

GALATIANS - SERMON 7
GALATIANS 2:11-14 — PAUL'S REBUKE OF PETER
Pastor Max Doner, Sovereign Grace Bible Church
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INTRODUCTION:

Read Galatians 2:11-14

The attack upon the gospel of grace by the Judaizers included an attack upon the authority of the apostle Paul. The claim had evidently been made and circulated that he was an apostle by the appointment or discipleship of the other primary apostles. In this case, Paul was not as authoritative and hence his gospel message could be challenged. Thus far in chapters one and two Paul has set upon a required and necessary defense of his divine appointment to the office of apostle. His defense included three points. First, he was not a disciple of the apostles because he had not been instructed by the apostles. Second, he was not a disciple of the apostles because he was esteemed as an equal by the other apostles. Thirdly, he was not a disciple of the apostles because he engaged in the correction of an apostle. Only an apostle of equal authority and stature would be able to issue such a public rebuke or correction.

Let us re-examine this rebuke between two apostles. Let us draw out lessons for ourselves regarding how to deal with and resolve departures from proper belief and behavior on the part of our fellow Christians. From this historical account by Paul we can at least learn that even the most advanced of us can for various reasons fall into grievous errors and sin from which we need restoration.

OUTLINE:

- I THE OCCASION OF THE FALL.
- II THE EFFECT OF THE FALL.
- III THE RESTORATION FROM THE FALL.
- IV SIX PRINCIPLES FOR US

I THE OCCASION OF THE FALL, verse 12

. . . for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision.

Peter had spent most of his time in and around Jerusalem. However, on this occasion he had traveled north to Antioch. This church had a large number of Gentile believers. While in Antioch Peter, initially, engaged in free associations with the Gentile Christians. He went into their homes and shared meals with them. It is the eating with the Gentiles that Paul uses by way of singling it out to illustrate his point. The issue arose with those from James came to Antioch.

The Gentiles were accustomed to foods and food preparations that were or had been strictly prohibited to Jews by the Mosaic law. In addition to this the Gentiles were also accustomed to eating things and preparing things which the Jewish traditions had prohibited by adding to the law. There was a mass of Pharisaical tradition which had

developed and burdened the Mosaic law and these Gentiles were not in compliance with those traditions.

When Peter ate with these Gentile Christians he was, by his actions, saying that the old covenant, with its rituals and prohibitions regarding food and the association with Gentiles, had been abolished. Peter was also demonstrating that the Gentile Christians now stood on an equal footing with the Jews. Thus he gave testimony that the Gentiles were fully accepted as fellow members of the new covenant community. By his actions this was what Peter had demonstrated. It was proper and right for him to have done so.

But when certain Jewish zealots showed up from Jerusalem, who portrayed themselves as associates of the apostle James, then Peter's behavior suddenly and dramatically changed. Peter stopped associating with the Gentile Christians and ceased eating with them.

This passage does not tell us whether these men truly represented James or that James had sent them. It does tell us that they were, in some way, associated with James. It is not uncommon for men to present themselves as authoritative by an association with a recognized authority. This is speculative, but it is possible. It also could simply be that Peter wrongly invested too much authority in these men traveling from James in Jerusalem to Antioch. For whatever reason we do know that Peter feared these men. The fear of man is often a misleading influence.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

Peter may have feared the rejection of these men. He may have feared that they might call into question his own authority as an apostle. This fear adversely affected Peter. It caused him to act contrary to principle. He contradicted the previous lessons he had learned from God. Peter fell into hypocrisy.

Galatians 2:13

And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

The KJV word *dissemble* (NKJV - *hypocrite*) is συνυπεκρίθησαν which means to fall into hypocrisy. A hypocrite is one who believes one thing but acts in contradiction to that belief.

Peter had been in the company of the Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. During that time Jesus had declared the mosaic dietary laws abrogated, therefore undefiling.

Mark 7:19

". . . because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?"

It was also Peter to whom the Lord specifically revealed the abrogation of dietary laws in the vision of the sheet coming down from heaven in Acts 10:9-16. In that place God says, "what God has cleansed you must not call common." Peter had understood, not only

these clear abrogations of the dietary laws, but he also apparently understood their implications with regard to his relationship with Gentiles henceforth.

Peter had also participated in the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) at which the determination was made that Gentiles were accepted into the church. The dietary laws were not to be put upon the Gentiles.

Peter, in spite of all this knowledge, acted contrary to principle and truth. Peter was not ignorant of what God had purposed regarding the inclusion of Gentiles into the church without their having to become Jews. This makes Peter's actions in Antioch all the more grievous. That which promoted this in Peter was the fear of man.

II THE EFFECT OF THE FALL, verse 13

And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

The effect of this fall was that believers were thrown into confusion and led into sin. Previously, by word and example, Peter had taught them that Mosaic dietary and social restrictions had been removed. Now Peter, by his behavior, is teaching the opposite. Not only is he guilty of error, but he was leading others into the same error. The result was disastrous.

- 1 It obviously created division within the church. The Jewish Christians became alienated from the Gentile Christians. Fellowship was broken.
- 2 It created confusion among the believers. They were now doctrinally confused. What was originally taught as truth to them was now being overturned by demonstration.
- 3 It led others into sin. The higher one's profile and influence for good, the greater one's influence for evil can be as well. Barnabas was also led astray by Peter's example.

