*A poor man knocked on the front door of a suburban home asking for some money. The owner said, "I'll give you some money if you'll do a job for me." "What is it?" the man asked. "Paint my porch." The man agreed. "The paint and everything you'll need is out back," said the homeowner. "Just tell me when you've finished."*

*Two hours later the man reported that he was all done. "That was fast," said the homeowner. "Well, I'm done. In fact, I gave it two coats. But I thought you ought to know – that's not a Porsche – it’s a Mercedes."*

It is very important that we get the message straight, especially the gospel message because salvation is at stake, eternity is at stake, our freedom in Christ is at stake, and this morning we will see that Paul’s burning desire is for all of us to “get it right.”

So, let’s do a quick review. If you recall, sometime after Paul had established the churches in the region of Galatia, some professing Jewish Christians called Judaizers traveled from Jerusalem and had come to the churches preaching their “Gospel + Something = Salvation” message, which was a distortion of the truth. In essence, the Judaizers insisted that the Gentile believers had to become Jews (in practice) before they could become true followers of God – and the matter of circumcision was a hot topic in their teaching.

Now in order to make their distorted and I might add very painful version of the gospel stick, they had to first discredit Paul so they could create doubt in the gospel message he preached. So, in **Chapter 1**, we learned that the Judaizers had challenged Paul’s authority as an apostle, they alleged that Paul had “watered down” the truth so he would be popular with the Gentile believers, and they suggested that Paul was riding the coat tails of the “real” apostles. But Paul made the case that his apostleship and his gospel message came to him directly from the Lord, independent from the apostles in Jerusalem.

Now, put yourself in the place of the Galatian believers for a moment. Paul has made his case to reestablish his credibility amongst the Galatian believers, but the Judaizers probably claimed to represent the apostles in Jerusalem and came with a different message than Paul.

So then, from the perspective of the Galatian believers who are getting all of this, what are you thinking?

* Is there a contradiction among the apostles themselves?
* Do we have apostles of equal authority preaching two different gospels?
* Are the leaders of the church divided? Worse yet, is the church divided?

So, this is a dangerous time for the early church, and this is why Paul isn’t pulling any punches in this letter. He needs to crush this, and in **Chapter 2**, Paul continues to defend his authority as an apostle and the gospel message he preaches.

Now apparently, the Judaizers also alleged that Paul was a renegade, opposed to the other apostles who were leading the church in Jerusalem. So, as a defense, Paul describes a meeting he had with the other apostles in Jerusalem. Let’s read the first two verses of **Galatians 2** to see what happened.

**1Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. 2It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.**

Paul tells us that after a 14-year period, he went up again to Jerusalem. When he says “again” that implies this was not his first trip. Paul had made a previous trip to Jerusalem three years after his Damascus Road encounter with the Lord, and during his first trip, Paul only spent a few days with Peter to get acquainted with him and to meet his new companion Barnabas. It was likely a risky trip for Paul.

So, in this passage, Paul tells us about this second trip to Jerusalem. This trip could be the one described in **Acts 11:30** where he went to Jerusalem to provide some famine relief to the poor or it could be the trip described in **Acts 15** where he visited the Jerusalem Council. There are good arguments to be made for both but I tend to believe this second trip is the one described in **Acts 11:30**.

Anyway, while in Jerusalem, Paul seized an opportunity to meet privately with the other apostles since the Judaizers most likely claimed their teaching had been supported by them. This was wise on Paul’s part because it would be futile for Paul to preach a grace message if the Jerusalem leaders preached a legalistic one. This would mean that the apostles of Christ had contradictory messages, and the church would ultimately be divided and their labor would be in vain.

Now if you noticed, Paul brought Titus, who was a Gentile convert. Why do you think Paul brought Titus along? I suspect Paul anticipated a meeting with the other apostles when he got to Jerusalem and Titus is going to be “Exhibit A”. Titus is a Greek, and he is not circumcised according to the Mosaic Law, and yet he is a brother in Christ. There was no better way of forcing the real issue than to bring along a real person.

Will he be required to be circumcised by the apostles in Jerusalem, or won't he? That is the question. So, let’s see what happened.

