



Everybody Went Somewhere

Summary and Goal

Paul defended his call to the Galatians by recounting how the gospel spread and how the early church affirmed his calling to the Gentiles. This text, among other lessons, will teach us that we ought to work to be faithful to teach and defend the gospel wherever the Lord places us.

Main Passages

Galatians 2:1-10

Session Outline

1. Preservation of the Gospel for You (Galatians 2:1-5)
2. They Added Nothing (Galatians 2:6-8)
3. The Right Hand of Fellowship (Galatians 2:9-10)

Theological Theme

Nothing could ever be more worthy of a cause than the preservation of the gospel message for those who have believed and for those who have yet to hear. This passage expresses the uniqueness of the gospel, the exclusivity of the gospel, and the necessity of the gospel in its unadulterated form.

Christ Connection

Jesus came to seek and save the lost, both Jew and Gentile. In this passage we see Paul battling against a gospel of “Jesus plus works” that was really not good news at all.

Missional Application

Missions are more than simply taking the gospel to the nations. It is also working to preserve the pure gospel in contexts where the gospel has been preached, but is being threatened by counterfeits. We should look to Paul’s example and be encouraged to contend for the gospel among the people groups.

Historical Context of Galatians

Purpose

Galatians was written to clarify and defend “the truth of the gospel” (2:5,16) in the face of a false gospel. This was done by: (1) defending Paul’s message and authority as an apostle, (2) considering the Old Testament basis of the gospel message, and (3) demonstrating how the gospel message Paul preached worked practically in daily Christian living. Paul chose this approach to correct those in the Galatian churches in regard to both their faith and practice related to the gospel.

Author

The author’s name is “Paul,” and he claims to be “an apostle” of Christ (Gl 1:1). The autobiographical information in the letter is consistent with what is known about the apostle Paul from Acts and his other letters. Theologically, everything in Galatians agrees with Paul’s views elsewhere, notably in Romans.

Setting

It is not certain where the Galatian churches were located or when Paul wrote Galatians. The reason is that, during the New Testament era, the term Galatians was used both ethnically and politically. If “Galatians” is understood ethnically, the founding of the Galatian churches is only implied in the New Testament. On Paul’s second missionary journey, he “went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia” (Ac 16:6) in north central Asia Minor (near Ankara, the capital of Turkey). His later visit to the same general area is recorded in Acts 18:23 and 19:1. This is where a group from Gaul (modern France) invaded in the third century BC, and it became known as Galatia.

The problem addressed in Galatians is that “the works of the law” of Moses (2:16-17; 3:2; cp. 5:4), notably circumcision (5:2; 6:12-13), were added by some teachers to what was required to be justified before God. This is the same issue that Acts records as the reason why the Jerusalem Council met (Ac 15:1,5), supporting the idea that the existing problem in the Galatian churches was part of the reason for the Jerusalem Council.

Special Features

Galatians, which may be the earliest of Paul’s letters, is also his most impassioned. It gives us a strong presentation of the truth that sinners are justified and live godly lives by trusting in Jesus alone.



Session Plan

Everybody Went Somewhere

Introduction

- When was a time you were fooled by a counterfeit version of something, whether a product or something else?
- What are some counterfeit versions of the gospel that exist in the world today?

After Paul proclaimed the gospel to the Galatians and established churches there, the Judaizers followed behind him to disseminate a counterfeit message. They affirmed Jesus' death on the cross for the salvation of souls, but they believed that Jesus' work wasn't effective unless a believer also faithfully adhered to the Law of Moses. Paul wrote to plead with them to repent of this false gospel and return to the pure gospel.

1. Preservation of the Gospel for Your (Galatians 2:1-5)

Years before the gospel ever reached Galatia, the Lord confirmed the truth of the gospel through Paul and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. Paul stood firm against false brothers by God's grace so that the pure, joyful message of Jesus' finished work on the cross would be preserved for God's elect across the globe. The good message, years later, arrived in Galatia and was received. Soon, however, the Galatians abandoned the genuine article for a fake, a counterfeit. The same counterfeit that false brothers had introduced before. This led Paul to exclaim, "You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you?" (3:1)

? For Further Discussion

Application: What is the value of seeking out accountability, like Paul did? Why should we be willing to receive correction concerning our theology?

