

**Galatians 2: 11-14; “Paul Withstanding Peter to his Face”, Message # 8 in the series – “Christ has Made Us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in the Afternoon Worship service.**

It is good to remember the theme of this first chapter, which is, that the gospel which Paul preached was not of men, nor did he receive it from men. He received both the gospel, and his apostolic call from the risen Lord Christ Himself. It appears to me that one of the lines of argument being used by the Judaizers against the apostle Paul was that Paul had not come under Peter’s authority; that is, he didn’t come under his authority as representing of all the 12 apostles. The Judaizers were asserting that since this was so, the gospel which Paul preached was in error. They were asserting that Peter and the other Apostles were really on their side; that they believed that the works of the law were necessary to be added to the gospel if people were really going to be saved from their sins. But Paul knew that this was not true at all. He knew that what he needed to do was to show the churches at Galatia the truth of 2 things about apostolic authority. 1<sup>st</sup> of all – The truth that there was parity among the Apostles of our Lord. And 2<sup>nd</sup> – The truth that even the apostle Peter had fallen into hypocrisy in his thinking and actions at one point. This is what we want to look at this time. May the Lord help us to have good views of apostolic authority, church authority, and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**1<sup>st</sup> – We need to understand the truth that there was parity among the Apostles of our Lord.**

Verse 11 – “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.” The reason that Paul could withstand Peter to his face was because there was parity among the apostles. If you look up the word “parity” in the dictionary you will find that it says that parity is “an equality, as in amount, status, or value”. To understand this in the context of the Biblical teaching on church authority, we should understand that there is “a functional equivalence”, there is an equal right to speak with authority that is held within the office of apostle; an authority which they were appointed to in that day. The apostles were the foundational builders of the Church under the direct authority, Headship, and Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was an equality of authority committed to each of the 12 Apostles of our Lord and to the apostle Paul because they each had received a direct commission from the Lord Jesus Christ to their apostolic office. Each of these apostles had the same authority to teach and govern, in the Church at large, as much as any of the others. They were to listen to each other, and to respect each other, as equals in their office, and they were to give and receive correction or reproof from one another when it was needed.

That was what was happening in the situation that we are looking at now. If you will turn over to Ephesians Chapter 4, verses 11-16, you will see what the mission of the apostles was. “And He (that is Christ) Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastor and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

So the apostles, it is apparent from what we have just read, were appointed by Christ to equip the saints. That is, they were appointed to equip all believers then, in all generations of the Church age, by their oral and written teaching. And, so, even to this day, they are appointed to equip all believers everywhere, through their canonized written word, in the New Testament

Scriptures of the Bible. Their ministry, most particularly, would include the definition of the true gospel; their setting forth of all of the sound doctrine which would direct and govern the way that the saints would worship and serve God. This ministry would focus most especially upon Christ's Church in relation to doing God's will; that while still living in the world, they would not be "of" the world. The Scriptures were, and they still are today, the truth which they spoke, which they had written down; the truth which governs all believers during all of this Church age, until Christ comes back again. The Scriptures which they wrote and left for us, are the foundation of truth for this great spiritual building which Christ Himself is building, which is called the Church. All that the apostles have taught and wrote down, would represent Christ's will for His saints.

This does not mean that the apostles were infallible in themselves. But it meant that Christ perfectly preserved His own infallible word in and through their written letters; the books of the New Testament books of the Bible which we have today. Therefore, since they were entrusted with equal authority, and Paul having seen that Peter was doing something which was hypocritical in his practice, according to the teaching of all the apostles, he decided that Peter must be confronted publicly about it. He did this because he knew that he had the authority from Christ to do so. He knew that he and Peter were on an equal footing in their having been commissioned to this office; that of being apostles of our Lord. This same parity is to exist between pastors and elders in a church today. There are no apostles in our day. The apostles were given to lay the foundation in truth, and when they left the scene, the Scriptures which are authoritative for every area of faith and practice are the authority by which pastors teach and shepherd the local church which they are appointed to have spiritual authority over; that is, in relation to the absolute truth of the word of God.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy chapter 5, verse 19, Paul says – "Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses." "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. So you see, here was truth given by the apostle Paul in relation to parity in of reproving elders, by others with equal authority. In this case he was speaking to his evangelist, his helper Timothy. All of the elders who Timothy knew were sinning were to be rebuked in the presence of all the others, so that the rest also might fear sinning. But here in the text that we are studying today, it was one apostle rebuking another so that he might fear. Paul also knew that Peter had been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven. This is what our Lord Jesus said to Peter over in Matthew 16, verse 17. He said – "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven." "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hades (or hell) shall not prevail against it." "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

So, these "keys of the kingdom" were, first of all, the authority given to Peter by Christ, to specifically open up the spiritual door to the Gentiles, through his preaching of the gospel to them, so that they could then come into the Church of Jesus Christ by means of faith in the gospel. The keys, also then, were related to the defining of all matters of doctrine for the early Church, and then enacting Church discipline where necessary, when unrepentant transgressors appeared in the churches. But just because Peter had been given these keys did not mean that another apostle, even Paul, might not have to correct him in relation to his use of them. Indeed, in this case it was apparent that it was very necessary that he do so, in order to our having a straightforward gospel to preach today.