**3But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. 5But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.**

Bingo! The apostles in Jerusalem accepted Titus as a brother in Christ even though he was not circumcised. This also showed that the Jerusalem leadership accepted Paul’s gospel of grace.

But apparently it wasn’t easy. If I am reading **verse 4** correctly, it appears that some of the Judaizers crashed this private meeting and insisted that Titus be circumcised and that Gentile believers fall in line with the rules and ceremonies of the Law, thereby denying that salvation is by faith alone in the finished work of Christ. But Paul said that he did not submit to these Judaizers – because any requirement that causes us to rely on our work and not Christ's work is the end of the gospel. Paul stood firm because the truth he preached came directly from the Lord.

Paul makes the point to tell the Galatians that these Judaizers did not represent the position of the apostles in Jerusalem in any shape, form, or fashion. They are false brothers – they were sham-Christians. But Paul isn’t finished and he continues to describe his meeting with the other apostles – **verse 6**.

**6But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. 7But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised 8(for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 9and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.**

Even though Paul met with the other apostles – these highly regarded church leaders, they did not give him the gospel he preached. The leaders in Jerusalem added nothing to the gospel Paul preached because they found nothing lacking in the gospel he preached. The leaders of the Jerusalem church (James, Peter, and John) accepted Paul and his ministry to the Gentiles. They approved Paul’s ministry, knowing that Paul did not require the Gentiles to come under the Mosaic Law to find favor with God.

But most importantly for Paul, there is only one gospel that is to be preached to two distinct groups. Paul’s main ministry was to Gentiles, while Peter, James and John primarily ministered to the Jews. They understood the role that God had commissioned them to, which allowed them to unite and work together as partners and peers for the sake of the gospel.

Now some period of time had lapsed after this meeting, and that brings us to **verse 11**.

**11But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. 13The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. 14But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”**

Antioch was located north of Israel, in the province of Syria. It was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire and it was an early center for Christianity. And although there was a large Jewish population there, it was predominantly Gentile, and both of these groups fellowshipped together as one church body in Antioch.

One day the Apostle Peter came for a visit, and you might imagine the scene that created. Peter “the Rock” had come to Antioch to see them. This is the guy who had been with Jesus from the beginning. He’s the guy who saw Jesus do all those crazy miracles. He’s the one who stepped out of the boat and walked on water. He saw the empty tomb and the risen Savior. Yes, that same Peter is visiting their church, and I’m sure they were amazed by him.

But what Peter saw in Antioch amazed him as well. He saw Jews and Gentiles worshipping together in one church, ministering together, praying together, caring for one another, sharing with each other, and yes, even eating Amboy potlucks together. Nothing like that had happened in Jerusalem yet – because the church was still predominately Jewish. But here in Antioch things were very different. Peter loved it and he joined right in with his brothers and sisters. He gladly ate his meals with his Gentile family in Christ. They loved him and he loved them. To Peter, this was what the body of Christ was supposed to be like. They loved God, they loved one another, and they were united.

But sometime later, a few Jewish Christian believers who identified with James, show up to the potlucks. These believers were probably former Pharisees or individuals who likely still had strong legalistic perspectives. They just couldn’t let go of the Law that had been ingrained in them. We are told that Peter recognized these men and felt pressured to slowly separate himself from the Gentile believers. Unfortunately, others noticed Peter’s behavior and followed suit – even Barnabas got caught up in it.

In the end, you now have one of those school cafeteria scenes where the Gentile believers (*the unpopular weird kids*) are sitting at their own table and the Jewish believers (*the popular cool kids*) have separated themselves and are sitting at the cool kids table, and most likely now eating their special cool kids’ food in accordance with the Law. Peter actions implied there were two classes of people in the church in light of the gospel truth that all believers are one in Christ.

Well, what does Paul do? Paul an apostle called by the Lord, an apostle equal to the other apostles, openly reprimanded Peter because Peter’s behavior was in public and it negatively impacted others. This was such an important issue that it couldn’t be dealt with privately.