- What did Paul say about Titus when they arrived to meet with the Christians in Jerusalem? What did he mean by this?
- What was Paul's response and posture to the work of the "false brothers"? What was the result of his action?

2. They Added Nothing (Galatians 2:6-8)

Paul reported that "those recognized as important...they added nothing to me" (v. 6). In other words, they listened to Paul's message and found it lacking in no area. They saw no need to add anything to what he had

been preaching to the Gentiles. The way that Paul described their response was significant. He said that they “added nothing.” The very thing that the false brothers and now the Judaizers in Galatia were doing was adding something to Paul’s gospel. They were adding the Law of Moses. Paul preached that Jesus’ work on the cross was sufficient for the salvation of souls and that nothing more was required to complete that work. Others, however, added to this message saying that the gospel was the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross plus the Law of Moses.

- ❓ What did those who were influential add to Paul’s gospel? What does this mean?
- ❓ What did the believers in Jerusalem recognize about Paul concerning the gospel?
- ❓ Application: Given the fact that we are Gentiles, we are beneficiaries of God’s preserving of the pure gospel for us. How ought we to respond to God today knowing this? Has the true gospel been entrusted to you? If so, for what purpose?

3. The Right Hand of Fellowship (Galatians 2:9-10)

Peter, James, and John validated Paul’s position as a fellow Apostle and put him on equal footing with them. Paul wanted the Galatians to see that his gospel was in full agreement with the gospel taught by these men. He also wanted them to understand that he had the same authority as those Apostles. This wasn’t a popularity campaign on the part of Paul. Every argument that Paul made wasn’t for his own glory but for the preservation of the true gospel in the hearts of the Galatians.

- ❓ What does the text say about Peter, James, and John’s response to Paul’s message? What does the text say about Peter, James, and John’s feelings about Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles?
- ❓ Application: What makes partnership in the gospel valuable and fruitful? What significance should the witness of the Apostles have in our lives today? Is it still relevant?

Conclusion

- ❓ What can we do in our personal lives and in our churches to make sure that the gospel stays pure? Is the gospel as precious to us as it was to Paul? Why or why not?
- ❓ What sorts of pressures are there in culture and in the church to give in to a false gospel? What can we do to identify and guard against false gospels?

❓ For Further Discussion

Do we value and seek out like-minded gospel partnership? Are we careful and wise about whom we offer the right hand of fellowship? If the gospel is for all nations what ought we to do to make sure it gets to all people?



Expanded Session Content

Everybody Went Somewhere

Introduction

There is an abundance of counterfeits in the world. We don't see this as often in the United States, but if you've spent any time in the developing world and have visited a market, then you've seen it. Brands that you wouldn't think of purchasing in the U.S., you may find quite economical in other countries. Don't be deceived, however. It's not the same. They are fakes. The quality isn't there. The craftsmanship doesn't compare. These are not authorized products; they are a poor copy of the real thing.

It's one thing to get fooled by a pair of fake Nikes. It's quite another to take the bait on a false message of salvation. This very problem, in fact, is one of the critical issues in Christianity. It's critical because there is nothing more important than the spiritual condition of the souls of men. Paul knew this, and his letter to the Galatians is a testimony to his Spirit-led perseverance to fight for the purity of the gospel for the glory of God and good of men.

- When was a time you were fooled by a counterfeit version of something, whether a product or something else?
- What are some counterfeit versions of the gospel that exist in the world today?

Session Summary

After Paul proclaimed the gospel to the Galatians and established churches there, the Judaizers followed behind him to disseminate a counterfeit message. They affirmed Jesus' death on the cross for the salvation of souls, but they believed that Jesus' work wasn't effective unless a believer also faithfully adhered to the Law of Moses. Paul wrote to plead with them to repent of this false gospel and return to the pure gospel.

