

Peter Hurt My Feelings

By Robert S. Turner

November 1966, available via PLAIN TALK, at www.wordsfittlyspoken.org

When Peter first came to Antioch, he came to eat with me—or people like me. He visited in my home, and treated me as his equal. We were both children of God, and he treated me like a brother—which I was.

Then some "big shots" from Judea came to town. They were of the same race and color as Peter, and they felt superior to people like me. They sometimes spoke of my people as "dogs" and they considered themselves "unclean" when they had contact with us. My people and I were clearly "second-rate" citizens in God's kingdom, in the eyes of these people from the big church in Jerusalem; and I will not deny, that this hurt—a lot.

But what hurt even more: when Peter learned of their coming, he broke our engagements, and would have nothing more to do with me. He withdrew, and separated himself from us. Our personal hurt was compounded by realizing that Peter, whom we had considered a sort of "hero" in the faith, was actually afraid of these Judaeen men, and what they might say about his association with people like me.

And Barnabas, our close friend and teacher—the one who had done so much to plant the cause of Christ in our home town—he also began to back away from us. We realized that he was influenced by Peter's actions; but this did not soften the blow. These were indeed trying times for us.

Then Paul went to Peter, and withstood him to the face. Our embarrassment at being rejected, now gave way to fear—as we saw two Apostles at odds because of us. But Paul made it clear that there was more at stake than our personal feelings. He said that the principle involved was essential to the very truth of the gospel of Christ. At the time, rejected by many of our former friends, and treated as outcasts by important members of the church, I suppose we looked upon Paul as our personal deliverer. But now—calmly reviewing the past—I see that Paul was right. He did not try to force a social reform upon Peter, nor upon other brethren. I have read that he even returned a runaway slave—also a brother—to his master. He was not less concerned about our social plight, but **more concerned** that Peter's people and mine learn the true meaning of oneness in Christ.

Paul taught us that **Christ** was the great leveler. What was difficult, if not impossible to accomplish by law, strike, or pressure tactics; became a natural thing as we individually lost ourselves in Christ.

Paul did not argue our "civil or moral rights" with Peter. He showed him that neither of us could win without the Lord. He gave us a common denominator—made us realize our dependence upon something without ourselves. And when he did this, our color, race, and former creed faded into the background. Many years were needed to effect this change. **I must not forget that I am the white Gentile—the "dog" for whom Paul argued: AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED.** *Gal. 2:3-10, 11-f. 3:26-29.*

Fixating on What's Important, 6-28-20

By Bill Fix

I've heard people disparage the Bible because it does not include an outright condemnation of slavery, and such criticisms grow stronger whenever racial tensions are high. Why did Paul send the slave Onesimus back to his master instead of helping liberate him from Philemon? Why does he seemingly give slavery a pass in Gal. 3:28? "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." See also Col. 3:11.

I believe the answer is that while the Bible has much to say about societal issues, its primary purpose is not to remedy every social ill in this world. Instead, the Bible tells us how God wants each of us to live and how we can please Him. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, we can do that in whatever situation we find ourselves—no excuses. If Paul were writing today, it might read, "There is neither rich nor poor, black nor white, married nor single, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Furthermore, this allows man freedom to make the right choice — "that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary" (Phm. 14).

We are commanded time and again to love one another, which leaves no room for racism (Jn. 15:12-13; Rom. 12:10; 1 Jn. 3:18). Jesus instructs in the Great Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Mt. 28:19). True Christians will not exhibit hatred, unfair judgment, or preferential treatment of others. But if we fail like Peter did (Gal. 2), we should modify our attitudes and actions, while forgiving others who likewise adapt and grow following some offense to us. If Christ broke down the "wall of separation" between Jew and Gentile, and we are "no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens" with all the saints (Eph. 2:14-19), then we must set aside any personal biases to do what's best for Christ and the salvation of our fellow man.