



## PETER'S HYPOCRISY

(Galatians 2:11-17)

- Peter stopped fellowshipping with Gentile believers when he was in the company of Jews whom he feared would disagree with what he was doing (*12; Acts 11:1-3; 15:1*)
  - this influenced other Jewish believers (*13*)
- Paul opposed this – Peter's practice was not consistent with the gospel he had received and believed (*Christ died for Jews and Gentiles; 11,14; Acts 10:43*)
- Peter had acted as if he was still the man he was before he trusted in Christ (pretending to be someone he no longer was); his actions were inconsistent with the truth he believed (*hypocrisy*).
- By withdrawing from Gentile believers, Peter endorsed the belief that Gentile believers must live as Jews (under Old Testament Law); he was requiring them to do something he had renounced in his new faith (*14*).
- As a Christian of Jewish origin, Peter should have been especially keen to demonstrate (by word and action) that no one can be justified by keeping the Law; it is only by faith in Christ that we are cleansed (*15-16; Acts 10:28*).
- Paul, inspired by the Spirit of God, pointed out that if we confess that we are justified by faith in Christ and then turn back to the Law for justification, we are behaving as if Christ's work on the cross is insufficient; i.e., making Him to be a minister of sin, rather than righteousness – this is absolutely wrong! (*17*)

## PRACTISING WHAT WE BELIEVE

1. Are you truly forgiven (justified) by God? What do you trust for your forgiveness (justification)? Is it by what you do that you are justified, or do you believe that the only way that God counts you as righteous is through faith in Jesus Christ?
2. As a Christian, is your practice consistent with your beliefs about Jesus Christ? Do you behave differently depending on whom you are with? When you do, what does it say about Jesus Christ? What influence does your behaviour have on others?

The greatest Christian challenge is living what we claim to believe. All of us fall short of this goal. Like Peter, there are times that we live and speak boldly for Christ, enduring His shame and suffering (*Acts 2- 4*); while at other times, we find ourselves compromising the truth we believe, in order to be accepted by others (*Galatians 2:11-17*). To say this is not so is to be hypocritical about our hypocrisy. In our natural state, we are chameleon-like; we naturally assimilate with our culture in order to gain praise and acceptance. We are called to put off this “old” nature and put on the “new” nature of Christ (*Ephesians 4:22-24*). This includes behaving in a way that is consistent with the gospel, regardless of whose company we are in. We should be receptive to correction when we have dishonoured Christ with our hypocrisy (*Psalms 141:5*). When we are guilty of inconsistency and pretence, we need to be honest with the Lord about it (*1 John 1:8-10*). If we detect hypocrisy in a fellow Christian, we should restore them in a spirit of gentleness, knowing that we can easily fall into the same sin (*Galatians 6:1*).

*“Therefore, laying aside all...hypocrisy...” (1 Peter 2:1)*