

Galatians 2:11-14

"Stay Straightforward"

How many of you realize that the *content* of what we *preach* & the *conduct* of what we *practice* are to go hand in hand? Because I've discovered (perhaps you have as well) sometimes the things we *do* shout so loud that people can't hear what we *say*! Or to understand that another way; "Actions speak louder than words." That was the problem Peter was in danger of in Antioch & Paul was having none of it! You remember the scene; Paul had taken great pains in the area of Galatia to establish & ensure the *content* of the gospel.

But then these men from Jerusalem would come along behind him & seek to undermine him by telling these folks who'd come to fresh faith in J.C. that they hadn't gone quite far enough. That salvation *was in* Jesus (that much was true) but it was limited to the Jews, therefore before faith in Jesus could be accredited to you by God, you had to convert to Judaism, you needed to be circumcised (if you were a male) & you had to come under the law of Moses. You do that; *then* faith in Jesus will carry you on home.

As you can imagine this kind of rhetoric simply infuriated the apostle Paul. "What do you mean salvation by faith in Christ will be imputed to you so long as you're circumcised & keep the law? Either the sacrifice of Christ was sufficient to atone for my sin or it wasn't! It's not Jesus *plus* law, it's Jesus & that's *all!*"

When Jesus cried out upon the cross, "It is finished!" What He was saying is that the payment for the sin of the world had been paid in full through the shedding of His blood & His death on our behalf. God acknowledged that, ratified that through the rending of the veil in the temple & the resurrection of Christ from the tomb! When that veil was torn (the veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies) at the moment Christ died, what God was saying was, "There used to be a separation between you & Me, (it's called sin), but now through the breaking of Christ's body, the shedding of His blood, access has been granted. You can now come boldly to My throne of grace (through faith in what Jesus has just done) to find help in your time of need. No longer is there anything between you & Me (in Christ), we have a relationship, not predicated upon legalism, but upon love & grace."

But when someone comes along & say, "That's great, believe on J.C. but you also need to do this & this, & don't do that (ad nauseam)" you're communicating that the sacrifice of Christ was good, just not *good enough* to save you in & of itself. Do you see the problem? But there's another danger; we might *communicate* one thing in what we proclaim, but *demonstrate* another thing in what we practice. Our conduct falls short of the content of our message. So that what we portray confuses what we preach.

But when it comes to the truth of the gospel, (what's required for salvation) there can be no confusion, it must be clear & it must be correct. So Paul tells the believers of Galatia that so critical is the necessity of this that he even had to put another apostle in his place *publicly* in order to safeguard the integrity of the message. Look at Vs 11.

Vs 11-13

It's not hard to get a picture in your mind's eye of what's happening here is it? Now some debate as to whether or not the visit Paul is referencing happened *before* the Acts 15 counsel or *after* the Acts 15 counsel. Truth of the matter is that it makes no difference; the point remains, Peter portrayed something that contradicted what he preached & Paul had to call him out on it.

Now listen, it's important that we take the time to establish the gravity of what's happening here. This wasn't, "Peter, you said that we shouldn't lie in your message the other day & you just said something untrue!" We all fall short & struggle w/& against our sin nature don't we? But this was much larger than that. **This was an issue that dealt w/the fundamental necessities of salvation! (Paul will make that clear in Vs 14)... So let's understand that this wasn't a minor infraction of a personal nature, or else Paul would've never called him to the carpet publicly (he would've spoke to him privately). But having sinned in public, having led others astray in public, it was critical that it be set straight in public as well...**

Can you imagine this scene! When you get to heaven, if God has a blue-ray section (or something) of human history, be sure to check out this particular DVD (or whatever file it may be ☺). I'm certain you could've cut the tension in the air w/a knife.