One part of the case Paul made to the Galatians was the fact that the pillars of the church (Peter, John and James) were in agreement with Paul's message. We should also be moved by Paul's argument. Let's consider his words together with humble hearts and submissive wills.

1. Preservation of the Gospel for You (Galatians 2:1-5)

Paul began his argument by recounting to the Galatians that he “went up again to Jerusalem” (v. 1) with Barnabas and Titus. He affirmed that his purpose for going there was to present to them the gospel he preached among the Gentiles. Why did he want to do that? “So that I might not be running, or have run the race, in vain” (v. 2).


This is significant. Remember that Paul’s aim throughout this letter was to convince the Galatians that he delivered to them the true gospel, and that what came behind him (the Judaizers) was false. Paul initiated accountability from the leadership of the church in Jerusalem. He took himself to them in order to be examined by them. Paul modeled humility and submission. Furthermore, he was willing to accept correction from them. Paul submitted himself to the leadership of the church, seeking confirmation from God through them that his gospel was pure and unadulterated. This is significant for two reasons. First, it provided evidence for the veracity of the message that Paul had originally delivered to the Galatians. Second, it modeled what the Galatians ought to do when they received this very letter. Paul hoped that they would respond with humility and submit themselves to examination.



What did Paul say about Titus when they arrived to meet with the Christians in Jerusalem? What did he mean by this?


Paul wrote, “not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (v. 3). The reason Paul and his companions made their way to Jerusalem was to sort out the controversy about how the gospel related to the Law of Moses. Judaizers (false brothers) had “smuggled in” the teaching that the gospel message included the keeping of the Law, and that meant being circumcised. All Jews were already circumcised according to the covenant (Genesis 17). Gentiles, however, were not. Those Gentiles that responded to the gospel message with faith and repentance were brought into the Christian community, which was still very much embedded in the traditions and culture of Judaism. The result was an aberration of the pure gospel message to accommodate some of the Christian Jews’ affinity for the Law of Moses.

What Paul meant was that Titus wasn’t obligated to submit himself to the Law of Moses in order to be accepted into the Christian community in Jerusalem. And if this wasn’t necessary for Titus, neither was it necessary for the believers in Galatia. And if it wasn’t necessary for the believers in Galatia neither is it necessary for those who turn to Christ today.

 What was Paul's response and posture to the work of the "false brothers"? What was the result of his action?


Verse 5 is packed full of encouragement and exhortation for us today. Paul said, "we did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you." Did you notice what Paul indicated about their opposition to the Judaizers? He said that they did not yield for "even an hour." In other words, they didn't give an inch. Why? So that the true gospel message would be preserved. And, even though Paul may not have realized it at the time, it was being preserved for the Galatians.

Do you see what Paul wanted the Galatians to see? Years before the gospel ever reached Galatia, the Lord confirmed the truth of the gospel through Paul and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem. Paul stood firm against false brothers by God's grace so that the pure, joyful message of Jesus' finished work on the cross would be preserved for God's elect across the globe. The good message, years later, arrived in Galatia and was received. Soon, however, the Galatians abandoned the genuine article for a fake, a counterfeit. The same counterfeit that false brothers had introduced before. This led Paul to exclaim, "You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you?" (3:1)

 Application: What is the value of seeking out accountability, like Paul did? Why should we be willing to receive correction concerning our theology?


2. They Added Nothing (Galatians 2:6-8)

In verses 6-8, Paul explained with more detail what the believers in Jerusalem told him and didn't tell him. He wanted the Galatians to know their response to the gospel that he had been preaching to the Gentiles, the very same message that he had delivered to the church in Galatia.

 What did those who were influential add to Paul's gospel? What does this mean?


