

Galatians 2:11-14 “The Temptation Toward Hypocrisy”

GAL 2:11-14 “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he 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 by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. 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?”

This is an interesting portion of God’s word. If it were certainly taken out of its context it might appear to be Paul’s way of publicly picking on Peter who has obviously made a grave mistake.

But we must always consider the context if we are to arrive at what the Holy Spirit was teaching the church during Paul’s day as well as ours.

Remember, that Paul has been rebuking the church in Galatia for allowing certain men to advance a form of the gospel while actually adding to it, thus nullifying what the true gospel is really all about. This is a big deal since a wrong, or altered message will lead people to hell rather than to heaven.

Since Paul loves people too much to allow this to happen, and since he knows the church has been given the privilege to handle this gospel of Christ, he immediately jumps in with both feet to correct the problem before it gets out of hand.

Unfortunately, some false brethren in Galatia are trying to make the case that Paul is not really a valid apostle, and therefore his message and correction to them should not be taken seriously.

Paul’s response includes a list of reasons as to why he is a valid apostle, beginning with the fact that he didn’t receive his gospel from any man, including the other apostles.

He explains that the risen Christ personally gave him the gospel and then personally disciplined Paul for a number of years before he finally met the other apostles, only to be validated since what he

and the other apostles were teaching was the exact same thing as it related to the gospel and sanctification.

And then in our text last week we saw how Paul takes away any doubt as to his apostleship by showing how the other apostles accept him as one of them and give him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship which infers that they have been embraced in the work.

GAL 2:9 “James, Peter and John, those reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews.”

And so, when we come to our text this morning, Paul is building upon his case that his authority and power are equal with any of the other apostles and that no matter who might be bringing confusion, as it relates to how people are made righteous before God, he has both the commission and authority from God to officially represent the Lord in correcting the problem.

And so, in our text this morning Paul brings a particular incident before the church in Galatia as a reminder that whether “he, the rest of the apostles, or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!” (Gal.1:8)

And this is why he relates what happened to him in Antioch when he had to confront Peter.

GAL 2:11 “When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong.”

As to the time Peter had come to Antioch no one knows with any certainty exactly when this took place. In all likelihood it happened before the council at Jerusalem when Paul and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to specifically deal with this problem of some Judaizers adding the law to the gospel.

But the language of verse 11 leaves no doubt that what happened with Peter was something which could not be overlooked. It was not one of those instances where love could cover a multitude of sins without having to deal with the problem.

Paul says I opposed him to his face. For whatever else someone might say about this incident, no one can accuse Paul of not having

the guts to personally approach one who would have been considered to be one of the most celebrated apostles.

After all, Peter was the first apostle to publicly preach the gospel after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and three thousand were added to the church in one day. He was the first to have the Holy Spirit work through him in miraculous ways. We're all familiar with the first recorded instance of a healing through Peter.

ACT 3:1-8 "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer - at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."

It was this same Peter, in light of this incident with the crippled man, who boldly confronted the religious leaders of Jerusalem in such a way as to rebuke them for not being true to their Scriptures regarding the Messiah.

ACT 4:8-12 "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

It was Peter who was used by the Holy Spirit to put the fear of God in the church when Ananias and Sapphira lied to God about what they had done with their possessions. As each came into Peter's presence he pronounced God's displeasure with them and they immediately fell dead.

Peter was a heavy weight in the church and people loved him and admired him and respected him for his work in the church and among the Jews of his day. It's no coincidence that the Roman Catholic church places Peter on the pedestal they do. Though they are entirely wrong about declaring him to be the first Vicar of Christ on earth, or the first pope, it shows us that early on Peter was held in high esteem.

And yet, Paul has no problem in confronting this beloved apostle and rebukes him to his face for what would be a denial of the true gospel. This is what Paul means when the NIV says, "he was clearly in the wrong."