After all this wasn't some guy who wandered in off the street & made a mistake, this was the foremost, premier apostle of his day... The apostle Peter, probably the most famous Christian on the planet at that time; everyone wanted to meet him, sit near him, listen to him share, "Peter what was it like to walk w/Jesus for 3 yrs? Did you really walk on water? Did you witness Jesus raise people from the dead?" "Yeah, yeah it's all true!" Peter was man who stood up on the day of Pentecost & shared the gospel of J.C. & 3,000 people were saved, the church was born (wouldn't you like to hear Peter recount that story from his own personal perspective?) **So Peter's fame went before him, & here he is at your church, you're having dinner w/him & every time it's meal time they place him at a different table so everyone gets to hang w/the great apostle Peter!**

Paul on the other hand was relatively unknown at this time in the Christian circle, he was more famous for killing Christians than anything else, this was the 1st letter he'd ever even wrote.

But Peter had heard of the great work going on in Antioch (there in Paul's church, [the church in Antioch was Paul's home base & it was primarily a Gentile church], he was the pastor of the CC Antioch ☺) & so (maybe after the council in Jerusalem) he went to check it out. Everything is going great, a few days, maybe a couple weeks had gone by, he was enjoying everyone's fellowship, eating w/the people at church potlucks & being invited into people's homes for dinner...

Then one day certain men from the church in Jerusalem pop in & everything changes. (Now we read they're from James, so they were from his church, but we don't know that they were official delegates or anything, but whatever they were they were enough to rattle Peter [this great apostle's] cage.)

Understand something here & that is this; for decades after the cross of J.C. there were radical & very difficult transitions that were taking place culturally/spiritually for the Jewish believers. They had been raised to honor the law of Moses, they had been taught to separate themselves from that which was unclean; unclean foods, unclean environments, unclean people (the most unclean of people [of course] were Gentiles [anyone who wasn't a Jew]). For you as a Jew to eat *with* or step into the house of a Gentile was to defile you before God (that's what you had been taught). A good Jewish boy would just never do that kind of thing.

However the cross of J.C. had broken down these barriers that previously had been erected, right? Now there was neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ *is* all & *in* all. We're all one in Christ. & Of all people, *Peter* understood this, right? After all, *he* was the one whom God used to open the door of the gospel to *Gentile* believers.

Acts Ch 10 there he is, he's hanging out on the rooftop (kind of like a deck) & he's praying, getting hungry & he falls into a trance. He sees heaven open & this giant sheet coming down, bound at the 4 corners. When it hits the ground it opens & up all these unclean animals (hogs, rabbits, eagles, lobster etc.) pop out & scurry off. Peter hears a voice saying, "Rise, Peter; kill & eat." Peter says, "Not so, Lord! I've never eaten anything common or unclean." The Lord speaks to him again & says, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

This happens 3xs & then the sheet is taken back to heaven. Peter is sitting there wondering what the whole thing meant when the Spirit speaks to him... “3 men are at the gate, go w/them doubting nothing.” You see, God was preparing Peter to share the gospel w/some Gentile, God fearing people whom he would’ve previously never even considered. You see the vision wasn’t about food so much as it was people that previously Peter would’ve considered unclean... Think about it, on the day of Pentecost the 120 disciples in the upper room were all Jewish, the 3,000 that believed on the Lord were all Jewish. The church was virtually entirely Jewish up to this point...

But though salvation was *of* the Jews, God was showing them that it wasn’t limited to the Jews but that God so loved *the world* He gave His only begotten Son.

Peter goes to Caesarea w/the men & he meets a Roman Centurion by the name of Cornelius (who had called for him at the direction of an angel that had instructed him to do so). Peter says, “You called? What do you need?” Cornelius says, “An angel told me to call for you & said that you’d tell *me* what I needed, the ball’s in *your* court.” We read, “*Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.’*”¹ Then he shares the gospel, the Holy Spirit falls upon the Gentiles & the Jewish believers w/Peter are blown away, God just saved these guys! No circumcision, no Law of Moses, nothing but faith in J.C.!

