

## **Fear and Hypocrisy**

Galatians 2:11-13

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Galatians Chapter 2, verse number 11: "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. But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

Let us bow for prayer.

Heavenly Father, we pray now that You would, through Your Son, the Lord Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, work through the preaching of Your word to both strengthen, to convict, to comfort, to exhort Your people that they might be found pure and blameless and holy, that they might set aside the things which are weight and sin, and that they might run the race that is set before them, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

The section that follows from Chapter 1, verse 11 to Chapter 2, verse 13 outlines those evidences that Paul was making to prove and to show and

to demonstrate that his gospel was a gospel that was independent from the Jerusalem elders and apostles, and that his apostleship was not given to him by men but by God. He's demonstrating in these verses that he received revelation from Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus and he gives several arguments to prove that. He basically explains first and foremost that there is no human explanation for my call and conversion. You cannot make sense of my life apart from the fact that the risen Lord Jesus appeared to me on the road to Damascus and revealed His truth to me. And secondly, he also argues that there is no human intervention that transpired after his conversion, that after he was immediately saved and called as an apostle, it wasn't until 14 years later that he had some significant discussions with those at Jerusalem regarding the gospel that he preached. And then he goes on to say that even when I got there, in his third argument, the gospel that they preached, and Peter was preaching, was the very same gospel that I was preaching. Evidence once again that God not only had the Lord Jesus that walked with them, that taught them that gospel, and appeared to me on the road to Damascus, taught us the very same things.

And now he presents, as it were, one of the final arguments before he moves on to the doctrinal aspects of this epistle, demonstrating that gospel more clearly. And this one is a little bit of a strange one, maybe one a little bit unexpected, but what Paul shows here is the superiority of the gospel over all men, Apostle, elder, you name it, the gospel of Jesus Christ stands supreme. And he demonstrates this in giving the account of the rebuke of Peter as that demonstration of the fact that that gospel is supreme. If it comes by revelation, no man shall stand above it. If it comes from heaven, then all men are subservient to it and must subject themselves under it. And so when I saw Peter not walking according to it, it didn't matter who he was. It mattered that the gospel be defended, that gospel which, yes, Peter preached, which I preached. And it makes no difference if an angel from heaven preaches any other gospel, let that person or that angel be accursed.

And so the remaining section in Chapter 2, verse 11, particularly down to verse number 21, can be divided into two parts. And the first part is the scenario or the scene that transpired there at Antioch and that conflict between Paul and that conflict between Peter. And the second section from verse 15 to 21 is basically a sermon that Peter preached to Paul in the hearing of all the Jews and the Gentiles at Antioch, that was a sermon of rebuke, if we could say, which is basically from chapter verse 15 of Chapter 2 down to verse number 21.

Now why include this account in the text? Of course, these things happened before the epistle was written, but why mention such an awkward, uncomfortable situation that happened between two apostles? I mean, he could have just left it out, but the Holy Spirit, as guiding Paul in the inspi-

ration of scripture, included this account in holy sacred scripture not only as a further proof of Paul's apostolic ministry but rather that that rebuke that was extended to Peter might be extended to the churches of Galatia themselves. Because in the very same way, they were falling under the same spell that Peter fell under, as it were, on that day when he did not walk according to the truth of the gospel. And they were using Peter and they were using Jerusalem to justify their agreement with the Judaizers. And so Paul includes this as to expose not only Peter—we believe him and Peter were reconciled, no doubt. I mean, the second epistle of Peter says at the end that "my brother Paul," there's an agreement there, we see that there was a restoration there, and that we assume that Peter responded well to this. But he wanted the Galatians to understand and to know the very same sin that was found in Peter was also being found in them.

