

Paul's Public Rebuke of Cephas – Galatians 2:11–21

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Introduction

Galatians 2:11–21 is a thought bridge. It is obvious from chapter 1:1–2:10 that two factors were at work among the churches of the region:

1. Paul's apostolic credentials and authority had come under fire, causing distrust of his message of salvation by grace which frees one from the bondage of the law of Moses.
2. The Galatians were in grave danger of renouncing their salvation by grace through faith in Christ in exchange for the dead works of the Mosaic Law.

The apostle necessarily began with a bold attempt to reclaim his apostolic credibility among these brethren. Only by re-establishing his authority would he be able to regain their ears for the Gospel Truth, which they were rapidly abandoning through the influence of the Gospel-perverters who were troubling them (1:6–7). He went to great lengths to provide his spiritual heritage and biography so as to establish the fact that he received the Gospel by revelation of Christ rather than from men (vv. 11–24), just as the other apostles had. Moreover, in rehearsing the events at the Jerusalem meeting, he emphasized that James, Peter, and John extended to him "the right hands of fellowship," implying full endorsement of – and agreement with – the Gospel he preached (vv. 1–10).

In order to bridge the thought gap between the claims of his apostolic authority and the subject of the perverted "gospel" into which they were rapidly moving, Paul next described his confrontation with the apostle Cephas/Peter. This confrontation serves well to show that he was not inferior even to the best-known and perhaps, at the time, most influential apostle. In the course of Paul's quoted reproof of Peter, he naturally introduced the subject that was the source of serious problems in the Galatian churches, which subject-matter constituted the remainder of the letter: the superiority of the Gospel of Christ over the Law of Moses.

Exegesis of Galatians 2:11–21

Verse 11

This verse contains the only New Testament reference to Peter's visit to Antioch. As to when the visit occurred, we have only the evidence of this context to supply help. All that Paul has written concerning his own spiritual background from Chapter 1:13 through 2:10 has been strictly chronologically ordered. It would seem most natural to assume that he did not alter this arrangement with the narrative beginning at Chapter 2:11. I conclude that this visit of Peter to

Antioch was after the Jerusalem meeting (2:2–10; Acts 15:1–29) in which the decrees were issued showing that Gentiles were not subject to Moses' Law. The visit likely occurred during the "some days" between the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch and their departure in separate directions on their second respective tours (Acts 15:30–41).¹

Peter's error and Paul's rebuke have stirred many curious opinions, dating all the way back to the second century. Clement of Alexandria suggested that the "Cephas" named by Paul was not Peter, but one of the 70, since Luke never placed Paul and Peter together in Antioch, nor mentioned this occasion of dissension. This view has been revived by some papists in an effort to rescue their claimed founder from an embarrassment, although it is too absurd even for some of them.

While rejecting Clement's hypothesis, Jerome, the fourth century Roman, popularized an even more absurd conjecture, credited to Origen of the previous century. This view maintained that the dispute was only feigned and was "set up" by Paul and Peter to teach the Judaizers an object lesson. Chrysostom, Jerome's contemporary, almost passionately argued this view. Their difficulty was in admitting Peter's obvious (and characteristic) fickleness and tendency to yield to pressure as demonstrated in this event. By this time the papal halo had begun to settle over Peter's head and no flaw could be allowed to appear in him. Jerome's position was strongly countered by Augustine who correctly argued that such a position made a liar of the inspired Paul, who had shortly before written, "...before God, I lie not" (Gal. 1:20). Augustine also correctly argued that Jerome's position had the effect of destroying the authority of Scripture.² For those who trust the inspired text, a statement does not have to be made several times, nor by more than one writer, for it to be accepted as true. One appearance in Scripture is quite sufficient.

Infidels have charged that Peter's error at Antioch disproves the claim of inspiration for him, and if for him, likewise for all the apostles. Albert Barnes effectively answered this flawed charge as follows:

The fault was not that he taught error of doctrine, but that he sinned in conduct. Inspiration, though it kept the apostles from teaching error, did not keep them necessarily from sin. A man may always teach the truth, and yet be far from perfection in practice.³

Peter was acting in this case against his own previously stated inspired conclusion: "...and yet unto me hath God showed that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28b). The function of inspiration in all the apostles and prophets was not to regulate the

conduct of its recipients beyond the control of their own wills, but to regulate the message they spoke and/or wrote, thereby preserving it perfect and whole.

