

# **Galatians 2:11-14 Grace Christian Huynh**

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*11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.*

Regrettably, there was a conflict between the apostles Paul and Peter. To “withstood him to his face” means that Paul expressed his opposition to Peter’s behavior. What Peter did will be discussed in the next verses, but make no mistake that it is Paul’s obligation to correct his brother if the brother did any wrongdoing. In fact, we, too, are encouraged to do as Paul did if we knew that one of our brothers or sisters in Christ was in the wrong according to Matthew 18:15. If that person listens and corrects himself or herself, we have gained back a brother or sister, but if not, then we have lost a brother or sister. To correct other Christians is to help them, not to embarrass or to turn against them. Paul was cut and dry about what he had to say to Peter. He did what he had to do in order to save Peter and the Church from further wrongdoing.

*12 For before certain ones came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they had come, he withdrew and separated himself from them, fearing those who were of the Circumcision.*

The “certain ones” who came from James were the Christians that knew James. Before they came to Antioch, Peter willingly ate with the Gentiles. Eating with the Gentiles means not only eating next to them, but also eating the same foods as them. Remember that the Jews had specific eating rites. The Christian Gentiles were excused by the Jerusalem Church from having to keep up with the rites of the Jews. That means that Peter, a Jew, also disregarded the rites in order to eat the food of the Gentiles. This act towards the Gentiles is that of good will, representing the degradation of the barriers between the Jews and Gentiles, as God intended. However, when the Jews (the certain ones from James) came down, or met up with Peter in Antioch, Peter changed his behavior towards the Gentiles. These Jews are also referred to as “those who were of the Circumcision” in this verse. Peter did not eat or perhaps did not even talk to the Gentiles anymore because he was conscious of what the Jews might think of him, especially since he did not follow the rites of the Jews while eating with the Gentiles.

*13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, so much that Barnabas also was carried away by their dissimulation.*

The other Jews saw Peter as a leader, so they also did the same thing as Peter: separate themselves from the Gentiles. They “dissembled” or concealed their actions (eating with the Gentiles) from the other Jews (the Jews in Jerusalem). This display of hypocrisy disappointed not only Paul, but also God. The Gentiles who were subject to

this hypocrisy were probably hurt and felt inadequate for the Church. Perhaps they were even confused.

*14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"*

Cephas and Barnabas knew better than to discriminate their Gentile brothers. Their error compelled Paul to speak out against their behavior for the good of his brothers and the Church. To “walk not uprightly” means to live or do something the wrong way. In this context, Paul meant that Cephas and Barnabas did not do what was right according to Christ. God wanted the barrier between Gentiles and Jews to be destroyed, but Cephas reinforced it instead. Also, take notice that Paul confronted Peter not privately, but “before them all.” He rebuked Peter in front of the Gentiles and Jews in order for everyone to know and learn from the mistakes that were made.

To “live in the manner of the Gentiles” refers to the manner of living without the guidance of Christ. The Gentiles, in this context, to serve Paul’s rhetorical question, refers to Gentiles who had not believe in Christ. To “live as the Jews did” means to live a life with the guidance of Christ. Peter, being a Jew, took after the manner of the Gentiles (hypocrisy) while he should have been living in the manner of the Jews. Paul asked Peter: How then, could you expect the Gentiles, who you teach, to live like the Jews if you, a Jew, do not live like a Jew? If the question is still confusing, replace “Jew” with “Christian” and “Gentile” with “non-Christian” in Paul’s rebuke: If you, being a Christian, live like a non-Christian and not like a Christian, how can you teach non-Christians to live like a Christian? A simple question, such as the one Paul asked, still contains quite a punch.

Every time we sin, we become hypocrites. We preach or teach others about the Gospel, but sometimes we slip up and do something that is against the Bible, against the Word of God. Similarly to Peter, we are Christians who, when we sin, live like non-Christians while trying to teach non-Christians how to be Christians. That is why we must be careful of our actions and repent of our sins every day.

In these verses, we can learn from Paul through his actions to save the Church. When we see our brothers or sisters in Christ do something that is not in accordance to the Gospel, we must do something to correct it before the situation gets out of hand. Paul displayed courage and wisdom in carrying out this unfavorable task. It can be difficult to stand up to someone who is your friend, especially if someone’s feelings are subject to being hurt. But, it is our duty to help each other, no matter how hard or difficult the situation, to be better because we love them.

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*11 But when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed.*

Paul, seeing Peter's behavior around the Gentile and Jewish Christians, publicly called out Peter for his actions. Instead of spreading rumors, or speaking behind Peter's back, Paul directly spoke to Peter of his inappropriate actions that could cause division in the Church. This is in accordance with Christ's teachings reminding us to confront our friends and family in Christ when they do wrong, even with others around so that they may also learn for their mistakes. Paul's confrontation with Peter, a veteran member of the Church who even followed Christ personally, showed us that we are all equal as children of God, and that we must watch each other's actions to avoid straying from Christ's path.

*12 For before certain ones came from James, he ate with the Gentiles; but when they had come, he withdrew and separated himself from them, fearing those who were of the Circumcision.*

The "certain ones" that had come were the Jewish Christians who still kept some of the traditions of Judaism. Peter eating with the Gentiles could be viewed by the Jewish Christians with disdain, like how the Jewish scholars and lawmakers saw Jesus eating with the sinners and tax collectors. Eating with the Gentiles also likely entail eating foods that Jews who practice the laws of Judaism would find unclean to eat.

*13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him, so much that Barnabas also was carried away by their dissimulation.*

The other Jews followed the example of Peter, isolating themselves from the Christian Gentiles in order to not offend the Jewish Christians that still followed the traditions of Judaism. Peter's mistake led to the fall of the other Jewish Christians who decided to do as he did. Peter's actions could have been quite harmful to the Church if the Jewish Christians continued to segregate themselves from the Gentile Christians, because this would damage their message of unity under Christ. Not only do these discriminatory actions harm their relationship with their Gentile friends in Christ, but they also distracted themselves from Christ by continuing to focus upon keeping the Jewish Traditions made by men instead of following Christ's path.

*14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, "If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"*

To walk upright is to live one's life in a moral manner, avoiding hypocrisy and wrongdoing. For Christians, to walk upright under God is to live observing His word and following His teachings. The truth of the Gospel being spoken of in these verses is that Christ saves us all through His blood alone, removing the need to observe the Jewish Traditions, including that of segregation from the Gentiles.

Paul taught the Gentiles that they did not need to follow the Jewish traditions in order to be saved. Peter and the other Jews, on the other hand, showed their hypocrisy through their continuance to alienate themselves from the Gentile Christians because they were uncircumcised, which could cause division within the Church between the Jewish and Gentile Christians. With the coming more of the modern churches and denominations, there may arise discrimination of one church against other churches due to the status of their circumcision, physical baptism, christening and other sorts of traditions and rituals, while they disregard the essential need for union under Christ.

It is important for Christians to all be united together under Christ, regardless of superficial differences. Christians should also watch each other, openly confronting each other about our wrongdoings without hostility, but also remembering to also act as one expects others to in order to avoid hypocrisy. As followers of Christ, Christians cannot work to appease men or bind themselves to man-made traditions or we will go off the path of Christ.