And not only that, this account serves us and it serves them also, and us, as with many spiritual lessons. Here we have exhortations. Positively, we see Paul's fearlessness and faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, no matter who was before him. And we learn immediately that our allegiance must not be to men but to the sacred gospel itself. And we must proclaim it and stand by it, no matter who it is that corrupts it. And then secondly, what we learn also is the power and the relationship, the power of and the relationship between fear and hypocrisy, which is what I want to bring out this morning for us to learn. And we see that in the failing of Peter. And let us understand this, that when the Bible presents the failings and shortcomings of men, it does that for our learning. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 10, it says that these things that happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness happened for our instruction, happened for our learning. And he goes on to say that it serves us, the failings of the children of Israel, the failings of Peter, the failings of ordinary men, it serves us to understand that if someone thinks they stand, take heed lest they fall. And it serves us also to understand and give us some comfort that there is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man. In other words, there is no temptation that enters into your life that hasn't been experienced by others. Do not think that Peter doesn't experience temptation that you experience, or Paul doesn't experience temptation that you experience. All man is common in the sight of God. We're sharers of the same sinful nature, partakers of that. And we all know the struggle of the soul. And so it serves for warning, it serves for exhortation, and it serves for comfort.

And here we have in this text the clash of the apostles, Peter and Paul, there at Antioch. Look at with me in verse number 11: "Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed." Peter. We've just been hearing of Peter in the last few verses of Chapter 2, from verses one through verse 10. Peter, yes, Peter, the apostle of Jesus Christ. Peter here is represented to us as the pillar, one of the pil-

lars of the church at Jerusalem. Peter is presented to us as one of not only apostles of Jesus Christ but one through whom God worked effectually for the saving of the circumcision or the saving of the Jews. This is Peter who was the apostle of Christ, who was a pillar at the church of Jerusalem. He is described as one who was somebody, as it were, in the church. And we see that this Peter is withstood to the face. Paul, this apostle born out of due time, who himself refers to himself as the least of all the saints and the least of all the apostles, as it were, he confronts Peter and rebukes Peter. And the Bible uses the language here that he withstood him to the face. He stood against him. He went face to face, as it were, in public confrontation of this great apostle there at Antioch when Peter made a visit to Antioch. Why did he withstand him? It says in verse number 11, "because he was to be blamed," or another way to translate this, as the ESV puts it, was "is because he stood condemned." And I like the translation "stood condemned" because it helps us understand what Paul was seeing here was evidently clear error and failing in the life of Peter. It wasn't just that people blamed him, but it may have not had any significant value, but rather he stood condemned. He was one who was blamed and yes, convinced as that which was wrong. He was stood condemned before God. He stood condemned before the truth of the gospel, and he stood condemned before the apostle Paul and those who stood firm with him in the truth of the gospel.

Peter, this great pillar of the faith and of the church at Jerusalem, here we see him as one who stands condemned by not aligning his life to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the old proverb rings true at this very point, and it goes like this: "Men at best are at best, the best of men are at best only men." The best of men are at best only men. And here we have a pillar of the church of Jerusalem, in human standards the best of men, but we see that he is only at best a man, and he falls there at Antioch in violation of walking according to the truth of the gospel, and Paul withstands him to the face.

What I love about the apostle Paul in this text is that he did not measure Peter's person, neither did he ask himself, "Am I going to win this battle?" before he confronted him. The motivating factor for Paul was the truth of the gospel. It did not matter who Peter was, it did not matter necessarily whether or not Paul was going to win favor with the people around him or not. These were not the calculations that were ringing through the mind of Paul when he saw the fall of Peter. What he was concerned about primarily is that the truth of the gospel might continue with the people of God, and he was willing to not only preach it but to lose all for it.

Now, what was Peter's sin? Well, the Bible teaches us in verse number 12 through to verse number 14 that Peter's sin was that he was playing the hypocrite. It says in verse 13, "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?"

What was Peter's sin? He was playing the hypocrite. He was playacting. He was wearing a mask. He was ultimately playing the hypocrite, which means he was acting contrary to his own convictions. Peter believed certain things about Jews and Gentiles, believed certain things about the cross of Jesus Christ as breaking down that middle wall of partition. He believed certain things about the cleanness and the uncleanness and the old covenant and their laws and how they were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but at this very point, we see that he plays the hypocrite. He puts on a mask that rightly doesn't represent his convictions, and he stands against what he believes in order that he might appease others.