This is a very mild interpretation of what our text actually says. The Greek word for the phrase, "in the wrong", or as the KJV and NKJV puts it, "to be blamed", is *kataginosko*, and it could literally be translated condemned. And so, the NASB correctly translates this portion as "he stood condemned."

Now, this is not the same word we have earlier in this letter where Paul says, if anyone preaches another gospel other than the one we delivered to you let him be eternally condemned or anathema.

And so, Paul is not suggesting that since Peter is self-condemned in this particular matter that he has given up his salvation and that he is lost forever. Rather, what he means to say is that just as a criminal is found guilty of a crime and has been proven to be wrong in a court of law, Peter has been found guilty of a wrong which can be proved.

This has nothing to do with Paul having any sort of personal animosity toward Peter, it has nothing to do with Paul trying to find fault. It is simply a fact that what Peter was doing was to be condemned as being out of accord with the word of God, and there were to be consequences; in this case a rebuke to set the matter straight.

Now, in the next verse of our text Paul explains what this wrong is.

GAL 2:12 "Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group."

Here's what's going on. Whenever Peter arrived in Antioch he evidently spent considerable time there getting to know the Christians and having fellowship with them. Now, since many of

the Christians were Gentiles he was inclined to spend time with them and as our text says he ate with them.

Keep in mind that both Paul and Barnabas were the leaders in the church at Antioch at this time. And so, Paul observed how Peter was being a blessing to these Gentile believers. But the idea of Peter eating with these Gentiles was not accepted by a lot of Jews.

For the common Jew he was brought up believing that the law spoke very clearly on the issue of what was considered clean and unclean food. In other words, this was a moral issue for them. As Scot McKnight puts it in his commentary on Galatians, “we misfire when we think these legal concerns of Peter’s were concerned with diet; they were about piety.”

And so, for the common Jew of Paul’s day their perspective on diet had more to do with how can they please God or at least not displease Him, rather than what is the best diet for them so as to maintain their best health. Diet and health is more of a 20th century western concept.

So here’s the problem. Every Jew brought up under the Mosaic law, which of course included laws on diet, knew that to deviate from such laws made them feel guilty of being out of favor with God. But it went one step further, because any Jew worth his salt would not even consider eating a holy meal with an unholy Gentile.

And Peter has done both, according to these Jews who felt that even a Jew who named the name of Christ should not compromise his heritage which was given to him from God Himself.

Many Jewish believers had a problem contending with this. Remember that even the apostle Peter would never have previously considered eating unclean meals with Gentiles.

The classic case regarding this is recorded in Acts when a Roman Centurion by the name of Cornelius was given a message by an angel from God to call for Simon Peter to come to his house to share the gospel with Cornelius and his family.

Shortly after this the Lord was giving Peter a vision. It too is recorded in Acts.

ACT 10:9-17 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while

the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles of the earth and birds of the air. Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean." The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven. While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate."

When Peter finally went with the men he arrived at the house of Cornelius only to find out that this Gentile was given the same grace as Peter had been given and so Peter shared the gospel with them and they embraced the Jewish Messiah as their own.

ACT 10:44-48 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have. So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days."

Now, you would think that everyone in Jerusalem would be ecstatic over these Gentiles coming to Christ through Peter. But look at what we read in Acts.

ACT 11:1-4 "The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened:..."

These circumcised believers in Jerusalem criticized Peter for going into the house of a Gentile. We're not told who these circumcised believers were, but it is interesting that they are mentioned in the context of the apostles and the brothers throughout Judea hearing that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

I don't think it's a stretch that the apostles during this time felt any differently than Peter who needed a vision from God that it was okay to go to the Gentiles to share Christ, and that it was even okay to go into their houses and eat with them.

This was the atmosphere in which the early church operated where mostly Jews made up the church in the formative years. And so, Peter was personally taught by the Lord, not unlike how Paul had been personally taught his gospel and the word of the Lord, that it was acceptable to go to the Gentiles and regard them as brothers and sisters in Christ when they repented of their sin and embraced the Messiah for their salvation.

