

**MR FACING-BOTH-WAYS** [ *Sermon Notes contd.* ]  
**[3] THE FAITH OF CHRIST; 2:16-17.**

Though Peter did not publicly preach some false dogma, by acting in this hypocritical manner towards the Gentile believers, he was giving credence to those who were adding something to simple faith as necessary for salvation. Paul could not tolerate this, even for a moment. There is no doctrine so essential to our personal salvation and comfort than **justification by faith alone**: it must be tenaciously defended and graciously promoted. This is the doctrine that the arch enemy of souls hates and does his utmost to overthrow; the absence of this doctrine accounts for half the errors of the Roman Catholic church; the articulation of this doctrine in our day will save the sheep and stir the goats.

### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY



- 2 October: Lecture in Linen Hall Library, Belfast @ 1.00pm: 'Who Was Martin Luther?'
- 22-23 October: **Harvest Services** in Martyrs; Lord's Day 11.30am & 7.00pm; Monday 8.00pm.

### MEETINGS TODAY

- Sunday School/Bible Class – 10.15am | Bible Class – 3.10pm.
- Morning Worship – 11.30am: *Fifth Message in our Studies on the Book of Galatians*
- Evening Service – 7.00pm; Fellowship Supper – 8.20pm.

### INSPIRATION IN A SENTENCE

*I'll trust in God's unchanging Word,  
Till soul and body sever,  
For, though all things shall pass away,  
HIS WORD SHALL STAND FOREVER!*

*"If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write."  
[ Martin Luther ]*



### REFORMATION TRACT TO 787,000 ULSTER HOMES

The Gospel tract designed by the **Reformation Committee of the Free Presbyterian Church** was scheduled to arrive at homes in Northern Ireland last week. 787,000 homes are due to be reached by this method – every home in the country.

Though I must admit bias as a member of this Committee, I am convinced this is one of the best tracts I have ever seen. It runs to 12 pages, but due primarily to its comprehensive yet concise Gospel content, aided by excellent design work, those responsible for it have eagerly anticipated the week when it is distributed to Ulster homes by the Royal Mail. Publication and distribution **costs have been large** – but funds that have come in from our churches across the province have covered the entire costs of this project.

In this key anniversary year, may God, by His Holy Spirit, spread the light of this glorious Gospel throughout Ulster, convincing and converting many souls through Christ alone.



## MR. FACING-BOTH-WAYS

Text: **Galatians 2:11-17.**

While others concern themselves with what Peter did – or did not do – in Rome, **Galatians 2:11-17** trains the spotlight on a serious theological confrontation in which he became embroiled at Antioch.

Due to his fear of the false teachers (**2:12**), he had been acting out the role of ‘Mr Facing Both Ways’ with respect to the Gentile believers: depending on circumstances he either accepted them, or held himself aloof from them. Paul “opposed him to his face” (**2:11,14**) – and called Peter back onto pure Gospel ground.

### [1] THE FALLIBILITY OF CLERICS; 2:11-13.

Great men of God are capable of making great mistakes. Peter was undoubtedly one of the greatest apostles, privileged to open the door of faith to both Jews (**Acts 2**) and Gentiles (**Acts 10**). However, in Paul’s language, Peter was blameworthy (**2:12**), guilty of hypocrisy (**2:13**) and of not walking in tandem with Gospel truth (**2:14**). This is the third colossal error in Peter’s life (cf. **Matthew 16:22-23; Matthew 26:72**).

This record of Peter’s guilt in **Galatians 2:11-21** strikes a particularly savage blow against the RC doctrine of the primacy of Peter. As Bishop J.C. Ryle stated: *“It matters nothing what a man is called ... he is still a fallible man. Neither the crown, nor the anointing oil, nor the laying on of hands, can prevent a man making mistakes.”*

Truth is, unless God’s grace keeps us on track, we will go astray. Biblical – and Historical – records both testify to this truth.

Therefore: (i) let us not put implicit confidence in any man’s opinion, (ii) merely because of his office as a minister, (iii) or because of his learning, (iv) or due to his godliness. Never be satisfied with a religion that revolves around a man – as even ministers are manifestly capable of departing from the faith.

### [2] THE FRACTURES IN CHURCHES; 2:14-15.

As is evidenced by the following group of Scriptures, none knew better the value of peace and unity than the apostle Paul (cf. **1 Corinthians 13, 2 Corin. 13:11, 2 Tim. 2:24, Phil. 3:16, 1 Thess. 5:13, Eph. 4:3&5, 1 Corin. 9:22**). All of which makes the public rebuke he delivered to Peter truly remarkable!

*Why* did he do this? Because he: (i) feared what false doctrine would do to the Gospel and the church, and (ii) wanted to teach all generations of the church to fear the loss of truth more than the loss of peace. If we are persuaded that nothing but the pure Gospel of Christ – unmixed and unadulterated – can do any good to the souls of men, then we will be ready to make any sacrifice, including hazarding peace, risking dissension, and running the chance of division, to maintain pure truth in the church.

We recognise that: **(i) peace without truth is a false peace;** it is the peace of the devil; **(ii) unity without the Gospel is a worthless unity;** it is the unity of hell.

This is the dynamo that directed Christ to denounce the Pharisees (**Matthew 23**), Paul to publicly oppose Peter, Athanasius to stand up for the Deity of Christ at the Council of Nicea, Luther to denounce the Pope and all his false doctrines, Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley to counsel the king to separate from Rome, and Whitefield and the Wesleys to expose the barren preaching of their day (cf. **Matt. 10:34, Rev. 2:2, 20**).

**Some practical lessons** that should be drawn from this sad circumstance are: (i) Be very selective about the preaching you regularly listen to and the place of worship you regularly attend as there are many churches where the teaching is little better than Roman Catholicism / philosophy / mere morality; (ii) While divisions and separations are not to be desired and unity among Christians is a wonderful blessing, one thing is even worse than controversy – that is false doctrine permitted without protest. *“There are three things which men never ought to trifle with: a little poison, a little false doctrine, and a little sin”* (J. C. Ryle).

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