

Parson to Person

(Galatians 2 – Part 3)

“Hypocrisy and the Known Will of God”

“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

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.

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? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain'" (Galatians 2).

In Acts 11 we read the account of Peter's defense to the Jewish community when accused of eating with Gentiles—apparently in Caesarea by the sea. The event requiring his defense related to the Holy Spirit having fallen on the household of Cornelius—who having heard the Gospel were born again.

The storyline is as follows:

"Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but...he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild

beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.' And a voice spoke to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.' This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again" (Acts 10:9b–16 abridged).

The vision related to the abolishing of the Mosaic Law which contained dietary restrictions. However, the point concerned Peter's call to minister to the close friends and family of Cornelius—a Gentile:

"Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate. And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there. While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, 'Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.' Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, 'Yes, I am he whom you seek. For what reason have you come?' And they said, 'Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you.' Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him" (Acts 10:17–23).

Peter stayed with the family in Caesarea for a few days following (Acts 10:48). After his return he was confronted in Jerusalem:

“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!’ But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning...” (Acts 11:1–4a).

His defense included, *“the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing...and we entered the man’s house”* (Acts 11:12 abridged). Moreover, *“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?”* (Acts 11:17 abridged).

Peter knew it had been “unlawful” to eat with or enter a Gentile home. He had mentioned this to the crowd gathered in the house of Corenelius. He said, *“You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean”* (Acts 10:28 abridged).

However, God had shown him otherwise.

He told the same gathering, *“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him”* (Acts 10:34–35 abridged).

Therefore, the hypocrisy of Peter recorded in Galatians 2 seems to have been the result of peer pressure. Clearly, it was in direct rebellion against the known truth God had revealed to him. Moreover, it was significant enough to require Paul’s public rebuke designed to protect Peter, those he would influence, and the Gospel itself.

Herein we learn:

- 1) Peter was human—just like you and me.

- 2) Peter was insecure—just like you and me.
- 3) Peter needed theological reinforcement to keep him from falling to peer pressure.
- 4) Peter needed his Church family to strengthen him and help him stand firm.
- 5) Peter was teachable, grew, and became a great teacher.

May the Lord equip us, strengthen us, surround us with support, cause us to grow, and use us for His glory. We are prone to weakness. Only by His great power do we overcome.

I love you all,
Pastor Paul