But more than that Peter was also taught through this vision that the former Mosaic laws on diet had been abrogated. In other words, they had been canceled and considered null and void in light of the new covenant in Christ.

Now, you can imagine some of the problems with this. One present day phenomenon would be one I've encountered over the years with different people I've met who have come out of the Seventh Day Adventist church where their rules on diet and the Sabbath are pretty strict.

Some here would concur that to spend many years in that system, and then to come of it and be told that you have the grace and liberty from Christ to eat anything you want according to God's word, can be a hard pill to swallow. And I've heard stories over the years where former Adventists had the hardest time not thinking they were somehow sinning when they ate meat for the first time.

They questioned whether they should swallow now that they've thoroughly chewed it. I'm sure for some of these people they felt unclean. This is what Peter had to contend with in his own life and would ultimately have to contend with in the lives of other Jews who couldn't cross that bridge into Christ's liberty.

But Peter did cross that bridge, and as an apostle he was called by Christ to be a messenger of hope and freedom and life without the restrictions which encompassed his life as a former Jew bound by the law which Christ came to fulfill.

I suspect that in the beginning he still looked over his shoulder once in a while when invited to eat at a Gentile's house wondering

if other less free Jewish believers could handle an apostle sitting down with what they all used to refer to as Gentile dogs.

But we know that over time Peter embraced this freedom in Christ and freely practiced a love for Gentiles as he gave them the gospel and was more than happy to fellowship with them, which would have included him eating with them.

And the implication is that he ate what they ate. Now, I'm sure that some of these Gentiles accommodated Peter on occasion, not unlike how we might accommodate someone we meet from another country who longs to taste a dish from their native land. And so, I'm sure some Gentiles may have made a dinner like Peter's mom used to make which would have been entirely Jewish.

But even so, it would not have made it Kosher according to strict Jews because no holy meal can come from an unholy people. And unfortunately, even some Jews who claimed to be Christians took this attitude many years after Peter was given his vision by God and had shared with the church that God was no respecter of persons.

And this is part of the struggle that Peter was now contending with in Antioch. He had no problem eating with the Gentile believers in that city, and yet it appears that Peter still is susceptible to Jewish influence.

GAL 2:12 "Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group."

These men who came from James had taken it upon themselves to say that they represented the church in Jerusalem when in fact they didn't. They may very well have been sent out by James, who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem, but they over stepped their authority.

And it seems that Peter felt that to be able to fellowship with these apparently influential Jews in the church at Jerusalem he had to begin to look more like them in practice than the Gentiles he had befriended.

Imagine how these Gentile brothers and sisters felt. Our text tells us that he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.

The phrase “draw back and separate himself” indicates that this didn’t happen over-night. In fact, this is a term which was used by the military in those days which suggests a military disengagement to find safer ground. It’s not a term which suggests immediate flight as in a full-fledged retreat.

And what this suggests is that these men from James, who were obviously Jews, were coercing Peter to disengage from these Gentile believers as they intimidated him over a period of time.

Now, we might wonder how an apostle could succumb to this. First, Peter was not perfect. We need only look at his life with Christ and some of the decisions he made. But, there may be a legitimate reaction to these Judaizers which Peter considered as being best for the church. F.F. Bruce gives us one scenario when he poses the question from T.W. Manson, “what was the message to Peter from these Judaizers?”

“It may have been something like this: ‘news is reaching us in Jerusalem that you are habitually practicing table-fellowship with Gentiles. This is causing grave scandal to our more conservative brethren here. Not only so: it is becoming common knowledge outside the church, so that our attempts to evangelize our fellow-Jews are being seriously hampered.’”

This message is saying that you are overstepping your liberties in Christ as you exclude the feelings of fellow Jews more conservative than you and it may cause them to stumble. And on top of that you’re even hampering the advancement of the gospel to go forward in Jewish communities.