But in Acts 11 Peter was called on the carpet for interacting w/these Gentiles & he defended his position explaining what God had done. However at this point though the content Peter preached was right on, the conduct he displayed was all wrong! How could Peter do such a thing? How could he know the right thing, yet do the wrong thing? I’m sure no one here knows anything about knowing what’s right, but doing what’s wrong 😊. Knowing the truth, knowing what’s right but failing to do it... no, we’re all too familiar w/the frailty of the flesh aren’t we? Here it’s almost like we’re seeing the Peter of old isn’t it? This is the vacillating Peter we come to know in the gospels isn’t it? The Peter who told Jesus He shouldn’t go to the cross, or who cut off the servant of the high priest’s ear w/the sword; the Peter who told Jesus he’d die before he denied Him then denied Him 3xs before the sun came up that very night.

Listen to me, don’t miss this because this should be speaking something to you that’s very important...

¹ *The New King James Version*. (1982). [Ac 10:34–35]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Even though Peter had been born again, even though Peter had been filled w/the power of the Holy Spirit of God, even though Peter was the premier apostle of God at this time he still had to wrestle with & struggle against his flesh didn't he? **The day will come when we will be like Jesus, when we see Him as He is. Until then we're to daily crucify our flesh along w/it's passions & desires. The simple truth here is that Peter (at this point) failed to do that. He knew what was right but he failed to do it.**

All of the sudden these men come in from James & the seating arrangements are all changed up. Now, those of Jewish descent are all over here at these tables, & the Gentile believers have been sort of sloughed off to the side in their own area & they're just humiliated. To make matters worse *Peter* is sorta leading the charge. **"Yesterday Peter, you were my friend, we were laughing at how ridiculous it was for you to be fighting all the time w/the other disciples about who would be the greatest in the kingdom, but now you won't sit w/me?"** But then it begins to snowball. **Not only Peter, but because of his position in the church that day, the rest of the Jews who were there followed his lead...** It gets worse even still. *Barnabas*, Paul's assistant pastor abandons his flock & sits w/the Jews leaving the Gentiles to their shame! "Barnabas, our own pastor won't eat w/us? 3 months ago he led me to faith in Jesus & now he's sitting over there as if I'm not saved at all!" & Where there used to be such beautiful unity, now there's unconscionable division; can you see the problem?

This is one of the reasons that Satan will set his sights on the leadership of the church. Oh, he wants to destroy us all, but if he can get a leader to trip up, if he can cause Peter to stumble, those *under him* will more than likely go along w/him & that's exactly what happened. Never forget that the decisions you make, the path you take will influence those around you.

2 Things I want you to see here & then we'll move into Vs 14 & start heading toward a close. #1 The *root* of his sin, & #2 the *fruit* of his sin. What was the *root* of his sin? Did you see it there in Vs 12? "...he w/drew & separated himself *fearing* those who were of the circumcision." Fear was the root of his sin. Afraid of what the guys from James' church would say, how they would report the situation, he didn't want to make them mad or whatever. The bible says, **"The fear of man brings a snare," Prov 29:25**

His fear led to his fall. I don't know about you but I've discovered this to be true in my own life. Sometimes because I don't want someone to think I'm a jerk, or trying to lord over them or whatever I just go w/the flow, or don't make a stand & it's snapped back to snare me. Public pressure, wanting to please people can sometimes do more harm than good.

Peter would agree. His fear spawned his sin, that was it's root. What was it's fruit?
Vs 13; hypocrisy.

What is hypocrisy? It's not setting a mark & failing to hit it. Sometimes that's what people think. You as a parent tell your child that they should always tell the truth, yet you as a parent have at some point told a lie. That's not hypocrisy, that's sin. It's failing to hit the mark, but we don't lower the standard. We're still aiming at the mark. Hypocrisy is telling your child not to lie because you don't lie & you've *never told a lie* your whole life! That's hypocrisy. It's pretending to be something you're not!

