

I. Introduction.

II. Don't entrust yourself to men because even great men can make great mistakes. v. 12-13

A. What Peter did. v. 11a,12

1. At first Peter happily ate with Gentile believers in Antioch. v. 12a Eph. 2:14-15 Acts 10:9-16,28 11:2ff 2:42 1 Co. 11:20
2. Then, when certain men (the "James gang") came to Antioch, Peter separated himself from his Gentile brothers. 12b 1 Co. 5:11 Acts 15:24,5 Mt. 13:49 25:32

B. Why Peter did it – hypocrisy, fear, and legalism. v. 12b

1. Not because Peter had any personal scruples against eating with Gentiles. v. 12a,14 Acts 10:28 11:3
2. Peter (again) was afraid. v. 12b Mark 14:66-72 Prov. 29:25 Acts 5:27-32
3. Peter capitulates to legalism. Acts 15:1,5

C. The result of Peter's action. v. 13

1. Other Jewish believers followed Peter's hypocritical example. v. 13
2. The church is at risk of being divided, thus undermining the gospel – separate is not equal.
3. Peter needs a "Nathan" to correct him. 2 Sam. 12:1ff Prov. 27:5-6

D. Application.

1. Don't put your ultimate trust in fallible men. Jer. 17:5-8 2 Chron. 24:2
2. God's infallible Word is our ultimate authority. Acts 17:11 2 Tim. 3:16-4:4
3. Beware of your own tendency to fear men. Pr. 29:25 Acts 20:27
4. Don't trust yourself. 1 Co. 10:12 Prov. 3:5-6 28:26 Jer. 17:9 John 15:5
5. Your sins and errors can affect others. Mt. 18:6
6. We all need accountability. 1 Tim. 5:17-22 Acts 14:23 20:28-30 Heb. 13:17
7. There is possibility for restoration of those who err. John 21:15ff

III. The truth of the gospel must be defended. v. 11,14

A. What Paul did.

1. He stood up against Peter's error. v. 11 Js. 4:6 Mt. 16:23
2. He publicly rebuked Peter. v. 14
3. Should Paul have first gone to Peter privately? Mt. 18:15ff
4. Public sin often requires public rebuke. 1 Tim. 5:20 1 Co. 5:1ff
5. Paul then records Peter's failure in Scripture.

B. Why Paul did it.

1. Not because Paul was quarrelsome, or because he was ambitiously trying to establish his own apostolic supremacy over a rival. Eph. 4:1ff 1 Co. 9:22
2. Paul rebuked Peter because the gospel was at stake. v. 14 Acts 15:1,5
 - a. Peter's withdrawal implies that the Gentiles do not have an equal status through faith in Christ.
 - b. He thus implies that God only accepts those who conform to the Jewish Law.
 - c. Peter's previous words and actions had demonstrated that he knew better (making him a hypocrite). 2:3,10 Acts 10:28 11:3
 - d. Peter thus stood condemned. v. 11 Mt. 16:21-23
3. Paul could not yield when the gospel was at stake, not even to Peter. 1:8-9 2:4-5

C. The result of what Paul did.

1. The purity of the gospel of grace alone, apart from any human works, was defended. 2:16
2. The unity of the church was preserved. 3:28 Eph. 3:6
3. How did Peter respond to this rebuke?
 - a. Some scholars claim that this created a permanent rift between the apostles.
 - b. Later events prove otherwise. Acts 15:7-22 2 Pet. 3:15-16

D. Application.

1. We must be very precise about the truth of the gospel.
2. It is possible to implicitly or subtly deny the gospel.
3. We must accept our fellow believers on the same basis that God does. Ro. 15:7
4. We must be prepared to defend the gospel.
5. We must lovingly rebuke those who stray from the truth. 6:1-2 Lev. 19:18-19 Prov. 27:5-6 Mt. 18:15-20
6. How well do you receive correction? 6:1-2 Pr. 17:10 9:8 2 Sam. 12

IV. Conclusion.

Discussion questions

1. Why did Peter stop eating with the Gentile Christians?
2. Of what sins was Peter guilty?
3. How were Peter's actions inconsistent with the gospel?
4. Under what circumstances do you struggle with the fear of man?
What harm results when you give in?
5. How can people today be guilty of making too much of human religious leaders?
6. Was Paul right to make this a public issue? Why or why not?
7. What was the outcome of Paul's rebuke of Peter?
8. In what ways do people today implicitly or subtly deny the gospel?
9. How do you respond when you are rebuked?