

Why Getting This Right Matters

Galatians 2:1-21

Introduction

Good morning, Lighthouse. Are you ready for the Word of God this morning? This morning's message may be one that doesn't make us the most popular. This letter for the churches of the Galatian region is probably one of Paul's most serious letters he had to write. Something was greatly compromised, and much was at stake. It was the Gospel itself. The issue Paul had to deal with was teaching that one must have faith in Jesus, but also keep the Mosaic Law or Old Testament Law to be saved. Aka, grace plus works.

Two men were riding a tandem bicycle up a steep hill. After much effort, they finally made it to the top of the hill. The front rider said, "I can't believe it took so long. That was a tough ride." To which the second rider replied, "Sure was, and if I had not kept my foot on the brake we might have slipped backwards.

The two were working against each other. Likewise grace and works are incompatible when it comes to being saved. Getting the Gospel right is crucial. There is a long list of consequences to getting it wrong. This is what Paul had to say in the beginning of his letter.

Galatians 1:6-10

(6) I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:(7) Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (8) But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. (9) As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (10) For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

This here gives us a picture of just how serious the situation is. Paul normally started his letters with a thanksgiving, but in this case, he skips it.

Background

- Galatians is likely the first book written in our New Testament. It is Paul's earliest letter written around A.D 49.
- Galatians was written because the churches of that region were facing a theological crisis. People known as Judaizers came into the region and caused conflict with false teachings. The essential truth of justification by faith alone was being denied by the Judaizers—legalistic Jews who insisted that Christians must keep the Mosaic Law.
- In particular, Judaizers insisted on circumcision as a requirement for Gentiles who wished to be saved. In other words, convert to Judaism first, and then you can become a Christian. When Paul learned that this heresy was being taught to the Galatian churches, he composed an epistle to emphasize our liberty in Christ and to counter the perversion of the Gospel that the Judaizers promoted. In reality, these weren't even true Judaism. The OT itself never taught a person is saved through keeping the Law. It was a schoolmaster to point that man needed a savior.

The situation can be read in Acts chapter 15.

In the previous chapter, Paul addresses two issues that troubled him:

1. The Judaizers came into the region of Galatia and taught Gentiles had to become Jews first in to be saved.
2. The Judaizers questioned and challenged Paul's apostleship.

In this section of the letter to the Galatians, Paul continues his defense of his Apostleship by describing his experience with the Jerusalem council and his encounter with Peter and other

Jewish people. He writes this letter as to multiple churches in the Galatian region (most likely the Southern area). This would include Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

(Reading of the text)

Galatians 2:1-10 (1) Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. (2) And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. (3) But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: (4) And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: (5) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. (6) But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: (7) But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (8) (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) (9) 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. (10) Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

Outline

I. The circumstance of Paul's defense of the Gospel, vv. 1-10.

A. Paul's trip to Jerusalem in detail, vv. 1-2.

(1) Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. (2) And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.

1. In Galatians 1:18-19, Paul described a trip he made to Jerusalem three years after he met Jesus on the road to Damascus.

2. In the previous chapter, he demonstrated that his Gospel came by a revelation from Jesus, not from man, not even from the apostles in Jerusalem. Two visits to Jerusalem over 14 years shows that Paul did not sit at the feet of the disciples of Jesus to learn.
3. His companions on this trip were Barnabus and Titus.
 - a. Both men were well respected by the Jerusalem counsel.
 - b. Paul and Barnabus' partnership began during his first trip in Jerusalem.
 - c. Titus was a Gentile convert under Paul who became an effective minister eventually tasked to the area of Crete as we see in the book of Titus.
4. He describes his trip a being by revelation.
 - a. This expresses direction of God.
 - b. This trip to Jerusalem is most likely the one mentioned in Acts 11:27-30, when Paul brought a gift from Christians in other cities to the Christians in Jerusalem, who suffered under famine.
5. He communicated to those "of reputation" the Gospel privately.
 - a. The ones of reputation point to the leaders, including, Peter, John and James the brother of Jesus.
 - b. Paul had no doubt he had the true Gospel.
 - c. He wanted to consult the leaders and be on the same page.