Paul resisted Peter “to the face.” The fact that he had done so was a demonstration, not only of his equality in authority with Peter, but of his superiority in loyalty to truth and principle at that moment. This was a face-to-face confrontation between two apostles in which one stood condemned and the other opposed and withstood the behavior which rendered him guilty. Wuest argues that Peter “stood condemned” by the saints in Antioch and because of their indignation Paul was “forced to rebuke Peter.”⁴ I reject the implication that Paul was pressured into this rebuke by popular opinion. Such is totally out of character with Paul. Had Paul been totally alone in his disapproval of Peter he would still have done what duty demanded. It is much more likely that Paul indicated here that this cowardly and hypocritical act carried its own condemnation.⁵

Verse 12

Peter had made it his practice to engage openly in fellowship (including eating) with the Gentiles, in accordance with the inspired vision he had seen at Joppa (Acts 10:11–16). However, when “certain came from James” he changed his practice to suit their scruples. Who were these identified with James? It may be that they truly had been deputed by James in Jerusalem to visit Antioch. However, his thus sending them would seem somewhat superfluous since two apostles were on the scene. On an earlier occasion James stated that some had gone out from him and the Jerusalem church who had caused trouble in the churches by their words. He denied that they were authorized by him (15:24). James and Paul used the same words to describe them: “Certain” ones. It is entirely possible that these men were making an unauthorized use of the name and influence of James. Or, if they were actually from James, they could have been perverting the purpose for which they were sent. Whatever the identity of these men, they caused Peter to fear sufficiently that he played the hypocrite. Before they came he ate and mingled freely with Gentile brethren. Upon the arrival of these Judaizers, he “drew back and separated himself.” *Drew back* translates *hupestellen*, meaning a gradual withdrawal. *Separated* is from *aphorizen*, meaning a final separation. Peter gradually began refusing to eat with Gentile brethren, then finally stopped altogether, so these terms indicate.

Peter’s motivation is not left in doubt. It was fear of these Jerusalem brethren. At the Lord’s trials, Peter’s three-fold denial does not indicate that he had been persuaded that Jesus was not the Son of God. He was simply so afraid of the trouble it might bring to him if he were

identified as a disciple that he panicked. Likewise, here he did not become convinced that it was wrong to eat with Gentiles; he was afraid of the personal trouble he might suffer if he continued the practice. I suppose we should not be too amazed when elders, preachers, and college administrators today operate on the basis of policy rather than principle, when we remember that an apostle thus behaved in Antioch. Only eternity will reveal how many battles have been lost and how often the direction of an entire church or school has been determined because those who should have stood for the Truth of God's Word instead cowered in fear before the pressure of a few loud-mouthed or well-heeled spiritual pygmies? The tragedy is yet often repeated.

Verse 13

Peter's behavior had a powerful impact on many others. He was an apostle, a leader, and many people followed his cowardly lead in this matter. Even the faithful Barnabas was swept away in the flood of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy (for so *dissimulation* means) usually pretends to be better than it is to win the favor of the righteous. In this case, though, it is the better knowledge and conduct that is kept hidden by the misconduct. Such is the expected course when one acts only out of fear of immediate consequences, regardless of right or wrong.

Perhaps Peter's defection was not as surprising as that of Barnabas. The latter's must surely have been more heartbreaking to Paul. They had been through much together as yoke-fellows for Christ, going all the way back to Paul's first visit to Jerusalem where Barnabas personally vouched for him before the other apostles (Acts 9:26-27). It is possible that this may have been the beginning of the rift that would soon see Paul and Barnabas go in separate directions, never to work together again so far as Scripture reveals (15:36-41). The problem had reached extreme proportions so that every Jewish Christian in Antioch besides Paul himself had pulled away from Gentile brethren. The church was in dire danger of being torn asunder. Moreover, if this behavior were allowed to stand, the very existence of the church everywhere was at stake. Decisive action had to be taken. Galatians 2:12-13 explains why Paul had to use the desperate measure he described in first in verse 11 and further described in verses 14-21.

