

Galatians 2:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.

Analysis

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. The adversative hote de (ὅτε δέ, "but when") shifts to conflict. Peter's arrival eis Antiocheian (εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν, "to Antioch") becomes the stage for dramatic confrontation. The verb antestēn autō kata prosōpon (ἀντέστην αὐτῷ κατὰ πρόσωπον, "I opposed him to his face") uses the strong compound anthistēmi (ἀνθίστημι, "to resist, oppose")—the same verb used for resisting Satan (Ephesians 6:13). Kata prosōpon (κατὰ πρόσωπον, literally "according to face") means direct, public confrontation, not behind-the-back criticism.

The reason: hoti kategnōsmenos ēn (ὅτι κατεγνωσμένος ἦν, "because he stood condemned/was to be blamed"). The perfect passive participle kategnōsmenos indicates Peter placed himself in a condemned state through his actions—he stood self-condemned by his hypocrisy. Paul wasn't establishing new judgment but recognizing Peter's violation of the gospel he himself had received.

This public rebuke of the leading apostle demonstrates that gospel truth transcends human authority and personal relationships. Peter's status as a "pillar" apostle didn't exempt him from correction when his behavior contradicted the gospel. Paul's willingness to confront the most prominent apostle publicly validates his claim to equal apostolic authority and his passionate defense of justification by faith.

Historical Context

Antioch was the first major Gentile church (Acts 11:19-26), where Jewish and Gentile believers fellowshiped freely without regard for food laws. Peter's earlier vision (Acts 10:9-16) had freed him to eat with Gentiles. His withdrawal from Gentile fellowship in Antioch therefore represented a massive reversal, threatening to divide the church along ethnic lines and undermine the gospel of grace that makes Jews and Gentiles one in Christ.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. What does Paul's public confrontation of Peter teach about when private correction is insufficient?
2. When is it necessary to oppose respected Christian leaders who undermine the gospel through their actions?
3. In what areas might fear of human opinion be leading you into gospel-contradicting behavior?

Interlinear Text

Ὅτε δὲ ἦλθεν Πέτρος εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν κατὰ πρόσωπον
when But was come Peter to Antioch to the face
G3753 G1161 G2064 G4074 G1519 G490 G2596 G4383

αὐτῷ ἀντέστη ὅτι κατεγνωσμένος ἦν
him I withheld because to be blamed he was
G846 G436 G3754 G2607 G2258

Additional Cross-References

1 Timothy 5:20 (Parallel theme): Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Acts 15:1 (Parallel theme): And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

2 Corinthians 5:16 (Parallel theme): Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Galatians 2:14 (References Peter): 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, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Matthew 16:23 (References Peter): But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

2 Corinthians 12:11 (Parallel theme): I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

James 3:2 (Parallel theme): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

Galatians 2:7 (References Peter): But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

Galatians 2:5 (Parallel theme): To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Galatians 2:9 (Parallel theme): And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

