



Galatians 2:1-10
Nothing Is Added To The Gospel

Summary: You don't have to add anything to make salvation work, but you can do many good works once you're saved.

Last week I said I was thankful for the opportunity to share good news with you, news that you wouldn't read in the headlines or in your social media feed, but news that was actually good and would shape and affect all the other news you read, if you understood it correctly. I was able to declare to you the gospel, an old English word for good news.

And in case you missed it, here it is: you can be born-again. You can have a former life and a new life, the person you were or would have been and the person you are and are becoming. You're not stuck. There can be an old you and a new you through the transforming power of Jesus Christ.

Last week we spent time looking at the life of Paul the apostle who went from persecuting Christians to preaching about Christ. We said there was a radical difference between who he once was, and who he was now, it was like before and after pictures. A little later, he will say it like this:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

You see it right there – he says, I used to be one way, and now, I'm something else. I've been changed, totally, completely, radically reformed because God did something for me that I could not do for myself.

So now, this morning, we're going to talk about how that happens and what happens next because there were some people who said, it's great that Jesus has done this thing for you, it's great that you have put your faith in the cross – that's a good starting point, but now you need to do something else too, you still need to do all the stuff commanded by Moses, and then you'll be good and specifically, you start by being circumcised.

Now, I want to say right up front, the debate they have is almost completely irrelevant to us in its specifics, but the general idea is still profoundly important. I don't think anyone has ever come up to you and said, well, it's great you've got Jesus, but have you made any physical changes to your body as a result?

That's not an issue we face today, but there are still things we think we might need to add to our salvation to make it work, or make it work better, or make it work again. There are

still people who will tell you, you need Jesus and something else if you're really going to be a Christian.

Here in Galatians Paul insists that's not true. Your salvation is a gift. You don't earn it. You don't buy it, you just receive it.

Now, *once you have received it*, a whole new world of possibilities and directions opens up – you're freed up to live differently – you can live *for God* **by** helping others, but now it's all about Him and them it's not about you stacking your spiritual resume to try to make God happy. He's already happy, and that's why you serve – out of joy.

When we jump back into Galatians this morning, Paul tells of how we confirmed all of this with the leaders of the early church in Jerusalem and they agreed – we're saved, by faith alone, in Christ, alone, and then that frees up to serve others. Read with me:

Galatians 2:1 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with *me*. **2** And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. **3** Yet not even Titus who *was* with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Now you need to notice something important here: Paul brought at least two other men with him on the trip. One was Barnabas. He was a Levite, a member of the priestly class who was also heavily involved in the early church because he loved Jesus. The people opposing Paul would have loved him because he was very familiar with the old religious system. They would have thought, he's one of us.

But Paul also brought Titus, a full on bacon-eating, foreign language speaking, uncircumcised, Greek who loved Jesus. In other words, he was the problem. He was the issue – could somebody like Titus actually become a Christian, and if they could, how much would they have to change?

Well, Paul says, the leaders in Jerusalem met Titus and they said, "Seems like a cool dude." They didn't give him a list of things in his life to take care of, to clean up, or body parts to modify. They took him *as he was* because he had Jesus, or in more precise theological language, Jesus had him.

Now you might not realize how important this moment is, but it's huge. Because right here they're answering the question – if my friend who comes from a non-Christian home, a non-Christian background, wants to come to church, and maybe even become a Christian, how much do they have change in order to do that? What do they have fix up, clean up, or dress up?

The last major revival to happen in church history occurred in the 1960's and 70's. It was a time of incredible social upheaval and civil unrest in America. It was the era of the hippies

and free love, marijuana, mushrooms, and LSD, and the counter-culture revolution, there were protests and riots and shootings – on college campuses, in Vietnam, and in Dallas, Texas where President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. In fact, there have been a lot of comments made and articles written comparing the unrelenting challenges of 2020 with those we faced as a country in 1968.

