

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON – Sunday 30th March 2025 am

TITLE: The authenticity of the gospel TEXT: Galatians 1 verses 1-10

SERIES: Freedom in Christ pt 2 Scripture references from the ESV

Galatians 1:11-2:14 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.^[c] ¹² For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴ And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵ But when he who had set me apart before I was born,^[d] and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶ was pleased to reveal his Son to^[e] me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone;^[f] ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.¹⁸ Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹ But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. ²⁰ (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) ²¹ Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²² And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. ²³ They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." ²⁴ And they glorified God because of me.

2 ¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. ³ But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁴ Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery—⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. ⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. ¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the

circumcision party.^[a] ¹³ *And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.* ¹⁴ *But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"*

The gospel is good news. It proclaims that

Jesus has done everything God requires for our salvation.

Because of his perfect life of obedience to God, his death on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension back into heaven, there is nothing else we need to do to gain forgiveness, enjoy fellowship with God and have eternal life, except

to trust in Christ alone.

This is the gospel of free grace and anyone who believes it is a Christian.

Through this same gospel of grace, we are being made holy. Our old life of sin is gradually pulled down, and a new life of righteousness is built up.

**As we trust in Christ alone, we experience his grace to change us,
so that we become increasingly like Christ.**

We can say along with Paul: **I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20).** This message liberates us not only from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin.

- How can we be sure that what Paul teaches in Galatians is truly from God?

That question was being asked in the churches in Galatia. Some teachers from Jerusalem were telling the gentile believers that, in order to be truly saved and make progress in the Christian faith, the men must be circumcised and the whole church needed to keep the law of Moses. They were teaching a gospel of Christ **plus** human achievement. This performance-based Christianity was undermining the message that Paul was preaching. These teachers were using the

Old Testament to state that God had said you could only be a member of God's covenant people if you were circumcised and kept the Mosaic law. In addition, they claimed credibility because they had come from Jerusalem where Christianity had started, and where the real apostles were! They were telling the Galatian church that

Paul was not a true apostle and his message was not in line with scripture. Therefore, his gospel could not be true and would not lead to salvation.

Paul goes on the offensive straightaway, stating that he is an apostle (**Gal 1:1**) and that that his Gospel is not from man but from God (**v11-12** above).

Why is this relevant for us today? Clearly, we do not circumcise male children, and nor do we keep the Old Testament rules regarding food and festivals.

However, just suppose that these Judaizers are right! That would mean that most of us are unsaved.

- If the true gospel is faith in Jesus **plus** obedience to the old rules, then those who trust in Christ alone are eternally lost.
- At BBC, we teach and believe the gospel that Paul taught, so if he is wrong, then we are eternally lost.

We need to be confident that Paul's gospel is truly from God.

To help us have this confidence, Paul shows us three things about himself.

- 1. Paul's apostolic calling.** Apostles were men like Peter, James and John, who were uniquely called by Christ to be eye witnesses to his resurrection and to receive all that he wanted to communicate to the church. The teachers who had come from Jerusalem claimed that Paul was not a true apostle because he was not one of them. Paul states his apostolic credentials clearly: **Paul, an apostle—not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead (Gal 1:1).** He was not appointed by another human being, but by God. He goes on to tell us how that happened (**1:15-17** above).
 - a) Christ was revealed to him.** Paul had been persecuting Christians, but while he was travelling, Christ appeared to him. Paul saw Jesus alive in his resurrection body, and, in that moment, came to know that Jesus was the Son of God and his Saviour from sin. Jesus Christ was to be Lord of his life.
 - b) Paul was commissioned by Christ to preach Christ to the gentiles.** He was to preach Christ's death and resurrection, and all they accomplished to non-Jews who would believe in Jesus.
 - c) Paul received this message through a revelation of Jesus Christ (1:12).** Paul did not go to Jerusalem to find out what to preach from the other apostles. Instead,

after meeting Jesus, he went away on his own (1:17). He received the message of the gospel by direct revelation from Christ. No one else taught him.

Paul meets all the requirements of being an apostle of Christ.

In case anyone thinks he is lying, Paul even calls on God as his witness! (1:20).

2. Paul's apostolic acceptance. The Judaizers were claiming that Paul's message was different from that of the other apostles. Paul had been preaching the gospel he received from Jesus for 14 years. During that time, he had seen gentiles coming to faith in Jesus and living grace filled lives. Now Paul is concerned (2:2) that the Judaizers with their works-based gospel would undermine the gospel of grace that he knows is from Christ and is right.

He went to Jerusalem to lay out before the apostles the gospel he has been preaching, taking with him a convert as evidence that his gospel is authentic. That convert was Titus, an uncircumcised gentile. No gentile, let alone an uncircumcised one, ever went into the temple and Paul was bringing this one to the church HQ! It was a provocative thing to do, and could have stirred up strife and racial tension in the church.

Why did he do that? Paul did this to establish the truth of the Gospel not just back then but also for those who would read this letter 2000 years later (2:5). He battled on our behalf so that we would know the gospel is true.