Paul reported that "those recognized as important...they added nothing to me" (v. 6). In other words, they listened to Paul's message and found it lacking in no area. They saw no need to add anything to what he had been preaching to the Gentiles. The way that Paul described their response was significant. He said that they "added nothing." The very thing that the false brothers and now the Judaizers in Galatia were doing was adding something to Paul's gospel. They were adding the Law of Moses. Paul preached that Jesus' work on the cross was sufficient for the salvation of souls and that nothing more was required to complete that work.

Others, however, added to this message saying that the gospel was the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross plus the Law of Moses.

 What did the believers in Jerusalem recognize about Paul concerning the gospel?


Paul made a case for the origin of his gospel in chapter one. A key aspect of his argument was that his gospel was not delivered to him by men, but by God himself: “But when God, who from my mother’s womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles.” (1:15-16) When Paul wrote that “they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel,” he was reminding them where his gospel came from and that now even the believers in Jerusalem could see that God had entrusted him with the gospel, just as Paul had claimed.

Furthermore, he was entrusted with the true gospel for a purpose. He expressed this purpose in 1:16 saying, “so that I could preach Him among the Gentiles.” The believers in Jerusalem echoed this same purpose according to Galatians 2:7: “they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised.” In other words, Paul’s message in chapter 1 was that God revealed the true gospel to him in order that he might preach it to the Gentiles. Paul’s message in chapter 2 was that the believers in Jerusalem recognized that God entrusted the true gospel message to him in order that he might preach it to the Gentiles. And the Galatians were the Gentiles to whom Paul had preached his gospel.

 Application: Given the fact that we are Gentiles, we are beneficiaries of God’s preserving of the pure gospel for us. How ought we to respond to God today knowing this? Has the true gospel been entrusted to you? If so, for what purpose?

3. The Right Hand of Fellowship (Galatians 2:9-10)

The culmination of Paul’s argument was the confirmation of the pillars of the Christian church: Peter, James, and John. These three men were the leaders of the early church. As Apostles, their word carried more weight than anyone. What would they say about Paul’s message?

 What does the text say about Peter, James, and John’s response to Paul’s message? What does the text say about Peter, James, and John’s feelings about Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles?

“When James, Cephas, and John—those recognized as pillars—acknowledged the grace that had been given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to me.” (2:9) This gesture signified that these pillars of the church approved of the gospel that Paul set before them as well as his work to preach it among the Gentiles. The right hand of fellowship by Peter, James, and John validated Paul’s position as a fellow Apostle and put him on equal footing with them. Paul wanted the Galatians to see that his gospel was in full agreement with the gospel taught by these men. He also wanted them to understand that he had the same authority as those Apostles. This wasn’t a popularity campaign on the part of Paul. Every argument that Paul made wasn’t for his own glory but for the preservation of the true gospel in the hearts of the Galatians.

James, Peter, and John agreed “that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” (2:9) Not only did the Apostles examine and affirm Paul’s message, but they recognized that God had indeed called him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and that he should go and do it. The most influential men in Christendom sanctioned both Paul’s message and mission.

The True Gospel

In short, the primary message of from Galatians 2:1-10 is this: Paul’s gospel was the true gospel and was endorsed by those who walked with Jesus and saw Him raised from the dead!

Consider the impact that this would have on the Galatian readers who had departed from the gospel message that Paul delivered to them. Paul explained to them that Peter, James, and John were in full agreement with his gospel and had told him to continue to take it to the Gentiles. In essence, Paul had been sent by the pillars of the church to deliver this message to the people in Galatia. There is no doubt that this news would have had a tremendous impact on the Galatians, as it should on us. The testimony of the Apostles (those that were specially chosen to lead after following Christ during his earthly ministry and were eyewitnesses of His resurrection per Acts 1:21-22) is what is contained in the New Testament. Jesus Christ wrote no books of our Bible, but those who were closest to Him did. The early church leaders, the Apostles, were the witnesses of the person and work of Jesus Christ. The early church devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching (Acts 2:42) by direct transmission (the Apostles were living and laboring among them). The church today devotes herself to the Apostles’ teaching in the form of the Scriptures.



