

**Paul's Gospel Ministry Confirmed, Part 1**

Scripture: Galatians 2:1–10

Code: 48-7

If you'll open your Bible to the second chapter of Galatians, I want you to know that this morning we're going to be looking at a little more of the history and the background. When you take the Scripture as it comes you take what comes gladly, because all of it is profitable that we might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. These biographical sections put some demands on us to sort things out a little bit; and we're going to endeavor to do that. For this morning anyway, I want to at least get you to look at the opening five verses of chapter 2. Let me read them to you.

“Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It 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. But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. But 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. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.”

That final statement is the reason that Paul wrote this book: “So that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.” He was in a battle against those propagating a false gospel. They were, in his case, called Judaizers. They were Jews from Jerusalem who had come into the region of Galatia in the Gentile world purposely following Paul into the churches that he had established in the region of Galatia. There were a number of cities there where he had planted churches. They followed him, they dogged his steps, and they came into those churches preaching a different gospel, another gospel. Paul was shocked that the believers in Galatia, the church members in Galatia had given them an ear.

He says in chapter 1, verse 6, “I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed, *anathema*, damned, devoted to divine destruction.” Any tampering with the gospel brings about divine condemnation.

What was happening is what continued to happen through Paul's entire ministry. He would preach the true gospel of grace and faith, and along would come the Judaizers and say, “No, Gentiles cannot be saved unless they come through Mosaic constraints: circumcision, the law of Moses, the ceremonies, ancestral traditions.” They made those a necessary pre-salvation work, and they wanted to impose those on Gentiles who, of course, in their own history were utterly ignorant of Moses and the rest of the Old Testament.

Paul then has to defend the gospel of salvation by grace through faith alone, and that's why he wrote the book of Galatians. The first of his thirteen epistles chronologically, he sets the record straight at the very beginning about the gospel. And the sum of the purpose of the book is at the end of verse 5: all of this that he is writing is "so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you, so you would not be drawn away, leaning toward a different gospel, a different gospel which is not another gospel, but merely a message that brings about damnation."

Now we're not surprised at this. There are, on the surface of life in this world, constant wars. We know that. We're more aware of them today than any civilization has ever been because of media. The world is in conflict; it is in endless conflict. The conflict never ends; it is every level. It is in human relationships. It is in the family. It is among family members, extended family members. It is in communities, it is in cities, it is in states, it is in nations, it is between nations. We are very aware of massive, massive conflict in the world. It is a very difficult world to live in; the curse is apparent to everyone.

But for all that we can see, there is a far greater spiritual war going on that rages at more extensive and more formidable and more consequential levels than anything you can see; and that is the war between God and Satan, between God's truth and Satan's lies. That goes on all the time. It is an endless battle. And anyone who comes into the kingdom of God is defined by the New Testament as a soldier, as a soldier, as a fighter: one who has to defend the gospel, defend the Word of God, defend the truth.

Paul the apostle gives us a model for defending the truth, and that is what he is doing in the book of Galatians. He is fighting for the true gospel in the face of Judaizers propagating a false gospel of salvation in Christ, but by faith and works. And we have looked at that already in the book of Galatians; that's just a brief summary.

I want you to go with me for a moment back to the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, because our Lord gave warning to His disciples in that very important thirteenth chapter, in which He describes life in the kingdom: how it's going to be, what it's going to be like to evangelize in the kingdom, to preach the gospel in the kingdom. And one of the things that He lets us in on is that as busy as we are, that's how busy Satan's going to be. Satan is not just going to be devising religions that are alternatives to Christianity, not just devising religions that are anti-Christianity – and the world is full of alternative religions and anti-Christian religions – but that Satan would spend a great amount of his time and energy in false forms of Christianity. This is where we have to be most wary.

And so our Lord tells the disciples a parable to make this clear. Matthew chapter 13, verse 24: "Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" And he said to them, "An enemy has done this!" The slaves said to him, "Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?" But he said, "No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers: First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Now they would have understood this, because this is what happened in the ancient world when an

enemy wanted to do damage to someone, this was one way that you damaged your neighbor, by sowing noxious tares in the wheat field, and therefore corrupting the grain and, of course, the tares, the weeds, the noxious elements would choke out much of the good crop. This was something an enemy would do. Our Lord explains the significance of this in the kingdom down in verse 36.

