

Date: 5 Mar 2023

Scripture Passage: Galatians 2:11-21

Title: Contending for The Gospel

Introduction

- Jude 3 “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”. Here, “to contend” is to defend from attack while establishing what is true.
- “The faith” covers more than the gospel, and it has the gospel at its core. Paul had to contend for the gospel when Jews who professed faith had disturbed the church at Antioch. Paul & others had been sent to Jerusalem to settle the matter (Acts 15:24ff.).
- We strive to defend and protect the faith. We ought to fight off those who try to pervert the gospel. Gal 1:9. Let those be accursed and condemned into hell. We must not treat those who pervert the gospel as brethren.
- Why contend? The Judaizes were perverting the gospel and adding rules and requirements to be saved. They teach people to rely on their own effort to be accepted by God. We keep the law because we are already saved. It is for us to grow in sanctification. To be accepted by God, none of the works of the law will reconcile us with God.
- Known as the Council of Jerusalem. The leaders in Jerusalem confirmed that Paul was teaching the true gospel while the Judaizes were not. They sent out a letter, that salvation is by faith and not by works.
- This message is about the necessity of contending for the gospel whenever it is denied in doctrine or practice.

I. Contending against practical deviation (11-14).

- Against hypocrisy manifested outwardly.
 - Paul had visited Jerusalem church twice over the gospel he preached. Paul now mentions visit by Peter to Antioch. Peter was having a meal with the Gentiles. Peter had no problems eating with (i.e. accepting) Gentile believers (cf. Acts 10:15 cf 11:2-3, 18). We are not surprised as Peter preached the same gospel as Paul, that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. And this applied to both Jews and Gentiles. We see that twice during Paul’s visit to Jerusalem. It is not about the do’s and don’ts. Salvation is by faith.
 - So Peter was eating with the gentiles, when some of the Judaizes came up to Antioch later. As they visited the church, Peter became afraid of them. He separated himself, fearing Judaizers. In process, influenced Barnabas & others, causing them to stumble. Paul had to go against Peter because he was to be blamed. Men came from James, i.e. from his church, not with his authority (cf. Acts 15:13-14, 19-21). Such behavior hypocrisy. Fear of men, contradicting salvation by grace, to all nations.
 - The practical denial of the gospel amounts to hypocrisy and has tremendous adverse effects. Your action does not only affect you. It affects those close to you, and it affects the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you do right, it is to God’s honor to the good of everyone. But when you do wrong, it affects those close to you, and it affects the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think very carefully how your sins have affected others.
- Against hypocrisy inwardly inconsistent to the gospel (14).
 - Peter was not “straightforward”, not walking in line with gospel. His sin was public sin, and therefore Paul addressed it publicly. Paul knew of Peter’s stand on the gospel as he had consulted with Peter & James privately before (2:2). Paul is saying that Peter is behaving contradictorily: you have discarded Jewish laws, now you are asking Gentiles to live as Jews?
 - Paul is saying, “Peter, don’t you see that your outward practical actions is not only a deviation of the gospel, but also inwardly goes against your own belief of the gospel”. Our belief in the gospel that we both preach. Don’t teach one thing do another. Hypocrisy is a contradiction of the gospel.

II. Contending against doctrinal deviation (15-21).

- Becoming a Christian is by faith (15-16).
 - According to revealed gospel, even we Jews are to be justified by faith, not works of the law. “Justified” a legal term meaning declared not guilty & treated as righteous. According to gospel, the

righteousness of Christ counted as ours who believe. “Justified” is where a judge declares one not guilty, and instead declares him righteous. For us who are guilty before God, may be declared not guilty by faith in Christ. Because when Christ died on the cross, he died for those who trusted in Him. So if I trust in Christ for my salvation, Christ death on the cross is counted as my death, and Christ righteousness is counted as my righteousness. So when God sees me, He treats me as not guilty because Christ has already died on my behalf to pay for my sins. When God sees me a person without righteousness, he treats me as righteous because Christ righteousness is counted as mine. Justification is by faith, not by works.

- The gentiles are also saved through faith. We are not any better than the gentiles. Justification is by faith, for “by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” V16. If you try to earn your salvation by your efforts, you will never succeed. God will never accept your works. There is only one way to be accepted by God, and that is by faith through Jesus Christ alone.
 - So how do we become a Christian, not by trying to be a better person, not by doing good works to make up for the sins we have committed against God. If you try by your own effort, you fail to see that you are incapable of doing anything good in the sight of God. Your good deeds flow from a sinful heart. It is like filthy rags in the sight of God. You do not know how limited and vile you are. You have also not appreciated that your offence is primarily against the Holy God, the creator of things. For you to be drawn near to God you need to have righteousness in you. But the Bible says, there is “none righteous, no not one”. So where do you turn to be saved? You cant turn to anyone to help you out in this world. You cannot turn to any religion that is of men. You have to turn to the God whom we have offended. He has declared the way for us to come back to Him. Christ was the only begotten son to this world, to take on perfect human nature, without ceasing to be God, The perfect man who is God, Jesus Christ, lived out a perfectly righteous life on this earth. And He died on the cross as that perfect sacrifice, for the sins of His people. We deserve to die for our sins. It is not just a mere physical death but also a spiritual one. It is eternal punishment from God. It is to be plunged into Hell to suffer there forever. That is what we deserve. Jesus Christ has come to die for His people. To bear the punishment that His people deserve. So when we trust in Jesus Christ and have faith in Him. Christ death is as though He has died for me. If He has died for me, I don’t have to die that way anymore. I don’t need to be cast into Hell because the payment has been made through his death. I am united to Him through His death. So God cannot punish me the second time because it has been fully paid for by Christ death on the cross.
 - By faith in Jesus Christ, His righteousness is counted as mine. So God looks upon me as I am clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The two problems are solved in Jesus Christ. My guilt has been paid for, and Christ righteousness is regarded as mine. In that way I am justified by God. So how do you become a Christian? It is to turn from your sin, turn from trusting yourself, and trusting in Jesus Christ finished work on the cross. He who died for His people.
 - No place for pride, whether Jew or Gentile. All are to be justified by faith in Christ, not by works. “By the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” All same.
- Being a Christian is also by faith (17-21).
 - You don’t begin by faith, and then you trust in your own effort to maintain being a Christian and to bring you to heaven. If we trust in the lord, we should trust Him all the way, not just at the start of our Christian life. It is not as though Christ died for your sins when you repented and became a Christian, but after that it is all up to you. No. We continue on in the Christian life by trusting in what Christ has done for us on the cross. His death has paid for all the sins, of the past, present, and future.
 - The Judaizers were saying that Gentiles should go back to the law. Those who were not circumcised need to go back and be circumcised. They must have faith, but also works!
 - (17) If the Judaizers were right, that we are unclean by fellowshiping with Gentiles, wouldn’t that make Christ a liar? Cf. Mark 7:19; Acts 10:13-15. No!
 - (18) If I fall back on law-keeping for salvation, I make myself a transgressor. Don’t change course. Stay on course.

