



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 2:11-14

"Paul Versus Peter"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning again to Galatians chapter 2, and our Scripture reading this morning is rather brief, only four verses, Galatians chapter 2, verse 11 through verse 14. Just for the sake of a brief review, remember the apostle is seeking to defend his apostleship in the opening two chapters of the Epistle to the Galatians; together with the independency, not only of his apostleship, but his gospel message well. And in the course of the defense of himself, for he feels that it is important to defend his office.

Before he launches into a full defense of his message, he has been looking into his past history. He has spoken of his manner of life before he was converted. He spoke of the things that happened to him when he was converted, and of the things that have happened to him afterwards. He has been saying in each one of these things that it is evident that his previous life cannot account, naturally, for his present position. He implies by this, and also states it directly, that it is the result of God's direct working on his life. In the 2nd chapter he has referred to a visit to Jerusalem, which evidently his enemies have interpreted as an acknowledgement of the superiority of the pillar apostles in Jerusalem. He points out that they did not communicate anything to him as far as the character of his gospel was concerned, but rather they acknowledged his superiority

among the Gentiles. That is, that God had given him special commission to preach among the Gentiles as he had for Peter among the Jews.

This incident that we are looking at is a further defense of himself, and he will show that when Peter was in Antioch, he not only withstood Peter to his face, but the implication is that he came off in superiority as a result of this. You may remember that there is a large religious organization that has a doctrine of papal primacy. That means that all Christians, under penalty of excommunication, are supposed to believe that the Religious leader in Rome is the divine successor of Peter endowed with the primacy of jurisdiction over the entire church. That second, his primacy includes the full power to teach and rule, both in faith and morals, and also in discipline and government of the entire church. And finally, that the jurisdiction is both collective and individual, and that, theoretically, we are all, if we are believers in Jesus Christ, under the jurisdiction of this leader.

They recognize that they must prove several propositions in order to support this. One, that Peter was appointed by Christ as the visible head of the whole Christian church, endowed with the power of supreme jurisdiction. And second, that it was Christ's will that Peter's primacy should be carried on through all the years of the militant Christian church. That is on through the centuries, and that this jurisdiction and this power is communicated to his successors. And finally, that Peter's primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Christian church, was intended by Christ to be continued by and through the bishops of the city of Rome, of whom Peter was the first. I think it is evident from this simple incident that we are going to read, that the primacy does not rest with Peter. There is, strictly speaking, no primacy other than the primacy of the apostolic teaching, now contained in the word of God. The church is the church, because of the teaching of the word of God. The church did not give us the Bible. The truth of the Bible is the foundation of the church. The church has come into existence because of the teaching of holy Scripture. The church has not authorized Scripture. Scripture and the truth

contained in it is the foundation for the spiritual life that every member of the church has, and which is the foundation of the church.

This incident is therefore a rather important incident, even though it is very briefly recorded. It's evident that the apostle Paul did not know any doctrine of papal primacy, and the evidence of it is his rebuking of Peter before the whole of the church in Antioch. We begin with verse 11,

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before certain men came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles (Now you can probably sense from reading this that he is speaking about customary action. But the Greek text renders it; he used to eat with the Gentiles.): but when they were come, he began to withdraw and separate himself, because he feared them that were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled in like manner with him (that words means "to play the hypocrite." They were hypocritical in like manner with him,); insomuch that Barnabas also (the companion of Paul) was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles (he had gone in to eat with them), and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

The New International Version, a very good rendering of the New Testament, renders "why compellest thou" by the word "force." Why do you force the Gentiles to live as Jews? That is probably a little too strong. We do not ordinarily think of forcing people to do something by an example, but the force of compel is very suitable. We can exert compulsion by illustration. I think the King James translators at this point, and other translators, have used the English word compel have caught the force precisely. Now, the use of this word through the rest of the New Testament, I believe supports it. Why

compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews. That word "compellest thou" is the key to the point that Paul makes, and we'll talk about that when we come to the message in a moment or so. Our subject for today is "Paul Versus Peter" or "The Bishop of Rome Fallible After All."