“He then left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’ And He said, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.’” It will not be well for the tares in the time of judgment.

Our Lord says, “There are going to be tares sown by Satan inside the kingdom, and they will be indiscernible in many cases. You won’t be able to tell them apart, so that you can’t go around ripping them out, because you may be doing damage to true believers. Leave that to Me at the end of the age.” That is our Lord saying that the church, the kingdom in its visible sense, is going to be populated by true believers and false believers, which means there will be people who believe the true gospel, and people who believe a lie and false gospels all within the framework of the church and the kingdom. We all know this; we all see this; we all must contend with this. That is why Paul says, “I cannot believe that you’re leaning toward something that is cursed, that is doomed to destruction by God: a false gospel.”

Everywhere Paul went, this dogged his steps; and it does for every preacher in every era, in every place in the world; it always will, because Satan is always at it, not only in religions outside Christianity, alternative religions, and anti-Christianity religions, but in forms of Christianity; and that is where he does his greatest damage. So Paul is writing to the Galatian churches and saying, “You must stop leaning that direction. You must come back and accept the true gospel which I preached to you,” – and, again, that’s the end of verse 5 – “so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.”

The point is, if you are confused about the gospel, even though you may be a believer and subsequent to your faith, you’ve become confused about the gospel, you can’t then preach the true gospel, which is why the church is in the world. We must understand the true gospel. As you know, this has been a dominating burden in my life, is that among the people in the church who may well be true believers, there is ignorance about the true gospel. Consequently, they cannot proclaim that true gospel; and the church then is short-circuited in its purpose in the world.

The Judaizers were saying, “Paul does not give you the truth. Paul is not an apostle. Paul does not speak for Christ. We do. We are the representatives from the church in Jerusalem. We come from Jerusalem,” they said. “We are your Jewish brothers. We understand the true gospel. We represent the truth, Paul does not.” By doing this they tried to become the satanic sowers of tares in the churches in Galatia.

Now Paul knew this was coming, he expected. When he was in Ephesus, he said, “For the period of

three years, I didn't cease to warn you with tears for three years, that as soon as I left, the false would come. They'd rise up inside, they'd come from the outside, and they'd do everything they could to corrupt you and to steal the gospel, to confuse the truth, so that it wouldn't remain with you, and you wouldn't be clear as to the fulfillment of your mission in the world. False teachers are everywhere."

When Paul writes to Timothy, he warns him about false teachers as a young pastor. When he writes to Titus, he warns him about false teachers. All pastors and all leaders are to be able to refute false doctrine; that is a qualification. They not only are to be able to do it, but they are to do it. Satan and his emissaries are disguised as angels of light, but they are from hell. They are the angels of darkness.

Paul has to defend not only the gospel, but first his own apostleship. Because there is no New Testament yet, how do they know that Paul is preaching the true gospel? They have to be sure that he received it from heaven, that he received it from the primary and only source, that is God Himself. And that he has done in chapter 1. That is what he did in chapter 1.

He begins the chapter by saying, "I did not receive my apostleship from men, nor through the agency of man." Down in verse 12, speaking of the gospel, he says, "I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it. I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. I received the gospel the same way the original twelve apostles did, from the lips of Jesus. I am a true apostle. I saw the risen Christ, which was a requirement. I was commissioned by the risen Christ personally, and I received the truth from His lips."

After his conversion on the Damascus Road, he went into Nabataean Arabia for three years. God gave him three years, because the original twelve had three years with Jesus. Paul was given his three years to learn directly from the mouth of Christ. "I received my message not from men, not even from the apostles, not from the leaders of the Jerusalem church, not from Christians in Damascus where I was brought low when Christ called me; I received it from heaven. This is a gospel that came to me first-person from the Lord."

His argument has been very convincing in chapter 1. But the Judaizers are going to take a look at that argument and they're going to come up with something like this: "Well, you received your gospel three years out in the wilderness. Maybe that's your gospel. Maybe that is what you think God gave you. But maybe it doesn't agree with the Jerusalem church and the Jerusalem leaders. You have said in chapter 1 that you only went to Jerusalem for fifteen days, you saw no one but Peter and James the Lord's brother. We know from the book of Acts that they didn't want to receive you. They were afraid of you because you had terrorized the church. Finally Barnabas was willing to take you, and bring you in, and introduce you to the disciples. And they accepted you, and they loved you. And, of course, they gloried God because of you" – the end of chapter 1, verse 24. They glorified God because of what He had done in the life of this persecutor of the church.

