

**LAW, LIBERTY, AND LIFE IN JESUS - Knowing How it all Works**

**Part five - Teaching #2137**

**Sunday, October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021 - 10 a.m.**

**Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

**IT IS A FALSE LOVE THAT IS INDEFINITE ABOUT GOSPEL TRUTH**

**Galatians 2:1-10 - “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. [2] I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain. [3] But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. [4] This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus in order to enslave us. [5] But we did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you. [6] Now from those recognized as important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism) — they added nothing to me. [7] On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised, [8] since the one at work in Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised was also at work in me for the Gentiles. [9] When James, Cephas, and John — those recognized as pillars — acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. [10] They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do.”**

We've just taken three weeks to unpack all of Paul's argument substantiating his authority as an apostle and the supernatural nature of his gospel message. He was bound to refute these false teachers who were troubling the believers in the churches he had planted throughout Galatia.

These false teachers were questioning Paul's **authority** and Paul's **message**. They were trying to bring these Galatian Christians back under the religious system of old covenant Judaism through the outward sign of circumcision and the keeping of dietary restrictions and fellowship rules, such as abstaining from breaking bread with Gentiles. And Paul won't hear of it.

To substantiate his claims as a true apostle, Paul shows that he was just as divinely called and chosen as any other apostle in the early church. He describes the supernatural nature of his calling on the road to Damascus. And then he is careful to prove that he never even **met** with any of the other apostles. He does this to point out that he wasn't chosen for his role as apostle to the Gentiles by a committee or group of church leaders. **God** had singled Paul out for his apostolic ministry.

So far so good. But consider for just a minute how confusing all of this might appear to the Christians in these Galatian churches. Now that Paul has established himself as a genuine apostle, and now that these false teachers were trying to convince these Christians that Paul's gospel wasn't a **true** and **effective** message because it was abandoning the whole foundation of Judaism, and now that these false teachers were claiming to be coming from Jerusalem, with credentials from the **real** apostles back home, what were these new Christians to conclude?

In other words, if it was true that Paul was a genuine apostle, and if it was true that the apostles back in Jerusalem were **also** genuine apostles, and if their messages were contradictory, **was the apostolic foundation of the church divided against itself?** Were the apostles themselves **divided** over this important issue of salvation and freedom in Christ Jesus through faith alone? Was the church itself being built on a **cracked foundation?**

We probably can't even imagine how huge this issue was for these new Christians. Because if **Paul's** message came from God, and if the **Jerusalem apostles'** message came from God - and if those messages **contradicted** each other - there was a big problem!

This is the issue Paul knows he has to deal with, and he deals with it in our text for today's study:

1) **IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE THE GENUINENESS OF HIS GOSPEL MESSAGE, PAUL SUBMITS HIS MESSAGE AND HIS MINISTRY TO THE APOSTLES AT JERUSALEM**

In fact, quite strikingly, he says he was actually led by *divine revelation* to do so:

**IPAD TEXT- Galatians 2:1-2 - “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. [2] I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain.”**

This is a fascinating insight. Paul received his call and his message by *divine revelation* (1:1,12). But he still wanted his message and his ministry endorsed and approved *by the church*. He had no desire to be a *freelancer* in his ministry. Once he had established the *unique, independent reception* of his message and calling (thus proving its divine *source* and *authority*), he was happy to *submit it all to the leadership of the church in Jerusalem*.

Even on his missionary journeys Paul wanted to make sure he was released under the support and blessing of the local churches:

**IPAD TEXT - Acts 13:1-3 - “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. [2] I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain.”**

**IPAD TEXT -Acts 16:4-5 - “Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. [2] I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain.”**

Paul recognized the protection and strength of working with the church. In fact, in our text today, it was Paul’s plan to **use** the leadership of the church in Jerusalem to refute the attacks of the false teachers. If the leaders in Jerusalem **received** Paul’s ministry and message as genuine this would silence the attacks of the false teachers who were trying to say **they** were the ones coming with the final word of the leadership at Jerusalem.

In other words, once Paul could demonstrate that his message was consistent with that of Peter and James and John, he would leave his critics with no leg to stand on. He would prove that his ministry for the past fourteen years had not been in vain - **Galatians 2:2 - "I went up according to a revelation and presented to them the gospel I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those recognized as leaders. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not been running, in vain."** - IPAD TEXT

## 2) THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL NEVER ENCOURAGE THE COMPROMISING OF GOSPEL TRUTH

Notice that it was the Holy Spirit that pressed Paul into this trip to Jerusalem. Somehow the issue of these false teachers had to be resolved. It would be a mistake to misread Paul's trip to Jerusalem as merely *Paul's own stubbornness or pride*.

Paul makes it clear that this was a confrontation that the Holy Spirit had orchestrated to *preserve and protect the purity and power of the gospel for those who hadn't even heard it yet*:

**IPAD TEXT- Galatians 2:5 - "But we did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you."**

Only when this primary goal is kept in view will Paul's motives be clearly revealed. This was not some kind of personal scrap for Paul. He was not battling to save his own pride. Paul saw this as a great **missionary issue**. That is, the whole future of Christian outreach to the Gentile world was at stake. This is what made Paul attack these false teachers with such grit. **He was thinking of you!**

The church shouldn't contend about everything. Many issues are merely issues of **style**, not **substance**. And the testimony of Jesus Christ can truly be marred by a lack of love among true brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

But a lack of love is not the **only** kind of tragedy in the Church. It is also possible (and increasingly prevalent) to **respond to serious doctrinal error with indifference under the guise of respect for other people's viewpoints**. In other words, **relativism is equated with humility**. And that is terribly grieving to the Holy Spirit.

