

Date: 26 Feb 2023

Scripture Passage: Galatians 2:1-10

Title: Fellowship In Defending The Gospel

Introduction

- In Phil. 1:3-5, Paul refers to “fellowship in the gospel”, which he appreciated. Instead of rivalry, good to have fellowship, each encouraging others in gospel work, & helping where possible.
- The Judaizers were teaching a different gospel. Claiming to be preaching a gospel with the blessing of the apostles in Jerusalem. There were two issues the Judaizers were distorting among the Galatian churches: (i) the gospel, (ii) Paul’s apostleship.
- In 1:11-24, shown he was truly an apostle, who received msg personally from Christ. The message today is to show again: (i) msg is true gospel; (ii) he is true apostle. But in fellowship with other apostles.
- The blessedness of preaching and defending the true gospel in fellowship with like-minded brethren.

1. The gospel as revealed must be preached (1-2).

- Shown already what was gospel (1:3-5): Christ crucified, to save sinners, by God’s grace. 14 years after meeting Peter & James (1:18 cf Acts 9:26-30), Paul went again to Jerusalem (Acts 15). Church in Antioch sent Paul & Barnabas (Acts 15:2). Here, Paul shows that it was by revelation also that he went to Jerusalem. He spoke “privately” (2) to the leaders (Acts 15:6), whose decision were brought to church (Acts 15:22). Paul was not summoned by Jerusalem elders. “Iron sharpens iron... (Prov. 27:17).” “In the multitude of counselors there is safety (Prov 11:14).

2. The same gospel will be preached by other faithful preachers (2-3).

- Paul certain of his apostleship & gospel, but for the sake of all, he went “in case all effort wasted”. “In vain” used in v. 2 same as 1 Cor. 15:2, 10, 14. Ref to his labor in preaching the gospel. What about the faith of those who believe? Are those in vain?
- The issue that is before them was the question of circumcision. The Judaizers were saying that you had to keep the old testament laws to be saved. And particularly, the ceremony of circumcision. Insisting that a person cannot be saved unless they are circumcised.
 - Circumcision was of tremendous importance to the nation. It was established by God to Abraham. God had commanded that every male that is set apart as part of this Jewish nation to be circumcised. It was the right that established the Old Testament covenant. And was the sign of the OT covenant. 2000 years old, not a recent innovation.
 - Circumcision was not a human tradition. It was ordained by God. A law given to Abraham and to his seed. A law that defined the identity of the whole Jewish nation. Circumcision signified that God had taken this people, I have set them apart, I have cut them out from the rest of the world to have a unique relationship with them.
 - When David faced Goliath. he said “ who is this uncircumcised philistine who defies the people of God”. This was the identity of the Israelites. But now Paul is saying you don’t need to have it.
- The Judaizers were insisting that the new Gentile converts had to be circumcised. He brought Titus to Jerusalem. He consulted with the rest of the apostles, and they approved of Paul’s gospel. They gave them the right hand of fellowship. Titus was still not circumcised. The leaders in Jerusalem did not approve of the Judaizers.
- Paul says that of which that were communicated through the OT covenant were fulfilled in through the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The OT is fulfilled by Christ. Rom 2:25-29 says to have a circumcised heart. At the final supper, Jesus instituted the new covenant. Colossians 2:11–13, Hebrew 8
 - ☉ Baptism is not the Continuation of & Replacement of Old Covenant. But it is a new sign of the new covenant. <https://founders.org/library/a-string-of-pearls-unstrung/>
 - ☉ Paul is now saying that circumcision was a Must in the OT, it has now been fulfilled and it is a “May” not a “Must”. 1 Cor 8 Where food offered to idols. Uncleaned and was a sin to eat food offered to idols. Paul says no, food is just food. If you find a weaker brother whose conscience is tender at the matter of eating

food offered to idols, even though in and of itself it is a matter of indifference, then I don't need to eat them. It is a matter of liberty, but for the sake of my weaker brother, I will abstain. Paul is saying you can eat it, but it is not required. The difference between May and Must.

- ⊖ Now that the new covenant is in place, you may continue with circumcision, just as he circumcised Timothy, but it is not a law anymore. It is not binding on the gentile converts to submit to circumcision.
- No more prophets/apostles. Controversies are settled by Scripture. Isa. 8:20.