"You were only there a brief time, and then by your own admission you left and you went back. You went back to Syria and Cilicia. We actually sent you because persecution began. We shipped you out so you didn't get hurt. You went back where you'd come from, the area of Tarsus where you were born and raised. So maybe because you have not had enough exposure to the apostles, you've come up with something that's really kind of a gospel of anarchy. You've sort of developed your own, and your independence is sectarian, and it's different than Peter's and James and John,

the three leading apostles.”

Paul's going to answer that, and he answers it in chapter 2. Listen to these words: “Then after an interval of fourteen years I went again up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went back. I went back.”

“What did you go back for this time?” “I went back to have the apostles hear my gospel, hear the accounts of my gospel, and tell me whether this was, in fact, the true gospel. It's not that I doubt it. It's not that I didn't know it. It's not that I even had questions about it. I had seen that gospel work for three years in Nabataean Arabia where I was being tutored, and also preaching. I came back, and then for fourteen years I preached that gospel in Syria and Cilicia, and I saw that gospel work for seventeen years. Look, I was with the apostles fifteen days, and then on one other occasion I was with them for a very brief time. I'll tell you what that was. Apart from that, I was alone with the Lord in my ministry for seventeen years. But let me tell you about my coming. I came to Jerusalem after three years in Arabia and fourteen years of ministry; I came. I brought Barnabas who was my companion.”

Barnabas remember, he had met on that first visit. According to Acts 15 they wouldn't let him in, they were afraid of him: the believers, the disciples. Barnabas gave him access. Barnabas became his friend. Barnabas then went back with him to minister alongside him. He brought Titus – and I'll say more about him next week.

“Fourteen years after I left Jerusalem I came back into this part of the world and I ministered. It was busy ministry. It was intense ministry. It was apostolic ministry.” Go over to chapter 1, verse 21. “I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia,” – those were the areas where that ministry took place – “and everybody began to hear” – verse 23 – “that the one who once persecuted the church is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy. They were glorifying God because of me.” They not only had accepted him finally in Jerusalem, but the word was spreading about the impact of his ministry. Let me tell you a little bit about it.

He founded the churches in Syria and Cilicia. He worked with Barnabas. A church was founded in Antioch, the second church – Antioch in Syria. It was about the time of the death of Herod Agrippa 44 AD or so that he accompanied Barnabas on that relief mission. Acts 11 and 12 tells about it. They brought relief to the famine-struck believers in Jerusalem and Judea. He then went right back to Antioch; and when he came back to Antioch, he went on his first missionary journey. Returned from that first missionary journey, remained in Antioch, and finally makes this trip to Jerusalem fourteen years after with only that one brief delivery of some goods to help the saints there.

Now what trip is this? I believe it's the one recorded in Acts 15. It's the one recorded in Acts 15. So go to Acts 15. What was going on in Acts 15 fits in perfectly. Meanwhile in Jerusalem while Paul is off in Syria and Cilicia, “Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” So here we find Jews coming to Antioch and demanding that these Gentiles be circumcised or they can't be saved.

“Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them. The brethren determined then that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through

Phoenicia, Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.'" And that set the debate. Verse 6: "The elders, apostles came together to look into that matter."

Up in Antioch, some Judaizers came there, and they're preaching this false gospel. They're the satanic emissaries. Paul and Barnabas take them on with such impact and such power that the church sends Paul and Barnabas with some others down to Jerusalem to help them with that issue.

But notice what it says in verse 2: "It was because of a revelation that I went up." You always go up to Jerusalem because it's so high. "It was because of a revelation." He's still getting direct revelation. He got direct revelation on the road to Damascus. He got direct revelation in the house of Ananias. He got direct revelation three years in Arabia. He's been getting direct revelation from the Lord for the fourteen years of his ministry. And now another of these rather common revelations from heaven comes, and that's the reason he goes to Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem needs to hear from you." That's very important to state, because Paul is not questioning his gospel, he is being sent there by God. The revelation may have come to Paul first. It may have come to the church leaders with Paul collectively. But they all agree that he needs to be sent to Jerusalem. And this is how the Holy Spirit operated.