Of course this would be a smoke screen, but you can see how they might have reasoned with Peter that it would be best to separate himself from the Gentiles for the sake of the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

But remember, Paul is a leader in this church where Peter is fellowshiping and you better believe he knows what these Judaizers are trying to accomplish and how they are getting Peter off to the side to persuade him. Add to that that I’m sure these Gentile believers, who are now being ostracized, are coming to Paul and asking, “what’s up with Peter?”

What’s up with Peter is that he fears this group from Jerusalem. I know that sounds amazing and yet it’s true for whatever reason. And so, Peter, single handedly, begins to undermine the peace and

unity of that church in Antioch to where even other Jewish believers join him; even Barnabas who was instrumental in bringing Paul to Antioch.

After all, Peter is an apostle. He must be doing what is only best for the church. Paul doesn't think so.

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?"

Here's the essence of Paul's argument. It has nothing to do with observing certain rituals found in Judaism. In fact, Paul practiced many of these rituals when fellowshiping with fellow Jews; both believers and unbelievers.

The problem here has to do with hypocrisy; saying you're one thing and then practicing something different. Peter was saying and demonstrating that he was free in Christ, that he was no longer under the law as he fellowshiped with the Gentile believers. But when it came to pleasing certain Jews he all of a sudden had a lapse in integrity as he moved away from the Gentiles.

When he was with Gentiles he didn't have a problem fellowshiping with Gentiles which is why Paul accuses him of being a Jew and yet living like a Gentile. But when legalistic Jews entered the picture he then reverted back to living like a Jew as he moved away from the Gentiles.

And by doing this Peter now joined that group Paul spoke of earlier who were presenting another gospel, a false gospel. Why? Because Peter was saying with his actions that his theology did not include the freedom to simply come by faith in Christ alone for your salvation. You now had to become a Jew in practice to be a true Christian worthy of the fellowship of other Jewish believers who obviously had it all.

Peter was basically saying to these Gentiles in Antioch that "unless you conform to the Jewish way of life we cannot have social relations with you." (F.F. Bruce) In essence, this makes them non-brethren.

And so, by his very actions he was compelling them to adhere to the wishes of these Judaizers, which we know was for these Gentiles to be circumcised and to follow the law of Moses, which included not only the 10 commandments, but the ceremonial laws,

like washing in a certain way before meals, and the dietary laws which Peter only knew too well.

Again, there was nothing inherently wrong with Jews, or even Gentiles for that matter, practicing some of these Jewish customs. But it was when the 10 commandments became a way to earn salvation from God that it went beyond the truth of God's grace, or when the dietary laws became a requirement to be righteous with God that it became another gospel.

Paul would not tolerate a different gospel from false brethren in Galatia or Antioch, and he would not tolerate a false approach to the gospel from Peter. This is what Paul meant when he said, "they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel..."

The truth of the gospel does not require some additional means to be clean outside of the shed blood of Christ alone which pays our debt to God in full. And so, Paul confronts Peter face to face in public.

I want to pick up next week on this theme of hypocrisy and the ways in which the church today can give one message to the world and end up sending an entirely different message through its actions.

I also want to address why Paul dealt with Peter in a public way instead of a private manner which Jesus addresses in Matthew 18:15-20. "If your brother sins, go to him in private."

I also want to consider how different segments of the church today can force believers to do things which they might otherwise not do. There are so many evil influences trying to infiltrate the church today and we need to be aware, sensitive and open to the truth of God's word as we go about seeking and serving our great God in the power of the Spirit.

Jesus prayed to the Father, sanctify your children in truth, Your word is truth. This same Peter who is having to be rebuked by Paul would write later in his first epistle.

1PE 2:2-3 "Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good."

Peter had tasted the grace of God and now he is promoting bondage to the law. This will have to be dealt with and Paul will not back down. We'll look at this next week.