Verse 14

The corrective action took the form of a public rebuke of Peter. Paul "saw that they walked not uprightly." *Orthopodousin* means literally "to walk with straight feet" and is found only here in the New Testament. The idea is to walk straight or upright; figuratively, to act rightly, be straightforward.⁶ The standard Paul used for walking upright is the "truth of the

gospel.” (There is no other standard for the loyal disciple.) Peter’s act was a denial of the all-sufficiency and Truth of the Gospel by which they had been saved. In Galatians 2:11 we read that Paul’s rebuke of Peter was face-to-face, and here we learn that it was public, “before them all.” It seems likely that this occasion was one of their regular worship assemblies. Why was the rebuke public rather than private? Because the sin was public, the rebuke had to be public, also. How can a public sin, one that casts a stumbling block before many others, be corrected in private? It can’t. Had such been acceptable it is safe to assume that Paul would have gladly chosen a private over a public encounter. The fact that the rebuke is public is weighty evidence that public sins require public correction. Further, this incident emphasizes the need to correct spoken error in the same public forum in which it was taught, if at all possible. The same assemblage of individuals that have heard – and may be influenced by – the error will likely never again occur until The Judgment.

Paul’s rebuke of Peter begins with a question in which he immediately and devastatingly exposes Peter’s pitiful inconsistency. Although Peter was a Jew, he had been fully extending fellowship to and eating with the Gentiles (“livest as do the Gentiles”). Now that he had withdrawn from the Gentiles, he was in effect requiring them to live as Jews (submission to the Law, especially circumcision, implied [Acts 15:1]) before they could have his fellowship again. A.T. Robertson commented:

Paul charges Peter with trying to compel...the Gentiles to live like all Jews, to Judaize the Gentile Christians, the very point at issue in the Jerusalem Conference when Peter so loyally supported Paul. It was a bold thrust that allowed no reply.⁷

So far as we know Peter’s “compelling” of the Gentiles to adopt Jewish practices was only a “moral” compulsion by example. However, this is often the strongest of all, in this case sufficiently strong to persuade even such a stalwart as Barnabas.

There has long been a difference of opinion among commentators concerning how much (if any) of the remainder of Galatians 2 was a part of Paul’s public correction of Peter. Some authorities aver that only verse 14 constitutes Paul’s words to Peter and that verses 15–21 are then addressed to the Galatians. Others argue that verses 14–16 are addressed to Peter and verses 17–21 are then transitional from the problem in Antioch to the similar one that now threatened the Galatian churches. I am persuaded, on the following grounds, that all of verses 14–21 refer to Paul’s speech on the occasion of his rebuke of Peter:

1. The words of verse 14 only, or even adding verses 15–16, do not seem enough for the seriousness of the problem caused by Peter.
2. Such a brief account would hardly be enough to convince the Galatians that Paul had dealt decisively with Peter and the issue at hand.
3. Applying the entire section seems to be the most obvious understanding of these verses.
4. A clearly marked resumption of address to the Galatians occurs at Galatians 3:1.

To the objection that Paul surely would not have lectured Peter for so long on the subject of justification, it is important to remember that he addressed not only Peter, but a gathering of the church which was in need of just such instruction at the time because of Peter's behavior.⁸

Verses 15–16

Paul's words seem to be filled with irony as he contrasted the natural-born Jew with the Gentile. He referred to the universal contemptuous Jewish evaluation, shared formerly by Paul and Peter, that "Gentiles" and "sinners" were synonymous. It was true enough that the Jews were privileged by being God's people by covenant and by being custodians of God's only written revelation until He spoke through Christ (Rom. 3:1–2). "Although we had greater advantage than those ungodly Gentiles," argued Paul, "the advantages which we had through the Law were not sufficient for our salvation." He reminded Peter and all his auditors that they had practically admitted the truth that they (nor any others) could be saved by keeping the works of that Law in that they turned to Christ for their justification. Paul was particularly reminding Peter that they had both been compelled to abandon that which made them Jews, namely, the keeping of the Law of Moses, because it was unable to save (Rom. 8:3). They found their sought-for justification through their obedience of the faith (1:5; 16:26) and through their faith in Christ (1:16–17).

Verse 17

Paul here argued that in the very process of seeking salvation in Christ, the converted Jew had not only admitted he was unable to keep the Law perfectly so as to be saved by it, but that he had also pronounced himself a "sinner," just like those godless Gentiles. But does the fact that in abandoning the law and coming to Christ they were thereby shown to be sinners mean that Christ is the one who caused them to be sinners? To this utterly illogical conclusion (perhaps being mouthed by some of the Judaizers in Antioch) Paul gave the strongest form of negative response: "God forbid!" The truth is that they were already sinners in fact, judged so

by their own Law, before they came to Christ. In coming to Christ, they were simply admitting their hopelessly sinful condition in the most positive way.