**So, 2<sup>nd</sup> – We need to understand the truth that Peter did fall into hypocrisy in his thinking and actions, and needed to be corrected.**

He needed to be corrected in regard to how the Jews and Gentiles were to see each other in terms of fellowship. Verse 11 says, “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 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.” “And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.” The reason for this action of Peter’s, of not eating with the Gentiles, is stated to be hypocrisy in Peter. It was not that Peter did not know better; that Jews and Gentiles ought to be able to eat together. It was because he was feeling the social disapproval of these “certain men sent from James”. But if you will remember, Peter had already opened the door of the gospel to the Gentiles in, preaching and having fellowship with Cornelius and his household.

Turn over to Acts Chapter 10, verses 34-48, with me. Here, at this particular time, we find that God had arranged for Peter to come and preach to Cornelius the centurion. What a fine and godly man he was, in the sense of his having great common grace before he was saved. But thankfully, God the Spirit was working in his heart, and he wanted more. He wanted saving grace. It says here – “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.” “The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” “And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.”

“Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.” “And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.” “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.” “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.” “And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.” “For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.” “Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’” “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.” “Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

What was the response to this when Peter returned home to Jerusalem? Chapter 11, verse 1 – “Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.” “And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, ‘You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!’” They said this as an accusation. They said this believing that somehow, after Jesus Christ died and rose again, and had eaten with his disciples and witnesses to his resurrection, it would somehow be wrong for Peter to eat with these Gentiles for whom Christ had died? But they really did think this way. They thought that it was a sin for Jewish Christians to eat with the Gentile Christians; to have social fellowship with them. They didn’t understand the connection between receiving Christ, and receiving all other Christians, whether they were Jew or Gentile. They didn’t understand that this would be hypocrisy in Peter if he did not understand it and proclaim it!

But look at Acts chapter 11, verse 17. Peter boldly says to them – “If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” “When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.’” Now, I have read all of

this to you, to show you that Peter most certainly did understand the implications of his going to eat with uncircumcised men that day. It was to preach to them the gospel, according to the will of God. But it was after this that he fell into this hypocrisy at Antioch when he did not go to eat with the Gentile believers for fear of what those who were sent from James would think. This was why Paul had to say to him in verse 14 of our text – “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?’”

Paul saw the issue very clearly, didn’t he? He knew that Peter was trying to play both sides of the fence. He was fearing those Jewish men who had come to him from James, more than he should have. He had fallen into hypocrisy by not inviting the Gentile believers to eat with them while they were there. How could he then think that he would not have to eventually begin requiring those same Gentiles to observe the customs and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, and require them also to keep all the works of the law in order to be justified, if he continued in this hypocritical practice? Paul knew that Peter could not have it both ways. So, what was the problem that led to the hypocrisy? It is revealed in Proverbs 29: 25. “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.”

Hadn’t the Lord led Peter providentially, showing him the vision of the great sheet being lowered down from heaven, in Acts 10, before he ever met Cornelius? Hadn’t Peter seen that this sheet was filled with all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air, which represented the Gentiles? Hadn’t he heard a voice from heaven saying, “Arise, Peter kill and eat?” (Meaning that he should not consider Gentiles as being unclean; that is, those who were seeking to hear the gospel and be saved, in terms of his then associating with them, either before or after their conversion? Shouldn’t he partake of their being men whom he should fully and socially fellowship with? Yes, he most certainly should have. But he feared the disapproval, and their opposition. He feared the rejection of men.

You and I must remember this. Even as great an apostle as Peter was, he fell into this sin of hypocrisy. But let us remember, as well, that he was willing to be reproved by Paul, and to receive his reproof. As so, I bring this message to a close, I would have us to remember that it is possible even for great leaders in the church to fall into hypocrisy, and not to be straightforward about the truth of the gospel, during those times. We must remember the truth about what Christ has come to do. He has died so that elect Jews and Gentiles can be made into one spiritual body in Himself. Turn with me over to Ephesians 2: 13. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both (that is both Jews and Gentiles) one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.”

We see here that the law, with all of its commanded ordinances, could never save one soul, or make peace between God and men, or between men and men. But what the law could not do, Christ did. Listen to what Paul says in Galatians 3: 26. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you all one in Christ Jesus. So let us remember this glorious truth, and not disdain fellowship with any Christian, no matter what their background, their skin color, or their race. The true Christian is one who believes that they are saved by faith in Christ alone, apart from the works of the law, in order to be able to have fellowship with all other Christians. Let us live in this consistency of belief, and let us not fall prey to hypocrisy.