From this we must learn that one's example must never take precedence over the revealed will of God. Even if someone respected deviates from the written word, it should not influence us to the same error.

III THE RESTORATION FROM THE FALL, verses 11 & 14

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed;

. . . But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"

Peter's actions were clearly wrong and he was not correcting himself. The verbs are in the imperfect tense, indicating continued mal-practice. Those who were following Peter's bad example were likewise continuing in those errors.

they were not straightforward (KJV - *they walked not uprightly*) means integrity. With regard to the truth of the gospel these were denying it by their actions. Having taught

that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to be Christians, the actions of Peter and his company taught the very opposite. This is how significant conduct can be. Conduct and behavior are strong persuasion and teachers. In this text the word *compel* which is very strong is used as the result of Peter's behavior. He was actually compelling observers to err as he erred doctrinally.

By his actions Peter was re-instating the Mosaic law, dietary and social. He was denying that acceptance with God was based upon faith alone. He was demonstrating that works of ritual and ceremony were required in order to be accepted with God.

Many followed Peter's example and error. This is the danger in great, good, or respected teachers.

Peter's error was public and uncorrected. Paul's rebuke was public because of this fact. Since many were involved and influenced, Paul addressed Peter and the error with equal visibility. Many were in error, but Peter was the leader and received the specific rebuke publically. As the leader of the error, Peter needed to receive the rebuke and suffer the humiliation as publically as was his error.

IV SIX PRINCIPLES FOR US

There are six principles to draw out of this passage in terms of lessons we can learn regarding sin that enters into the Christian community and how it is to be dealt with.

- 1 We must insist that all Christians walk with and in integrity in light of the truth of the gospel. Paul observed Peter involved in a serious deviation from the truth. It was not a matter of personal tastes or habits, but one of grievous and sinful doctrinal error.

2 Thessalonians 3:14

And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.

Though this is in reference to a specific error, the principle is valid and proper for a wider range of errors.

When sin is not dealt with in the company of Christians it sets a dangerous example for others. Some things can be overlooked, but not those things which influence and effect the integrity of the gospel.

- 2 If people are not correcting their own behavior then it must be corrected by others. This passage portrays Peter's error as an on-going one. There is no evidence that Peter erred once and repented of it. Everyone errs. When one errs and becomes aware of it to the end that correction is exhibited, such rebuke as recorded in Galatians 2 is not required. However, when the error is continuous and as it was in this case being promoted, it must be rebuked and corrected.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.

Paul exemplifies this principle. We are not to be indifferent to the on-going sins of the brethren. With patience and tolerance to allow for self-correction, where it does not occur, then Christians are obligated to exhort and rebuke their fellow brethren.

- 3 If we believe that someone is in sin, then we must address them to their face. There is no countenance given here for gossip talking behind the back of the one to be corrected. In verse 11 Paul says that he addressed Peter and the error *to the face*. He did not travel to other churches to talk about Peter and his error. Such would have been back-biting. If we are not willing to address the erring brother to his face (as we are obligated to do), then we must keep our tongues still. There is no place here for third parties.
- 4 We must be sure of the facts before we ascribe blame. In verse 11 Paul states his charge and rebuke while in verse 12 he begins to lay out the specifics of the error. There are facts that prove the specifics of the error into which Peter fell and led others. We must likewise proceed with rebuke only after there are bonafide facts supporting the error committed. There is much danger and abuse falling out from jumping too hastily to a conclusion of error in others without supporting verification.
- 5 If someone is to be blamed, then scriptural proofs must be supplied showing how and why they are wrong. Paul did just that in verses 15-21. Many think that this passage is the actual lecture Paul delivered to Peter. It is a scriptural support for the correction of the error into which Peter had fallen. General statements without biblical support are insufficient. To call one harsh and unloving without biblical material is to promote the idea that harshness is always wrong. But our Lord Himself was harsh with the scribes and Pharisees (*you hypocrites and whitened sepulchers*). Paul will shortly refer to the Galatians as foolish and bewitched (Galatians 3:1).
- 6 All who were involved in the sin must be involved in the restoration. For this reason Paul's rebuke was public.

These principles are not only applicable to church disputes, but they would benefit family disputes.

The fear of man brings a snare.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

Peter would have been safe had he trusted God for his reputation rather than bow to the pressure of men around him. What Peter had hoped to retain by bowing to the fear of man (mainly his reputation) was precisely the very thing he lost. Submitting to the fear of man actually takes away the very thing it promises to give. This is the deceit of sin. It promises something it cannot deliver. It actually denies the thing it promises. Sin will always lie to you. That which sin promises you will actually be denied you. Sin, like Satan, is a liar.

Nevertheless, in this case with Peter there was repentance and continued benefit of ministry. Peter did not cease to be a profitable apostle to the circumcision having repented of this error. There is in this a lesson for us that repentance can restore to a measure our fruitfulness in the church.

There was also a kindling of affection in Peter for his brother who had rebuked Him, Paul.

2 Peter 3:15

. . . our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you...

Those who fall into sin need to be rebuked, restored, forgiven, and trusted again.

Hymn # 559