3. The gospel needs to be defended against attacks (4-5).

- From the time Judaizers started problems in Antioch, their false teaching were opposed (Acts 15:2). Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Not plus works.
- In Jerusalem, this matter was pursued further (5). There was no softening in opposition to wrong teaching. These false brothers, (i) came in by stealth, claiming to be Christians; (ii) to spy on our liberty, i.e. no good intention, but to do harm; (iii) their aim was to bring us into bondage of the law.
- Circumcision was a matter of Christian liberty. Some say that it is a sin to wear lipstick, to dance, to watch movies, to listen to certain music.... all kinds of prohibition that you cannot find in scripture.
 - If I believe it is wrong for me to wear lipstick, and my conscience troubles me when I wear lipstick, then it is wrong for you to wear lipstick.
 - But what if someone stand up in church and says that this is the universal law of the church. That no lady will be allowed to wear lipstick. What do you think Paul's response will be? V5 He would say we are sensitive and caring for the weaker brother, but never ever may we submit to the tyranny of the weaker brother. We must never allow human scruple to be elevated to universal law of the church.
 - This is exactly what was happening in the Galatian church. The Judaizers wanted the May to be a Must. I know you had a rich tradition, you may. But if you want to make it a requirement, I will resist you. He will never submit himself to these acts of tyranny and legalism that will destroy the liberty that comes with the gospel.
 - Spying out on the liberty of Paul. Trying to curtail his freedom. You circumcised Timothy but not Titus. Today it is like spying on who wear lipstick.
 - People say all the time that when we are called to obey the law of god, that is legalism. No, that is not. Legalism is when you add laws when it is not prescribed. Legalism is when you substitute things to salvation rather than by grace alone though faith alone. Obedience to the law is not legalism. We are called to obey the law! Jesus says " if you love me, keep my commandments".
- We need for vigilance: (i) against professing believers; (ii) infiltration; (iii) create division.

4. The gospel cannot be improved upon by anyone (6).

- Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Not plus works. Judaizers were name dropping. Claiming support from the leaders in Jerusalem, that circumcision was required for salvation.
- God shows no personal favoritism. Christ commissioned all apostles. Paul was not inferior to other apostles. Truth is not from man. Truth comes from the revelation of God. Paul's msg came from the Lord. The Twelve did not add anything to his gospel or apostleship.
- Give due respect to others. Learn what may be learned fr them. But be faithful to God, His word.

5. The gospel must be preached in different spheres of ministry (7-9).

- Great commission says go therefore to all nations. We cannot literally go to all nations. We are working together with others else where. Each church will need to have fellowship with likeminded churches. There are other true churches. We must resist false teaching, but we also must recognize that there are others teaching the true gospel. Each has it's own corner.
- Peter and the rest in Jerusalem acknowledged Paul and recognized him as an apostle. Paul was to the Gentiles, and Peter was to the Jews. Paul did not need to circumcise the Gentiles, but if Peter wanted to of the Jews, go ahead. It is not a law. But they both had the responsibility of declaring the gospel in its purity. And the freedom that is contained therein.
- Concept of "spheres of ministry" (2 Cor. 10:13). Paul's ministry to Gentiles, Peter's to Jews. Paul planted those churches in Galatia. Although Paul was to focus on Gentiles, while Peter was to focus on the Jews. It

does not mean that they are only to preach to a specific population. Peter in Acts 10 ministered to the family of Cornelius. A healthy church is where all Christians are represented. When converted, we find ourselves closer to believer than the ethnic group that we belong to. God has put that bond of Jesus Christ in us. The same spirit dwells within us. We are at one in Christ. Never allow color of skin to be a consideration when it comes to church life.

- The Spirit worked effectively in both men's ministries, using the same gospel. James (the Lord's brother), Cephas (Peter) & John were pillars, i.e. recognized leaders. Saw "grace given to Paul", gave right hand of fellowship, i.e. official recognition & partnership. No one can be involved in everything/good at all. We support by prayer, finance, encouragement.

6. The gospel is not averse to meeting social needs (10).

- Preaching is primarily to win souls, but we must not neglect social needs. Jerusalem church had many poor people to care for (cf. Acts 4:34, 36-37; 6:1; 11:27-30). Paul had no problem with that. In fact, been doing that (cf. Titus 3:8, 14).
- The gospel is to be followed by social work. The gospel must be what the church is known for. It is of primary importance. We want to do good to their soul. The eternal welfare, but just the temporal welfare. All true churches should be involved in social work. But the church has gone astray when it is known for social work and not the gospel. The gospel has its social dimension, to be carried out in its due order.

Summary and Application

- It is a blessing to be involved in the work of the gospel. We do not want our vision for missions to be dimmed. We don't want our burden for souls to be lost. If you never had a vision for missions, perhaps you may have neglected this area in your Christian life. A failure to see that the gospel must go out to other people. If you have never had the burden for souls to be lost, today should be the day that you reconsider what your faith is like. Do you have true faith in the Lord. Are you really saved? Do you know what it means to be saved? The Lord Jesus Christ had such a burden for souls. In Matt 19 he looked at the people and His heart went out to them, and He told his disciples, "The harvest are plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray that the Lord of harvest will send forth laborers". If the Lord had a burden for souls, shouldn't we who are His followers have a burden for souls as well? The apostle Paul knew how great a sinner he was, that he said "Christ Jesus came to this world to save sinner, of whom I am chief". And because he knew that he had been such an undeserving sinner, he gave his life to preaching the gospel. It is such a blessed thing to be involved in missions. It is such a blessed thing to be involved in propagating the gospel. Value the gospel, defend it, and propagate it. May God help us to do so.