

**Title:** Dealing with Peter’s Hypocrisy

**Text:** Galatians 2:11-14

**Theme:** Paul’s Autobiographical Defense: The Divine Origin of Paul’s Gospel is proven by His confrontation with Peter. Hypocrisy manifested in partiality destroys the integrity of the gospel. When we forsake grace and live under law we are being hypocrites.

**Introduction:** In the autobiographical section Paul seeks to establish the divine origin of his message through three thoughts.

- **First**, there is the proof of His conversion.
- **Second**, there is the proof of the Apostle’s confirmation and
- **Finally**, there is the proof of His confrontation with Peter.

“After reading about Paul’s confrontation with Peter, the Galatian believers should have had no question as to Paul’s authority. It should have been very clear to them that a primary concern of Paul was the purity of the gospel. If anyone compromised the gospel, no matter who it was, Paul was going to confront them.”

The Peter confrontation (2:11-14) is a transition from 1:1-2:10 to 2:15 and following. He goes from the autobiographical (1:10-2:10) to the confrontational (2:11-14) to the theological (2:15 and following). This passage is also somewhat implicational. We have no right to tamper with the text regardless as to who we are.

The historical context might be that of the Love Feast or Supper that preceded the Lord’s Table (William Barclay, *Mark*, 18; N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 21). Paul references this idea in 1 Corinthians 11:33, 34.

33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

If this is true, then Peter’s actions are even more flagrant and offensive. Peter violated the very meaning of the Lord’s Table.

### **THE BIG PICTURE:**

- I. The Origin of Paul’s Communication (1:11, 12)
- II. The Evidence of Paul’s Conversion (1:13-24)
- III. The Evidence of the Apostle’s Confirmation (2:1-10)
- IV. The Evidence of Peter’s Confrontation (2:11-14)

### **Its Eternal Value:**

“In the presence of God a man is neither Jew nor Gentile, noble nor base, rich nor poor; he is a sinner for whom Christ died. If [people] share in a common Sonship they must be [family].” (William Barclay, *Mark*, 19).

**The Problem:**

Showing partiality is biblical hypocrisy and such sin undermines gospel purity and integrity.

**The Storyline:**

It is hard for us to imagine the setting. “The scene of the conflict is Antioch, the chief city of Syria. The two participants are each apostles, mighty men of God, both commissioned by our Lord Himself, and both honored men in the churches of Christ. In fact, the Book of Acts is practically the story of the ministry of the two men, being virtually divided in half by the accounts of their ministries.” (Johnson, *Galatians*).

**Questions:**

1. When did Paul confront Peter?
2. How did Paul confront Peter?
3. Why did Paul confront Peter?
4. What was Peter’s sin?
5. Why did Peter sin in the manner he did?
6. Did Peter know what was right?
7. How do you think Peter found himself in this sin?
8. What might you think Peter’s response was to the confrontation?
9. Was Peter’s sin an isolated event?
10. Did Peter’s sin impact others?
11. Who is specifically named as joining Peter and why is this individual significant?
12. What does Paul call Peter’s sin?
13. What was Peter’s sin actually affecting?
14. What did Paul mean by what he said to Peter?
15. What would move you to confront another Christian?
16. How do leaders in churches today handle conflicts and differences of opinion?
17. In your experience, what has most confrontation been over?
18. Do you think Paul had been dealing with Peter over this issue before?
19. Do you think Paul is too harsh here in his confrontation of Peter? Why or why not? Do you see any applications in the way Paul interacted with Peter for your life today?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

**To Know:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the gospel of grace is worthy of confrontation.

**To Choose:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to address issues that would undermine the integrity of the gospel of grace.

**To Feel:** The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of humbly living under the authority of the gospel of grace.

The passage before us continues the “battle” tone of the letter. There is a deep seated atmosphere of war present in the epistle. Paul has unsheathed his sword. This paragraph is very sobering as we find Paul confronting Peter publicly. No one enjoys confrontation. Yet confrontation is necessary and biblical. We must learn to handle our problems biblically if we are to retain body unity and gospel purity.

