

Galatians 2

Galatians 2: 1-10

Galatians 1 1-13 (nt reading)

Genesis 17 1-8 (Ot Reading)

So to review a bit from last week, If you remember we find Paul writing a letter to refute a group of false teachers from Jerusalem who had been following behind him in his missionary journey doing their best to convert the Gentile Christians to Judaism, and to bring the Gentiles under the Mosaic Law. They argued that Paul, who was not one of the original 12 disciples who traveled with Jesus on his earthly ministry was not fit to be an Apostle, or at least a lesser one with not much authority .

These false teachers were coming from the churches in Jerusalem on a type of missionary journey to correct Paul's teaching. They were claiming Christ, that he was the promised Messiah, and that you must repent and turn from your sin to be saved, but they wanted to add to Paul's gospel of free grace and taught that before you can accept Christ, you must first become part of God's people by being circumcised and following the Mosaic Law. They said it was the only way to truly be an heir of Abraham's promise.

If you remember, last week, Paul said that these teachers were, perverting the gospel, creating a different gospel that is not the gospel of Christ and his free grace. To these teachers he said that they should be cursed for this false gospel that they were spreading.

The danger here, is the subtle shift from a gospel of Christ's work on the cross, and the free gift of faith to what these false teachers were saying twisting and distorting it into a different gospel requiring man to do something. To put plainly, they were saying that what Christ did on the cross wasn't fully sufficient for your salvation, there is something more that you needed to do. This is something we need to be wary today, these types of false teachers who want to add to the gospel, to make requirements for salvation something more than the free grace of God, his free gift of faith, and the sacrifice of his Son. This is what the Judaizers were doing in Galatia, and what we see happening in churches today, the distorting and twisting of the gospel into something different, into another gospel, but there is only 1 true gospel.

Please have patience with me here, I know that we just went over all this last week but I feel that it is very important, and worth a second look.

Also lets remember that Paul was writing this letter to the believers in the church warning them to not be deceived into believing anything other than what they had first been taught by him. This letter was written because Paul was concerned that the people were being led astray from the truth. He took a much harsher tone with the teachers rebuking them, and I want us to keep that foremost in our mind as we go through and study this out. He had concern, and love for the body of believers, but he held the teachers to a higher standard for it was they that were leading people astray, deceiving them to believe a different gospel.

So first, we need to answer the question. What is the gospel that Paul taught? Paul taught that salvation was by a free gift of grace given to us by God the Father. That no one is worthy of it, that we are all

dead in our sins heading toward death hell and the grave. But it is God who is rich in mercy who sent his Son to die in our stead, paying for our sins and through his death, burial and resurrection we are declared righteous in him. We bring nothing to the table, we have nothing in ourselves making us worthy for such a marvelous free gift, but it is only God who shows mercy, who from his sovereign will, chose to save some to make for himself a holy nation.

This is why if you remember last week I drew a line between Paul warning the church in Galatia and the churches today. How even today, we must fight this very same fight against false teaching which twists and distorts scripture. The church has many opponents outside who seek its destruction but it is not those that we need to fear, for we have God's promise that this faith will endure, and indeed it has endured through generations despite ridicule, and persecution by those on the outside. Really, our biggest problem facing the church today is the same as in the time of Paul. Those who are on the inside that have twisted and distorted scripture to be another gospel, they are the ones that do the most harm. That is why I wanted to revisit this again for I feel this is a very important issue in the church today and we have a tendency to want to overlook it in the name of unity, or peace.

We need to differentiate between what are doctrinal differences, and false gospels. We can have differences, in fact there will be differences for we are all fallible and none of us have everything right. We can have healthy debates, and discussions over doctrinal things such as the role of the law in the Christian today, or the Sabbath, we can debate end time views, or even how the church operates or we can debate styles of worship, what we eat, what we drink, etc. but all these things are not the gospel. When it comes to the gospel there is only one, and it is not debatable. That is the difference between a doctrinal difference, and a false gospel.

Which brings us to the heart of the issue. What is a false gospel? what does it look like? and what are the ramifications and dangers.

As I have said already, a false gospel is anything that teaches either anything other than Christ as the savior of the world, or adds anything to his work on the cross, or takes away from God's sovereign plan of salvation putting limitations, stipulations, or conditions on it. That is why we can look at different belief systems and say they are false when we see that they change, distort or twist the biblical doctrines of the gospel.