That year a strain of the flu that originated in China claimed the lives of over 100,000 Americans, both Martin Luther King Jr and Robert Kennedy were assassinated, there were riots in the streets of Washington, Baltimore and Chicago, overseas the military deployed half a million men and women to Vietnam in the bloodiest year of an increasingly unpopular war, and you had incredibly contentious presidential election with violence at the Democratic National Convention.

But during that season of incredible difficulty and division in America, God began calling people with the gospel in a fresh and powerful way. People were being saved by the hundreds and thousands, and you had some churches, like this little place called Calvary



Chapel out in Southern California doing massive baptisms at the beach as people were saved and became known as Jesus People.

These new Christians, who looked a lot more like the culture they came from than the church they entered started the modern Christian music movement by taking guitars and drums that once played folk music or rock and roll and creating songs about and for Jesus at a time when most churches just had a piano or organ, hymn books, and a choir.

But at the same time, you had other churches that would hold evangelistic services where you could respond to the gospel by walking down the aisle at the end of the service, praying to receive Christ, and get a respectable haircut at the same time. I'm not kidding – you could give your heart to Jesus and cut off that long hippie hair to show that you were no longer rebelling against God, or society.

You had men like Jack Hyles, the pastor of First Baptist Church in Hammond Indiana, a church with over 25,000 people in attendance – they had over 400 school buses that would go out into the community, pick people up, and bring them in to listen to Hyles preaching, which often included him railing against the direction the culture was going. I heard a sermon where he went on and on about men with long hair and women wearing pants and he actually said, "People who do not dress like what I say from this pulpit do not know or do not care what God's will is for their lives."

It was the modern version of telling Titus, "You have to be circumcised in order to be saved." And things like this that happen in the church are why you need to know that the early church leaders in Jerusalem never told Titus he had to be circumcised in order to be a Christian.

Times change, and the things people point to changes as well, but there will always be a challenge to the simple, pure, gospel that says, yes, you need to believe these things about

Jesus, but now you need to do these other things too. Christians, if you allow these things to happen, if you start to add other pre-requisites to the faith, it actually destroys the faith, listen to what Paul says:

Galatians 2:4 *And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), 5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

Christian, take notice: it was false brethren, people in the church, or speaking in the name of Christianity, who were not really Christians themselves, were the ones stirring this pot.

But, Paul says, we resisted it. We wouldn't have any of it. Because, it would have brought us into bondage. Christian, your faith should feel like freedom, it should feel like liberty, it should feel like help, and hope, and community and connection.

That's not to say it should feel easy. The Bible clearly says there is a spiritual war raging all around us, and there will be difficult times. You will even experience a war inside yourself with your own temptations, feelings, and desires, at times pulling you away from God.

But resisting the forces of darkness in this world and in our own hearts and minds, should never feel like bondage, it should never feel like keeping rules. Instead, it should feel like working out. It should feel like saving money instead of spending. It should feel like choosing a healthy option instead of another jelly donut or processed quickie food – difficult in the moment, but an intentional act of self-discipline that brings desired results. Results you desire even more than the momentary indulgence of what feels good right now. There is a freedom that comes through discipline.

This is what Paul was preaching, this is what he was arguing. But, the question was, would the leaders in Jerusalem agree? Would they support Paul's position that there was nothing more to add to the gospel? The answer, was yes.

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.*

Now, Paul comes across a little hot here, doesn't he? So, what's going on?

Well, he's not trying to throw shade on the apostles; he's trying to shine light on the gospel. He's not trying to take a swipe at them as men, or undermine their authority, after all, he came to meet with them because of their recognized authority, God sent him to Jerusalem for this very reason, but Paul is trying to fight against the tendency of some people to make too much out of leaders. Again, we'll come back to this in a minute, because we should respect our leaders, of all sorts, but we should not unnecessarily, or uncritically revere them.