In reading the text there appears to be two distinct thoughts.

- **First**, Paul confronted the issue “face-to-face” and “before them all (vv. 11, 14b).”
- And **second**, the issue was over theological error and its implications not personalities and preferences (vv.12, 13a, 14a, and c).

Consider the context in which we find our passage.

- **First**, Peter is the apostle to the Jews (2:8).
- **Second**, he gave the right hand of approval to Paul (2:9).
- **Third**, Peter recognized Paul’s commissioning to the Gentiles (2:10). What happened?

From the text I would like to ask a series of questions as it relates to biblical confrontation and problem solving.

### **Outline:**

- I. When do we confront a problem (v. 12, 13a, 14a, and 14c)?

Verse 12 gives us the reason for the encounter. In this text it is clear the issue is theological. What was Peter doing? Peter was forsaking grace living and going back to law living. Peter was doing exactly what the Judaizers were asking the Gentile believers to do. This is the perversion spoken of in 1:7. This is the “another gospel” of 1:8, 9. Why did Peter separate himself from the Gentile believers? Because of what he thought the Jewish believers would think of him. He was not willing to take his stand because of peer group.

One author argues that it was not Peter’s orthodoxy (right belief) but orthopraxy (right behavior).

“Peter was rebuked publicly for the inconsistency of his conduct (*not* doctrine).”  
(Wilson, *Galatians*, 38).

Yet what we must note is the inseparable link that does exist between one’s belief and one’s behavior, between creed and conduct.

Peter “withdrew” himself from the fellowship of the Gentiles. “The force of the two verbs shows that his withdrawal was gradual but steady. It was probably imperceptible to all, except for Paul.” (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 64). Paul’s question to Peter was, “Why are you making people do what you know to be unnecessary?”

Peter knew what was right, but found himself somewhere he never intended to be.

“If God has accepted the Gentiles as Peter had already affirmed, how can he reject them? To reject them is to reject God’s plan of salvation. It is to rise up in rebellion against the doctrine that our standing before God rests solely upon our relationship to Christ in faith.” (Johnson, *Galatians*).

What Peter chose to do was not in step with the truth of the gospel. This is what we confront others over, when the gospel of grace is violated. The tense usage (Present Active Indicative) tells us that Peter’s problem was becoming a pattern (v. 14).

The word **sunupokrivomai** means, “To be a hypocrite with.” The second word is a transliteration of the Greek word **hupokrisis**. Peter was a hypocrite. Peter was making himself into something he was not. He was acting like a stage player.

Peter was playing the hypocrite. He knew he was wrong especially in light of the fact that this is *after Acts 10 with Cornelius and the vision of the animals*. What happened? It was the fear of man that ensnared him (Prov. 29:25).

“The fear of man brings a snare, But he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.”

Consider two thoughts concerning hypocrisy.

#### A. The Defining of Hypocrisy

“The Greek word for ‘play-acting,’ referring to people who were pretending to be something when they were in fact something else, is the word form which we get our words *hypocrite* and *hypocrisy*. They meant what our words mean, someone deceitfully playing a part, pretending to be something they aren’t.” (N.T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 21).

Hypocrisy is when we are one thing on the inside and portray a different image on the outside (Matt. 6:16; 23:25, 27; Mark 7:6).

Matt. 6:16 "Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full.

Matt. 23:25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence.

Matt. 23:27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

Mark 7:6 And He said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites,

as it is written: 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

## B. The Dangers of Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy can lead to a seared or desensitized conscience (1 Tim. 4:2).

by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

Hypocrisy allows us to nit-pick over “specks” when we are carrying around the proverbial “beam” (Matt. 7:5). A seared conscience is a conscience that is no longer sensitive to the internal working of the Holy Spirit. Living hypocritically is the difference between being authentic or artificial. The sin of hypocrisy is such that we soon begin to believe the lie.

