

## Pressure to Compromise

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

**Galatians:** [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

**UBS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Paragraph Topic:** Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch

**Central Idea of Message:** Pressure to compromise can cause a person to behave one way while actually believing another.

**Introduction:** It is no light thing for one preacher to rebuke another; however, more must be at stake than petty differences. In the case of Paul and Peter, the whole matter of gospel truth as it pertains to complete salvation and full fellowship were under fire. **Paul, therefore, confronted Peter about believing one way and behaving another and about setting a terrible example which others followed. Pressure to compromise got the best of Peter.**

- I. **Believing One Way and Behaving Another (vv. 11-12)**
  - A. **Paul opposed Peter face to face (v. 11)**
    1. Paul confronted Cephas in Antioch about certain hypocritical behavior
      - a) Antioch was the "cradle of Gentile Christianity"
      - b) Antioch had been the base of all three of Paul's missionary journeys
    2. Paul says that Peter stood condemned, for his actions were deplorable and thus cried out in judgment against him
  - B. **The presence of certain people prompted Peter to behave hypocritically (v. 12)**
    1. Peter had been joining in "mixed dining" prior to the coming of certain men from James, the Lord's half brother and leader of the church in Jerusalem
    2. Paul and Peter had been eating with Gentiles for years
    3. Dietary laws
      - a) Were given by God to promote the physical well-being of the Jews

- b) Gentiles ate foods forbidden to Jews, which is one reason Jews would not eat with them
  - c) They were unclean because they ate what was unclean
  - d) But God had made it abundantly clear with a vision to Peter in Acts 10 that these dietary regulations had been superceded by the cross
4. When these Jewish Christian men from Jerusalem arrived in Antioch, Peter gradually withdrew himself from Gentile contact
- a) Because he feared repercussions from the party of the circumcision
    - (1) Peter had a cowardly tendency
    - (2) Peter denied Jesus three times out of fear of what would happen to him
    - (3) Peter played the hypocrite here out of fear too
  - b) Certain Jews came and contended with Peter about eating meals with Gentiles
  - c) **Peter compromised his convictions and retreated, even withdrawing from observance of the Lord's Supper, which frequently followed the love feasts**
  - d) **By withdrawing, Peter was wrongly expressing that Gentiles were inferior and unclean**
  - e) He slowly withdrew day by day and his presence was missed, his absence was understood, and then his example was followed
  - f) **Although it should not, peer pressure can cause even the strongest to compromise their God-given convictions**

## II. Following the Leader (vv. 13-14)

### A. Many others followed Peter's hypocritical lead (v. 13)

1. The word hypocrisy is used twice in this sentence
  - a) **Hypocrisy occurs when one's conduct misrepresents one's convictions, when orthopraxy [action] does not match orthodoxy [belief]**
  - b) **Hypocritical behavior is contagious!**
2. Rather than be a positive influence, Peter instead allowed himself to be influenced for the negative
3. Even Barnabas was swayed to withdraw from the Gentiles and, in so doing, tacitly approve

observance of the Law as necessary for salvation and full fellowship

- a) Barnabas was Paul's co-laborer in the missionary work to the Gentiles!
  - b) This event may well have brewed dissension between Paul and Barnabas which eventually led to their separation over John Mark (Acts 15:39)
  - c) There is no record that Paul and Barnabas ever traveled together again
4. The withdrawal of Peter and Barnabas had to have been a severe insult to the Gentile believers at Antioch and must have caused great unrest in the fellowship there

**B. Juggling with sacred truth (v. 14)**

- 1. Peter's attitude toward the truth of the gospel was not straightforward but crooked
  - a) Peter was neither practicing the gospel honestly nor consistently
  - b) Gospel truth demands justification by grace through faith, not by works
  - c) Redemption is through Christ, not legalism
  - d) Salvation in Christ also admits one to full fellowship in Christ, thereby shattering all cultural and racial barriers
  - e) **It is not said that Peter believed any differently, it is simply demonstrated that his behavior relative to gospel truth did not match his beliefs**
  - f) **Peter had trimmed his sails to the change in the wind and such segregation as he practiced went against the truth of the gospel**
- 2. Paul addressed Peter directly because he was supposedly the one with the most influence
  - a) Paul confronted Peter and others about not living the truth of the gospel
    - (1) Peter was a Jew by birth
    - (2) Peter had fellowshiped with Gentiles
    - (3) Peter knew that redemption was in Christ and not in legalism
    - (4) Peter had received the first recorded Gentile convert to Christianity, Cornelius, without requiring circumcision (Acts 10:44-48)

- b) **It was hypocritical of Peter to expect the Gentiles to live a Jewish way of life that he did not support by his own behavior except under duress**
  - (1) Paul rightly accused Peter of living like a Gentile, although he was a Jew, and then behaving as if he wanted the Gentiles to live as Jews!
  - (2) What sort of consistency is this?
- 3. Paul rebuked Peter in the presence of all, likely an open church meeting in Antioch
  - a) Paul publicly branded Peter as a hypocrite
  - b) Such confrontations can never be justified over minor differences
    - (1) **This was not a matter of private quarrel but of timeless public policy**
    - (2) **It does little good to correct in private what has been committed in public**
    - (3) Repair is to be sought where the damage has been inflicted
    - (4) This church was splitting apart
  - c) Public rebuke is awkward but is also a great deterrent to similar misconduct by others
- 4. **Influential Christians do God and others a disservice when they refuse to use, or when they misuse, their influence**

**Conclusion:** Illustration. Peter believed correctly but did not always behave correctly. Does your behavior match your beliefs or does pressure cause you to compromise?