He had a face for the Jews, as it were, and a face for the Gentiles. Peter was playing the hypocrite. Hypocrisy is the opposite of sincerity, and sincerity is when one acts according to their conscience and according to their conviction. A man or a woman that's sincere, they may be wrong, but the beautiful thing about a sincere person is that when they act, they act according to what they believe and what they know. Just like Paul says in Corinthians, he says, "We believe, therefore we speak," and that's the sincere person. The sincere person, he believes and speaks. He speaks according to his faith. He speaks according to his conviction. He lives according to his faith. She lives according to her conviction, but here in this particular case, what we find is the opposite of sincerity. We find hypocrisy. We find the insincere actions of a great man of God.

This is different to Paul becoming all things to all men. That is not hypocrisy. Hypocrisy does not mean that there are no considerations that adjust your behavior concerning being at different places and with different people. It may be very well, and it may be very well, and should be very well, our conviction that by love we seek to reach others, and that means when there are matters outside of the authority of scripture, things that are preferential, we are willing to lay down those things in order that we might win others. And so just because you may do one thing in front of one person and something not in front of another person, that does not mean hypocrisy. Understand the difference. One is clearly acting contrary to your conviction, but if your conviction includes, as it should include, that you become all things to all men, that you might by all means win some, this is not acting in hypocrisy. Acting in hypocrisy is acting contrary to your conviction, that you violate your conscience in order to satisfy others. When you don't really believe those things, satisfy them in a way that you want their

approval. That you are motivated by fear and not motivated by love. And ultimately, you speak one thing and do another.

You see, Peter, this whole scenario is centered around the Gentiles and centered around the Old Testament food laws. You see, what was happening here in verse number 12 is that Peter was eating with the Gentiles. It says that in verse number 12, he said, "before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles." Meaning it was his habit to eat with the Gentiles. He would sit at the table with them there at Antioch. He was eating with the Gentiles, and there was no problem whatsoever because Peter believed that it was okay to eat with the Gentiles. You remember what was read to us just moments ago in the Bible reading, is that when Cornelius was there, that they had a vision, Peter had a vision, and saw from heaven a sheet come down, and there was all kinds of meats on there. And God told Peter, "Kill and eat, Peter," and Peter said, "No, no, not so, Lord. I've never eaten anything unclean. I don't eat that, you know," and God says, "Don't call that unclean which I don't call unclean." And it was at that moment in time that Peter started to learn and understand through Cornelius and through the Spirit of God leading him and uniting them together and seeing the gospel unfold before his eyes as he opens the key of salvation, as it were, the door of salvation to the Gentiles. He's learning that God is bringing together in one body Jew and Gentile, and therefore those old laws are fulfilled in Christ that kept the distinction between the nation of Israel and the rest of the world. But now God has told His people to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and they'll be united together in one body under a new covenant through whom the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse them from all uncleanness, and they shall be one in Christ.

But there were still some people that wanted to live under the new covenant, under still bringing the old covenant under the new covenant. These were those ones that came up from James. That doesn't suggest that James believed what they believed; we wouldn't suggest such a thing, but it seems that they came up from Jerusalem, the idea there, and they came up, and when they came up, all of a sudden, everything they believed, Peter knew what they believed, and Peter got cold feet and scared. All of a sudden, Peter, in Chapter 10 of Acts, says, "God showed me." Remember that? God showed me that these people are received, that they're not unclean, and then even in Acts Chapter 11, there were people that were fighting against Peter, saying, "Oh, you went and ate with Cornelius, and you went and ate with the Gentiles," and Peter actually defends what happened. He says there's nothing wrong with eating with them. God has received them. Look what's happened here, and he defends before the churches of Jerusalem there, and he defends the truth that he now at this very moment denies.