“Everything that a Christian does affects someone else for benefit or detriment.” (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 66).

“Our failures affect others. Peter’s acts affected the rest of the Jews in Antioch and, finally, Barnabas as well. ‘Their dissimulation,’ Lightfoot says, ‘was as a flood which swept everything away with it.’ Everything, that is, except for one man, -- Paul.” (Johnson, *Galatians*). Paul set himself for the defense of the gospel of grace. If God had not in His wisdom placed Paul in the path of this hypocrisy, the church would have been hopelessly entangled in legalism and stood divided.

It is for this reason he was to be confronted “in order that others might fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). Had the issue not been confronted the sin would have continued to spread. The NAS captures the idea behind 1 Timothy 5:20 when it says “Fear of sinning.” When public sin is publicly dealt with there is a sense of fear cultivated within the assembly. But it is a fear of what, of exposure? No, it is a fear of falling. The idea of fear in 1 Timothy 5:20 is that of being so fearful of falling that we cling to the object of safety. Like a child learning to walk that clings to their mother’s leg. The child is ‘fearful’ of falling thus they cling for support and safety. When others fall we see our own instability and it forces us to cry out to God for help. When you read the tone of Galatians 6:1 can you not sense the humility of the restorer or confronter?

## II. Whom do we confront (1 Cor. 5:9-13)?

We confront those within the church. We are not here to deal with the problems of this world. God is dealing with them. We are here to deal with our own family members.

## III. How do we confront (Matthew 18:15-20)?

Verse 11 tells us that Paul “withstood him to the face.” The word is telling us that Paul

got in his face and told him he had a problem that needed to be corrected. How often are we willing to get in somebody's face and confront them with their problems? "This was an act of personal courage. Paul did not keep his mouth shut nor did he whisper behind Peter's back. He rebuked Peter 'to the face.'" (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 63).

In looking at Matthew 18 there is a certain assumption that needs to be understood. This is a strongly Jewish context.

- **First**, the church is still yet future. Matthew 16 tells us that Jesus Christ will build His church. Thus the instruction given in Matthew 18 is transitional in nature.
- **Second**, we cannot transpose all of Paul's church truth into Matthew 18. For the most part the word "Church" in Matthew 18 is more "assembly" as in Synagogue than "assembly" as in New Testament Church. This does not negate what we are reading, but it does put it in its proper context.
- **Third**, the whole idea of two or three witnesses is using the judicial system of Old Testament witnesses. There is nothing wrong with this, it is simply being noted. Some would suggest when Jesus sent His disciples out in teams of two He was thinking of this principle (Mark 6:7).
- **Finally**, the outcome of the process in Matthew 18 is that the non-repentant is to be treated as a "Gentile and a tax-collector." The language of Matthew 18 is strongly Jewish. In saying all of this I would like to say that the pattern stated in Matthew 18 is a valid pattern for us to use today, yet it is equally understood that there is some transitional modifications taking place (i.e., moving from the old agreement/testament to the new agreement/testament).

I would also note in contrasting this passage with Galatians certain assumptions are being made.

**First**, in Matthew the offense is more personal ("a brother sins against you"), whereas in Galatians the offense is against the truth. I would argue that both passages are the same in that the truth violated in the local church setting is personal since we are connected one to each other.

**Second**, the assumption I am making is that Paul had been dealing with Peter on a private level before he went public. He went public (1 Tim. 5:20) because Peter was overtaken in his fault (Gal. 6:1) and "refused" to "repent." Had Peter not repented than he would have been "excommunicated" from the church. Notice four quick observations about Peter's sin.

1. It was a primary player (2:9).
2. It was a public offense (2:12).

"Paul did not keep silent as if he had been afraid of Peter as a superior; he was not awed by the example of so great an apostle into the silent sanction of what he thought wrong; and he did not oppose Peter by secret insinuation – by speaking evil of him when he was absent, – he avowed to himself his dissatisfaction with his conduct." (John Brown, *An Exposition of The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* [SGBC, reprint 1957], 83).