Verse 18

Next, Paul transferred Peter's fault to himself for sake of illustration. He is showing that Peter was, by his fearful fickleness, building again what he had earlier destroyed. In living with and like the Gentiles he had torn down the old Jewish laws as insufficient and no longer necessary. Now, by returning to the observance of those laws, he had rejected the all-sufficiency of Christ for salvation and thereby had become a transgressor.

Verse 19

Paul said that through the Law he died unto the law. To be "dead" to the Law means to be free of its claim on or control over him (Rom. 7:4). In what sense did he "die" to the Law through (by means of) the Law? Perhaps he answered this to some degree in Galatians 3:24: "So that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." All of the types, promises, and prophecies that pointed to Christ in the Law inexorably led the Jew away from the Law and to Christ if he would but hear them. Only by becoming dead to the law could he "live unto God" – that is, live the life of faith in and obedience to Christ that God wanted him to live. I believe Lightfoot captured the essence of the connection between chapter 2:18 and 19 and of their meaning in his paraphrase:

No! The guilt is not in abandoning the law, but in seeking it again when abandoned. Thus, we convict ourselves of transgression. On the other hand, in abandoning the law we did but follow the promptings of the law itself. Only by dying to the law could we live unto God.⁹

Verse 20

The means by which Paul died to the Law was in being "crucified with Christ." Whereas Christ's crucifixion was literal, Paul's was figurative or spiritual, but no less real. The effect of the death of Christ was to make Paul "dead to the Law" because its authority was nailed to the cross, taken out of the way, "blotted out" when Christ was crucified (Col. 2:14). He fulfilled the Law and it "passed away" (Mat. 5:17-18). Christ was "the end of the law" in the sense that the Law constantly pointed toward Him, and it found its consummation in Him (Rom. 10:4).

When Paul was "crucified with Christ" he not only died to the Law, but also to himself: "It is no longer I that live." Paul merged his own will, personality, yea, life, with Christ's. There was an intimate relationship between Christ and Paul so that he could no longer live as he had once lived. This is the essence of Jesus' challenge to all who would be his disciples: "If any man

would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). Only in the denial of self does one put self to death so as to live for Christ. Thus Paul had done. Thus the Christ challenges all men to do.

By what means was Paul's crucifixion accomplished? When did **he** cease **to live**, and **Christ** begin **to live in him**? He described this very matter for himself and for those in Rome who had become Christians:

We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:2-4).

It is manifest from the foregoing passage that in the commands of the Gospel to which the sinner must submit in order to be saved, he dies to sin (and to self and to the Law), is united with Christ and his death in baptism, and therefore comes forth from baptism to live a new life in and for Christ. Paul wrote a shorter version of these same truths to these Galatians: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (3:27). Jesus' own summary statement of the salvation and new life that come only when one is "crucified with Christ" is seen in the universal proposition of Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." The New Testament repeatedly teaches that one can be united with Christ in his death (where His atoning blood was offered) short of these Divinely-appointed conditions, consummated in immersion in water (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Eph. 5:25-26; Tit. 3:4-5; 1 Pet. 3:21; et al.).

To further describe what he meant by having Christ "live" in him, Paul explained how his life was now being spent. While he still lived a life of fleshly existence, it was a far different life from that which he formerly lived. As a Christian he lived "in faith," that is, a life dominated by his trust in and obedience to Christ. Paul missed few opportunities to express his undying gratitude to Christ for His saving sacrifice, and with such an expression he concluded this verse. Paul's sense of obligation to live wholly for Christ was directly related to his recognition of what Christ had done for him. Herein is a great key both to dedication to Christ and lack of it.