You see, this conviction of Peter was settled long ago in his mind, and the hypocrisy was not that Peter had a change of conviction, but that he had the same conviction and a change of practice, and this is where Peter's hypocrisy lay. It says here in the text that before certain men came from James, he was accustomed to eating with them, but when they came, he was afraid, so he separated and withdrew himself from them, from the Gentiles, and he basically caused a division in the body of Christ. He acted contrary to his conviction. He introduced the distinction which God destroyed in the cross of Jesus Christ that Peter believed, that Peter practiced, that Peter was well, had those truths settled in his mind, but when people come that are scary, the Pharisees or the really strict law observers coming up from Jerusalem, all of a sudden, Peter's starting to think and be afraid, "Oh, what are they going to think of me now? Do you see if they come up here and see me sitting down with these guys, my ministry to the Jews will be all over. If they see me sitting down with these guys, they're going to think that there's something wrong with me. They're going to pull up all those Old Testament scriptures and smash me. If they see me sitting with these guys, they're going to tell everybody that Peter sits with Gentiles, and therefore Peter now is unclean because he sat with those who are unclean, as the Old Testament says. When someone was unclean, you couldn't touch them. If you touch them, you became unclean, and so all these vessels that Peter was in, drinking from the same cups and sharing the same meal and grabbing that same pork steak from the same plate, all that kind of things really kind of caused Peter to stand out before these other guys. So Peter heard that they're coming and said, 'I can't do that, no, no, no way,' and so Peter, what he does, motivated by fear, is he separates and withdraws himself from who? The people of God."

If you remember last time we looked at this passage, to whom should we extend the right hand of fellowship to? Those that God receives, we should receive. Well, here we see a group of people that God receives that Peter's now not receiving because he's afraid. He's afraid that his legalistic counterparts will see him, and he'll get a black label on his name because he sat with people that they wouldn't sit with. He started to be fearful because if they hear that I'm fellowshiping with them and I'm communing with them, then they're going to think that I'm also in the same error that they might be in, even though that error is not significant enough to separate fellowship. But I want to look like I'm as pure as pure. And so he separates and withdraws himself from the people of God, as it were, by dividing them. The very thing Jesus Christ came to do, to destroy, Peter now erects that very wall in this moment in Antioch.

What we see here is Peter's hypocrisy, and it was a hypocrisy that was rooted in fear, and it was hypocrisy that crippled Peter. It was fear that crippled him from acting according to the word of God and acting according

to his conviction, and therefore his resolve was weakened, and he became a coward.

This is not unique to Peter. We all know what that feels like, I'm sure. In our own given areas, you go to your workplace, and someone puts forward something, perhaps the support of the LGBT community, and you're not trying to make trouble—I don't suggest you should seek to make trouble at all—but you're confronted with something. What do you do? Do you divide people into such categories? Do you, in one sense, fear what they might think of you in your workplace because you don't wear the badge that they wear?

We see it not only in the world sense, when we and our workplaces where we're challenged with things contrary, and we fear to lose our reputation, so we play the hypocrite and put a mask on that doesn't really reflect what we truly believe. When our mates make dirty jokes, and we laugh at it because we feel like if I put my laughing face on at this time, they're not going to think I'm weird, and so we violate our very convictions, although our heart is grieved, our face is laughing. And I'm not saying you need to display vehement anger to your thing, but it would be good to show that I'm a follower of Jesus Christ, and this is contrary to the gospel, and I don't find that funny. Therefore, you keep silence, perhaps turn away; you don't laugh.

But it also happens not only in the world but in the religious world. As I mentioned before, you have people that attend a certain conference, there's a certain speaker, people who listen to different kinds of preachers, and you're happy to share who you listen to with certain people or what's encouraged you from what someone said, but as soon as you see that other brother that you know that doesn't really like that, you all of a sudden pretend that you believe something else. Once again, I'm not saying you can you fight it out every time and bring up something every time if it's not the point, but the point is when you are asked something, you speak what you believe without fear of how you may be received by that person or not.

