

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS  
Part Four

Peter's Blunder

Paul's masterful rebuke of Peter at Antioch forms a bridge connecting the historical portion of the epistle to the doctrinal portion. This incident receives thorough treatment by Paul in his argument against the Judaizers because they were seeking to show that there was a difference between Peter's Gospel and Paul's. Paul reveals that the only difference between Peter and him is in conduct, not in doctrine.

IV. Peter's Blunder (Galatians 2:14-21)

A. The Nature of Peter's Blunder

1. It was a public offense
  - a. A public wrong deserves a public rebuke. Paul rebuked Peter before the Christians at Antioch, not to shame Peter, but to repair the damage that had been done in the minds of those who had witnessed Peter's action.
2. It was caused by the fear of men
  - a. Peter's action was a result of his fearing what the representatives from the Jerusalem church would say if they saw him eating with Gentiles. "The fear of man bringeth a snare."
3. It was out of harmony with his former experience and conduct
  - a. Peter had received a special revelation from God concerning how he should behave toward the Gentiles
    - (1) Acts 10:15b "...What God has cleansed, that call not thou common."
    - (2) Acts 10:28 Peter speaking to Cornelius says: "... Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."
    - (3) Acts 10:34,35 "Then Peter opened his mouth and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

B. The Scope of Peter's Blunder

Peter doubtless had no idea that so much was involved in his blunder. Thoughtless, arbitrary decisions often have widespread implications.

1. It reflected on the Gentile manner of life
  - a. by his action Peter was compelling the Gentiles to act as Jews in order to be acceptable (verses 14 and 15)
2. It reflected on the doctrine of justification by faith
  - a. Those ordinances which Peter was forcing on the Gentiles were part of a system which taught that righteousness comes through keeping the Law. (This was Judaism - not what the Old Testament itself teaches.)
  - b. Peter was teaching that we are justified by faith, but by his conduct he was admitting that works have something to do with our justification.
  - c. Paul clearly states that the Law does not bring a man to the state of righteousness. We are declared righteous by faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.