

The One, True Gospel

Text: Galatians 2.1–10

Theme: Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone and by no other means

Introduction — I like a good spy movie, especially of the James Bond variety

- world of espionage intrigues me...at least the movie kind of spy story
- in the real world, it is nothing at all like what we see on the big screen

When spies enter into the church, it's even worse

- that's what's happening here in Galatians 2
- spies, false brothers, sneak-thieves enter the church and do some serious harm
- Phillips, in his delightful paraphrase, calls them "sham Christians"
- they are pseudo-believers, seeking to make slaves to their way of thinking, to their gospel

So, Paul writes this letter to those churches to correct them

- it is strongly worded, at times harsh, even painfully so
- but it is necessary: the truth of the gospel is at stake
- it's power is being denied, it's exclusive claim is being forsaken
- and worse than that: the One who is the very heart of the gospel is made small
- therefore, we have this letter, and a good corrective for our times today it is
- it tells us that Jesus' sacrifice alone is sufficient to set us free from sin that we may live a life of obedience to God's law by God's grace

Let's read Galatians 2.1–10 (page 1090/1154, pew Bibles)

Let's pray

Now, as we keep God's Word open before us, here in vv. 1–5, let's consider...

I. A MISSION IN COMMON

1. The period of this mission

- Paul went up to Jerusalem after a period of 14 years
- the time since his last visit reveals how independent Paul was
- as he has stated already: he did not get his gospel from man
- nor did it derive from man, not even the apostles
- an endorsement, if you will, simply was not needed
- it was a direct revelation from Jesus Christ Himself
- add to this 14 years, the three years Paul had been in seclusion receiving this revelation...
- ...and you have 17 years of faithful, fruitful ministry
- Paul has a proven track-record, if you will

2. The people of this mission

- v. 1 tells us Paul did not travel alone, a very common practice for the great apostle
- he had those who strengthened and encouraged him: Barnabas, the son of encouragement
- it was Barnabas who stood by his side after his conversion
- Barnabas bore testimony to the salvation Jesus had given to Paul
- he was a stalwart companion to Paul, and on this important mission, he came along once again
- and he brings along Titus, a Gentile convert to Jesus Christ

- Titus proves himself dear to Paul
- later, he calls him a “brother,” a “partner and fellow worker,” and “my true child in a common faith”
- what will prove instrumental at this moment for the newborn church is this:
- Titus, as a Gentile, was uncircumcised; no sign of the old covenant upon him
- this was a daring thing for Paul to do
- you could liken, I suppose, to you, inviting your favorite cousin to Vikings game
- only problem is, they are a die-hard Green Bay Packers fan
- come decked out: cheese-head headgear, face painted half yellow & green, big Packers #1 hand
- sits with you in hard-core Viking fans section: face paint, horns, whole works
- not going to be well-received; well, that might have been Titus coming to Jerusalem
- very likely, come Acts 15, that Titus was once again with Paul before the apostles
- Acts 15 would bear out the truth of the gospel of God’s free sovereign grace
- men and women, Jew or Gentile, circumcised or not, were redeemed by grace, not by works

3. The prompting of this mission

- v. 2 begins: “I went up because of a revelation”
- tells us Paul wasn’t coming because felt insecure & needed validation
- no, the Lord told him to go
- when he arrived, met privately with “those who seemed influential”
- several comments here: Paul not being snarky
- Judaizers most likely held apostles in high verbal esteem, if not for truth in their hearts
- did this hoping apostles would side with them; buttering them up, as it were
- Paul uses this phrase, knowing it would reveal what those wicked men were up to
- he also meets privately so as not to draw any more attention than necessary to this mission
- the gospel must be held up, held to, and held fast
- he longed that there would be a oneness of mind in the gospel
- if not, then 17 years of preaching would have been in vain, pointless
- and, I believe, Paul knew the church would not last if this were the case
- so you can see how absolutely vital this meeting was to Paul, apostles, indeed, future of church
- therefore, Paul “set before them” — he laid it out, all that he had been preaching for 17 years
- again, Paul isn’t doing this because he believes he lacks anything—v. 6
- his purpose is to ensure a complete oneness in the preaching of the very same gospel
- are saved by God’s grace alone through Christ alone by faith alone?
- or must something else happen, something else be added, as the Judaizers are claiming?
- and he will test that with Titus, an uncircumcised Gentile
- give thanks to God, brothers and sisters, for what we see in v. 3 is the proof of the gospel
- “But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.”
- Titus, a Greek, was not to be circumcised for salvation; nothing would be added to gospel

4. The provocation of this mission

- so here is the setting, once again, to make sure we understand and do not miss this
- churches Paul had seen begun in Asia Minor—southern Galatia—come about by faith
- simple preaching of the gospel by Apostle Paul saw so many converted
- they had been born again, those who were by nature children of wrath
- men & women, once dead in their sins, had been marvelously made alive in Christ Jesus