How often are we afraid of what our children might think of us, or what our spouses might think of us, or what our friends might think of us because we obey the truth of scripture and live according to the gospel, and so we want to win their favor, and so in trying to win their favor, we undermine the very truth of God in order that we might satisfy them, and so we put on a mask, we fake, we pretend, we play in order that we might receive the praise of men and not, as it were, be rejected by them. And this is what happened to Peter, which happened to many people that believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. John chapter 12, verses 42 to 43 says this, "Nevertheless, among the rulers, many believed in Him, but because of the



Pharisees, they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." And they calculated what's going to happen to me if I confess Him, and they let fear grip their hearts, and they assessed the responses of others, and therefore they acted not in accord with their conviction to confess Christ openly, but they wanted to be secret disciples because they were afraid of what the people might think if they openly confessed Him. This happens all the time, doesn't it?

With baptism, that public declaration of our faith in Jesus Christ, signifying to our friends, to our families, to those around us that I have decided to follow Jesus, and I'm not turning back. He's my savior, he's my Lord, and he is my God, and I'm submitting to Him in the waters of baptism. But all of a sudden, before the day of baptism comes, or as you're considering this matter, your mind starts to think, what are they going to think if they know that I'm getting baptized, and they thought I was baptized as a child, as it were, or this happened and that happened, and now I know what I need to do, but I'm confronted with fear and anxiety is gripping my heart because certain men from so and so might think certain things of me, and you separate yourself from that which God desires for you to do and do not yield to baptism. That happens so often, and the danger of this is that that fear that leads to hypocrisy is contagious. You see, fear is contagious, and the fear that leads to hypocrisy is contagious. You know what Jesus said to His disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." Leaven spreads, hypocrisy spreads. The Pharisees' behavior, their double life, they're masking up where they live one way and say one thing and do another, it spreads in their disciples and goes on and on and on. It's like a leaven, and it's driven by fear, the fear of men, the praise of men, therefore they want to put their money in the offering box to be seen of men, as it were, not because they truly are convinced that this is the right thing to do before God that they might receive the praise of God. Jesus says, "Don't let your right hand know what it's doing," but they do it to be seen of men. And the same thing happens here. Peter's fear and hypocrisy is like leaven because the Bible says to us in verse number 13, "And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him," so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy. Barnabas, Paul's right-hand man. Here's Peter, allowing fear to grip him, hypocrisy to take hold in his life, not walking according to the truth of the gospel, and all of a sudden, you have this leader leading now all the Jews that were there at Antioch astray, and they got a Jewish table and a Gentile table. What happened? The fear and hypocrisy, like leaven, spread, and all of a sudden, there was that division in the church.

You know, the Bible teaches us in Deuteronomy chapter number 20 that when someone goes out to war, the Bible says this, "What man is there who

is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his." It's a principle here that regards the fact that fear spreads. And he's saying if you're going to go to war and a battle and you're afraid, go home, don't go to war and go to battle because all your brethren will start to fear the very things that you fear, and they will start acting in the very same way that you are acting according to cowardice.

Fear infects, hypocrisy infects, it spreads rapidly, but the lesson that we learn from the word of God regarding these things is that there is an answer to fear. You see, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 29, verse 25, "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoso puts his trust in the Lord shall be made safe." And here we have Peter fearing man, looking to man, measuring his steps by the opinions and desires of man, and the praise of man, and in doing that, he let fear grip him and did not live in trust and in faith according to the truth of God. The hypocrisy was rooted in fear, the fear of man, but the answer to that fear is trust in God, that we ought not to fear what man might think of us, that we ought not to fear what man might say of us, but we ought to fear God rather than man, that we ought to fear not them that can harm the body but cannot touch the soul, but rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Fear the one who holds the universe in His hand, fear the one who formed you and fashioned you out of the dust of the earth, fear the one who governs all things after the counsel of His own will, fear the one to whom all things are naked and open to His eyes, fear God, fear Him.

