

**‘Don’t be a hypocrite.’ (5)**

A little boy was waiting for his mother to come out of the supermarket. As he waited, he was approached by a man who asked, ‘Son, can you tell me where the post office is?’ The little boy replied, ‘Sure, just go straight down the street, when you get to the roundabout, turn to your right.’ The man thanked the boy kindly and said, ‘I’m the new preacher in town, and I’d like for you to come to church on Sunday. I’ll show you how to get to Heaven.’ The little boy replied with a chuckle, ‘Aw, come on preacher, you don’t even know the way to the post office!’

In today’s world, there are many religious groups who claim they know the way to heaven and during days of the New Testament it was much the same. Some people were saying, ‘**you can get to heaven by following Jesus and being obedient to the Gospel**’. Others were saying, ‘**well, it’s true, you need to follow Jesus but you also need to be circumcised and follow the traditions of Judaism**’.

We’re continuing our sermon series on Paul’s letter to the Galatians today and we’re going to read about Paul rebuking Peter because of his hypocrisy. But before we get into the actual text, let me share with you the background to the text first. Now even though we don’t know all the details, Paul presents us with the seriousness of legalism in the church by recording a division that took place as the result of the work and teaching of legalistic teachers. And I believe the event we’re going to read about today here in **Galatians 2** occurred after the letter which was sent out concerning the Gentiles not having to be circumcised in **Acts 15** which we looked at last time.

In **Acts 13+14** Paul and Barnabas had just established the church in Galatia around **A.D. 47-48**. **Acts 14:26-28** tells us that Paul then went to Jerusalem after reporting to the church in Antioch. The Judaizing teachers evidently came immediately into the Galatian churches after Paul and Barnabas left the area. But they came in order to recruit churches to their legal system of justification.

**Acts 15:1+2** tells us that when Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he immediately had a heated dispute with the Judaizing teachers who were in the church in Jerusalem. **Acts 15:10** tells us it was decided during the Jerusalem meeting not to bring the Gentile churches into a yoke of legalistic bondage.

By the time of the **Acts 15** meeting, the legalistic church recruiters had already left Jerusalem to bind ‘**circumcision and the customs of Moses**’ on the Gentile churches. They evidently went first to Antioch where the incident of **Galatians 2** occurred and where Paul and Barnabas were located after the first journey. Now it’s evident that sometime after the Jerusalem meeting in **Acts 15**, Paul returned to Antioch.

However, Peter and Barnabas had already gone to Antioch before Paul arrived. And so, the incident in which we’re going to deal with today happened before Paul arrived in Antioch. Peter and Barnabas were withdrawing from the Gentiles because they were afraid of the Judaizing delegation from Jerusalem. And so, when Paul finally arrived, this separation had already taken place.

Now remember what Paul is dealing with here. In the eyes of the Jewish legalists of Jerusalem, the church in Antioch were not saved. **Acts 15:1** “**Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.”**”

**Acts 15:5** “**Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”** They were teaching that these newly converted Gentile Christians weren’t saved and so they sent out a bunch of men to convert other churches to their beliefs. **Galatians 6:13** “**Not even those who are circumcised keep the law, yet they want you to be circumcised that they may boast about your circumcision in the flesh.**” Paul says their mission was to go from church to church, binding where God had not bound, and so go about saving the saved.

And at the same time, they were sending back glorious reports about how many had been circumcised. **Galatians 4:17** “**Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them**”. Paul says they zealously built relationships with young Gentile churches in order to bring them into their fellowship and so separate them from the influence of Paul.

So, that’s what Paul is dealing with here, he’s dealing with a bunch of people who want religion but they want it done and practiced their way. And sad thing about it was, Peter and Barnabas were just as bad, if not even worse.

Galatians 2:11-13 “When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray”.

It’s interesting that Paul uses Peter’s name interchangeably depending on the context, especially here in Galatians 2. I don’t know why he does that, but here in Galatians 2:11, Paul calls him Cephas. And remember that Peter is his Greek name and Cephas is his Aramaic name. I think it’s possible that Paul is calling him Cephas here because his actions in Galatians 2 represent an Old Testament mind-set regarding Gentiles. Now that’s just my theory I’m sharing with you.