- (19) Through the law, I deserved death. But because of Christ death, I have died, and now live to God. Before I was in Christ, I tried keeping the law. But however hard I tried, I could not keep the law perfectly. Therefore I needed to be punished. But when I came to my understanding, I trusted in Christ by faith. In the Christian life, I continue in faith, not by law keeping. The law has no more claim on me.
- (20) How did that happen? Substitution! Counted as crucified with Christ, who now lives in me. When I trusted in Christ, the demands of the law have now been fulfilled. Christ has died on my behalf. Now I live a new life in Christ. Christ lives in me, and I live for God. The law has no more claim on me. You cannot condemn me because I am not keeping the law perfectly. Because I have been accepted by God through faith in Jesus Christ. The life I now have is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- (21) We know that Christ did not die in vain. It cannot be that the son of god has mistakenly died. It is impossible that God's plan failed. Christ has revealed through Paul that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone. Paul was fully convinced that Christ death was not in vain. Christ came as a fulfillment of God's plan to save His people. God cannot fail in His plan to save people. Man can fail but God cannot. Faith in Jesus Christ will not fail us. Jesus Christ will bring us safely home. It is a certainty. Why did Christ die for us? It was because he loved us. Should we therefore not show forth our love for our Lord, however imperfect it may be.
- We become a Christian, & continue as a Christian, by grace, through faith.

Summary and Application

- By living inconsistency in the Christian life must not be tolerated. It makes us hypocrites & (adverse consequences) stumble others.
 - Doctrinally how can we deviate from the gospel? The gospel must not be changed. In whatever culture, whatever circumstances, the gospel is the gospel. Salvation is by faith in Christ alone. God never justifies anyone by the works of the law or any good works, or any effort of ours.
 - We must ensure that the gospel is propagated. And that the gospel is handed down to the next generation to be propagated, without deviations. This has to go on until Jesus Christ comes again. This requires proclamation by words, and it requires proclamation by life! This is where it is so important that we live a consistent life. We know that everyone gives the excuse that we are not perfect, and we have human limitations. But do not use that excuse for hypocrisy. For inconsistency because we are afraid of men. We don't want to compromise under pressure. The gospel be propagated by word as well as by life.
- Deviation from the gospel, in practice or in doctrine, must be resisted & corrected. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone.
 - Some think that we need to present the gospel based on the culture that we are in. And in doing so they unwittingly change the content of the gospel. When you attempt to change the presentation, you also change the content. The chief means by which people are saved is by the hearing of the gospel. The great commission is that we go into the world to make disciples of all nations. Internet, radio, TV... are all good. But do not let the gospel message be changed. And do not let these override the chief means taught to us in the Great Commission. That one soul must go out and meet another soul to bring the gospel to them. That is why missionaries must still be sent forth. That is why we need to do personal outreach.
 - What did Paul say about the Son of God at the end of V20? "the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me". Paul was so conscious of that. He understood the gospel that the Son of God died for a sinner like him. He declared in 1 Tim 1 "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief". He senses his unworthiness of being saved. But yet God saved him through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ laid down His life for a sinner like me! Christ died for me because he loved me and gave Himself for me!
- Are you able to say "the Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me"? Then show it in life!

- Salvation is personal. You cannot rely on your parents' faith. You must have personal faith in Christ. You cannot rely on coming to church to save you. Have you repented of your sins? Do you have faith in Jesus Christ? Do you have the righteousness of Jesus Christ upon you? Do you belong to Jesus Christ and have been adopted as a child of His? You may have thought you were a Christian, but today you have come to realize that you are not one after all. You have been relying on your efforts and your works. But you have not repented of your sins, you have not had faith in Jesus Christ. You have not trusted in Christ and Christ alone, and His death on the cross and the cross alone, for your acceptance before God. Then today you know that the right thing to do is to come before God and plead for mercy from Him. And today come and trust in Jesus Christ who alone is the savior of sinners. Let today be your day of salvation. Come to Jesus Christ. Realize that He died on the cross because of His love for sinners.
- And for all of us who have experienced the love of Jesus Christ, how we should give our lives more to the Lord. How we should show forth more our love because he first loved us!