

“Paul Opposes Cephas”

Galatians 2:11-14

September 29, 2024

Introduction/Organization

- We have been following Paul building a case (verses 1:11 – 2:14) that he has authority to write about the controversy of circumcision being required for salvation
- Let’s review the first four arguments that Paul gives as evidence of his authenticity as an apostle:
- This time we’ll see how Paul confronts Peter and in so doing, demonstrates his equality with the other apostles

Paul demonstrates he has been given equal authority with the other apostles (2:11-13)

- “Those who seemed influential... God shows no partiality (2:6)
 - Recall how Paul referred to the leaders of the Jerusalem church as influential
 - He reminds us that God shows no partiality, even among influential leaders
- “But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned” (2:11-13)
 - If he opposes even Peter, who is a pillar, he is not a follower of Peter, but of a higher authority
 - Such boldness is uncharacteristic of Paul. See, for example, 1 Cor. 15:8-9:
“Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”
 - Paul’s boldness clues us in to the importance of the matter
- “But when [certain men from James] came, [Peter] drew back and separated himself” (2:12)
 - “Certain men from James” – not necessarily sent by James
 - Peter changed his behavior under pressure from the others
 - But this is more than simply blending in with the crowd, as we will see

Some background on the conflict

- There are a multitude of ceremonial guidelines and rituals given in the Torah
 - These include prohibitions around what to eat and how it should be prepared
 - See, for example, Deu. 14:1-21
- After the Babylonian exile, Rabbinical Judaism began to develop many prohibitions on top of the prohibitions described in the Torah
 - As just one example, the prohibition about boiling a young goat in its mother’s milk (Exo. 23:19, Exo. 34:26, Deu. 14:21) was expanded to not allow cooking meat and dairy together
 - Eventually, these multitudes of prohibitions caused Jews to completely separate themselves from Gentiles
 - For example, in John 18:28, when Jewish leaders were having Jesus tried:

“Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.”

- But God meant for these prohibitions in the Torah to serve as a stark symbol of holiness and of being a people separated unto him
 - Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for erecting these many additional prohibitions around God's prescribed laws: See, for example, Luke 11:46:
“And he said, Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.”
 - As he taught his disciples, he clarified that foods and unwashed hands don't themselves defile a person. See Matt. 15:10-11, 15-20:
“And he called the people to him and said to them, ‘Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person...’ 15 But Peter said to him, ‘Explain the parable to us.’ 16 And he said, ‘Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.’”
- Peter had a hard time letting go of these Rabbinical traditions
 - It took a vision to convince him that fellowship with Gentiles was permissible. This episode is recorded in Acts Chapter 10, and summarized in Acts 11:1-18
 - Peter understood the meaning of his vision, which was not about food, but fellowship! (Acts 10:28)
“And he said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.’”
- So, Peter's hypocrisy was not just a matter of food and drink and washing. This went to the heart of the truth of the Gospel, and the meaning of the cross!

Peter's hypocrisy publicly condemned by Paul

- “And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray...” (2:13)
 - Peter's prominence and influence led others astray
 - Peter, of all people, should have known better
- “I said to Cephas before them all...” (2:14)
 - Why did Paul rebuke Peter so publicly?
 - After all, Jesus taught us to handle conflicts privately at first. See Matt. 18:15-17:
“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three

witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

- (And Paul repeats this guideline in 1 Tim. 5:19-20)
- Three reasons his rebuke needed to be public:

Next week we will see how Paul shifts from his defense of his apostleship to a more theological defense of the unity of Jews and Gentiles under the gospel