3. It was polarizing the faithful (2:13).
4. It was perverting the truth (2:14).

So, how do we confront?

- A. **We confront over faulty doctrine and/or sinful behavior.** Confrontation does not occur because of personal preferences or individual idiosyncrasies.
- B. **We do it privately and alone.** If the individual repents, then the process stops. If they do not repent, then the process goes to the next level.
- C. **We do it with another witness who is aware of the offense.** I believe we must maintain a tight circle in order to protect the individual and the unity of the body. If the individual repents, then the process stops. If they do not repent, then the process goes to the next level.
- D. **We bring it before the Church family.** If the individual repents, then the process stops. If they do not repent, then the process goes to the next level and the individual is removed from the fellowship of the Church.
- E. Verses 18-20 shows us **the authority given to the local church** in the area of local church discipline.

I would argue that unity must be maintained through deference (Rom. 14:13) and humility (Phil. 2:3), but not at the expense of truth. The devil wants nothing more than to see the church of God divided by an unloving spirit. It is our love for God, His Word and each other that sets us apart and establishes our witness to the world (John 13:34, 35).

“The question of liberty was raised. There was nothing wrong in the observance of certain Jewish customs. A Christian is free to do this, or not to do it. But, if the observance is forced upon others, then it becomes intolerable bondage done away with in the cross of Christ. The freedom of the Gentiles takes precedence over the permitted observance of certain Jewish customs, when they come into conflict. The freedom of the Gentiles must be preserved even if the Jews must abandon their practice of the permitted customs. **Grace takes precedence over legalism, even over certain Church traditions.**” ([emphasis added] Johnson slightly modified, *Galatians*).

“One can imagine the feelings of Peter, noble man of God that he was, and yet he had been carried away with this snare. At first he was startled as he looked at Paul, and perhaps he bowed his head in shame as he realized how guilty he was of seeking to please these legalists who would rob the Church of the marvelous gospel of grace.” (Ironsides, *Galatians*, 82).

Although Galatians does not provide for us a response from Peter, Peter gives us the following thought concerning the apostle Paul in 2 Peter 3:15.

15 and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also **our beloved brother**

**Paul**, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,

Would to God I (we) would respond so graciously after we have been confronted over something in our life?

**Shepherding the Sheep:** (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. "Rebuke, at times, can be healthy and refreshing. It can help clear the air of misunderstanding and confusion. Solomon wrote that 'open rebuke is better than secret love' (Prov. 27:5)." (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 67).
2. Deal with issues immediately and privately.
3. Don't worry about personality and preference. Deal with the violation of grace and truth.
4. Guard yourself in your speech lest you fall into the sin of hypocrisy (James 5:12). How often have we, through unguarded speech, fallen into the sin of hypocrisy, of lying? We say something we wish we hadn't. When that happens make amends immediately.
5. Peter encourages us to lay aside this sin (1 Peter 2:1). Isn't it amazing how Peter, though swept into the clutches of hypocrisy, was able to pen such powerful words? Isn't the grace of God simply astounding?

Therefore, **putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy** and envy and all slander, 2 like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, 3 if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

6. Perhaps you have failed to practice Ephesians 4:32?

32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Perhaps today God is calling you to forgive someone with whom you have been carrying an unnecessary grudge or toward whom you have been bitter. God calls you to forgive. Maybe there is a violation of truth that you need to confront, but wish to avoid. Maybe someone has confronted you with a perceived problem and you have responded in the wrong way, let it go. Life is too short to hold grudges or to be bitter or unloving.

7. It is not enough to believe the gospel, we must apply it. This Peter failed to do. "A famous name can never justify an infamous action." (Barclay, *Galatians*, 19).
8. "A church ceases to be Christian if it contains class distinctions. In the presence of God a man is neither Jew nor Gentile, noble nor base, rich nor poor; he is a sinner for whom Christ died. If men share in a common sonship they must be brothers." (Barclay, *Galatians*, 19). Let grace reign.