So, Paul says, I told the leaders in Jerusalem exactly what I've been telling all of you in Galatia and they affirmed, they agreed, they had nothing to add. So, don't worry about these other guys who keep saying there's more you need to do. In fact, the men in Jerusalem gave me their full endorsement, they had nothing to add except their approval and the encouragement, that now that you're saved by grace, go out and live by faith – remember the poor.

7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised was to Peter 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we *should go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 *They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

I want to spend the rest of our time this morning reviewing a few things here, because there are several dichotomies that I want to point out, several points of tension, several places where we say this, but we also say that, and we have to carve out a space in the middle to live in – that can be a little confusing, it can sound like talking out of both sides of your mouth if you're not careful.

The first is one we just spoke about – it's **the dichotomy of leadership and authority**. On the one hand Paul kind of plays down the status of the leaders in Jerusalem and on the other hand he says God told him to go up to them as authorities in order to straighten things out. And, he's going to lean on their status as the big dogs in J-town as part of the credibility for his message.

So, what do we do? How should we view leaders? Well, we should be supportive and encouraging of those placed in authority over us, but we should never be unquestioning, unwavering, or uncritical, in our loyalty. We should look through our leaders to the God who gives them their authority, and we should take note of the places where things are out of alignment.

There is also a **dichotomy of calling** here – on the one hand these men endorse Paul's calling to share the gospel with non-Jewish people, and at the same time they endorse Peter's calling to reach to those with a Jewish background.

So, what are we supposed to do? Which direction should we go? The answer is not to focus on one group or the other, it's both. They said, Paul you go that way, Peter you go this way, and we'll all point everyone back here to the cross.

God wants to reach the whole world – and all these different people, with all their different backgrounds, all their different experiences growing up, all their different attitudes and approaches to life, all these family traditions and customs, are being called into one, single, gospel that builds one, single, global-historical church.

Which is exactly why we have to work really, really, hard at not adding anything to the gospel. If we're calling everybody in, then we have to set very firm, essential, boundaries around the foundations of the truth, there need to be things you're actually willing to fight for and quite literally die for when it comes to Christian belief and truth as countless martyrs have throughout history, and as people still do around the world today.

But, you also have to be really careful to draw those lines in the right places – you don't want to make them any more narrow than they already are, and you certainly don't want to go pushing them out farther so they include things unnecessarily. You want to avoid two traps – liberalism on the one side and legalism on the other.

But, you're naturally going to tend toward one of the two. So let me ask an important question here: are you self-aware enough to know which one it is? Do you personally tend to over adapt the gospel to the people and culture around you so everyone can fit in, or do you tend to under-adapt it, and want people to look exactly like the kind of Christianity you grew up with or are most comfortable with?

Friends, neither of those is the right answer. There is one gospel, and only one. It is offensive to all people, but it's also open to all people. We should rejoice when we see people who are not like us coming to Jesus, but we should also expect that people will reject both the gospel and us, because, they're rejecting God and his grace – as Jesus said, the light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness. They don't want to receive the gospel because they prefer to have their sin.

One last thing to share with you, but we're going to spend a little time on it because it's the what comes next of everything we've said: I want to look at the **dichotomy of grace**. On the one hand we're saying you don't have to do anything in order to become a Christian, it's all by grace, through faith, in Christ. There's nothing for you to add, no circumcision or conservative haircuts. But then we ended by saying, but also remember the poor. So, which is it?

The answer is: it's all about chronology, or timing.

You don't work to earn your salvation; you work because of it. *Because God has given you grace*, because He gives you gifts, because He gives you opportunity and through all of those things you show the world, and experience yourself, the new life you have received in Christ. You make a difference **for** others *in God's name*. And that's not bondage, it's liberty, it's freedom, it's joy. It's allowing everything that you receive in Christ to flow through you into the world around you for the good of others, not just to earn you spiritual power points.

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God and love others. And one specific way to do that is work for the good of people who have less or have it worse than you do. So, what could that look like? One thing to do is have concern for the poor.