B. The conflict involving Titus, vv. 3-4.

(3) But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: (4) And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:

1. Paul's point is that the leadership in Jerusalem accepted Titus, a Gentile convert, even though he was not circumcised in accord with the Mosaic law.
2. This shows that the Jerusalem leadership accepted Paul's gospel of grace.
3. False brethren sneaked there way in attempt to bring them into "bondage."
4. The implication here is they demanded Titus to be circumcised.
5. Notice the plural "we and us." Paul could easily dismiss this and let it be Titus' problem because he himself is a Jew. However, any case the message of the gospel was compromised, it was not just bondage for the Gentiles, but bondage for everyone who followed Jesus.

Narrative: Someone I was acquainted to long ago used to teach that someone had to be baptized after they trusted Jesus if they wanted to be saved. At the moment they were baptized their sins were washed away. Of course, he had a few scriptures he misunderstood for back up, but his defense towards me was this: Why does it matter to you? You're already baptized. It matters because the Gospel was corrupted, and he would bring false faith upon anyone who listened.

6. They came in "privily" meaning by secret.
7. No false teacher wears the label false teacher or announces it.

C. The response to the conflict, vv. 5-6.

- (5) To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.
- (6) But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me:

1. Paul did not give them the time of day.
2. This is not pride or stubbornness by Paul, this was a serious matter.
3. Do not hear out false teachers, do not give them the time of day.
4. He did this for the sake of the true Gospel to continue.

5. His approval of those who were big shots to the people didn't matter to him because God is not a God of favoritism.

D. The Jerusalem leader's approval of Paul's ministry, vv. 7-10.

(7) But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (8) (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) (9) 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. (10) Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.

1. The leaders recognized Paul's specific calling to the preach the Gospel to Gentiles.
2. Peter's specific calling was the Gospel to the Jewish people.
3. These are not exclusive callings. It does not mean Paul only would preach the Gospel to Gentiles, but it was his primary ministry.
4. The leaders in Jerusalem recognized the impact Paul had on Gentiles and sent Barnabas to assist.
5. They approved Paul's ministry, knowing that Paul did not require the Gentiles to come under the Mosaic Law to find favor with God.

Note: Since this text has used the term Gospel repeatedly, let's define what the Gospel is.

The Gospel comes from the Greek Word εὐαγγέλιον. The word literally means "good news or good message." But what is that specific good news? There is many good news from God in the Bible, but there is only one specific true Gospel. Paul gives a clear definition of the Gospel in

1 Corinthians 15:1-4: (1) Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; (2) By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. (3) For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how

that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; (4) And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus for our sins, and by trusting in Jesus, you will be saved. That is the Gospel defined, it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes (Romans 1:16). That is the Gospel Paul is talking about every time he says it. This is such a crucial message that we cannot ever afford to compromise. Unfortunately, it is a message that is compromised too often. Usually, it's the response to it where the issue lies.

II. The open rebuke for the consistency of the Gospel, vv. 11-14.

(11) But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. (12) For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (13) And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. (14) 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?

A. Peter's failure in Antioch, vv. 11-12.

(11) But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. (12) For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.

1. Paul opposed him publicly.
2. Before these Judaizers (men from James) came into Antioch, Peter associated with Gentiles, but when they came he separated himself out of fear.
 - a. This is not to assume James the brother of Jesus is responsible, but these are men who associated themselves with James.
 - b. The motivation of fear begs the question: Who are you going to fear, God or man? When you give into peer pressure, think about who you

want to please.

3. Peter is responsible for some of the conflict!
4. It's outrageous because it was Peter who God used to welcome Gentiles into the church in the case of Cornelius.
5. Peter had no issue with Gentiles getting saved and did not abide by the belief of faith plus keep the law, but his actions spoke as if he did not recognize Gentiles as brethren.

B. The bad example Peter set, v. 13.

(13) And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

1. Along with Peter, other Jews dissembled themselves from Gentiles,
2. Barnabus also went along with Peter and the Jews.
 - a. A well trusted and dear from of Paul also failed this test.
 - b. Even a someone as Barnabus described as a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith can fail tremendously.
3. We might be surprised that Peter, who did know better, did this; but we are only surprised if we don't believe what God says about the weakness and corruption of our flesh. Even the apostles were still sinners.

C. Paul's rebuke towards Peter's behavior, v. 14.

(14) 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?

1. At the foundation, this wasn't an issue of seating arrangements at the church potluck. It was not about table manners and being a good host or

about being sensitive to another brother's conscience. Paul saw the issue for what it was; it was about the truth of the Gospel.

