

Galatians: Freedom through Christ – Part 3

Don't Let False Believers Enslave You – Galatians 2:1-10

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – Sept. 28th, 2025

Introduction:

- When I was a kid, it was my job to be the family navigator on long car trips. I remember either having a huge fold-out map or a Rand McNally flip atlas to use as my guide. I would locate our destination on the index and then find that location on the map. Then I would plot out our route and use a highlighter to trace where we were to go.
- As we were driving, I would pay very close attention to where we were, and I would use mile markers to pinpoint our location. I would trace my finger along the route so I would know at any time where we were. In larger cities, it would get complicated, and sometimes we would miss our exit or get lost somehow. If this were the case, we would either wander around until we knew where we were or stop at a gas station and ask for directions. It was a difficult and painstaking process that required a lot of work and attention.
- Having this experience in my past gave me a great appreciation and love for the advent of the marvel of GPS. With the push of a button, it will guide you anywhere in the world with turn-by-turn instructions and a guiding voice to lead the way. However, at times, GPS gets it wrong.
- A few years ago, a family from Pennsylvania followed their GPS off the highway in Utah, onto back roads, and eventually onto a snow-covered trail. They trusted the voice on the screen more than their own eyes. Before long, their car was stuck, and they were stranded for two days with no food, freezing temperatures, miles from civilization, and no idea how to get out. Eventually, they had to leave their car, hike miles through the wilderness, and by the grace of God, they were rescued, but not before suffering frostbite and exposure.
- Why did this happen? Because they trusted the wrong guide. That's what Paul is warning the Galatians about. If you add to the gospel, even if it looks official, even if others are saying "this is the way," you'll end up stuck, lost, and in danger. But if you follow the true gospel, Christ alone, He'll always lead you home.
- The purpose of this message is to protect you from being deceived by false believers into following another gospel. We want to stay on the right path, and we must be careful. On one side of the road is the ditch of "Christ plus" for salvation, which includes the teachings of Roman Catholicism, Christian Judaism, or Protestant legalism, which some of you are in danger of falling into. On the other side of the road, there is another ditch of Christian liberalism or Christian mysticism, which even more of you in this room are pulled toward. This ditch is primarily addressed in the book of James, which we will work through in the spring, while the letter of Galatians addresses the first ditch.
- We are picking up the letter of Galatians again today in chapter 2, page 1001 in the pew Bible. After sharing his personal testimony, Paul shares the story of going to Jerusalem to spend time with key leaders of Christianity as further evidence that the gospel he preached is the true gospel. We are going to read our passage in its entirety and then circle back to talk through it.

Galatians 2:1-10 NIV

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem, this time with Barnabas. I took Titus along also. 2 I went in response to a revelation and, meeting privately with those esteemed as leaders, I presented to them the gospel that I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running and had not been running my race in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was compelled to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek. 4 This matter arose because some false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves. 5 We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

6 As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. 8 For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

- The first thing that I want us to consider is that the gospel is to be preserved.

The Gospel Is to Be Preserved

Galatians 2:1-5 NIV

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- So what is going on here? Paul had been preaching and ministering for 14 years at this point. Christ told him to go to Jerusalem to connect with the other apostles to make sure they were on the same page he was on, that he was not “running his race in vain.” This was a hugely important meeting, which included Paul, James, Peter, and John, who wrote all but five books of the New Testament.
- At this meeting, Paul brought with him his ministry partner, Barnabas, and a young man named Titus, who was Greek and was being trained as a pastor (the letter of Titus was written to him). Titus was not circumcised, which was a big deal for the Jews. In the Old Testament under the Old Covenant, in order to be included in the family of God, males needed to be circumcised.
- After Jesus established the New Covenant as recorded in the New Testament ushering in the church age, there were false believers who were teaching that in order to be in the family of God, you needed not only to believe in Jesus but also to follow the Old Testament laws and rules in order to be saved. This is the Christian Judaism of today.
- Another “Jesus plus” thinking taught by false believers makes anyone who would follow them slaves to the law, instead of living in the freedom that Christ gave by fulfilling the Old Testament Law and giving us His Spirit so we can walk and live by it (Paul explains this more in chapter 5). This is Protestant legalism of today.
- . This includes Roman Catholicism's teaching that one must cooperate “with God’s grace infused into him [at baptism] so as to engage in good works and merit eternal life. If he reaches the end of his life in a state of grace, he will ultimately be saved, though probably not immediately. Due to the stain of sin, he needs to be purged of defects. He first suffers