"Eternal vigilance," Wendell Phillips said at an anti-slavery meeting in Massachusetts over a hundred years ago, "is the price of liberty." That sentiment is true in politics, and it's true in the domain of truth. One of the characteristics of the Apostle Paul's teaching, and the characteristics of the other apostles are their stress upon vigilance. The apostle wrote to the Ephesian elders, or said to the Ephesian elders, "Therefore, watch, and remember, that for the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears" To the Corinthians he wrote, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" And then in the Epistle to the Galatians, the 5th chapter, he will say to them "Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty with which Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" And Peter, the other apostle in our passage that we are looking at this morning, wrote, "Be sober, BE VIGILANT, because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

It's not always to be vigilant in the truth. Truth is not oft always received with joy and gladness. Socrates, according to Plato's Apology said, "Do not be angry with me if I tell you the truth." In very epistle, the Apostle Paul, who speaks so sharply to the Galatians here and there says, "Am I, therefore, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" This principle of vigilance as the price of liberty is illustrated in the section of Galatians to which we have come. We have been saying that the Pauline churches were troubled by infiltrating Judaisers who wished to say, not simply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," but "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be circumcised, and thou shalt be saved." They agreed with Paul in the facts of the gospel. But they disagreed with Paul over the terms which the benefits of Christ's work become

ours. And so they wanted to add the additional term of circumcision. They wanted to transform the gospel into a sacramental system, composed not only of the work that Christ did on the cross, but the observance of a religious ceremony.

Paul's first line of defense is the demonstration of the divine character of his office and of his message. He says in the very 1st verse of the 1st chapter that he was an "apostle not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead." And then a few verses on, he said that the gospel which he preaches is "not after man." Because he neither received it of man, nor was he taught it. He received it of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The apostle wants to make very plain that his message, as well as his office, are from God. His doctrine is from God. The evidence is given in the verses that follow. He looks back at his life before his conversion, and he says, "Before my conversion I was a man who was advancing in Judaism beyond my contemporaries. You cannot explain what I had come to believe by looking at my past life. Furthermore," he said, "at my conversion it was a case of an encounter with God on the Damascus Road. And God revealed his Son in me."

Then he speaks, incidentally, of how went into Arabia. Because it was not a case of God using mushrooms. God does not use mushrooms, which spring up in a night. He uses oaks, and even the Apostle Paul, who was a man who was instructed in the Jewish understanding of the Old Testament, needed time by which he could take the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus and see them anew in the light of those Old Testament Scriptures, which he had made his lifetime study. He talks also about his life past and with particular reference to the city of Jerusalem. He said, "It's true, I went up to Jerusalem. But I did not go up to Jerusalem as a sign of inferiority and dependence upon the apostles in Jerusalem, Peter, James, and John. As a matter of fact, when I went up there they did not compel Titus to be circumcised. They agreed with me about circumcision, and furthermore, they extended to me the right hand of Christian fellowship,

in which they, in effect, said that you are superior among the Gentiles, because your ministry is among them as Peter's is among the Jews.

John Calvin said, "From this we see how firm his doctrine was. He not only obtained their willing subscription to it, but then looking at the passage that follows," he adds, "but steadfastly maintained it against Peter and came off victorious." So the purpose of this section that we are looking at here is to stress the fact that he actually had an encounter with one of these pillar apostles, one of these men of repute, in the city of Antioch. And he had to stand up in the Church at Antioch, and in a public display of opposition to Peter, rebuke him before the whole of the church, showing that his actions were contrary to the truth of the gospel. That doesn't sound like dependence, does it? That's independence. And the implication is that Peter was convinced, at least Paul came off victorious in that encounter.

I think that this incident, incidentally, stresses very strongly the importance of the article of faith called justification by grace through faith. It is doubtful that there is anything else in the world that is to be compared with the article of justification by faith. "What is Peter? What is Paul? What is an angel from heaven," Luther said. "What are all other creatures to the article of justification, which if we know, then we are in clear light. But if we be ignorant thereof, then we are in the most miserable darkness." That is true, my dear friend. If you are ignorant of the doctrine of justification by faith, you are not in the light. You are in the most miserable darkness that it is possible for a man to live in. But if you have come to an understanding of your own sin, and guilt, and condemnation; you have seen that you have truly been slain before God by sin, and you are come to see the Lord Jesus Christ and his merits as the sole foundation for the assurance of life, then you are in the clearest of light. And you have an assurance that no one, no one, not even Satan himself, can take away from you.