A false gospel can look like many different things. For instance instead of pointing to Christ, a false gospel can point to the Holy Church, to its traditions, and elevate a sinful created being to that of a mediator between God and man, and attributing this person with the ability and power to forgive sins.

It can look like a church, where instead of preaching repentance, and faith, tell you to just trust God and he will give you health, wealth, and everything you desire.

It can look like a community of people, who separate themselves from society. Who place for themselves a list of requirements, regulations, and laws which creates an outward appearance of piety, and holiness..but lacks the inward changed heart.

It can look like the church on the corner, or the one you grew up in who have changed salvation by faith alone, and by grace alone, to a salvation not of a sovereign God who raised us from death to life, but rather a salvation of our own choosing.

In the times that we live in, many have set the gospel aside as being too harsh and scaring people

away. The focus is no longer on the word rightly preached, but instead they focus on money management, church attendance, politics, or living a moral life. Not that any of these things are bad in of itself, but when the gospel is twisted and the focus is changed it becomes a false gospel. I think many of the issues we see inside the church today is because of this change of focus. We have tried to make the gospel appeal to more people, we have tried to make it easier, more acceptable, more entertaining. And in doing so, we have created a different gospel.

What are the ramifications of these false gospels on the church. Mainly, I think it can create false converts. People who believe they are a part of the body of Christ because they did something or are a part of the church, or a community and are being deceived that they are all ok. When in fact they need Christ. Because they were told salvation was because they are a good person, or given to them through the church, or by a decision they had made instead of being brought to scripture for their assurance, or to even test their faith as to whether it is true. They are told that everything is ok. The effect is that of a church full of people lacking saving faith, trying to act the part. This different gospel, and its effect is highly dangerous for it deceives people, when in reality they still need Christ. It is for this reason that we need to stop coddling these people, and instead preach the biblical gospel of Christ. We need to stop accepting these other gospels as a biblical gospel, and call it what it is. A false gospel that is dangerous!

Now on to this week. I would like to go back and read starting in Galatians 1:13 for it really is all one argument that leads into chapter 2. (read Galatians 1:13-2:10)

If you remember Paul is setting his case here for his Apostleship, and his authority in the church to rebuke and call out these false teachers. He uses his conversion, and early ministry to prove that his calling was not that of man, but of God himself.

In Chapter 1 verse 15 and 16, he says that God had chose him to minister to the Gentiles while still in his mothers womb. He was set apart for this ministry before he was even born. He grew up to be a very devout Jew, and zealous follower of the traditions and laws until he met God on the road to Damascus, and Christ was revealed to him so that he would become a minister unto the Gentiles of the very gospel that he sought to destroy! In fact the Greek word used for destroy here is Portheo, which means to sack, to ravage, to utterly destroy. Paul was seeking to completely and utterly wipe Christianity off of the face of the earth! He goes on to say, in vs 16 that he did not seek the advice, and teaching of anyone, not even of the apostles in Jerusalem who came before him, but rather went in to Arabia and Damascus ministering the word which was given him by God. There was no reason for him to be taught by anyone else, he was given the gospel through Christ Jesus himself.

After 3 years of his ministry in Arabia and Damascus he finally went to Jerusalem, and stayed with Peter, and met with James. But He only stayed for 15 days.. I believe This too is part of his argument that what he teaches is not from man, for he would not have been there long enough to get a formal education in christian ministry. Rather it is believed that he went to Jerusalem to meet Peter and James, those who were with Christ when he walked this earth, and learn from them the details of his ministry, death, and resurrection.

And that brings us to Chapter 2. We will be looking today at verses 1-10. (read 1-10)

Paul understood that the gospel of Christ, was a gospel of freedom. Freedom from Sin, and freedom from the Law. It was this gospel given freedom that he was defending and that the false teachers in Galatians were attacking. You can't just be saved by believing, you have to have rules to guide your

life too! You must follow these traditions! Paul says no, grace is free, given by God, and it is that of freedom, not of bondage.