But one thing we don’t have to figure out is that Paul has already opposed the legalists in Jerusalem and now he’s opposing them again here in Antioch. The Greek word ‘**anthistemi**’ that is translated ‘**opposed**’ here is actually a military term that refers to resisting an attack. You see loved ones when anyone comes along and adds to the Gospel of Christ they are actually attacking the Gospel of Christ.

The question is, **will we resist that attack or give in and follow it just for the sake of peace?** If someone was to attack your family, you would resist that attack, **wouldn’t you? Why?** Because you love them, they are your life. **But why do we have an attitude that just gives in when someone comes along and attacks our church family, who are also our life?**

We all know of a congregation who’s been under attack by people who wanted us to buy into their ideology of religion, a form of doctrine that they believe is right. **And what happened?** When some of that congregation resisted the attack, the legalists caused a huge division and left, taking a bunch of people with them. **And what happened when they set up another congregation?** Some of those they took with them opposed their teaching and they split again.

Now loved ones, I may be guilty of a lot of things but if there is one sin I wouldn’t want to be found guilty of, it would be causing division within the Lord’s body. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:16+17 “**Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple**”.

Now those are strong words loved ones but I thank God for all those who did resist those who tried to change the simple Gospel message. And thank God for Paul who had enough courage to stand against those who were denying the Gospel of grace by adding to grace that which God hadn’t bound.

And notice how Paul opposed Cephas, ‘**to his face**’. Paul is saying that even public confrontation with a respected brother or sister in the Lord is sometimes necessary, especially if the truth of the Gospel is in danger of being compromised. You see, what Peter did, brought him under condemnation. Peter was basically yielding to the legalist’s idea of meritorious works.

In other words, he was being a hypocrite and **why was he being a hypocrite?** Because he has a short memory, the great Peter who said, he would never leave the Lord, the great Peter who said he would never deny Jesus. The great Peter who preached the very first Gospel of grace sermon in Acts 2. The great Peter who in Acts 10+11 received a special vision from the Lord Himself informing him that the Gentiles were to be received into fellowship without any meritorious conditions attached.

No wonder Paul opposed him to his face, Peter’s actions didn’t reflect what he preached. And like we will see in our next sermon, Peter, and those who withdrew with him, were violating the fundamental teaching concerning church unity. Peter was manifesting support for the teaching of those who denied justification by faith. He was manifesting behaviour that would bring the believers again into the bondage of law, and so they were destroying the freedom we have in Christ.

The actions of Peter attacked the oneness of all races in Christ. The very nature of the truth of the Gospel was under attack and the sufficiency of the grace of God was being denied. And so, if what happened in Antioch was allowed to spread throughout the world, the church would go out of existence. Loved ones, Peter’s actions were serious, serious enough for Paul to oppose him to his face.

Now let me ask you this, [what do your actions say about your beliefs?](#) I'm going to describe a famous person to you but I want you to try and figure out who this person is.

He made free use of Christian vocabulary. He talked about the blessing of the Almighty and the Christian confessions which would become the pillars of the new government. He assumed the earnestness of a man weighed down by historic responsibility. He handed out pious stories to the press, especially to the church papers. He showed his tattered Bible and declared that he drew the strength for his great work from it as scores of pious people welcomed him as a man sent from God. [Do you know who this is?](#) It's Adolf Hitler. [Adolf Hitler](#) claimed to be a Christian but he was a master of outward religion with no inward reality.

You see loved ones, our lives need to be a true reflection of what we believe. [James 1:22-25](#) "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do."

Paul says, Peter used to eat with the Gentiles but when these legalists came along he withdrew from the Gentiles because he was scared of them. In other words, Peter's action proclaimed a different Gospel from the one he was preaching. The Gospel he preached was a Gospel of grace and because his actions didn't preach grace he ended up under condemnation at this point of his life. And look at the influence these legalisers had on the church. All the Jewish brethren in Antioch, and even Barnabas, surrendered to the legalistic teaching from Jerusalem.

