ really was not sufficient in and of Himself to procure our salvation, and so they started their own organization while claiming to still be connected to Christianity.

One prominent group comes to mind. The church of Jesus Christ of latter day saints, the Mormons. Notice how prominent the name Jesus Christ is conveyed in their organization. And yet, what do they believe as it relates to salvation? Is Jesus Christ the only solution to our sin problem with them?

Absolutely not. In fact, the bible plays a subservient role in their organization, and then only when it is interpreted according to their prophets, and so they can make it say anything they want.

It's the book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price which makes up their spiritual bedrock. And it is in these and other writings which gives the foundation for their faith which includes such heresy which teaches that our heavenly Father is a creature who was once a man and then became a god over time.

They in turn teach that all men today, (and they make the distinction between men and women here), that every godly Mormon man can one day become a god and thus be a father of a world of his own. This is why Mormon women play a prominent role in birthing many children for such a future world so that her husband will rule over such a planet, thus making him a heavenly father to that world. This is also why polygamy was prominent in early Mormonism, and is still practiced today among some Mormons.

They believe that Adam is our true heavenly father and god. Brigham Young, the second president of the Mormon church, wrote in *The Journal of Discourses*, Volume I, "When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body and brought Eve, one of his celestial wives, with him He is our father and our God and the only God with whom we have to do." (Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*).

Lorenzo Snow, former president of the Mormon church, wrote in the *Millennial Star*, Volume 54, "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become." (Walter Martin, *Kingdom of the Cults*).

And so, the Mormon church teaches, among many other heresies, that there are many gods who evolved from men. This is known as polytheism.

Regarding Jesus Christ, the Mormons see him as just one more human being becoming a god through his good works and thus establishing his place among many gods who were once men.

In the book, "Pearl of Great Price", along with the writings of the Mormon's apostle, Orson Hyde, we read, "Christ as a pre-existent spirit was not only the brother of the devil, [he also] celebrated his own marriage to both the Mary's and to Martha, whereby he could see his seed before he was crucified."

In terms of how a Mormon is saved, and thus the only way to be saved, since Mormonism teaches that it is the only true church, [one must have] "faith in Christ, but [also] baptism by immersion, obedience to the teaching of the Mormon church, good works, and keeping the commandments of God, (which) will cleanse away the stain of sin", according to Brigham Young in the Journal of Discourses, page 159." (Walter Martin, Kingdom of the Cults).

It would make your head spin to go through all of the weird and false doctrines of Mormonism. The bottom line is that it is a false church with a false gospel, and yet they promote themselves as truly Christian.

But blatant cults are not the only ones deceiving people when it comes to a false gospel.

One such group is often identified with evangelical Christianity and yet it has clearly added an element to the gospel of pure grace. Let me quote from this church's web page. "It is necessary to respond to God's free offer of salvation by faith, repentance, and baptism. As we confess Christ as our Lord and are baptized by immersion, God meets us, forgives our sins and gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers each of us."

This is the web page of Oak Hills Church of Christ with Max Lucado as it's senior Pastor. Now it should be noted that Max Lucado takes a much softer view of this doctrine of baptismal regeneration, but the fact that he is still a Pastor in good standing in this denomination makes it clear that he still subscribes to this heretical teaching regarding water baptism.

In fact, The Dallas Morning News, in an article written by Paul R. Buckley on Nov. 28, 1998, published this story which in part reads: One of Lucado's critics is a friend, F. LaGard Smith, who teaches law at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California. Smith believes that the Churches of Christ are suffering an identity crisis, and he has written a book about it, "Who Is My Brother?" (Cotswold Publishing). The epilogue is an open letter to Lucado that gently takes him to task for sending mixed signals about baptism....

.... Smith cannot easily regard such people -- unimmersed or immersed for wrong reasons -- as Christians. He acknowledges that God has the prerogative to do as he wishes on Judgment Day, but later he urges Lucado to "tell our 'Christian' friends about redemptive, saving baptism."

In other words, 'from one pastor to another, you need to tell them the truth you subscribed to when you became a Church of Christ minister, that to be truly saved you need to be water baptized through immersion. Don't send mixed signals.'