punishment and purification in purgatory, then being perfected he may enter God's presence in heaven." (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/roman-catholic-theology>)

- Paul and company resisted these false believers and did not give in to or follow their enslaving teaching. The apostles in Jerusalem agreed with Paul, and they did not make Titus be circumcised. In this way, the message of the gospel was preserved for all who would believe. This gospel message of grace must be preserved even today, and it also needs to be presented to all people.

The Gospel Is to Be Presented

Gal 2:6-9 NIV

As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favoritism—they added nothing to my message. 7 On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. 8 For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. 9 James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

- The apostles recognized each person's specific calling and sphere of ministry, and they were working together to ensure that the gospel message was communicated near and far. Acceptance, fellowship, and partnership are key to the future dissemination of the gospel to the world. No one is called to everyone and everything, but everyone is called to somewhere and someone. We each have an assignment and sphere of influence. We are each given grace to work in an area, and we must all to work together, including churches, organizations, and individuals. What area has God graced and called you into so that you can proclaim the gospel?
- We cannot stop presenting the message of the gospel until the nations have heard. Not only does the gospel need to be presented, but it also needs to be "performed," lived out in practical ways.

The Gospel Is to Be Preformed

Galatians 2:10 NIV

All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

- The true gospel of grace must be proclaimed by our words. And our words must be followed by our actions. Your theology must be expressed through your activity—primarily through your mercy—or the message of the gospel will be lost and discredited by our actions or lack of actions. So often our actions speak louder than our words.
- One of the best ways we can make our faith visible is in how we treat those in need, those on the outside, and those who are most vulnerable. This is a biblical virtue as seen and taught in both of the testaments.
- Remembering the poor was a high priority then and still should be today. This was the only thing the apostles in Jerusalem asked Paul, Barnabas, and those working with them to do: Continue to remember the poor. They agreed to do this, and this is exactly what they had been doing all along.

- The gospel message must be accomplished by practical demonstrations, which include meeting the practical needs of people; in this way, the gospel message is complete. They will know that we are Christians by our love.

Conclusion

- Church, the gospel is our map. It is our compass. It is our true guide. Paul knew that if the Galatians trusted a false guide, even one that looked official and religious, they would be led into slavery, not freedom.
- Just like their GPS took that Pennsylvania family into the snowy wilderness, false believers want to take you down roads that look right but lead to destruction. And just like I used to carefully trace our family's route on a map, we must trace our lives along the truth of the gospel.
- The good news is this: Jesus is enough. Nothing more needs to be added, and nothing more can be added. Christ alone saves. And when the gospel is preserved, presented, and performed, it not only keeps us on the right road, but it also shows the world the way home.
- So don't trust the wrong guide. Don't let false believers enslave you. Trust Christ alone, walk in His freedom, and extend His grace with both your words and your works. He will never lead you astray.

Our prayer team is available to pray with you after the service near the “prayer” sign at the front of the sanctuary and also in the prayer room, next to the offices.

Questions for Small Groups

1. Why do you think it is so tempting to add rules, rituals, or requirements to the gospel message?
2. What modern examples of “Jesus plus something else” have you seen in churches or Christian culture?
3. How do Paul's actions in refusing to let Titus be circumcised (v.3–5) show us what it means to guard the gospel today?
4. Paul and Peter had different spheres of ministry. What sphere of influence or calling has God entrusted to you?
5. How does remembering the poor keep our gospel witness from becoming just words?
6. In what area of your life do you most need to re-embrace the freedom that comes from trusting in Christ alone?