And, Paul says in essence, “Peter, you rub elbows with the Gentile believers all the time. You even eat baked beans with strips of bacon on top of it, and you liked it. Yet, these guys … from James show up, and now you act as if you need to keep these laws.” **Peter you are not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel.**

The picture Paul paints is that of walking straight. Have you ever seen on TV or in a movie where a police officer suspects someone may be intoxicated and orders that person walk a straight line? Paul is giving Peter a gospel sobriety test. He’s asking him to look at how he lives to see if he is walking in a straight line with the truth of the gospel. And in this case, Peter wasn’t.

Think about this for a moment. Peter is one of the pillars in the church. If anyone gets the gospel it’s him, yet this passage shows us just how easy it is to drift off line from the truth of the gospel. Peter was acting like he needed to live right in order to be right with God, when the truth is – as believers in Christ, we are right with God, and now we are free to act like it.

It’s so easy to believe the gospel, but live like we don’t. We believe that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, but then we live as if we need Jesus plus our own efforts in order to stay saved – living our lives as if we have to earn God’s approval and acceptance rather than understanding that our approval and acceptance has already been secured based on what Christ has done for us.

The problem we have with walking in line with the gospel is that we have a difficult time believing that we are completely accepted on the basis of what Jesus has already done rather than what we do. We still live like we have to earn God’s approval, rather than really believing, in the depths of our being, that Jesus has already done this for us. This is why Paul hammers this truth home in **verses 15** and **16**:

**15“We are Jews by nature and not sinners from among the Gentiles; 16nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.**

Paul introduces us to this word “justified.” Justified or the word “justification” are those church words we occasionally hear, but what does it mean?

The word “justify” means to “declare righteous.” It refers to a verdict from the judge where the defendant is declared not guilty, innocent of all charges, and there is no record against him or her in the eyes of the law. If you are justified, your record is clean.

Justification is an act of God whereby He declares the believing sinner righteous – not guilty. Justification is not the result of a person’s character, or works, or observing the Law. It’s an act of God based solely on the finished work of Christ – period, end of story.

And being justified, Paul tells us in **Romans 5:1 *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

In other words, God’s justice towards us is eternally satisfied. It’s a done deal! We have peace with God, we are no longer enemies but are now highly favored by Him. You and I have peace with God today. We will have it tomorrow. We will have it the next day. We will always have it. It’s a done deal, not because of what we do, but because of what has already been done by Christ at the cross.

Most of us understand this at some level, but still, there are times where we feel it is up to us to gain God’s approval and acceptance. Paul wants us to get this right and accept the truth of the gospel as being the gospel truth.

*It seems that there was a man in England who put his Rolls-Royce on a boat and went across the continent to go on a holiday. While he was driving around Europe, something happened to the motor of his car. He cabled the Rolls-Royce people back in England and asked, "I'm having trouble with my car; what do you suggest I do?" Well, the Rolls-Royce people flew a mechanic over! The mechanic repaired the car and flew back to England and left the man to continue his holiday. As you can imagine, the fellow was wondering, "How much is this going to cost me?" So, when he got back to England, he wrote the people a letter and asked how much he owed them. He received a letter from the office that read: "Dear Sir: There is no record anywhere in our files that anything ever went wrong with a Rolls-Royce."*

That is justification. If we are going to experience the freedom we have in Christ, we have to know the truth. And the truth is this – in Christ, you are a Roll-Royce in the eyes of God. Is it because of something you did? Absolutely not! It’s because of what Christ has already done for you. You just got to accept this truth by faith.

Today is Palm Sunday, and two thousand years ago, Jesus made His triumphal entry in Jerusalem in spite of what awaited Him. Jesus rode into the city during the Passover celebration and publicly declared that He was their Messiah. He was the true Lamb that God had sent to take away the sins of the world. He was God’s Lamb. Jesus rode straight into enemy territory, knowing full well that in a matter of days, He would suffer the cross on your behalf and mine. That’s what He did, and for those in Christ – you are justified – declared not guilty by God.

So, let’s get it right. In Christ, you are right with God, and now you are free to act like it.

Source Material:

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Constable Notes