And yet, Paul would say to the Church of Christ as he did to the Galatians who also taught that Jesus Christ is our only Savior, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel - which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" (GAL 1:6-8)

There are other groups who teach water baptism as necessary for one's salvation which would include the group I was brought up in, which is the Roman Catholic Church. Let me quote from the "Catechism of the Catholic Church - American Translation."

[Answer] "1257 The Lord himself affirms that Baptism is necessary for salvation. He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament. The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are "reborn of water and the Spirit." God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments."

What is sad in all of this is that what Paul was dealing with back in the first century is the same sort of problem we're having to deal with today, and in some instances it is harder because of a sentiment which is prevalent in the church where we should simply accept one another because we name the name of Christ.

If someone is preaching another gospel we don't have to attack them or be rude to them, but we have to love them with the truth

and if that means being separate from them then it needs to be done. If that means pointing out the biblical gospel when they insist theirs is the true gospel then it needs to be done as graciously and compassionately as possible.

The alternative is separation from God forever. And quite frankly, I'm not comfortable with that alternative. No one has to be lost if they would just embrace the one who came to save we who are lost.

The last point I wanted to make that I didn't get to last week has to do with segments of the church forcing people, or coercing people to do things that are not biblical.

In Peter's case he was coercing people to act like Jews which was a nice way of saying that he was forcing Gentiles to think of themselves as second-class Christians, or that they weren't Christians at all if they didn't become circumcised.

The flock in most cases wants to trust their pastor, respect their pastor and to follow their pastor as he follows Christ. But when that shepherd is leading the flock to turbulent waters instead of quiet streams then it's time for the flock to have enough back bone to say no, this is out of accord with God's word.

Of course, in its most extreme case when the leadership wants to add something to the gospel to make it effectual then the voices need to be raised. But there are more subtle ways of leading the flock of Christ astray which can then lead to doctrines of demons which always harm the body.

And what I have found to be one of the most insidious ways of Satan to harm the body is when the leadership of a church prohibits the flock from testing their teachings according to the word of God.

You'll remember that Paul commended the Bereans because they sought the Scriptures concerning the things he had taught them. He didn't accuse them of being a tool of Satan or a Pharisee looking for an occasion to question the Pastor.

There are many applications in which we might find this attitude among leadership, but you'll remember a few years ago the Holy Laughter Movement, which was expressed in a variety of churches including the Brownsville Assemblies of God church in Pensacola, Florida.

At that time, the congregation was essentially told by the leadership that despite how weird and far out the manifestations were that were taking place in that church, supposedly under the influence of the Holy Spirit, no one was to question this movement.

In an article entitled “The Silencing of the Lambs” from the web site, “Contemporary Pentecostal Issues”, Luther Edwards writes, “An unusual thing is happening in connection with “The Revival” at Brownsville. Its teachers are lashing out strongly against critics. Now it’s not unusual for someone to give a spirited defense of their position....

..... But the Brownsville revivalists have gone beyond that; they are now pronouncing divine judgment on their critics, and strongly implying that misgivings of any kind could incur God’s displeasure....

.... Evangelist Steve Hill lashed out against those who mock manifestations, and even gave examples of how God dealt with one mocker. He went on to mock those who run to the Bible for verification every time they see something unusual. In his sermon entitled “The God Seekers,” Hill stated that God seekers are open to “new revelation.” That is, those who are so hung up on the Bible that they can’t receive new revelation do not qualify as “God seekers.”

When the experience becomes the qualifying factor for what is of the Spirit and what is not, then we’ve lost the war. When Jesus Christ was tempted by Satan in the desert our Lord didn’t fight back with some emotional experience directing His actions. He rested on the word of God He wrote.

When you and I rely on any source other than God’s word for spiritual answers to life then we’ve taken the most important weapon out of our arsenal for spiritual battle.

2TI 3:16 -17 “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

1JO 4:1 “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

1TH 5:21-22 “Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. 23 May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We are in a spiritual war and Satan is doing everything he can to disrupt our battle orders to go into the world and preach the gospel and make disciples. He will create every sort of obstacle, from causing division within the ranks to raising up false prophets who distort and change the gospel.

We need to be diligent to handle the word of God accurately and to walk in the truth of God’s word in the power of the Spirit. His Spirit is with us and indwells and enables us to go through this life to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ.

2PE 1:3-4 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

May our lives shine for Christ and may we be bold in our love for Him and His word as we live as those ambassadors He’s called us to be.