Application: What makes partnership in the gospel valuable and fruitful? What significance should the witness of the Apostles have in our lives today? Is it still relevant?

Conclusion

Galatians is a passionate plea by a spiritual father to his spiritual children to return to the fold. There are many obstacles and apparent setbacks that a church can face. There will always be trials and suffering in this fallen world. Yet, what was happening in Galatia was much more than a trial

or a setback. The situation in Galatia was grave because the very essence of their identity and hope in Christ was hanging in the balance. A false gospel had entered in and was threatening to destroy all the work that Paul had done among them and lead many to condemnation.

The issue in Galatia was far beyond a spat about philosophy of ministry or style of music. The problem was even graver than habitual sin prevailing among the membership. The loss of the true gospel is the loss of everything. Once the gospel is lost, then there is nothing left to salvage save the few souls that have clung to the pure, unadulterated gospel message.

Paul brought to bear the strongest arguments that he could. In our text, we see Paul's narration of the events of his visit to Jerusalem to give an account of his message and his ministry. What happened in Jerusalem was nothing short of a full endorsement of Paul's message and ministry from the most influential men in Christianity. Paul was given the right hand of fellowship by Peter, James, and John and was encouraged to continue going to the Gentiles. That's why he eventually landed in Galatia, and that's why he preached the message that he did there.

- ❓ What can we do in our personal lives and in our churches to make sure that the gospel stays pure? Is the gospel as precious to us as it was to Paul? Why or why not?
- ❓ What sorts of pressures are there in culture and in the church to give in to a false gospel? What can we do to identify and guard against false gospels?
- ❓ Do we value and seek out like-minded gospel partnership? Are we careful and wise about whom we offer the right hand of fellowship? If the gospel is for all nations what ought we to do to make sure it gets to all people?

Prayer of Response

Give joyful thanks that God has preserved the pure gospel for us today. Express your desire to be used by God to be a preserver of the gospel message. Ask God for wisdom to guard against false gospels. Finally, pray for the development of fruitful gospel partnerships among like-minded individuals and churches for the good of the nations and the glory of God.

Additional Resources

- *No Other Gospel* by Josh Moody
- *Galatians for You* by Timothy Keller
- *Getting the Gospel Right* by R. C. Sproul

For Next Week

Session Title

- Attacking Anxiety

Main Passages

- Psalm 23:1-3

Session Outline

1. God is Sufficient (Psalm 23:1)
2. God Leads Me to Peace (Psalm 23:2-3a)
3. God Leads Me for His Glory (Psalm 23:3b)

Memorize

But we did not give up and submit to these people for even a moment, so that the truth of the gospel would be preserved for you.

-Galatians 2:5

Daily Readings

- Monday - Matthew 28:16-20
- Tuesday - Romans 10:13-15
- Wednesday - Matthew 9:35-38
- Thursday - Acts 13:1-3
- Friday - Acts 13:46-47
- Saturday - Psalm 96:1-3

Extended Commentary

Galatians 2:1-10

2:1. In Galatians 2, Paul continues to defend himself. Apparently, his critics had not only attacked the authority of his gospel but had also said he was a renegade, opposed to and independent from the apostles in Jerusalem. After responding to their first charge, he responded to the second charge by pointing out that the Jerusalem apostles had, in fact, endorsed his message. They affirmed that he was part of their team. Many scholars believe this meeting with Paul and the Jerusalem apostles was the Jerusalem Council meeting recorded in Acts 15. Paul is accompanied at this meeting by Barnabas and Titus. Titus, being a Gentile, was a test case to see if the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem would require him to be circumcised.