When we turn to this incident and look first at the circumstances of it, the apostle says in verse 11, "But when Peter was come to Antioch." This was one of the most

dramatic episodes in the New Testament. You know, we have lots of expressions out west. I've read a lot of westerns over the past few years. When I want to relax a little, I read some of the westerns. I won't tell you the names of my authors, you would laugh. But generally my mind goes into neutral when I read them. I do remember some of their expression, however, some of the expressions of the west. One is "Winchester litigation," well I understood what that meant. There is another expression that "Law is in the five bullets that are in the cylinder, but justice is the one in the chamber." Well, I remember some of the expressions that are used when two men beat each other on the little street in front of the saloon for a final showdown. And it's referred to as one man "bracing" another. "He braced him." And usually it follows with he "bored" him also. [Laughter] He braced him and he bored him.

Well, here is an encounter, a dramatic episode, in which Paul braces Peter. And as a matter of fact, he bored him, to speak in a rather symbolic way. Peter is supposed to be *primus inter pares*, the first among equals. These two apostles, they are honored men, do not forget that. As a matter of fact, the Book of Acts is loosely divided into two parts, the history of Peter and the history of Paul. Two great and honored men of the church meet in the city of Antioch. There is a puzzle about this. It's such a great puzzle to those who think of Peter as having primacy that they have wondered if the Cephas referred to here is really the Cephas known in the synoptic gospels. And several have sought to suggest that perhaps the Peter referred to here, and in the Greek text the term is Cephas, if he's really the Peter that we know as one of the apostles. Perhaps he was one of the seventy; they have had difficulty believing that it is possible for the Apostle Paul to have faced Peter down in Antioch.

F.C. Bauer of Tübingen used this as one of the aides in the presentation of his hypothesis that to understand the New Testament we must understand that there was a fundamental difference between Jerusalem and Paul, or Peter and Paul. And the doctrines of James and Peter and the Jerusalem apostles were different from the doctrine of the

Apostle Paul. They taught the events of the Lord Jesus, but they also taught that one must keep the law, whereas, Paul was a man of grace. Bauer went on to say that Paul was wrong; that they were really followers of the Lord Jesus, and therefore the Christian doctrine really was a kind of doctrine in which law formed an integral part of New Testament teaching.

But that's not the conviction of other great students of the word. John Calvin said with reference to this incident, "And here the Roman papacy is struck down by another thunderbolt." And then he goes on to say, "The whole debate on the two points that he's referred to his nothing less than the overthrow of the tyrannical primacy, which the Romanists prate was founded on divine right. If they wish to have God as their founder, they must write a new Bible," he says. The occasion was the visit of Peter to Antioch. We do not, of course, know the circumstances of it. Evidently while Paul was off visiting somewhere else, I cannot imagine Paul being there and observing this going on without saying something early about Peter's actions. Peter had come he had begun to fellowship with the church at Antioch, no doubt anxious to see how God had worked there. And he had begun to eat with the Gentiles, had mixed with them, had enjoyed it, as a matter of fact. And then some representatives from James had some, and finally Paul. I assume that this all took place before the Jerusalem conference.

Well, that brings us to the controversy. Paul says that when Peter came to the city of Antioch, he withstood into the face, because he was to be blamed for, that for explains why Paul thought he was to be blamed. So the confrontation took place before, before certain men came from James he used to eat with the Gentiles, but they were come he began to withdraw and separate himself, because he feared these men who came from James. Who evidently were believers in the necessity of circumcision.

