DEFAULT

Scripture Reading: Read Galatians 2

When you read the gospels, you find a description of the apostle Peter that is less than stellar and certainly not consistent. For example, one minute he takes a stand for Jesus and declares him to be the Christ, the Son of living God, and in the next minute he is being used by Satan to tempt Jesus to avoid the cross.   One has to wonder what Jesus was thinking when he called Peter a rock.

When we shift to the book of Acts, however, we see a different Peter, a more solid and consistent presence in the church. He takes the lead in chapter 1, preaches a message in chapter 2 that results in 3,000 salvations, performs miracles, takes a stand before the Jewish Council that blows them out of the water and opens the gospel to the Gentiles when he visits Cornelius' house.   Empowered by the Spirit, Peter appears as a spiritual dynamo for Jesus in the book of Acts.

Unfortunately, in Galatians chapter 2, we see the old Peter pop back up, the unstable one.   After Peter's encounter with Cornelius, he apparently felt much more comfortable interacting with Gentiles in spreading the gospel.   When he visited Antioch where Paul and Barnabas were ministering, he hung out with the Gentiles and ate with them without a problem.   That is, until some folks came from Jerusalem from James. Peter, perhaps remembering the criticism he had previously received (Acts 11), drew back and walked away from his newfound Gentile friends.   His hypocrisy even caused Barnabas, Paul's co-worker, to pull away.

When Paul saw what was happening, he let loose and rebuked Peter before the whole group.   Can you picture the scene? Here's one take on it. *"Peter. God revealed to you that he accepts all people on the same basis…by faith. How can you reject that now? Peter, you have been freed from the bondage of the law. Peter, you have been enjoying roast pork. I can smell bacon on your breath even now. Why on earth are you walking away from the truth of the gospel? Peter, wake up. Snap out of it. Come back to the truth of God's grace and his salvation by faith!"* Fortunately, Peter received Paul's rebuke with the right spirit and repented.   How do we know? Because, by the time we reach the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, Peter, Paul and Barnabas are on the same page and they take their united stand on a gospel of salvation by faith alone without the works of the law.

What caused Peter to walk away and default back to his Jewish roots? Based on what Paul says, it seems to have been fear. He became a people-pleaser instead of a God-pleaser, but lest we become too critical of Peter, though, we must confess that we, too, sometimes default in our spiritual lives out of fear or stress.   In those times, we must be quick to repent and open to God's rebuke if necessary to get us back on the right path.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Defaults can happen to the best of us. When they do, it's important that we are open to God's rebuke and repent. When you examine your life, where do you find the greatest areas of default? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you why they occur and allow him to deal with the root cause.

Take-a-way: *When you default, be open to God's reset.*