2. Their actions were declaring you can only be right with God if you put yourself under the demands of the Law of Moses.
3. Paul's words were powerful: "If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of the Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?"
 - a. If Peter himself were not keeping the customs of the Mosaic Law, how could he expect Gentiles to?
 - b. This scene was a big deal and necessary for a public rebuke.

III. The affirmation of justification by faith, vv. 15-21.

(15) We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, (16) Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (17) But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. (18) For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. (19) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. (20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

A. No one is justified by their works, vv. 15-16a.

(15) We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, (16) Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law...

1. "We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles."
2. Paul is saying that even Jews ought to know that their approval from God has never come from keeping the law.

3. The word justified is a legal term that comes from the same root word as “Righteousness.” In the legal concept the person who is justified is the one who gets the verdict in a court of law. In the Biblical sense, it means getting the favorable verdict before God. It means to be declared righteous!
4. The moment you put your trust in Jesus to save you, you are justified – God declares you righteous based on Christ’s work. If he says you are righteous, what would that make you?

B. A person is justified by faith in Jesus v. 16b.

...but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified...

1. Reminder, faith itself is not what justifies you, it is object of your faith by which you are justified – the blood of Jesus.
 - a. Roman 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. Roman 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.
2. Many will seek to be justified by their deeds before God, but not one person will pass the test.

C. Paul’s answer to possible objections raised by Judaizers, vv. 17-19.

(17) But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. (18) For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.

(19) For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

1. Since we are justified, we are still found sinners, does that make Christ the minister of sin?

- a. God forbid – Absolutely not! The phrase he used in the original μή γίνουμαι is the strongest way to say “no.”
 - b. Here, Paul is using a common style of argument known as “reductio ad absurdum – Latin phrase for “reduced to absurdity.”
- 2. The idea that we are made right before God by faith in Jesus alone was not real enough. After all, Christians still struggled with sin. How could they have the “accepted by God” issue settled if they still battled sin.
 - a. The answer is simply because salvation is not of yourselves.
 - b. We are accepted of God because of Christ in us!
 - c. Salvation will always be based upon Christ, never you. If I am not good enough to be saved, neither will I ever be good enough to keep saved. It is Jesus who preserves our salvation!
- 4. Paul’s answer is brilliant. If he were to build again a way to God through keeping the Law of Moses, then he would make himself a transgressor.
 - a. Essentially, Paul says there is more sin in trying to find acceptance before God by our law-keeping than there is sin in everyday life as a Christian.
 - b. By trying to become right with God through your own effort, you become further from God.
- 5. As new believers, we are dead to law – we have freedom in Jesus.
 - a. This does not give us reason to seek and break the law it gives us the freedom to go above and beyond the law!

b. The law in its context, reflects the holy character of God.

There was nothing wrong with the law. It is not the law that died, but Paul died to the law. It shows us that we can never achieve that standard of living, it shows us our need for a Savior!

D. Our identity in Christ, vv. 20-21

(20) I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (21) I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

1. This is when Paul died to the law – He has been crucified with Christ.
2. Our old life, lived under the law, is dead. Now we are alive to Jesus Christ, and Jesus is alive in us.
3. The life he now lives in the flesh is by faith in the Son of God – not by law keeping.
4. The one life of the one who loved and gave himself for us.
5. If righteousness came by the law, then Christ’s death on the cross is meaningless.

Application

The idea of faith plus keeping the Mosaic Law is not something no longer practiced. It is existing in many different forms in denominations out there claiming to be Christian. Faith plus baptism – faith plus abiding by seven sacraments – faith plus saying certain prayers – faith plus church membership – faith, but also must keep living it or you will no longer be saved. The list goes on. During the times in school, we had chapel twice a week and listened to many different preachers. The worst one I’ve ever heard was one over unity and setting aside our difference. You would think that sounds great. Well, it ended up being a call to unify with our “Christian

brethren from charismatic and word of faith movements.” Sorry but a faith that requires something different or adds anything to simply faith in Jesus to be saved is not my Christian brother. The message of salvation is one we don’t compromise on and just agree to disagree. Because of what is at stake, it is crucial to get the Gospel right. To hold to anything addition to grace through faith in Jesus is to say Christ’s death was not enough! But it was enough. He did all the work and that’s the point. He came to live the life you could not and gave it for you. He took the punishment that should have been ours. 3 days later He proved His power over sin and death and anyone who simply would trust Him to save will have everlasting life. This message is simple, yet the greatest news of all.

Prayer