The confrontation then concerned food. Now, you know enough about the Old Testament to know that Jews had certain food laws. There were certain foods that were good for them to eat. There were certain foods that were prohibited. For example, they



could not eat pork. And perhaps this was involved in this. Incidentally, this morning, too, after the message Dr. Martin of the translation teach of the New International Version, who has been attending our meeting over the past weeks, came and knocked on the door. He said "I'll tell you a little story that you might be interested in." He said, "I used to minister in Palestine when it was Palestine. And I did that for a number of years, and there was a man there whose name was Mr. Clark, A.P.S. Clark. He was a banker. Mr. Clark was a Christian man, and I got to know him, and he told me this story." He said, "Two Jewish men came into the bank in Jerusalem and wanted to cash a check, and they were from Tel Aviv. And one of the tellers came and spoke to them and said, we don't have any information on these men, and we are wondering if we should cash this check." He said, "Let me see it." He looked at the check and he didn't recognize the name, so he said, "Call in the men." And so the two men came in, and he said, "I thought I knew most of the businessmen in Tel Aviv, but I must confess I do not know you." And so he said to them, "Well, what do you do for a living?" And one of them said, "I run a Jewish pork speakeasy in Tel Aviv." In other words, he was selling pork illicitly among the Jewish people. Some of whom had developed a taste for pork, evidently and wanted to eat it in spite of the prohibition of the Old Testament Law for the eating of pork.

Now, the Jewish people had these laws from the Old Testament and consequently, it came as a result of this as a kind of unwritten law that a Jews would not eat with the Gentiles. It was not stated in the Old Testament that a Jew could not eat with the Gentiles. That is perfectly all right according to the letter of the Old Testament. But since the Gentiles did not observe the Old Testament laws, it was a very embarrassing thing, very often, for the Jewish people to refuse to eat certain things in the home of Gentiles. So out of this grew the easier custom of just not eating with the Gentiles. And further, the Gentiles did not observe other things, and since the Gentiles did not have the Law, it is true that many of them were much greater sinners than the Jews, and the expressions

arose, "Sinners of the Gentiles," as we shall see in just a moment in the Epistle to the Galatians.

Now, some of these requirements, I say, were not scriptural, but nevertheless they were practiced. And one of them was the not eating with the Gentiles. So evidently then, Peter had come to Antioch, and knowing the grace of God from his experience in Cornelius' house, he had come. He had, since there were no leaders from Jerusalem about, he had begun to fellowship with the Gentiles. He enjoyed the relationship to the Gentile Christians, and he began to eat with them in their homes. I can imagine him sitting down at the table, and being served pork for the first time, and rather gingerly taking his fork and taking a bit of it; and putting it in his mouth and saying, "Not bad;" [Laughter] and then developing a little bit of taste for it, enjoying fellowship with the other Christians, because they were not now under the Law of the Old Testament, the Levitical cultus.

But soon there came a committee from Jerusalem, men from James and the Christian church there. Someone said that a committee is a body that "keeps minutes and wastes hours." Committees are always fearful groups of men, and these were men who came from James. We don't know whether they were believers or not. It is simply said that they were of the circumcision, so evidently they were men who believed but at the same time thought that circumcision was necessary. Now, whether they thought it was necessary for salvation or not, that is not stated here. And it may be that these are those who felt that circumcision was a very desirable thing for a Jewish man to continue to observe, but not necessary for salvation. We'll give them the benefit of the doubt. Paul says nothing about that, other than that they were of the circumcision. It's startling, is it not, that Peter should, when these men came, should have begun to withdraw from the Gentiles, with whom he's been having very enjoyable fellowship. Perhaps he thought, "If I mix with these Gentiles too much, they won't invite me to the annual apostles' Bible conference in Jerusalem." But it was more than that. It is stated here that he feared them.

Now, that's startling, too, because it was Peter who back in the 10th chapter of the Book of Acts, in connection with the salvation of Cornelius, was used by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles in the first place. Now he had a very difficult time following his commission, and God had to speak to him by vision. And remember, he went up on the top of the house of Simon the Tanner. Incidentally, that was a victory for grace, that Peter even lived with Simon the Tanner, for tanners are noted for the stench of their work. And even in the stench of the work of Simon the Tanner, was matched by the stench of the Gentiles in ordinary Jewish nostrils. But Peter overcame that, and stayed with Simon the Tanner. But he needed a vision from God to bring him to the place where he would preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

So, he had the vision, remember, of the sheet let down from heaven, in which were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air, unclean animals according to the Old Testament Law. And the voice came to Peter, "Rise Peter, kill and eat." And you'll remember he said, "Not so, Lord." Isn't it interesting, he puts "Lord" with "not so." You can say, "No so." But you cannot say, "Lord." Or if you say, "Lord," you cannot say, "Not so." But the contradiction is implicit in his words, "Not so Lord." For I've never eaten anything that is common or unclean. Then God spoke to him and said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." In other words, as a result of the Levitical economy has been done away with. And therefore the distinction in meats no longer exists. Later on, we read in verse 28, that "God hath shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean." He had learned his lesson. It would seem. And so he preached the gospel to Cornelius. And in Cornelius' house, a number was saved.