The statement of principle with which the verse and chapter close was at once a rebuke of Peter, a word of instruction to the startled saints in Antioch who witnessed this public rebuke, and the perfect introduction to the doctrinal heart of the Galatian epistle, which begins immediately in chapter 3:1. The understanding of this one simple principle would have

completely prevented the multitude of problems caused by Judaizers in the beginning age of the church. It would likewise prevent all who would bind certain points of the Mosaic economy today or who would seek to justify their carnally motivated practices (such as use of mechanical instruments in worship) from doing so. To claim Moses' authority for one practice obligates one to keep the whole Law (Gal. 5:3). If one places himself under the old Law, he is still claiming it as his means of being right with God. This renders the death of Christ "for naught," vain (Gal. 2:21), that is, useless, without sufficient cause (from *dorean*, gratuitously, cf. John 15:25). Cook stated it well: "Nothing could more strongly express the powerlessness of the Law, and the necessity of Christ's death, for salvation."¹⁰

Macknight offers an interesting observation on the encounter at Antioch:

And as it does not appear that Peter, when thus reproved of Paul, offered anything in his own defense, we may believe he knew the truth, and acknowledged publicly, that obedience to the law of Moses was not necessary to the salvation either of the Jews or of the Gentiles. Or, if he did not make this acknowledgement verbally, his silence on the occasion was equally expressive of the truth.¹¹

Exposition of Galatians 2:11-21

Galatians 2:11-14

These verses record one of the most remarkable events of the early church. All of the ingredients of high drama were present: two apostles were on opposing sides of an issue; the issue was climactic, with the potential of splitting the mixed Jew-Gentile churches all over the world; the issue was so important that whichever position prevailed, the church would be mightily affected in the future. A crowd waited anxiously to see the outcome of the encounter between Paul and Peter. Several observations are in order concerning this unique event.

First, it is noteworthy that Paul reproved Peter to his face, that is, personally. This is always the best course to follow in correcting error, if at all possible. Jesus did so on many occasions, as did Paul and likely all the apostles.

Second, although a personal meeting might be best, there is no exclusive example in this case that prevents the servants of Christ from giving warning about a false teacher or refutation of his false teaching if he is unable to do it to his face. Jesus not only faced the Pharisees and Sadducees with their errors, but He also warned his disciples about their evil doctrines when they were not present (Mat. 16:6, 11-12). Paul was not able to go to Corinth immediately to deal with the problems there in person, but he did not hesitate to rebuke them for their sins from a distance, even directing the withdrawal of fellowship from the immoral brother (1 Cor. 5:1-5).

John was not able to stand personally before Diotrephes when he wrote his third epistle, but he did not hesitate to rebuke him from afar and in print so that the whole world for all time would know, and, hopefully, shun his sin of spiritual tyranny (3 John 1:9–10).

The apostles did not understand Matthew 18:15–17 as some brethren now do. According to such brethren, one could never expose a false teacher unless he had first personally and privately approached him about his error. Such gives the devil and those who teach his doctrine a decidedly unfair advantage. How could one of us rebuke and refute Joseph Smith’s foolish doctrines by this rule? He has been dead 143 years. How could one refute the Muslim religion and a host of other false doctrines whose originators have died? Must one personally have gone to Austin, Texas, and face Madelyn Murray O’Hair before he could expose her atheism? Hardly. Neither must one go to Gainesville, Florida, or Boston, Massachusetts, before exposing the Crossroads/Boston heresies. Does anyone question whether Paul would have rebuked Peter at a distance had he not been able to do so in person? I do not know, but I suspect that the *you-must-talk-to-the-false-teacher-personally-before-you-expose-his-false-teaching* dictum was made up either by a false teacher who did not want to be exposed or by a left-leaning brother who had more in common with the false teacher than he did with the Lord. The Lord was not addressing the subject of doctrinal digressions and those who cause them in Matthew 18. He was discussing one thing only: the matter of a personal offense between two brethren. Error needs to be exposed whenever and wherever it is found, whether or not one can discuss it face-to-face with its proponents.

This should not be interpreted as a license to assume hastily or carelessly the role of the reprover and exposer. Every attempt possible should be made to verify one’s information and identify positively the source of any erroneous doctrine or practice before publishing it. Good brethren and good works can sometimes be severely damaged by failure to be as careful as we ought to be.

