

Sunday, November 30, 2009—Grace Life School of Theology—Understanding Galatians and the Law—Galatians 2:11-14

Galatians 2:11

- *“But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.”*
- The events of verses 11-14 fit into the time period between the end of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and the split between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:36-41. We know this because Barnabas was still with Paul in Galatians 2:13.
- So this incident that took place in Antioch occurred after Peter, James, and John had extended the right hand of fellowship and agreed to limit their ministry to the little flock.
- Acts 15:23-31--one should not assume that just because official letters were drafted and sent to the church in Antioch that the trouble the legalizers were causing ceased.
- Peter at some point had gone to Antioch, however, we don't know the reason why Peter went.
- Paul says that he *“withstood him (Peter) to the face.”* The Greek word translated *“withstood”* means “to set one's self against, to withstand, resist, or oppose,” according to *Strong's Concordance*.
 - Ephesians 6:13—“withstand”
 - II Timothy 3:8
 - II Timothy 4:15
- The reason Paul had a face to face confrontation with Peter according to this verse is because Peter was *“to be blamed.”* That is to say, Paul had found fault with something Peter had done and confronted him on the issue.

Galatians 2:12

- *“For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles”*
- Peter was from Jerusalem where he was used to being around Jewish Kingdom saints the majority of the time. Going to Antioch, the base of operations for Paul's gentile ministry and apostleship certainly would have been interesting experience for Peter. At Antioch, Peter would have been in an environment where Jews and gentiles were fellowshiping openly with one another.
- As the verse indicates, before men came to Antioch from James, Peter ate and fellowshiped freely with the gentile believers.
- *“but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.”*

- Once the men for James arrived Peter withdrew his fellowship from the gentiles because he was afraid of what they might report to James.
- Acts 21:18-21—it is clear that James never fully understood some things regarding what God was not doing through Paul in forming the church the body of Christ.
- Peter in this case was more worried about pleasing men (James) than doing what right according to his previous agreement with Paul.

Galatians 2:13

- *“And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him”*
- Peter’s actions caused other Jewish believers to follow his actions.
- The word *“dissembled”* means *“to act hypocritically with.”* In short, these Jews were acting hypocritically by following Peter’s lead.
- Until now Antioch was a model of what the relationship should be between believing Jews and gentiles in the body of Christ. For all appearances it was a smoothly operating assembly where all the believers were one in Christ.
- Notice how the arrival of the men from James affected the church in Antioch. Saints who were grounded and understood certain issues became confused and moved away from the truth of the gospel. This is what unsound doctrine does, it threatens to destabilize grounded people.
- *“insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.”*
- Peter’s horrible example had so divided the church at Antioch that even Barnabas separated himself from the gentiles. Barnabas had been Paul’s partner on his first apostolic journey to establish gentile churches in Galatia. Barnabas had gone with Paul to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 and was given the right hand of fellowship to preach the gospel of the uncircumcision unto the gentiles. Now, Barnabas refused to fellowship with the gentiles because of the bad example given by Peter.

Galatians 2:14

- *“But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel,”*
- Those who disassembled with Peter from the gentiles were not walking in accordance with the truth of Paul’s gospel. Paul preached a gospel which taught that there was no difference between Jews and gentiles and that both could be reconciled to God in one body by the cross.
 - Galatians 3:26-28
 - Ephesians 2:13-18
- They were not walking according to the truth of the gospel because they were making distinctions between men when Paul said there are none.

- *“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?”*
- Paul publically rebukes Peter in front of the crowd. Paul was never afraid to stand for the truth.
- Paul basically says to Peter, get it straight. If you are going to live like the Jews than live like the Jews but don't live in such a way that is going to cause the gentiles to live like Jews.
- Peter clearly knew that what Paul was telling him was correct for because he offers no defense for his behavior.

An Important Difference

- One subject that the opponents of mid-Acts dispensationalists will often use to try and trip us up is Peter's visit with Cornelius in Acts 10. We must always remember that Peter was not sent to a single gentile until after Paul had already been saved and receiving revelation for at least three years.
- Acts 10—Peter did not want to go eat with Cornelius because he was a gentile.
- Acts 11:2—when Peter returned to Jerusalem after ministering to Cornelius, they that were of the circumcision contended with him.
- Acts 11:4-18—Peter then rightly defends his actions in Jerusalem.
- In Galatians 2:11-14 Paul rebukes Peter because he stopped eating with gentiles. At Antioch Peter had no defense to offer because he was wrong. If there was someone who should have known better it was Peter, he had already seen the vision of the sheet in Acts 10.
- This comparison clearly demonstrates that things were changing dispensationally.