

Preached on 11/27/22 at GBC - Ruston

"A Vital Gospel Issue, Pt.1"

Gal.2:11-14

Let's start this message today by Scripturally establishing the **FACT** that there is **ONLY ONE GOSPEL**, and **ALL GOD'S PEOPLE** in every generation "**HEAR**" that Gospel, "**BELIEVE**" that Gospel, and **LIVE BY THAT GOSPEL** – "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of **Cephas, then of the twelve**: After that, he was seen of above **five hundred brethren** at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of **James; then of all the apostles**. And last of all **he was seen of me** also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which [was bestowed] upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. **Therefore whether** [it were] **I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.**"(I Cor.15:1-11) Peter, James, John, and the Apostle Paul believed and were commissioned by our Lord to preach the **SAME GOSPEL**. **LISTEN TO PETER**, who Paul reproves in these verses we want to look at today – "*Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"(I Pet.1:3-5) Paul had already confirmed the same truth to these Galatians to whom he wrote this Epistle – **Look back up at Vss.6-10**. So Peter's actions with the Gentiles and these "Jews" that brought Paul to deal with him so directly, i.e., "*I withstood him to the face*", was not an indication that Peter had forsaken the Gospel or that this great Apostle was on the verge of apostacy. While Peter's **ACTIONS** in this situation were to be condemned, and his actions should be considered **HERETICAL**, our God uses this as a **TEACHABLE MOMENT**, not only for those at Galatia and Peter himself, but also for all believers in every generation – "*For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*" (I Cor.11:19) **Let me be perfectly clear** – In these verses we want to begin looking at Paul deals with what is in fact "**A Vital Gospel Issue**". This lesson also teaches us **HOW** we should deal with our brethren when they fall into error, not seeking to destroy or ostracize them, but to **RECOVER THEM** to the same **HOPE** we share in "*Christ and Him crucified.*"*

In **vss.11,12** we learn an important lesson that wise Solomon set forth in Proverbs – "*The **fear of man** bringeth a snare.*"(Prov.29:25a) Look at Paul's words - "*But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*" It's amazing how that almost **20 years** after Peter's denial of Christ due to "*the fear of man*" and our Lord restoring him, Peter still allows "*the fear of man*" to cause him to err and sin against God. If you'll recall when we studied the

conversion of Cornelius, the Lord TAUGHT Peter by a vision to consider or count **NOTHING COMMON** or **UNCLEAN** that God sanctified. That's why we read **Acts 10** in **THE CALL TO WORSHIP**. Through this teaching by God the Holy Spirit Peter was no longer hesitant or reluctant to eat with the Gentiles. But now, when these Judaizers came to Galatia who believed and taught "*except ye be circumcised after the law of Moses, YOU CANNOT BE SAVED*", because of the **fear of man**, Peter surrendered the liberty he had been freely given in Christ – "*he withdrew and separated himself*." The original word translated "*he withdrew*" is the same word the writer of Hebrews used in describing those who "*live by faith*" – "*Now the just shall live by faith: but if [any man] draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*"(Heb.10:38) By his actions, PETER was not **LIVING BY FAITH**, and Peter **KNEW BETTER**, because Paul reminded Peter of what they all had heard, believed, and preached – "*We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*"(Vss.15,16) **We need to understand clearly what is going on here:** Peter had been in fellowship with the Gentile believers, eating and drinking with them, enjoying the liberty they all had been given in Christ Jesus our Lord. John wrote: "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not [his] brother abideth in death.*"(I Jn.3:14) The word translated in English "*we love*" and "*he that loveth*" when applied to human affection means 'to feel and exhibit esteem and goodwill to a person, to prize and delight in a thing'. So previous to these "**JEWS**" arriving, Peter "*loved the brethren*". Now these "**JEWS**" come to Galatia, whom Peter fears, and Peter "*withdraws and separated himself*" from these Gentiles, by his action **IMPLYING** that these Gentiles were **UNCLEAN** before God due to their **UNCIRCUMCISION**. Think about what that **IMPLIES** about the importance and necessity of **UNCIRCUMCISION** to a sinner's salvation – "*except ye be circumcised after the law of Moses, YOU CANNOT BE SAVED.*" By his actions Peter implied that **CIRCUMCISION** was essential to a sinner's salvation and his fellowship with them as brethren, something he **WOULD HAVE NEVER PREACHED**, and certainly something he didn't believe personally, seeing he had been "*taught of God.*" Listen to Peter's words in his epistles – **I Pet.1:1-5&18-23; 2:9,10; II Pet.1:1-4; 3:9**. Even though Peter like Paul was a **JEW**, and according to the law of Moses had been circumcised, you can rest assured both in understanding and message he **NEVER** preached **CIRCUMCISION** as having any part in a sinner's justification before the true and living God "*who will by no means clear the guilty.*" Remember, Peter got His Gospel from Christ, just like Paul, and Christ's Gospel is **JUST LIKE CHRIST, UNCHANGABLE** – "*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever*". Yet here is poor, lowly, sinful Peter, once again denying Christ by his actions, even though this time he didn't deny Christ by his words. How did Paul deal with this situation? Did he say: "It's no big deal, he is the chief Apostle and he knows what he is doing better than me." Paul, the one these **JEWS** said was not truly an Apostle, "*withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*" This was a serious error, one detrimental to any who professed to believe the one true Gospel, therefore Paul dealt with Peter dogmatically and Scripturally, and he wrote to these Galatian believers who were questioning his Apostleship that he (Paul – "*who was the least of the Apostles*") called Peter, **WHO ALL HIGHLY REGARDED AS AN APOSTLE**, to task for his error. We'll get into this more in the next message