But, now in Jerusalem he's there, and he has the conviction. It's all right to fellowship with the Gentiles, but when the men come from James, the old fear arises in Peter's heart. And imagine that what happened was that when he first saw these men, he just, you know the feeling that comes over you when a fearful situation arises. It came all

over Peter, and he says, "What if they smell the pork on my breath." So he rushed out the back door, went down to the corner drug store, and got some Binaca [Laughter] in order to eliminate the smell of the pork upon his breath. Well, this went on, he began to gradually withdraw. Now, notice, Paul says he knew better. It was from fear of the circumcision, not conviction. He knew that it was all right to eat with them, but he was fearful of these men who did not know the things that he knew.

So soon after this, Paul arrives, and he hears about it. The church has been divided into two parts. There are the Gentile Christians and the Jewish Christians, and the issue is now Peter's actions. He asks what happened. Why, they said, "Peter used to come into our homes and eat with us, and we thought he was enjoying the pork. But when those men came from Jerusalem, a change came in Peter. And now if you invite him over for supper, he won't come." He eats all together with the Jewish Christians, and not the Gentile Christians. Something has happened, and I can just see Paul. There is immediately rising within him the anger of a man who knows the truth of the gospel of the grace of God. He's a Jew, too. But he knows the gospel of the grace of God. So he says to himself, "Peter, I'm not going to let you get away with it." And so when the meeting of the church took place, it is Paul who stands up before them all, and rebukes him. We read verse 14, "But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all," you know we learn some practical lessons here. We learn that Peter is no vicar of Christ here. And we also learn that it is not enough to have new life and a new spirit. For Peter is now indwelt by the Holy Spirit. It's not enough to have all these benefits, but there must be conformity to the Scriptures. In other words, to have a new life, to have a new spirit, is no guarantee against falling. And Peter has fallen.

Now, it would be bad if the apostle failed, but unfortunately as is so often the case, our failing influence others, and so Paul says, the other Jews dissembled in like manner with him. They played the hypocrite, too. They knew better also. They were

afraid of those men from Jerusalem, too. In so much that Barnabas, also, was carried away with their false pretense. So, Peter's false acting which resulted from craven fear of these men from Jerusalem. "The fear of the Lord bringeth a snare," the word of God says. Influences Barnabas as well, not only is Peter shown to be a very fallible servant of the Lord, but gentle Barnabas, the son of consolation. He shows the weakness of a loving spirit that's not tempered by the firmness of biblical orthodoxy, a love of Bible doctrine. It's great for men to get up and to tell us to love one another, and emphasize love, and emphasize concern, and emphasize compassion. We're all for these things, but love without the steel of firmness in biblical doctrine, very easily become compromise of the truth. And that is what happened, Barnabas also; Barnabas the companion of the Apostle Paul. He had traveled with him on missionary journeys. Even Barnabas is carried away by the dissimulation. So the love of Barnabas has melded into compromise, and now he's evasively straddling the fence about the very character of the gospel itself. Is it a gospel of grace or is it not?

We have so much in history that illustrates this. There was Luther, the man of steel, the man of firmness, the man of biblical orthodoxy. And then there was Melancthon, the gentle reformer, the quiet reformer he has been called. Melancthon, who understood a lot, but at the same time allowed, by virtue of his own spirit, the intrusion of synergism in the Lutheran church, founded on the free grace of the gospel preached so strongly by Martin Luther. We've seen that illustrated down through the years. One man, so far as the Scripture is concerned, in this situation stayed firm. It was the Apostle Paul. Peter was gone, the rest of the Jews were gone. Even Barnabas, one of his right hand men, was gone. Only Paul, and if he had failed, a flood of legalism would have swept into the church. Humanly speaking, we might not be meeting today. But there was Paul, and there Luther, there was Ignatius, and other men who at critical points in the history of the Christian church have stood for the truth. Thank God for these men. Unpopular, no doubt; criticized, no doubt, but nevertheless they stood firm.