Consider this. Virtually all the first apostles **died for truths they felt were too precious to deviate from in the slightest fashion**. What truths do you feel are so certain, so absolute, and so essential that you would give your life to hold to them? It seems to me that Paul's obedient response to the leading of the Holy Spirit to have these false teachers defanged in terms of their influence in the church is something we need to rethink in our day.

3) **PAUL TOOK TITUS WITH HIM TO LAY THE ISSUE OF HIS GOSPEL MESSAGE CLEARLY ON THE LINE**

**IPAD TEXT - Galatians 2:3-5 - “But not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. [4] This matter arose because some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus in order to enslave us. [5] But we *did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you.*”**

There is something very powerful happening here that is easily missed. Paul doesn't have to bring Titus to Jerusalem. Paul was easily intelligent and capable enough merely to ***argue*** his case quite persuasively.

But he brings Titus as a ***case study***. Titus is Paul's way of demonstrating that ***doctrine always effects people***. Titus was a life set free - redeemed by the marvelous power of the cross of Jesus Christ. And Titus was a ***Gentile, saved by faith in Christ plus nothing.***

In fact, here we have Paul traveling with **two** men. **Barnabas (2:1)**, and **Titus (2:1,3)**. Barnabas was a Jew. Titus was a Gentile. What better picture could Paul have chosen to show the **universality of the gospel missionary enterprise?** The same Jesus, the same Cross, the same salvation was accomplished and available freely to all.

Notice that these false teachers were still on the prowl **fourteen years** after Paul's initial conversion experience. There is always something **persistent** about false doctrine. It never goes away. The spirit of the age will always have the desire to sow confusion into the body of Christ.

And here's the real point here. **Confusion** is just as harmful as **division** in the Body of Christ. And any softness on the content of gospel truth is just as **unloving** in God's eyes as division. Unity that get achieved at the expense of absolute, revealed truth is a devilish unity.

We are given further details about this same issue coming to life again in **Acts 15:1-9** - **“Some men came down from Judea and began to teach the brothers, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom prescribed by Moses, you cannot be saved.” [2] After Paul and Barnabas had engaged them in serious argument and debate, Paul and Barnabas and some others were appointed to go up to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem about this issue. [3] When they had been sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and they brought great joy to all the brothers and sisters. [4] When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. [5] But some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses.” [6] The apostles and the elders gathered to consider this matter. [7] After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brothers, you are aware that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the gospel message and believe. [8] And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us. [9] He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.”**

The world is still full of religions that ***add additional baggage to the process of salvation that muddy up revealed gospel truth.*** Paul would have the same reaction to them ***now*** as he did ***then***. We need to keep the faith. This is ***not*** for the sake of winning an argument. It is for reaching the world with the only message that can save the lost and take humanity to heaven. And that is always worth preserving, at all costs.

4) **THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR ITS TESTIMONY TO A UNITED FRONT OF APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY.**

**IPAD TEXT - Galatians 2:6-10 - “Now from those recognized as important (what they once were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism) — they added nothing to me. [7] On the contrary, they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised, just as Peter was for the circumcised, [8] since the one at work in Peter for an apostleship to the circumcised was also at work in me for the Gentiles. [9] When James, Cephas, and John — those recognized as pillars — acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me and Barnabas, agreeing that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. [10] They asked only that we would remember the poor, which I had made every effort to do.”**

Paul specifically names Peter, James and John as supporting his ministry. This is important because there are always those who portray James and Paul as proclaiming slightly different gospel messages (Paul, one of grace, and James one of works). But such was clearly not the case. James **heard** Paul's presentation of the gospel, witnessed the testimony of Titus, and fully endorsed Paul's message.

In these verses we find Paul's wrap up in his defense. The Judiazers did **not** represent the teaching of the Jerusalem apostles. Paul says this in two different ways:

**First**, Paul states the process negatively. In **verse 6** Paul says that the Jerusalem apostles "**contributed nothing to me.**" He means they didn't feel there was any need to **supplement** Paul's gospel in any way. It wasn't lacking or deficient. Circumcision was not a necessary condition for Gentile conversion.

**Second**, and positively, Paul says the Jerusalem apostles actually blessed and encouraged Paul's missionary efforts to the Gentiles (**verses 7-10**). As these verses make clear, these apostles would take the gospel to **different audiences** (Paul to the Gentiles and the others to the Jews), but they would all be taking the very same **message**. Then as now, there is only one Name under heaven by which we must be saved. The same gospel is for **all** the nations.

So don't be fooled by these seemingly remote and boring historic details. There are two future-shaping principles being hammered out.

***First, the gospel is eternally true and unchanging for all times and all peoples.*** This is certainly under attack in our pluralistic age.

And ***second, the truth of the gospel must constantly be maintained and guarded by the church.***

***Divine truth, while very powerful, is never self-defending.*** Those who, through God's free grace, have come to cherish the gospel the most are also the most obligated to ensure it is passed on to this lost world in an absolutely pure and undistorted form.

***"Truth decay"*** is all around us. It is never a loving or humble act to give a passive response when the absolute truth of the gospel is snatched from the hands of the perishing.