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"Overcoming 'Quiet Christianity'"

Galatians 2

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Sometimes Christians are reluctant to be bold in their faith for fear of what others may think. Even the apostle Peter briefly fell into this trap, and Paul confronted him about his hypocrisy. "Quiet Christianity" is when you act one way around some people, and a different way around other people who do not share your beliefs. In today's study, Pastor Gary gives us steps to overcome "quiet Christianity" so that we can be bold and courageous in our faith.

1. **Galatians 2:11-16** – *"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.'"*

## 2. Context

### a. Trouble in Galatia

- i. Galatia was a province in Asia Minor, or modern-day Turkey.
- ii. After Paul left the church plant, Judaizers came in spreading false doctrine.
- iii. The Judaizers were Jewish Believers who tried to impose the law on the gentiles as if works were a requirement for salvation.
  1. The book of Galatians' key verse is **Galatians 2:16** – *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."*
  2. To be "justified" means to be positionally right with God.
  3. As Christians, we still struggle with sin and must die to ourselves daily, but God now sees us clothed in the righteousness of Christ, which has been imputed to us.

### b. Trouble at Antioch

- i. The Judaizers' influence intimidated Peter into silence.

1. Peter's silence and withdrawal from gentiles sent a mixed message that led people astray.
- ii. Paul confronted Peter's error.
  1. **Galatians 2:11** – *"Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed."*
  2. **DISCUSS**: Are you willing to accept godly rebuke? How are you learning to handle correction better?
  3. **DISCUSS**: Are you willing to honestly and lovingly confront sin?
- iii. Peter's error was based on fear.
  1. **Galatians 2:12** – *"For before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision."*
  2. *"The circumcision"* were Jewish Believers.
  3. Certain Jewish Believers came from James, who was over the church in Jerusalem, and visited Peter in Antioch, Syria.
  4. Paul observed that Peter would withdraw from the gentiles when the Jews came, afraid of what the Jews would think.
  5. **DISCUSS**: Does the Lord have the final say in your life, or do other things like the media, friends, and family have a greater influence in your life?

### 3. Peter's view of gentiles

- a. Peter's error in withdrawing from the gentiles was ironic.
  - i. Jesus chose Peter as the apostle who would reach the first gentile.
    1. Jesus sent Peter to preach to Cornelius and his household.
      - a. Cornelius, the first gentile convert, was a Roman centurion (**Acts 10**).
      - b. The Jews held long-standing animosity toward the Romans, their oppressors, to the point that many rejected Jesus as the Messiah because His mission did not include overthrowing Rome.
      - c. As Cornelius was a gentile, a Roman, and a centurion, Jews would have considered him the worst of the worst, and yet this is the man that Jesus sent Peter to preach to.
    2. Jesus gave Peter a vision.
      - a. God gave Peter a vision of a sheet coming down to him full of unclean animals, and He told him to rise and eat.
      - b. Peter refused, saying he had never eaten anything common or unclean.

- c. The Lord replied, *“What God has cleansed you must not call common”* (**Acts 10:15**).
    - d. This repeated vision was to help Peter understand that God wanted to save the “unclean” gentiles, too.
  - ii. Peter defended gentile salvation and liberty in Christ.
    - 1. The salvation of gentiles was so shocking that Jewish Believers met to discuss the topic.
    - 2. While the Jews debated whether gentiles should practice the law to be fully Christian, Peter defended gentile liberty.
    - 3. **Acts 15:7–11** – *“And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: ‘Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.’”*
  - b. Ten years later, Peter allowed his Jewish brothers to decrease his confidence in the truth.

#### 4. Hypocrisy

- a. Paul and Peter’s confrontation
  - i. Paul called Peter out for his hypocrisy.
    - 1. **Galatians 2:13** – *“The rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.”*
  - ii. Paul called Peter out for leading other Believers astray—including Barnabas.
    - 1. Barnabas had been Paul’s traveling companion on his missionary journeys to the gentiles.
- b. Peter’s quiet Christianity
  - i. Peter had not been *“straightforward about the truth of the gospel”* (**Galatians 2:14**).
    - 1. Peter’s withdrawal from the gentiles allowed people to believe there was something lacking in gentile converts, as if they needed to become like the Jews to be truly saved.
- c. Peter’s feet of clay
  - i. The Bible records times when Peter acted in the flesh.

1. Peter rebuked Jesus for speaking of His death.
2. Peter walked on water toward Jesus, but he lacked the faith to stay afloat.
3. Peter said he would not abandon Jesus even if everyone else did, but he later denied knowing Jesus three times.
- ii. Peter was a godly man, but he had “feet of clay” like the rest of us, and we can learn much from his mistakes.
  1. **DISCUSS:** How does Peter’s hypocrisy confront you? Are you living true to God and self?
- d. Differentiating sensitivity from quiet Christianity
  - i. Sensitivity
    1. Sensitivity is about being mindful of people who do not share our Christian liberties.
    2. Because the Bible leaves some matters up to our sanctified conscience, some Christians will feel either at liberty or not at liberty to do things that are permissible.
    3. **Romans 14:13** – *“Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.”*
    4. In the first century pagan world, Romans would sell meat that had been offered to the gods.
    5. Paul said that Christians were free to eat meat, but they should give up their liberties in the presence of those who did not feel free to eat meat.
    6. **1 Corinthians 8:13** – *“Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”*
  - ii. Quiet Christianity
    1. Quiet Christianity is being embarrassed around people who do not share your beliefs.
- e. Courageous Christianity
  - i. Courageous Christianity is to unashamedly live for Christ no matter who you are with.
    1. **Romans 1:16** – *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.”*
    2. **DISCUSS:** How has God taught you to be unashamed to stand with Christ and speak His truth?
    3. **2 Timothy 1:8** – *“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God.”*

4. **Matthew 10:32–33** – *“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.”*
  - ii. God calls us to be bold—not to be chameleons, changing out of a desire to be liked and a fear of not belonging.
    1. **DISCUSS**: What is it that stops you from being bold for Christ? How can you counter the lies fear tells you with the truth of God’s Word?
5. Overcoming quiet Christianity with the acronym FEAR
  - a. Follow the example of Christ.
    - i. Jesus was the same with Jews and gentiles, with the prostitute and the Pharisee, and in public and in private.
  - b. Expect that not everyone will like you.
    - i. People are fickle and may choose to dislike you regardless.
      1. The crowds that followed Jesus came and went, and He never changed the message for them.
      2. The crowds blessed Jesus as their coming king one week and called for His crucifixion the next.
    - ii. We cannot be people-pleasers, but God-pleasers.
      1. Rather than focusing on being liked by men, we should focus on God’s faithful love for us.
      2. **Galatians 1:10** – *“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”*
      3. **DISCUSS**: How does a changed focus help you to be bolder for Christ?
  - c. Ask God to make you bold.
    - i. Jesus’ disciples asked God for boldness in the first century, despite knowing that boldness could lead to their deaths.
      1. **Psalms 138:3** – *“In the day when I cried out, You answered me, and made me bold with strength in my soul.”*
  - d. Repent for wanting the approval of man more than the approval of God.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)