Third, this face-to-face confrontation was public rather than private (Gal. 2:14). Peter’s sin had been public, sufficiently so as to draw all of the Jews, including Barnabas, into his practice. A public sin cannot be corrected in private circumstances. What was done was done “before them all,” apparently both Gentile and Jewish Christians mentioned in verses 12 – 13. It must have pained Paul to do what he did but do it he must for the sake of Christ and the church. Surely, had a private discussion which might have resulted in Peter’s quietly resuming his former practice of eating with the Gentiles been sufficient to handle the matter, Paul would

have taken such a course. Paul also recognized the validity of the *public sin-public correction* principle in the jail at Philippi. When the city fathers would have had him and Silas quietly slip out of jail and be on their way upon release, Paul refused by saying, “Nay verily; but let them come themselves and bring us out” (Acts 16:37). So few saints seem to understand this principle. I have seen some drop out of the church for months or even years at a time and then gradually start coming back until they regained some degree of faithfulness, but with no thought of publicly correcting their very public sin. That many of the “faithful” are under the same misconception in this matter is evident in that the impenitent backslider who has “eased” back in may soon be leading public prayers and serving at the Lord’s table again.

The New Testament provides both examples and commands that authorize public exposure of sinful practice or false doctrine and those guilty of them. Jesus was often found doing both, sometimes “to the face,” but sometimes “to the back.” Even in the matter of personal offenses (not involving doctrinal error), the Lord commands that the impenitent brother be rebuked by “telling it unto the church” (Mat. 18:17). The abrupt rebuke of Ananias and Sapphira by Peter was in the presence of at least some, if not many, brethren, and it was soon known by all the church (Acts 5:1–11). Paul wrote the Corinthian church to gather themselves together and withdraw from the immoral brother (1 Cor. 5:4–5). To Timothy, Paul gave charge concerning ungodly elders, “Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). For one conversant with the practice and teaching of the Lord and his apostles, Paul’s public rebuke of Peter comes as no surprise.

Fourth, so far as we know, this public rebuke did not cause alienation between Peter and Paul. Peter would later write of Paul as “our beloved brother” (2 Pet. 3:15). This evinces worthwhile traits in both of these men. It shows that Peter was apparently penitent and recognized the hypocrisy and consequences of his behavior. Such penitence is certainly characteristic of earlier episodes of weakness in his life. It also shows that Paul did not “hold this against” Peter and “write him off” as of no future worth to the kingdom. Rather, he seems to have correctly understood this lapse in Peter as another in a series of such experiences in Peter’s life, from which Paul fully expected him to recover to resume his faithful service.

Some Current Applications

If some brethren have their way, public exposure of sin and sinners will ultimately be discontinued altogether. The idea has gained a firm grasp on many brethren that it is barbaric, unnecessary, un-Christian, or at least unloving to identify any person or religious organization

by name with the false doctrine he or it may be teaching or practicing. The old Devil has done himself proud in convincing so many brethren of this absurd, illogical, and blatantly unscriptural concept. Brethren have become so “sweet” and “nice” in many places that they don’t want any sinful saint to be made to feel guilty about any sin. Why, that would make him or her unhappy and Christians must be perpetually on “cloud nine.” By convincing brethren to adopt the worldly attitudes of permissiveness and hyper-tolerance toward any and everything in morals and doctrine, Satan is destroying the church from within—a feat which he knew he could never do from outside attacks. By this spirit he has robbed the Lord’s people of the purifying work of withdrawing from the disorderly. By this spirit he has turned many of our church buildings into halls where brief religious pep rallies are conducted from which the members are all encouraged to leave “feeling good about themselves.” (If they are overweight and not feeling good about themselves, they can return to the premises that afternoon for basketball, volleyball, or aerobic dancing. If they are bored with too much leisure time, they can attend a class on needlepoint in the church’s craft center on Tuesday. If they really have a serious problem about “self-esteem” they can learn the art of “stroking” in ladies’ “Bible” class on Wednesday morning.)

To follow Paul’s example will cause us to deal with a doctrinal or moral flaw in a brother or sister before it becomes worse, both in its practitioner and in its effect on others. Had Paul been like many brethren of our day he would have ignored what Peter did until it was so out of hand that it caused catastrophic damage. Often nowadays brethren in a local church will put off dealing with a problem for so long that it becomes unmanageable. What do they do then? They either pretend that the problem is not there, or they defend the source of the problem (often a false teacher or someone involved in immorality). I have seen this situation regarding adulterous marriage relationships in several congregations. Concerning false teachers, factious brethren, and troublemakers in the local church, preachers in many locations know that they literally lay their jobs on the line if they expose them and refute their errors, even if done in the kindest spirit possible.