So now we find Paul, 14 years after his conversion once again going back to Jerusalem. But this time not on his own, but with Barnabas and Titus, a Greek gentile. There is some controversy here as to whether this visit was the one recorded in Acts 15 or acts 11 lets

look at Acts chapter 15 a second. Reading Verses 1-4

One thing to note, the account in Acts 15 was definitely not one of a private nature as it mentions in Galatians 2. Acts 15 says there was “no small dissension” and they went to Jerusalem being sent by the church to debate and solve this issue of the Mosaic laws effect on the gentile believers. This is the very issue that Paul is fighting here in Galatians. It would not make much sense that this letter would be written to Galatians after the account in Chapter 15. For the Apostolic Council sent out a letter to all of the churches claiming that such beliefs about the mosaic law was not from the apostles in Jerusalem. We can read it in Acts 15 vs 23-29

Also, in Galatians Paul says that they went by special revelation, in chapter 15 they were sent by the church. So it does not seem to fit that this was the recorded trip that he has mentioned in Galatians. Rather some believed that it is the trip to Jerusalem recorded in Acts 11 verses 27-30. Lets turn there. This seems to fit a little better for verse 10 in Galatians chapter 2 he says They (being those being who he was meeting in Jerusalem) desired that they should remember the poor, which is the very thing Paul was eager to do.

Verse 2 in Galatians says, that he met privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means he might have run, or be running in vain. Paul on his visit was concerned that the gospel revealed to him might differ from that being taught in the churches in Jerusalem. This does not mean that Paul thought he was wrong, for he knew the gospel was given to him by God. But rather he wanted to see if they were all on the same page, and verify that there was a unification of the gospel under Christ. It goes on to say in verse 3, that Titus who was Greek, was not even compelled to be circumcised. So Paul's fears of any gospel differences were put to rest.

This is an important distinction here, and still relevant today. While the argument for circumcision as a requirement for salvation isn't something that is hotly debated today, it is still the principle of adding anything to the gospel other than Christ. This was still Paul's argument here, and he uses Titus as an example that even the Apostles who were part of the original 12 do not see circumcision and keeping of the law a requirement for salvation. This really is a final nail in the coffin for the false teachers. They were claiming being sent from the Jerusalem Church, being taught by the Super Apostles, and here Paul goes to the root, and shatters their argument giving them no ground to stand on, and no authority to argue against him.

Paul goes on to say, in verse 6 But from those who seemed to be something whatever they were, it makes no difference to me. God shows personal favoritism to no man, for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. At first look, it seems that Paul is being a little derogatory of the apostles in Jerusalem. But I don't think that is really the case. He was basically saying he was on even footing with them. We need to remember that he is dealing with the church here in Galatia, and the false teachers who were making claims of being sent from these Super apostles, and that Paul was just a little apostle, so that is more than likely his reasoning for the use of this language here. Paul did not need the approval of these other Apostles...he already was one. And he goes on to say, that they added

nothing to him. They accepted him, as a true apostle, and not only accepted but agreed with the gospel he taught. They did not need to add to it, or correct it. They all saw that the gospel had been committed to Paul to give to the Gentiles, just as it had been given to Peter to give to the Jews.

The true gospel has a unifying effect. When you stand on the truth of the word, despite your differences of ethnic backgrounds, age, or social status, it unifies us all. For we all once walked according to the prince and the power of the air that works in the sons of disobedience, but God who is rich in mercy showed grace toward us that while we hated God, his Son died in our place. Taking on himself the punishment of our rebellion, making us joint Heirs with Christ. What a glorious gospel message, what good news to a fallen world, lost in anger, depression, tossed to and fro, with no assurance, no peace, no rest. Praise God that it is by his sovereign grace he saw to save some from as Paul says...one lump of fallen humanity and make vessels for honor for his own Glory. It is by nothing we do, nothing we bring, but of God who shows mercy. That my brothers and sisters...is not another gospel, that is THE Gospel!

So once again, just be who you are. If in Christs, rest in his Sabbath rest, giving all to your sovereign lord and father. Do not fret or worry about your salvation for it is in the hands of he who made all things, and the same power that resurrected Christ from the grave, has given you knew life in him. This is your assurance, this is your hope. It is not your church, not your family, or how you live your life, or even your confession of faith where your hope should lie, but in Christ, and his saving gospel message!