- God took out their hearts of stone and instead, put in hearts of living flesh
- when they heard: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved—well, they did
- shortly after this, men from Jerusalem came along, claiming the same faith
- but they also convinced Galatians believers they were from apostles of Jerusalem
- as they conversed, they told these new converts: you're missing something
- you heard gospel from Paul...but not the *whole* gospel
- yes, you must believe in Christ, this is necessary
- but you must also be circumcised if you are to be fully saved
- enemies of freedom: Judaizers, seeking to bind believers back to the Law for redemption
- “false brothers” they are called; we get the “false” bit, but why “brothers”?
- because these men would have agreed on just about every point of doctrine as you and me
- nothing in Paul’s letter seems to indicate that they disagreed over any facts of gospel
- Jesus Christ was the Son of God
- His death on cross was the atoning work for the forgiveness of sins
- the death and resurrection of Jesus—yes, they held to this as well
- so, if you just laid out “facts” of gospel: they believed them
- but as to how all the benefits came to one was different
- and as we saw in Gal 1.6—not some other variety, but of the same species
- no, as Paul would go on to say in v. 7, what these Galatians heard was whole new species
- a completely different gospel preached by ones who would be anathema—cursed forever!
- the remission of sin, declared just by God through faith alone, and more: nullified
- these false brothers were adding something to Christ, to the gospel
- what Paul preached was this:
- you are justified by faith, by belief in what God has done for you through Christ, trusting only in Christ and what He has done
- instead, what you see are spies sneaking into churches and destroying the work there
- all under the guise of “let’s follow God’s Word; let’s take it literally”
- this meant that any non-Jewish convert to Christ must get circumcised
- the confirming nature of this mission of Paul in coming to Jerusalem was paramount
- at issue is the orthodoxy of the gospel
- sneak-thieves were saying: if not circumcised, then not true Christian
- this is why Paul brings Titus: to show the power of the truth of the gospel
- v. 5 bears this out: “we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.”
- the doctrinal truths of the gospel were presented
- but also living proof—in Titus—of the power and truth of this gospel
- Titus was saved by grace, plus nothing; he needed nothing more to be saved
- orthodoxy — right belief — was preserved by the mission which Paul undertook
- you may wonder: any relevance to me today?
- why all the fuss about circumcision; not really the issue today, is it?
- you’re correct: circumcision isn’t the issue; what lies underneath that is the issue
- what is at stake are the fundamental parameters of Christian freedom
- as stated in v. 5: so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved

- the Judaizers sought to enslave new believers; bring them back into bondage under the Law
- still happens all around us today
- large branch of church that bases all of salvation on the sacraments
- they believe in the Trinity, Bible is God's Word to us, Jesus is Son of God come in the flesh
- this large branch of the church would say Jesus' death on cross necessary
- He rose from dead and ascended into heaven on high
- but your sins are not removed by blood of Jesus alone: it was waters of baptism when infant
- daily sins you commit each day—removed by the taking of the sacrament
- huge church council held between 1545–63 spoke to those who disagreed
- Let him be accursed who says that sins are not removed by the non-bloody sacrifice of the mass. Venial sins are removed by that aural of extreme unction, and others sins removed by purgatory.
- must ask: what's left for the cross to do?
- if sins removed by water, by bread, by oil, by fire, what's left for the cross to accomplish?
- so much is done by works; what's left of grace by this time?
- agreement on the facts of the gospel matter not when it's power & truth are denied
- but lest think that is only one, there are many evangelicals adding to the gospel
- I could be gracious and say that perhaps they do this unknowingly
- but men well-trained in theological seminaries and other institutions, ordained in churches
- small branch of Christian church says you must trust Christ AND be baptized to be saved
- not “get baptized” after you are redeemed; no, you MUST be baptized or not truly saved
- it seems clear in Scripture that if we say this we are saying not saved by grace, but works
- still others would say that if you do not speak in tongues, evidence gifts of Spirit, not saved
- after all, is it not described for us in Acts 2
- Peter said, when all listening were under great conviction:
 - “Repent and be baptized every one of you...and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
 - however, if even the gift of the Spirit is made a “work” many things are denied
 - first, you deny it is the Spirit already working in you to bring you to Christ
 - second, you deny that it is God's grace powerfully transforming you into this new believer
 - and third, you deny the free sovereign grace of God in salvation, just as other do
- some would say that in order to be saved you must “surrender”
- others tell you that you must “open the door of your heart” or “commit yourself to Jesus”
- even more popular is that you must “invite Jesus into your heart”
- how many have told you that in order to be saved you must DO something
- pray this prayer and all will be made right with God
- sign this commitment card, walk the aisle, toss the stick into the summer camp campfire
- these are all confusing terms, they play around with orthodoxy—right teaching from Bible
- they do not rest upon the gospel of God's free grace as put forth in New Testament
- instead, they put emphasis upon you and me, upon our feelings and emotions
- you may counter: “Well, these are just ways of talking about the same thing, right?”
- to which Scripture would say “No”
- and to which I would say, “Not really, so let's use biblical wording, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you”

Conclusion – time is past and must conclude for this morning

- pick up where we left off next Lord's Day, if the Lord wills it

Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, I am free at last!

- words of Martin Luther King, Jr delivered over 60 years ago now
- could be the them for Paul's letter to the Galatians
- in Christ, and in Christ alone, are you free at last from sin and bondage to sin
- thru gospel only are you set free to live life of freedom in Jesus Christ
- Thank the Lord for His glorious gospel that alone saves you from your sin
- if you haven't looked to Christ, look to Him today
- if you have, if Jesus has saved you, keep looking to Him
- and may the truth of the gospel be preserved for us and all who come after us

Now, let hear...

II. A MESSAGE IN COMMON

- not just *a* truth, but *the* truth: truth of the gospel
- truth Jesus had in mind when He said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8.32)
- Jesus is, indeed, this truth (John 14.6)
- there is only one Christ, one truth, and on gospel

1. The proving of the message
2. The prudence

And finally, we see...

III. A MINISTRY IN COMMON

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1. The recognition of ministry
 2. The reception of this ministry
 3. The relationship of this ministry

Conclusion –

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