2:2. Paul's second trip to Jerusalem following his conversion was in response to a revelation. The purpose of this meeting with the Jerusalem apostles was to clarify the apostles' position on the Christian's relationship to the Jewish law. Jerusalem did not force Paul to come to them for their official stamp of approval. God sent Paul to Jerusalem to bring unity in the mission of the church. If the leaders in Jerusalem sided with the legalistic, false teachers who required Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the whole law, then Paul said he would have run my race in vain. It would be futile for him to preach a grace message if the Jerusalem leaders preached a legalistic one. He talked to those who seemed to be leaders. Paul's reference to these leaders becomes more clear in verses 6 and 9.

2:3-5. The purpose for bringing Titus to Jerusalem is now revealed. Titus was a test case to see if the Jerusalem leaders would allow a Gentile to be a Christian without being circumcised. The false teachers (Judaizers) said he must be circumcised and Paul adamantly said, "No!" Paul knew that both Jews and Gentiles were accepted into the church by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Paul won this battle, for Titus was not. . . compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. The Judaizers wanted to make Christians slaves by requiring them to observe the Old Testament laws' rules and ceremonies, especially circumcision. Paul stood absolutely firm because the truth of the gospel was at stake. To impose circumcision on Titus would be to deny that salvation was by faith alone and to affirm the law as the means to God's acceptance.

2:6. The Jerusalem leaders added nothing to his message. They recognized that it was from God. They approved its truthfulness and completeness. They endorsed Paul and received him as a fellow apostle. We do not know Paul's tone of voice here as he spoke of those who seemed to be important.

We do not know if he was simply acknowledging his lack of information or whether there is a subtle “put-down” in his voice. He may have been making the point to the Judaizers that his authority for what he preached came from God, and therefore, he was not intimidated by the Judaizers who, to bolster their own bluster, appealed to the Jerusalem apostles as their authority. It need not have been a slight of the apostles themselves, however. They may have been totally unaware of the controversy between the Judaizers and Paul.

2:7-9. Several times Paul refers to the leadership in the Jerusalem church. In verse 2, he refers to “those who seemed to be leaders.” In verse 6, he refers to “those who seemed to be important.” In verse 9, he talks of those reputed to be pillars. Each time, the reference seems to be, according to our modern American intuition, more indignant. We sense a rising temperature in Paul’s rhetoric. We ought not to jump to this conclusion, however.

On the one hand, Paul may have been voicing his dissatisfaction and even indignation with the leadership of the church in Jerusalem over several issues. First, he may have been angered by those who wanted Titus to be circumcised, feeling that the leadership of the apostles was inadequate on this issued. Or he may have been put off by Peter’s handling of the Jew/Gentile controversy (see vv. 11-14). Paul may have felt that the leadership, whom he now names as the apostles Peter, James, and John, had caved into pressure from the Judaizers and legalists in the church.

On the other hand, his indignation may have been directed solely at the Judaizers working among his beloved Gentile churches. The Judaizers may have tried to diminish Paul’s authority by emphasizing the apostolic authority of Peter, James, and John. In doing so, they could support their own opposition to Paul’s teaching, tearing him down by lifting up the Jerusalem apostles. Indignant at the Judaizers’ presumption and opposition, Paul may have been saying, “You claim that these Jerusalem apostles are the big shots around here. Well, listen up. My authority comes from God and is just as valid. I’m just as much a leader as they are.”

James, Peter, and John recognized that God had called Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles just as he had commissioned Peter to take it to the Jews. The approval of the Jerusalem leadership silenced the false teachers’ accusations that were seeking to discredit both Paul and his message. The acceptance and approval of the Jerusalem leaders was sealed when they extended to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Paul knew that his words had not convinced the Jerusalem apostles of his ministry. Rather, they saw God’s grace in his ministry.

2:10. The apostles only request was that Paul remember the poor who were among the Jewish believers in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem leaders may have surmised that after their approval of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles he would not feel a responsibility to aid the poor in the Jerusalem church. On his third missionary journey, however, Paul raised a large offering from the Gentile Christians for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (1 Cor. 16:1-3). Such giving promoted love and unity among the Gentile and Jewish Christians.¹

References

1. Anders, Max E. *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians*. Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1999.