

There is One Gospel - Galatians 1:11-2:10

Pastor Lee Cadden – April 14, 2024

In declaring the beauty and wonder of the One, True Gospel – the story of God, His creation, His people, their sinfulness, and His faithfulness to redeem them by His Son’s life, death, and resurrection – Paul starkly contrasts his hope in this with **how broken** he is over the Galatians forsaking this gospel for **legalism** and **self-righteousness**.

Having made this statement, he pauses and takes the Galatian church through a history lesson by way of reminding them how the Gospel of Christ came to them and the ultimate hope that they once had, and Paul hopes will have again, in a Savior that sets his people free from earning their status (or thinking so) before God, or earning their punishment and shame before the holiness of God.

GALATIANS 1:11 – 1:24

Paul here gives his testimony in brief, reminding them of his story – it is probable that they had already heard it in person when he was with them:

1. **Before Jesus** – Paul was a fanatic Jewish legalist – a Pharisee – bent on stamping out the Jesus movement and defending his Jewish faith.
2. **Meeting Jesus** – from beginning to end it was by **grace** through faith that Paul – enemy of the truth and a **terrorist** meets radical grace in the face of Jesus. → AND HE IS TRANSFORMED.
3. **Walking with Jesus** – Paul’s life is one of absolute surrender and faithful proclamation of the gospel that was revealed to him.

Before

We see Paul in Acts 8 dragging Christian men and women to prison. In Acts 7 Paul casts his vote (likely as he did many times elsewhere) for Stephen’s stoning. He recounts these stories on trial before King Agrippa in Acts 26.

- In v.13 – he confesses his violent intent to destroy the church while in ...
- V.14 – he was an exceptional student, zealous for the traditions of “my fathers,” – as a Pharisee he was intent on being the most fanatical member of the “strictest sect”¹ in all of Judaism.
- Here is a man who looks at his **resume and finds not only pride in his accomplishments but a deep sense of his identity in them.**
- But....

Meeting ...

In meeting Jesus, “the God whom I left out of all my fanaticism” and religiosity met me at my absolute lowest.

Stott: “All my raging fanaticism was no match for the good pleasure of God.”²

- Paul is still amazed to know and believe that God the Father

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Galatians, The Bible Speaks Today Commentary*, (19).

² Ibid. 19

- set him apart before he was born (v.15) and it pleased him to reveal his Son to Paul (16). Yes, even to the one who is killing the sons and daughters of God.
- Paul knew, “he neither deserved mercy, nor asked for it. Yet mercy found him, and grace called him.”³

Walking with...

- V.16 – “my immediate response...”
- Paul wastes no time in responding at this point. He has spent his entire life (unknowingly) fighting the One True God.
- Timeline:
 - He spends a short period of time in Damascus where he is blinded by the presence & glory of Jesus.
 - Then he travels into Arabia (a large expansive territory) where many have speculated on what exactly happens there for the next three years.
 - Most scholars believe that the revelation of the gospel was given to him there in silence and solitude, but the truth is we don’t know exactly where he goes or what exactly happens.
 - Then after **three years** he goes and spends fifteen days with Peter (Cephas) and James. Paul communicates this as more of a “get to know you meeting” and then he goes back North to Syria and Cilicia to continue proclaiming Jesus Christ.
 - Unknown to the other apostles and the church in Judea, the rumor spreads for another decade that the one who was persecuting the church – killing Christians and burning down their homes – “**is now preaching the faith that he once tried to destroy (v.23)** and “**they glorified God” because of this (v.24).**
- **Why the details?**
 - **Because the details confirm the otherwise outrageous claim of Paul – that the Gospel he preaches he received directly from Jesus by way of supernatural revelation in and through the Spirit of God.**
 - V.11-12 – this is not something we made up. This is true, it is real.
 - There is One Gospel – and it is the one we preach – revealed to us directly from God.

GALATIANS 2:1-10

After 14 years, (2:1) “because of a revelation” (not sure what it was, but clearly a divine calling to return to Jerusalem) ... Paul again does so.

Why?

- To set before the other Apostles the Gospel that had been revealed to him and he had been preaching for 14 years, “in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.”
- Paul is aware of the Judaizers – those who would have new, Gentile converts to Christianity uphold the law of Moses AND put faith in Jesus –
 - how their false claims of **Jesus + works** as a means to salvation had infiltrated the Jerusalem church.