But poverty is not spiritual, it's physical. And so, people need your prayer; but they also need your help. Caring for the poor is something real, something tangible, that we do in the physical world. And we're freed up to do that – to spend our time, energy, and money on helping others because we're not so busy trying to help ourselves – we don't need to build our resume or get that next promotion because we're already accepted in Christ. If the promotion comes, great, if they bonus or raise comes, great. If the acceptance letter comes, great, but I'm OK without those things – I can love God and serve others with or without them.

So, let me give you some ideas about how you could spend your life on other for God.

The first, is through giving. It is important to give financially to help people. When you give to the church we pool those resources and support things like Good News Jail and Prison Ministry and their outreach in the jails.

We support places like Assist and their ministry to families considering abortion, which is often driven by financial factors. We support missionary efforts like the Ayeles in Ethiopia who are taking in unwanted children and Stone of Help Haiti where Bill and Marcella are investing into the churches and schools and churches that double as schools during the week to help poor and struggling communities. So, yes, giving is good.

But I want to encourage you to consider doing more. I want to encourage you to consider, how could you do more with your professional skills, interests, and calling. I want to encourage some of you to consider how you could go into politics and policy at the local, state, national and even international levels *for the sake of helping others*. How and where can your faith in Christ compel you to do good in legislation and leadership that will help the vulnerable?

I want to encourage you to go into education. Become teachers, become professors, and then consider, really strongly consider, taking those skills to a place or community in need whether domestically or internationally. Everyone wants a cushy job in a rich suburb, but could you give a year or more to teaching somewhere with a great need?

I want to encourage you to become a pilot or an aircraft maintenance worker and then go live overseas and serve as a missionary pilot flying aid and relief supplies into remote and hard to reach regions.

I want to encourage you to go into real estate or finance. There's no shortage of people who want to be an exclusive buyers agent for million dollar properties, but what can you do to help people buy their first home? Or become a developer and build affordable properties and always know there are ways you could make more money, but you're doing this for others *because God has done so much for you*.

Become an entrepreneur and build concepts into your business plan that emphasize doing good *because it is good* instead of maximizing quarterly profits.

I want to encourage you to go into medicine – especially hands on patient driven medicine – including optometry and dentistry. Could you devote your life to learning tangible skills that will make a difference in the lives of others? Friends, the flow of medical professionals is almost entirely one way – out of poor countries and communities and toward the rich.

How many of you have received care from a medical professional who immigrated to this country? I have nothing against that, but what I am saying is, who is going back to the underserved communities where people still live? Who is taking medicine back to the places where there are no local hospital systems and trauma centers and urgent care clinics? Why would anyone do that?

Why would anyone intentionally move backward, into a less developed region, into a less populated city, into an area with less of the amenities you enjoy? *Because people are there*, and God might use you to make their lives better and their future brighter as you remember the poor.

Now, let me be super clear about what we've said this morning: God won't give you credit for any of this when it comes time to consider your salvation. All He's looking for is, have you been born again? Have you confessed your sins? Have you received Jesus?

But once you're saved by Jesus, how much will you look like Jesus who wasn't intimidated by the rich and famous, but also spent the bulk of His time with the poor and the sick, the lowly and the outcast?

I think there's a really good chance that some of you feel guilty or insecure in your relationship with God.

Some of you feel like He's kind of just barely tolerating you, or He's disappointed in you. You feel like you're not doing enough, or not doing things right. And you might be wondering if that's because you need to do something else, you need the equivalent of circumcising Titus, or cutting off your hippie hair.

But I hope you see, that's not the answer, you don't need more rules, they would only bring you into bondage. Your entire relationship with God is built on grace. He knows you're nothing amazing, and he's not asking you to do anything about that except accept that.

And then, once you find the freedom of acceptance in Him, let Him make of you whatever He wants and go make a difference in world by letting Him shine through you.

Join Paul in saying,

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Let's pray.

Who do I need to see/check in on/check up with/thank?

What do I need to do?

How did the message go?

Who did I meet?

What do I need to do?

Any prayerful thoughts?