It seems that an increasing number of elders are unable/unwilling to withstand the pressure such exposure and discipline of sin and error will bring from loud-mouthed, half-converted members. When will elders, preachers and school administrators learn that the more garbage they sweep under the rug the bigger the pile and the worse the stench?

This confrontation in Antioch has some brotherhood-wide implications for us. Paul knew that the implication of what Peter had done would have serious effects on the whole church if left alone. He also knew that his reproof of Peter would affect the whole church. By said reproof he emphasized graphically that the Law was not binding on Christians and that it could not save. This was the crucial problem among the Galatians and in churches in many other places where the Judaizers had wrought their devastation.

What happened in Antioch very much affected the churches in Galatia and elsewhere. If that were so in the first century when transportation, communication, and the frequency of changing residence were far below the modern level, how much more is it likely that what brethren may do in California, Texas, or Florida will affect brethren in many other places—even all over the world. Thus, what brethren are doing in Gainesville, Florida, is dividing churches all over the nation and in some cases, abroad. What some brethren at Harding University, Oklahoma Christian College, Abilene Christian University, and Sunset School of Preaching are teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage is causing upheavals in the church all over the world. Let a new gimmick or innovation be introduced by a well-known personality or congregation and one can soon expect to see it in congregations far and wide.

The foregoing illustrations underscore the need to deal publicly with sin and error in such a way that what is being exposed can be understood. Our “soft” brethren who decry any exposure of sin did not learn this attitude from John the Baptizer, Jesus, Paul, Stephen, or from any of the faithful prophets that went before them. All of these great men suffered much and many of them were killed because they dared expose sin and error wherever and in whomever it was found, whether in a nation, a king, revered religious leaders—or even an apostle! Let us be sure of our facts. Let us be sure it is a matter of principle and not mere prejudice, of doctrine rather than mere opinion or judgment. When the case is clear and the error is identified beyond doubt, let us not spare, whomever or whatever we may be required to expose the error and reprove its proclaimer and practitioner. There can be no “sacred cows” among God’s people. Such is the very spirit of prophesying and preaching, and such was Paul’s spirit at Antioch. Yes, this must be done in the gentlest spirit possible (Gal. 6:1), but it still must be done!

May our spineless brethren soberly consider that every time they rebuke a faithful preacher or teacher, every time they criticize those who are yet determined to “convict the gainsayers,” every time they ridicule the practice of open confrontation of Truth against error in debate, they are rebuking, criticizing, and ridiculing our Lord and all those faithful saints of all

time who have dared be loyal to Him. The time when the church in recent years really quit its solid and rapid growth may be marked from the time that this spirit of “never preach or teach anything that might offend the weakest member or vilest sinner” began to be advocated. We need a great revival of plain, unvarnished, old-time “country” preaching that makes brethren so uncomfortable they will shape up or ship out, and that will make the sinner so mad he will go home and get his Bible out to prove you wrong. We must also have a revival of eldering that demands such preaching and is prepared to take the heat that such preaching will certainly generate from lily-livered church members.

Peter’s Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy (*hupokrisei*) is the word Paul used to describe the action of Peter and the Jewish brethren who followed his example of withdrawing from the Gentiles. Both the KJV and ASV translators rendered this term as “dissimulation.” This Greek term has an interesting history. It is related to *hupokrinomai*, meaning originally “to answer or respond.”¹² In Classical Greek the nouns *hupokrites* and *hupokrisis* were used to describe an interpreter of dreams, an orator, a reciter of poetry, and an actor, according to William Barclay.¹³ Originally, the word obviously had no evil connotation, but by the time of the Septuagint (LXX) it had taken on the connotation of evil. It is through its application to an actor on the stage that the meaning of the Koine Greek word derives its meaning of one’s playing a part, wearing a mask, or pretending to be someone he or she is not. It seems obvious enough that our English word, *hypocrisy*, is a direct transliteration of *hupokrisei*, and that our English word therefore means pretense or outward show for the purpose of concealing inward conviction. M.R. Vincent comments on what Peter and those he influenced had done as follows:

Their act was hypocrisy, because it was a concealment of their own more liberal conviction, and an open profession of still adhering to the narrow Pharisaic view. It was a practical denial of their better spiritual insight.¹⁴