In Acts chapter 13, similarly, "The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul in the first missionary journey. The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul," – direct revelation. That's how the early church and the apostles functioned, with direct revelation. So he receives this revelation, the church affirms it, and he heads for Jerusalem to help them with this dire situation.

Verse 2: "I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles." Them, meaning the church, Acts 15 says, the elders, and the apostles. "I submitted to them the gospel which I preach." God knew the problems. God knew the circumcision party. God knew the Judaizers were doing horrible damage with their mandatory circumcision and legalism, very much like forms of Christianity today that say you can't be saved without baptism and a certain fulfillment of moral and ceremonial behaviors. God knew the issue. Paul and Barnabas were the right instruments to use.

Paul comes, and the first thing he does is submit to them the gospel which he preached. Literally, "I laid it out for them. I laid it out for the whole church to hear. But also I did in private to those who were of reputation." That would be to the real leaders, the apostles named in verse 9: James, Peter, John, who were reputed to be pillars. They were the ones of reputation, the pillars. "I went to the inner circle of Jesus – Peter, James, and John – and I told them, laid before them the gospel which I preached. They were the ones of reputation." Might be a little bit of reference to sarcasm used by the Judaizers as they mockingly referred to the apostles as those of reputation.

The Judaizers, though they would have believed in Christ, would have held onto their Judaism, and therefore held onto their spiritual pride, and even looked down at the apostles and spoken of them sarcastically in a ridiculing way. "But I went to those who were of reputation, namely James, Peter, and John, and other apostles who might have been there; and I went there because I feared that I

might be running or had run in vain.” That’s genuine honesty.

“I wanted their affirmation. I’ve never doubted the truth that the Lord gave me. I heard it from His lips. I’ve never doubted its power. I’ve watched it for seventeen years. I’ve seen it in my own life. How else can you explain me?” That was the whole case in chapter 1. “How could you explain me, being a persecutor of this, and now preaching it. I know the power of the gospel, I know the truth of it, but I want apostolic affirmation. I want you to know that it isn’t just that I received it from the Lord, but the apostles confirmed it. I wanted their confirmation, and so I came.” And the confirmation came quickly. It came almost instantaneously.

Verse 3: “Not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek” – or a Gentile – “was compelled to be circumcised.” That’s the answer. Let’s not talk about theoretical things, let’s talk about practicality. He brings Titus: Titus, a Gentile; Titus, a living illustration; Titus. Paul calls him “my true child in a common faith.” Titus, a believer transformed, possessor of the Holy Spirit, companion of Paul and Barnabas. “I brought Titus.”

This thing becomes more than theological now. It becomes more than some kind of an academic discussion; it’s very personal. Here is a living, redeemed, Spirit-indwelt Gentile who has not been circumcised, and who has not been made to conform to ancestral traditions or Mosaic ceremonies. What would the apostles do with him? Because whatever they would do with him would be their response to the issue. If they said, “Titus must be circumcised,” then the Judaizers won.

But Paul says to the Galatians, “Though he was a Greek, he was not compelled to be circumcised while at Jerusalem in the presence of the apostles.” That is a devastating blow to the Judaizers. The Judaizers are looking for a corroboration of their view; they failed to get it. If the Jewish apostles in Jerusalem didn’t require this Gentile to be circumcised, then how could the Judaizers require it all over the Gentile world?

You say, “Well, wait a minute. Wasn’t Timothy circumcised after his conversion?” Yes. The story’s in Acts 16. But do you remember this? Timothy’s mother was Jewish. Timothy’s mother was Jewish. His father was a Gentile, but his mother was Jewish. He was, by all accounts then, considered to be of Jewish blood through his mother.

Paul wanted a companion. Timothy was going to be not only his companion, but Timothy was going to pick up the baton when his ministry was over and carry it forward. Timothy needed to be welcomed into the places Paul would go. And where did Paul go when he ministered? He went into a town and went to the synagogue.