So, Paul says he withstood him to the face. "I withstood him to the face," verse 11, "I stood up to him." He considers Peter's action aggressive. You'll notice he says, "I opposed him. I stood up to him." Peter, by his actions is preaching a certain doctrine. It's not simply a passive thing. We may actively preach a certain truth by the things that we do. That's the way Paul interprets Peter's action.

So the conclusion of the matter is given in verse 14. He says, "Peter has publicly acted in duplicity and hypocrisy, and so I publicly rebuked him." Boy that would have been some meeting wouldn't it? Everybody gathered to observe the Lord's Supper in the local church; there were a few hymns that were sung. And suddenly the Apostle Paul stands up and says, "I have some words to say to the Apostle Peter." And some of the sweet spirits in the meeting said, "Oh my, it's going to be a fight." There's going to be a fight. There's going to be trouble. Here's that Paul again. Was Paul an irascible old man, temperamental theologian who loved to split doctrinal hairs? No, he wasn't that at all. He was the one man who was God's man in this situation. He was the one man who saw that one of the chief articles of the Christian faith was at stake.

So he stands up in the midst of the meeting and says, "I have a word to say to Peter, and to say to all of you who are dissembling, playing the hypocrite with him. Peter, you know better. When you came to Antioch, you lived with the Gentiles. You are a Jew, you lived with the Gentiles. When these men from Jerusalem have come, you've now changed. You won't have any fellowship with the Gentiles; you fellowship with the Jews. So Peter, if you a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews. Why are you compelling the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" Peter might have jumped up, we have no record of course, and said, I didn't compel them, but that's the word that Paul uses. He says, "By your very example, you compel them to live as do the Jews. You're a man who is an apostle. You're an illustration for the whole of the Christian church. By your withdrawing from the Gentiles and eating only with the Jews,

you are forcing these Gentiles to think that the only way you can have full fellowship is to eat with the Jews and observe the Jewish laws."

That's the compelling, I agree with Luther. Luther says, "This is the clue to the understanding of the passage here." And "why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" What does he mean? Well, he means simply this, "Peter, your actions have played into the hands of the Judaizers. They said to have Christ by grace through faith is not enough for full fellowship. You must also observe the Law. Fellowship demands acceptance of the yolk of the Law. So Peter, don't you see that by your actions you have said that Christ is insufficient. You have said that you must observe the precepts of the Mosaic Law, and because other Gentiles are watching you, and want to have a relationship to God that is proper and right. You are by your example, compelling them to live like the Jews, to observe the Law again in order to have acceptance before God. Peter, you are the instrumentality for the possibility of their falling from grace," the grace principle of Christianity. And let me say further, it is to deny Jesus Christ. It is to deny the sufficiency of the work that he did on the cross. It is to say that when the Lord Jesus said, "It is finished." It was not really finished, but one must also add the keeping of the commandments of the Law in order to be justified.

Now, today we may do the same thing, we are not inclined to say to people today, "You must not only believe in Jesus Christ, but observe the Levitical laws concerning clean and unclean things." But today we are inclined to say, "You must not only believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but you must be baptized in order to be saved." Now, let me say this. I do think that baptism is important. It is an important expression of our faith. In fact, it is so closely identified with our expression of faith in the Lord Jesus, that to say that "I was baptized at a certain time," for many people is to say in effect; I was saved then, because they were saved and baptized. That's why there is that close relationship in the New Testament between our salvation and our baptism. We must avoid all other expressions of faith, making them secondary and tertiary in

connection with baptism. We signify that we have believed in the Lord Jesus, not by signing a slip, not by raising our hands in a meeting, not by coming down to the front, not by doing all these other things that are not spoken of in the Bible at all. We signify our faith by our baptism in water. It is important, but now is a short step, but a big step doctrinally, to say that one must be baptized in order to be saved. That was proven to be false in the house of Cornelius.