The more common form of hypocrisy described in the New Testament is that in which one pretends to be better than he is in order to hide an evil heart. This is the kind of hypocrisy Jesus so often rebuked in the scribes and Pharisees. They were like dishes washed on the outside, but still dirty within or like whitewashed tombs that hid putrefying bodies (Mat. 23:25–28). Peter’s hypocrisy in Antioch was of the reverse kind. He was pretending to be worse than he really was. He knew beyond doubt that the old ceremonies and legal distinctions of the Law were defunct. He had proved this by his words in Jerusalem shortly before coming to Antioch

(Acts 15:7-11) and by his initial practice in Antioch (Gal. 2:12). But now he pretended that he did not know or believe that the Law had been done away by once again submitting to it. Paul's use of *hupokrisei* shows that he did not believe Peter's convictions had changed, only that his practice now did not conform to those convictions. Barnes suggests another element of hypocrisy in that Peter attempted to conceal from the Jerusalem Jews the fact that he was in the habit of associating and eating with Gentiles.¹⁵ Lipscomb and Shepherd propose another element of hypocrisy in pointing out that while Peter pretended to change his behavior out of respect for the Law, he had really changed his behavior only out of fear of the Judaizers.¹⁶ From every standpoint Peter's cowardly act indeed constituted "hypocrisy"!

One cannot read much in the New Testament without being struck with the value Deity places on integrity, genuineness, sincerity, and being true to one's convictions. Pretense and hypocrisy lead to Hell (Mat. 24:45-51). Despite Scripture's frequent proscriptions of this malignant trait, the hypocrite is still alive and well. There are yet those who think they may conceal their spiritual bankruptcy during the week by regularly attending worship assemblies. Oftentimes the false teacher will gain a following by first ensnaring the innocent with a kind disposition and jovial manner. However, his true nature may be seen to be not so loving, kind, or jovial when his doctrine is refuted, and he must be exposed. We still have the problem of the reverse type of hypocrisy, also. It is evident in the Christian who really may believe it is wrong to drink, smoke, engage in suggestive humor, and such like, but who in certain crowds does not want to appear "too righteous." So, like Peter, out of fear of being ostracized, he will smoke, drink, or otherwise behave contrary both to his knowledge and convictions. "In the New Testament there is no sin more strongly condemned than hypocrisy, and in popular opinion there is no sin more universally detested," so wrote Barclay.¹⁷ To his statement we should perhaps add, "as long as the hypocrisy is in others." If Peter, an inspired apostle and elder, and Barnabas, a Gospel preacher of considerable experience and repute, could fall into hypocrisy, we would all do well to guard ourselves carefully and constantly against it.

Conclusion

If Paul had not acted courageously and decisively at Antioch, the church could easily have become little more than a Jewish sect through Peter's sin. At best, only a remnant might have been preserved. What courage it should give us to recount the boldness of such a one as Paul. Although he used the occasion in Antioch to teach the validity of his own apostolic authority, this was not the real purpose of his rebuke. He rebuked Peter because he was wrong and what he had done was an attack upon the Gospel. Let us be sure that any exposure we

must make of any one or any thing that is contrary to Truth is not out of love for personal attention, to build a reputation, or to satisfy an ego. Let us act only out of a pure love for the Lord and his Truth in all that we do and say.

Endnotes

1. For a fuller discussion of this hypothesis, cf. J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Lynn, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Pub., Inc., 1981), p. 111.
2. For a lengthy treatment of these curious controversies, cf. John Eadie, *A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), Vol. 1, pp. 198- 213 and Lightfoot, pp.128-32.
3. Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament – 2 Corinthians and Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), p. 315.
4. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Galatians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1956), p. 70.
5. F.C. Cook, editor, *The Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1981), Vol. 9, p. 507.
6. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 583.
7. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1931), Vol. 4, p. 288.
8. Interesting discussions of this question may be found in Wuest, pp. 76-77; Cook, p. 505; Lightfoot, pp. 113-14; Barnes, pp. 315-16.
9. Lightfoot, p. 116.
10. Cook, p. 510.
11. James Macknight, *Apostolic Epistles with a Commentary and Notes* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1954), p. 285.
12. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon* (New York: Harper and Brothers, n.d.), p. 417.
13. William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1971), p. 141.
14. M.R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament* (Mac Dill Air Force Base, FL: MacDonald Pub. Co., n.d.), p. 968.
15. Barnes, p. 313.
16. David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *A Commentary on the New Testament Epistles* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1976), Vol. 3, pp. 209-10.
17. Barclay, p. 140.

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