No Gentile could come to a synagogue. No Gentile could go into the places reserved for Jews. It was important for Timothy to be circumcised, because he was considered a Jew, so that he, along with Paul, would have access to those places. It added nothing to his life spiritually, it added nothing to his life in a saving sense. It was simply a way to give him access to the Jews along with Paul.

But Titus is a Gentile. From the very outset, we learn here that the leaders, the apostles James, Peter, John agreed with the position of Paul and Barnabas. No circumcision is not necessary for salvation, no ritual, no rite, no external ceremony. I might add no baptism, no sacrament. If they had had Titus circumcised it would have undercut the gospel of grace and given victory to the Judaizers.

Go back to Acts 15 one more time and see how the Council responded. And we ended by saying in verse 6, “The apostles and elders came together to look into this matter. Now after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘Brethren, you know that in the early days’ – the early days meaning going all the way back to the tenth chapter of Acts and how he evangelized Cornelius the centurion and all the Gentiles in Cornelius’ house, Acts 10.

“Peter stood up and said, ‘You know the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.’ – Acts 10 – ‘And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us. He made no distinction between us. How do you know that God gave them the Holy Spirit? Because it was manifest with the speaking in languages.’ – the same thing had happened on Pentecost – ‘It was clear that He made no distinction between us and them, that He had been cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe’ – this is Peter still talking to the Council, with the Judaizers there – ‘that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.’”

People kept listening. Barnabas and Paul related the signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. That’s important too, because the signs and wonders marked them as apostles.

The Council at Jerusalem said, “No, circumcision is not required. There is no work, there is no ceremony, there is no tradition that is necessary for salvation. The Gentile is saved exactly like the Jew through faith apart from works.”

They went on to formulate a letter, if you keep reading in Acts 15 – do that this afternoon. They formulated a letter that said, “Be careful not to purposely offend the Jews, but preach the gospel of faith alone.”

The Judaizers had voiced their opinions, and they had been denounced by the apostles. “All of this” – verse 4 says – “was because of the false brethren secretly brought in,” – who brought them in, who sows the tares? Satan – “who had sneaked in.” They were both brought in and sneaked in: brought in by Satan, sneaked in themselves under the guise of being believers in Jesus Christ. “They came to spy out our liberty, our freedom, which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.”

They secretly were smuggled in by Satan. They came into the church. They came in to corrupt the truth. They came in to sow tares. They came in secretly. They came in to attack freedom from the law.

“What do you mean by that?” Freedom from the law as a way to salvation, freedom from the law as a damning instrument by which we will be forever punished having violated it, freedom from the external ceremonies which the Old Testament law required, freedom from Jewish traditions, freedom from works as a means of sanctification rather than love. The Christian is free in Christ; free from any external ceremonies, rituals; free. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, liberty.” His word’s called the law of liberty.

“They want to bring us back into bondage.” Paul says, “We did not yield in subjection to those false



brethren for even an hour,” – literally, for a moment. Why? – “so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.”

And I can't think of a more pastoral statement than that final statement. My prayer, my desire is that in all that we say, the result is the truth of the gospel remains with you. I don't know how much longer I will be here. I don't know that; none of us does. Any time the Lord wants me to go to heaven, I'm ready to go. But the one thing that I would love to be certain about is that when I'm not here, the truth of the gospel will remain with you, because this is the only message of salvation.

Father, we thank You that we've been able to gather this morning and live this drama with the blessed apostle Paul, who understood the critical nature of maintaining the gospel. Thank You that You've given us understanding and clarity, conviction, strength to fight the fight to the very end. I would pray that this church would never abandon the truth of the gospel, never succumb to false teaching. Thank You for giving us the strength that You have through the myriad, countless numbers of stalwarts who understand love and preach the true gospel.

Thank You for giving us schools, a university, and a seminary where we can continue to raise generations of believers into leaders who will hold firm to the true gospel. It's easy to see what's coming at us from the outside. It's easy to see the error of the alternative religion, the anti-Christian religion. But, Lord, raise up in Your true church those with keen discernment to be able to see the true gospel and distinguish it from all subtle false gospels. And, Lord, it is for that true gospel that we rejoice, because in it is our salvation, the salvation of those we influence; that it is the gospel of grace that all that needed to be done for our salvation, Christ did on the cross. Amen.

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