Peter's error not only affected him and his liberty, but it affected other believers as well – "*And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with*

their dissimulation.” The phrase “monkey see, monkey do” comes to my mind when I read these words. In other words, these individuals had “*respect of persons*” regarding Peter and his position, so much so, that if he separated from the Gentiles they thought it had to be right, **i.e., Scripturally correct.** They regarded Peter as something more than he was, **A SINNER SAVED BY GOD’S ALMIGHTY GRACE.** Instead of following him without questioning his reasoning, they should have put his actions under the scrutiny of the word of God – “*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*”(Acts 17:11) Think about how insidious this was, namely, Paul’s own disciple – “*Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*” Peter would use the same word translated “*was carried away with*” when he wrote **II Pet.3:14-18** – “*Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know [these things] before, beware lest ye also, **being led away** with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen.*” The word both Apostles used means the same thing: ‘to yield or submit one’s self to lowly things, conditions, or employments or **TO CONDESCEND.**” Peter wrote these words well after Paul confronted him over this issue, and I believe his words show he understood the seriousness of such error, and by God’s grace Peter sought to never be “*carried away*” again.

When Paul withstood Peter to his face, he didn’t do it based on “I THINK”, but on “*thus saith the Lord*”– “*But when I saw that they walked not uprightly **according to the truth of the gospel**, I said unto Peter before [them] all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We [who are] Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*”(Vss.14-16) Notice Paul’s **STANDARD OF JUDGMENT** – “*the truth of the Gospel*”. As we said at the beginning of this study through Galatians, the **THEME** of the whole letter is **JUSTIFICATION** based on the accomplished work of Christ, apart from the law. So Paul makes his argument to Peter based on a mutual understanding of this **GOSPEL TRUTH.** Remember, any addition to or subtraction from **Christ’s PERSON and HIS WORK**, what Paul declared to be “**THE GOSPEL**”, is “*another gospel*.” Paul’s words to Peter in these verses show how dangerous his actions were in relation to **WHAT** God’s Gospel sets forth. When Peter denied Christ and Judas betrayed him, the **ONLY DIFFERENCE** between the two was that one was a vessel of **MERCY**, and the other was a “*vessel fitted to destruction*.” It is the same here - The **ONLY DIFFERENCE** between Peter and this “*JEWES who came down*” was that Peter was a justified saint who erred grievously, while they were unregenerate, self-righteous, religious reprobates. Let’s consider Paul’s question to Peter, and then we’ll come back next time and look at his words beginning in Vs.15. **Read Vs.14 with me.** Paul asked Peter a question that revealed the foolishness and sinfulness of what he had done. Keep in mind, when we have a question in the Scriptures that can be answered **AFFIRMATIVE** or **NEGATIVE**, the answer is always

NEGATIVE – So the answer to the question Paul asked Peter is - **YOU CAN'T!** If Peter, James, John, Paul, and all believers (either Jew or Gentile) have experience regeneration and conversion, **THIS MUCH I KNOW** – “[There is] *therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”(Rom.8:1-4) So if Peter was practicing and living by the **FREEDOM** all God’s redeemed have, seeing they are **ONE WITH CHRIST**, how could he turn around and by his action of separating make it appear that the Gentiles must go back under that from which they have been set free by Christ Jesus the Lord? **HE COULDN’T** and **WE CAN’T EITHER**. It is either salvation by Christ **ALONE**, justification full and free in Him, **OR THERE IS NO HOPE AT ALL** – “*I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness [come] by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*”(Gal.2:21) One last thing: The word translated “*righteousness*” comes from the **SAME ROOT WORD** translated “*justified*”, or “*just*” or “*justifier*” in the New Testament.

We’ll comeback next time and pick up with vs.15.