But it is possible for us today to say, "Yes we must believe in Christ, and we must be baptized in order to be saved. That would be to fall from grace." It is possible for us to say, "It's not only necessary to believe in Jesus Christ, but to surrender to him in order to be saved." That is to confuse sanctification with justification. It is possible to say, we must believe in Christ and make him Lord of our lives. I say nothing about the fact that he is our Lord, but to make him Lord is the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. It is to confuse justification with sanctification again. And if we add any such thing as abstentions from various things, or the observance of certain things, we also confuse the gospel of the grace of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and don't attend the movies, or don't wear lipstick; that would be a terrible thing. I would hate to look out on a congregation that was so pale faced. [Laughter] But nevertheless it is the sad history of the Christian church, that various taboos down through the years have characterized the Christian church. Usually geographical, in certain areas certain things are done, and certain things are not. But if those things are confused with the terms of the gospel, it is to fall from grace.

Now, one thing I like about the Apostle Peter is that he was a man who was big enough to admit that he was wrong. Later on, years after this, he writes in his second epistle and he refers to Paul. He doesn't refer to him as that renegade apostle, that fellow that did not understand grace, that fellow that split the church in Antioch, or things like that. He says, "Our beloved brother, Paul." Now, I want to tell you, it takes a great man to say, "I was wrong." And so I say to the Apostle Peter, thank you Peter. It shows us



how really great you were, not because you have the primacy among the apostles, but because you have the grace to admit you were wrong.

Now, he does say there are things in Paul that are hard to be understood. He said, "I'm not sure that I understand all of Paul's writings, but nevertheless they are Scripture." He puts his writings in the rank of holy Scripture in 2 Peter chapter 3. So if Peter ever possesses the primacy, and he doesn't, he comes closest to it when he confesses that he was wrong, and that Paul is his beloved brother.

Well, let me conclude. It's not enough to believe the gospel; to strive to preserve it for the health of the church, we must learn not only to believe it and strive to preserve it, but to apply it uncompromisingly holding to the sole-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. That simple action of withdrawing fellowship from one group and living with another group, implying that it was necessary to keep the Law, is to deny the gospel of the grace of God. Paul says, "I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel." So it is important that the truth we possess be the truth that we apply, that we live by, even when there are men from Jerusalem that come around who have position and authority, and we're inclined to fear them. We need to stand for the truth.

And finally, I began by saying that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty and truth. Paul knew that. Ignatius knew it. Luther knew it. They were men who refused to be stampeded by the heard. May God give us a double portion of their spirit. If you are here this morning and you have never believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, we repeat, salvation is through the grace of God. And the benefits are received by faith alone. The Lord Jesus has offered the atoning sacrifice in the shedding of his precious blood, blood that is of sufficient value to cover all our sins.

And if the Holy Spirit has brought home to your heart your sin and guilt and condemnation, and if he has created within your heart the desire to be saved, we preach to you a Christ who is able to save unto the uttermost those who come unto God by him. Why do you not, at this very moment, turn to him and say, "Lord, I am a sinner. I am

lost. I am undone. I have offended a holy God. I am under divine condemnation. But your blood is sufficient to cover all of my sin, I do receive as a free gift, the everlasting life offered through the Lord Jesus Christ. I trust in his merits and in his merits alone. I do not trust in good works. I do not trust in sacraments. I do not trust in culture or education or anything else. My whole hope for eternal life is our Lord Jesus Christ himself." When we stand before God, and if we were asked the question, what is the ground of your salvation? We can reply in only one word, Christ. He's the ground of our whole salvation, and the whole ground of it. May God help us to know the assurance of everlasting life through grace.

If you're here and you've never believed in our Lord Jesus Christ, we exhort you to consider the cross of the Lord Jesus, and ask yourself the question, why did Jesus Christ die? Why did he suffer? Why did he shed his blood? And ask yourself also the question, is it possible that he dies because I am a sinner and need a Savior? May God the Holy Spirit touch your heart and enable you to see what you really are in the sight of God. And may, by the grace of God, you turn to him and receive him as your own personal Savior. May God enable you to glory in the cross as the apostle gloried in the cross. And may the result be that the treasures of this world no longer have appeal for you, the glory of God become your goal. Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] And now may grace, mercy, and peace; all the gifts of a loving God through grace, be the precious possession of each one present. For Jesus' sake. Amen.