You see, the problem with the Christian church today is that many of us are like jellyfish; we got no backbone, and we get swayed with the current and with the tide, and we are simply looking for those currents that jump in because we don't want to go contrary and swim contrary to the tide, but we ought to be different, not swayed by the opinions of man or the fear of man, but we ought to settle in our heart, what does God's word say, and we ought to stand there. What does God's word say? What has He taught me? What is my conviction? And stand. Oh, you might say, "But I'm growing, Josh. I'm growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." If you change because you're growing, that's a good kind of change, but if you change because you're afraid, then you violate your conscience, and you violate the work of the Holy Spirit within your heart, and you quench and you grieve Him, and therefore we must give close diligence and attention to the fear that grips our heart.

You see, God will corner, as it were, all men, and He will most definitely corner the hypocrites. The Bible teaches us evidently that those things that are spoken of in secret shall be shouted from the housetops. You see, one day, all that we're afraid of, the opinions of men, the thoughts of men,

and all that causes us to live a double life, but one day, God's going to take the veil off the whole creation, and all mankind is going to stand before Him, and the great at the great white throne, and the books will be open, and everyone will be judged according to the things written in the book, the things that are written in the book, not the things that you presented to God, not the things that you made out to be true, but the things that are written, the things that God saw, that God acknowledged, that God knew to be true, and God wrote them down there, the things that you cannot hide from. And one day, those books will be opened, and our obedience or our lack of obedience now, all those kinds of things will be brought to the surface. The religious legalists that live contrary to God's law in order to satisfy others, they shall be exposed.

Those that have always looked to men and quickly hide this and hide that, and dress like this and talk like that because so-and-so is around, that day will declare it. Those ones who give way to cultural pressures that mount and resist Christ and His word, one day will stand ashamed before Him. You know, the Bible teaches us in Matthew chapter 8 that whosoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the same shall the Son of Man be ashamed of when He comes in the glory of His Father with His holy angels.

Therefore, we are called upon as the people of God to act in accordance with our conviction. Study, learn, grow, change, but grow in the knowledge of the Lord and live according to your faith. Live as though God is watching, for He is watching and sees everything. Don't suppress conviction. Do not suppress conscience. We need a generation of men and women and children that believe things and live according to what they believe. Hollywood shapes our children to be play actors, but God help us in the church of Jesus Christ to live as we are and to speak the things that we believe in, and raise up a generation of men and women that will love God, will serve Him, will live with a view to Him.

And if you say, "Josh, my life, you're speaking these things, my entire life is marked by hypocrisy and fear," well, I tell you, Jesus died for hypocrites, and He died for the fearful. He died to set us free from the fear of death, the fear that grips our hearts. Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins, and by His blood, He can cleanse you now and give you a new heart so you don't have to act in a way contrary, that the external religion that you put up as a front, you don't need to pretend anymore, but God will work in you both the will and to do of His good pleasure, that you might walk in clear conscience before God and be and understand that God has received you in His Son, to know that God accepts you and loves you will set you free from the fear of man, to know that God receives me in His Son, no matter when I fall, no matter how I struggle, the men may not receive me, God receives me in Jesus will free you from such bondage. I'm accepted in

the beloved, for who shall lay a charge against God's elect? It's God who justifies, and those who know what it means to be justified rejoice in the fact that they are right in the sight of God, although they fall and fail, they know that they are accepted in the beloved, and that God never received them because they were good, but in mercy and in kindness and grace, He has saved them.

You see, those that are fearful and those who are liars, the Bible teaches us, will have their part in the lake of fire. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the sexually immoral, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. The Christian life, there is no poker face; we don't bluff, but as God's people, we believe, and therefore we speak.

Now, if any of you may think that you don't experience hypocrisy in any form of your life, I'll be very, very, very careful that you examine yourself closely because if the truth be known, we all, like Peter from time to time, find ourselves living not according to the truth of the gospel. And if you think that you've got it all lined up, you better ask yourself, "Am I deceiving myself?" But those of us that know what it's like to fall like Peter, we know what it is to have forgiveness in the Lord Jesus Christ and to be delivered from our fears and to get up again and submit ourselves to the truth of the gospel.

So may God keep us from the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Let us pray.