
What Did Paul and Peter Disagree About? (Galatians 2:11)

Question: Why did Peter and Paul disagree, and what can we learn from their confrontation?

Answer: Let’s take a look at the passage:

> *Galatians 2:11 (ESV)*
>
> *“But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.”*

The disagreement mentioned here was not a petty argument over religious opinions, like those warned against in 1 Timothy 6:4, 2 Timothy 2:14, or Philippians 2:14, which caution us to avoid meaningless disputes and grumbling.

Nor was it the kind of spiritual struggle we're encouraged to engage in, such as the fight of faith described in Philippians 1:30 and Hebrews 12:1—standing firm against the forces of darkness and holding on to our faith.

Rather, Paul's use of the word "opposed" in this context refers to a direct confrontation. When Paul arrived in Antioch and witnessed Peter's inconsistent behavior, he confronted him face-to-face and called him out for it. Peter had been acting in a way that compromised the truth of the gospel.

Here's what happened: When Peter was with Gentile believers, he ate freely with them—even partaking in foods considered unclean by Jewish law. But when certain Jewish Christians arrived from James, Peter suddenly withdrew from the Gentiles out of fear of criticism from the circumcision group.

His hypocrisy influenced other Jewish believers to do the same—even Barnabas, Paul's close companion, was led astray.

Seeing this, Paul knew he had to speak up.

> *Galatians 2:12–14 (ESV)*
>
> *“For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party.*
> *And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.*
> *But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?’”*

What Can We Learn from This?

1. From Paul, we learn boldness and integrity. He was not afraid to stand for the truth, even when it meant confronting someone as respected as Peter. Paul shows us that no one is above correction when the truth of the gospel is at stake. We must speak up—not out of pride, but out of love and a commitment to God’s truth.

2. From Peter, we learn humility. There’s no record of Peter becoming angry or defensive after Paul’s rebuke. Instead, later on, Peter even commends Paul’s writings and encourages believers to pay attention to them.

> *2 Peter 3:15–16 (ESV)*
>
> *“And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,*
> *as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.”*

Peter’s response shows spiritual maturity. He accepted correction, learned from it, and continued to serve faithfully.

As followers of Christ, we are called to emulate both Paul’s courage and Peter’s humility. That’s true Christianity—correcting one another in love and receiving correction with a teachable

heart. We are not called to overlook sin, nor to react with pride when we are corrected. Instead, we should respond with grace, learn, and grow.

May the Lord help us live this out.

Maranatha—The Lord is coming!

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