Salvation is faith alone in Christ alone.

- Titus stood before the church as a believer who was right with God even though he had not been circumcised.

If the Jerusalem apostles accepted Titus as a true believer and did not require him to be circumcised, then they were showing their agreement with Paul and the gospel he preached. However, if they required him to be circumcised then they were denying the truth of Paul's gospel. There was a lot at stake.

- The apostles did NOT see the need for Titus to be circumcised in order to be saved (2:3)

The apostles who had spent years with Jesus did not see that circumcision was necessary for gentiles to be saved.

- This is a beautiful example of the power of the gospel to unite different ethnicities.

It serves as a reminder to us that we also must accept all those who are accepted by God.

The gospel unites us as brothers and sisters regardless of race, gender, social standing or any differences we might have.

In giving the right hand of fellowship to Titus, the apostles were making a very powerful statement. Circumcision is **not** necessary for salvation and the Judaizers were shown to be wrong.

- Salvation is not faith plus obedience to the Old Testament law – it is faith alone in Christ alone

We are put right with God through faith in Christ alone

Paul and the Jerusalem apostles were showing they all preached the same gospel

Paul had not had any contact with the other apostles, and yet amazingly, Jesus had given him the same message. Whether the gospel preached is taken from Paul, James, John or Peter, the gospel preached is:

**The gospel of God's grace to sinners,
to justify them and make them holy through faith alone in Christ alone**

- 3. Paul's surprising transformation.** Paul's former life had been in Judaism (1:13-14). He was so committed to it that he sought to destroy the church, along with the gospel and the name of Jesus. No one was going to convince Paul that the way to be right with God was through Christ alone, without the law.

Paul did not count on God's eternal and sovereign grace (1:15-16). He had no idea that God would break into his life and reveal Christ to him as the only way of salvation. After his encounter with Jesus, although Paul was unknown personally to the church in Jerusalem, they had heard what God had done. (1:22-23). The only explanation that the church could find for this complete turnaround in Paul's life was that God had been at work. (v24). Another evidence that Paul's gospel is authentic is that it brings glory to God. Any man-made message will only glorify man.

Only the gospel of God's free sovereign grace glorifies God

Paul used his own conversion from Judaism to Christianity as a means of proving that he was a true follower of Jesus, and that his gospel is authentic.

Even today, people seek to undermine Paul and his gospel, suggesting that Jesus only came to set an example of sacrificial living for us, and Paul has just added his own ideas. Often, they say this because they do not like what he writes about the role of men and women. However, Paul shows clearly that the message he preached is the message he received from Christ.

Paul's message is therefore the message of Christ for us

The gospel is good news from God for us

What are we to do with it?

- a) **We are to believe the gospel.** None of us will escape the day when we have to stand before God as judge.

How would you finish this sentence? I am confident that God is pleased with me and will accept me

If you find that your answer, however 'good' the follow-on action might be, starts with **because I** then you have fallen into legalism. You might say:

- Because I trusted in Christ
- Because I read my Bible and pray
- Because I go to church and am making progress in holiness

We can so easily carry that thinking in our hearts. When we do, it shows up in:

- Failure to delight in God, because we feel that he must be very disappointed with us
- Failure to be open about the sins we struggle with because we need to keep face
- Failure to make progress in holiness because we are always stuck in past sins
- Failure to accept other believers who do not follow our rules for godliness (our equivalent of the uncircumcised)

We need to constantly remind ourselves that we are justified by God, accepted by him, loved eternally by him, forgiven of our sins and given eternal life.

All of that is ours only because Christ lived a perfect life of obedience, died on the cross for our sins,

was resurrected for our justification and ascended to heaven to plead for us.

- Ask God to reveal himself to you through his word, by his Spirit.

b) We are to live the gospel. Paul rebuked Peter for his hypocrisy in turning away from eating with the uncircumcised gentiles (2:11-14). Where behaviour is not in step with the gospel, we need to call it out.

- The gospel has the power to set us free from legalism, from fear of man and from following sinful passions. When we behave in ways that are contrary to the power of the gospel to set us free, we undermine the message and dishonour God

Paul could appeal to his own testimony because his life was in step with the truth of the gospel. Our own testimony is not the gospel, but it can be an evidence of its truth. When we are out of step with the gospel, not just in gross sin but in less obvious areas like self-righteousness, we undermine that truth. The church needs to call out any such conduct, courageously and graciously.

c) We are to proclaim the gospel. We have the best news! We know how to be right with God, live a godly life and stand in the day of judgement.

It would not be right to keep that most excellent news to ourselves

- Pray that God will give you an opportunity to tell someone the good news this week

The gospel preached by Paul, Peter and the other apostles is good news to us from God. Through the apostles, God has declared how he has put us right with him through the blood of Christ. He calls us to put our trust in Christ alone.

However, that is not just the starting place. Continual trust in Jesus is to be an everyday experience in our Christian lives and it is the way we progress in holiness.

**Paul calls us to live the Christian life by faith
in the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us.**