At it's root, hypocrisy means, "actor". It was used in a theatre context, you're pretending to play a part, but in real life you're something completely different. Here's Peter *pretending* that you have to keep a kosher table, that you need to come under the law of Moses before faith in Jesus can be accredited to you (so he's separating himself from the Gentiles) but in real life he *knows* that's not true! **For Pete sake 😊 (get it) he's the one God used to reveal that truth to in the 1st place! He's the one who opened the door to the very 1st Gentile believers to enter the church on the basis of grace through faith in J.C.! & Now he's pretending (for the sake of these "certain men from James") that the Law of Moses is where it's at, that it's critical to observe. So his content (his message) was right on, but his conduct is *shouting something different*.** His actions are denying the truth of the gospel; that faith in Jesus is sufficient in & of itself to save you. Can you see how this is a big deal? He's playing the hypocrite (& he knows it, the verbiage indicates that he w/drew shame facedly, he did it, but he didn't like it) & his influence is so strong that every other Jew in the congregation gets swept away w/it... (like dominoes of defection) w/the exception of 1... Paul.

I Kinda think that if I was making a movie of this I'd have Paul show up a little late to the church pot luck. Things have been going great, the church is runnin a little low on the lamb so Paul decides to run to the market to ensure there's enough for everyone. But as he pulls up to the church it doesn't sound so festive, as a matter of fact it's awkwardly quiet. & As he makes his way into the area of the feast he can't believe what he's seeing. He quickly surveys the situation & he knows immediately what's happened. All the Jewish believers are in one area, quietly keeping their own company & the Gentile believers are in the corner somewhere feeling like fools, embarrassed & ashamed but they don't know why. Paul can't believe what he's seeing, here's Peter & even his best friend Barnabas not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel...

So he sets his rack of lamb on the table & he looks at Peter, (who's trying not to make eye contact w/him) & so Paul clears his throat & Peter looks up... Look at Vs 14.

Vs 14

Wow... I'm gonna guarantee you it just got real quiet. "Peter, you said before Cornelius that you perceived in truth that *God shows no partiality*. Why then are you (Peter) showing partiality now?"

It's getting real right now isn't it? If there's one thing I've learned from hit television shows it's always leave it hanging off a cliff ☺. How is this gonna play out? Tune in next time...

Here's the gist; "Peter, what kind of mixed message are you sending everyone & why are you sending it?" "Is the law necessary or isn't it?" "I've heard you *say* that it isn't, but I'm watching you *show* that it is." "Why is it that you've been eating ham, pork chops & bacon all week, but when these guys get here you act like it's beneath you?" "You've been living as a Gentile (that is apart from the law of Moses) because you know it doesn't save you, yet when these guys get here you compel the Gentiles to honor the Law of Moses as if it *does* save you. What's up w/that Peter?"

You could've heard a pin drop, everyone is looking at Peter, his face is turning red, the whole thing is awkward for everyone & Paul is just getting started...

Listen, sometimes standing for the gospel can be a lonely business. **Paul is all alone in this confrontation, but so critical is the subject that it's outcome would effect every believer in human history from this point forward... Content & conduct are to be one & the same as it pertains to the truth of the gospel. Stay straightforward; sufficient is the sacrifice of J.C. to save you. "For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'"**²

Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

God we're grateful for the resolve that You placed in Paul to stand up & stand firm for the truth of the gospel. Give us that resolve, we realize that non of us are exempt from the pressures of our peers, the fear of man; we're asking You to give us strength to rise above those things & trust in You. We're grateful for Your grace & mercy that we need so desperately, use us for Your glory.

If you've not called upon the Lord, you've not trusted in the Lord I want to give you the opportunity to do that right here & now. Maybe you've thought you need to get things in order in your life before you can come to God. You're realizing now, that's now how it works. We come to God a mess, He cleans us up & makes us something beautiful, it's not about what we do, it's about trusting in what He's done for you in the Person of J.C. Believe on the Lord J.C. & you will be saved.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 10:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.