And can't you just feel the pain that our Gentile brethren must have been going through during this. Think about it, they had just been accepted by the Jewish brethren as part of the Lord's church with no conditions attached before these legalisers came along. But now, they are all alone, those who should have known better had withdrawn from them. I can imagine just how let down they must have felt, confused with their brethren, confused about the Gospel. Lonely, not knowing if they are right with God or not, [where do they turn to now?](#)

And loved ones if the apostle Peter can be led astray and Barnabas who spent a lot of time with the apostle Paul could be led astray. [How much more careful do we have to be when it comes to what our preachers and teachers are telling us today?](#) You see if anyone is preaching and teaching one thing but living another, then we call them hypocrites. And that's what happens when people come along and start to teach another kind of Gospel. When they start to implement laws into Gospel, when they put demands on people that God hasn't put on them.

You will soon discover that they are hypocrites themselves. They divide the church, they allow fear to rule their lives and they try to put their fears onto the lives of other Christians. They are usually very good at pointing out things that need to change in other people's lives, without seeing their own need to change.

Let me ask you, [when was the last time you looked at the contents information for any food product you've bought?](#)

I don't know if you've noticed, but I've certainly noticed that some manufacturers are selling us the same size packages we are accustomed to, but they are putting less of the product in the package. For example, chocolate giant [Mars](#) have shrunk the size of its bars from 58g to 51g. Its [Snickers](#) bars have also been reduced from 58g to 48g. Same cost, same packaging but smaller product.

You see loved ones, how something is wrapped doesn't always show us what's on the inside, and that's true with people as well. We can wrap ourselves up in the same packaging every day, nice clothes, big smile, friendly conduct, yet still be less than what we appear to be. [1 Samuel 16:7](#) "The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

[1 Peter 2:1](#) "Rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind."

Now this whole incident here in [Galatians](#) reveals the remarkable character of the apostle Paul. In all this Paul was willing to stand alone against the evil actions of those who were dividing the church by preaching a gospel of works.

Paul continues in [Galatians 2:14](#) "When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

Paul realised that if Peter's actions became a common practice in the church, the truth of the Gospel would be destroyed. In other words, the church of the free would cease to exist. And so, because of that Paul begins his rebuke of Peter and the rest of the Jews in Antioch by pointing out that before the legal delegation came from Jerusalem, they had lived in close fellowship with the Gentile brethren.

And so, Paul asks if they, the Jews, would encourage the Gentiles to live as the Jews. Now earlier we found Paul opposing Peter face to face but here we find Paul opposed Peter publicly. That's because Peter's actions and the actions of the Antioch Jews were so serious. So, serious in fact that Paul thought it was necessary to take the whole matter before the entire church.

Which is exactly what Jesus taught us to do in [Matthew 18:15-17](#) "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector".

Loved ones, there are some situations which are so serious, that we can't simply bury our heads in the sand and hope they will go away. There are some situations which need to be dealt with quickly, otherwise it will spread throughout the whole congregation like some sort of virus. [Can you understand why Paul was so passionate about defending the Gospel of truth?](#)

[1 Corinthians 15:1+2](#) "Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain".

Paul says this Gospel saves people from their sins and makes people right with God. This Gospel doesn't demand that we get circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. This Gospel doesn't demand that we tick off all the good deed boxes. This Gospel doesn't demand that we do enough good things for salvation. You can't buy or earn God's grace, you simply have to accept it.

Think about this just before we close. When a person works an eight-hour day and receives a fair day's pay for his time, that is a wage, [right?](#) When a person competes with an opponent and receives a trophy for his performance, that is a prize, [right?](#) When a person receives appropriate recognition for his long service or high achievements, that is an award, [right?](#) But when a person isn't capable of earning a wage, when a person isn't capable of winning a prize, when a person doesn't deserve any reward, yet they receive a [gift](#).

That's God's grace and that is a good picture of God's unmerited favour. And this is what we mean, when we talk about the grace of God. We can't work for God's grace, we can't do anything to win God's grace, we can't be Christians long enough to merit God's grace, it's a gift that we have to simply accept.

The question is, if you're not a Christian this morning, [will you simply accept God's grace today?](#) Why not speak to someone before you leave and we will be more than happy to show how you accept His amazing grace.