³ Ibid. 20

- **Paul wants to know if the church there is still operating in the freedom of the gospel** – “it is for freedom you have been set free” (Gal. 5.1)– **or** if they have turned to legalism and Christian Phariseeism
- Paul does not need their confirmation of the gospel he has been preaching (he’s a decade and a half in) but **he comes on a mission to root out the influence of those who have “slipped in” among the church.**

So, Paul strategically does two things on this trip:

1. He takes Titus with him – a Greek, uncircumcised convert to Christianity.
2. He fully discloses the origins of and the full scope of “his gospel” – as revealed to him by Jesus.

A smile side note here – Paul also makes it abundantly clear that he is not impressed with the persons of the apostles – there is Greek or Jew (there is no room for celebrity pastors here) - while at the same time respecting their role as Apostles.

And then several amazing things happen:

1. They accept Paul’s Gentile brother and do not require that he be circumcised.
2. They accept the entirety of Paul’s gospel that he has been preaching for 14 years.
- **Those that would accuse Paul/Peter preaching two different gospels find themselves soundly defeated (and will be officially put down in Acts 15 at the Jerusalem council in the near future).**

WHAT IS THE FRUIT OF THIS MEETING? THE OUTCOME?

- **The Jewish Apostles add nothing to Paul’s gospel.** They are in lock step with one another.
- **They extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul, Titus, and Barnabas and their mission to the Gentiles.**
- Only asking that they remember the poorer brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. Many of the churches Paul founded would be far more affluent than those in Judea, here begins the consistent mission of Paul taking up offerings from Gentile churches for the sake of caring for Jewish churches.

Paul’s writing to the Galatians and retelling this story is to remind them of this very plain, but crucial truth:

There is one Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- And that one Gospel is preached by us to you, by the other Apostles in Jerusalem, and was revealed to us by Jesus (for them in person, for me by revelation from the Holy Spirit).
- And The Gospel must be maintained. It must be fought for. It is worth being fought for.
- This One Gospel has not changed over the last two thousand years.

What was True for Paul's story is also true of ours: (from Galatians 1:15-17)

1. Paul's salvation came because of **God's intervention**. Blind, Dead, "but ... God..." (Eph. 2:4 and Titus 3:4).
2. Salvation is part of **God's eternal planning**. (*set me apart before I was born v.15*). the plans and purposes of God are from outside of time and revealed to/in/through us in time.
3. Salvation – conversion from death to life – is because of **God's gracious calling** (*called me by his grace v.15*)
 - Paul was not searching for Christ. He was God's enemy.
 - God didn't ask for Paul's permission to blind him on the road.
 - God interrupted because he felt like it. Plain and simple.
 - God saves because it pleases him to do so (v. 16).
4. Conversion always involves **seeing the glory of Jesus**.
 - 2 Corinthians 4:6 – saved that we might "see God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ."
5. What is the result of this seeing? How does he respond? How do we respond when we **actually** see Jesus?
 - V.16 – "to me" is often revealed as to "to me in flesh and blood," or "in me."
 - Christ has been revealed to me and in me.
 - My heart of stone has been replaced with a heart that beats for him.
 - We were blind, but now we see the glory of Christ.
 - Do we see perfectly? By no means while here on earth.
 - But we see enough.
 - What happens when we see Jesus?
 - We respond in obedience.**
 - Paul "immediately" goes out to Arabia that he might receive a long-from instruction from the Spirit.
 - So that "he might preach him among the Gentiles." (v.16).

A person cannot see Jesus, **actually** see him, and remain neutral.

The gospel is clear that we will either **love him or hate him**.

But love for Jesus can never be lukewarm.

So I ask all of us this morning...

How do you see Jesus?

- Have you seen him? Do you love him?
- Where in your life do you drift away from him?

Do you believe that Gospel Paul so desperately defended is true?

- That it is still true today?
- **The spirit of legalism he wanted to root out of the early church remains a distraction today.**

- What is legalism? *“Working in our own power according to our own rules, ultimately to earn God’s favor.”*⁴
 - When good things become ultimate things, or means to earning favor/love from God we have drifted down the same road as the Judaizers.
 - Reading Your Bible, praying, fasting, being here on Sunday morning, serving those in need – when these things come with “so that God might _____” legalism is in full swing.
- **All of us are recovering legalists⁵. Born into sin with selfism at our core, the Gospel of Jesus through the Holy Spirit will for the rest of our lives be rooting out our old ways.**

Conversion doesn’t automatically change us, but it changes our nature enough that we might daily choose Christ.

Let us cling tightly to the person of Jesus. Let us respond in faithful obedience – our life lived in response to the goodness, kindness, and glory of Jesus.

He alone is worthy of our very lives.

⁴ David Platt, Tony Merida, *Christ Centered Exposition, Exalting Jesus in Galatians*, (p.40).

⁵ Ibid. 40.