

Galatians 2:1-10

Uncompromising

As many of you know we're currently in a search for both a Christian Education Director and a Youth Pastor. So far we've received over 60 resumes for these two positions.

The process we're using is to let the staff read through all the resumes and to pick out ones that look like a possible match. We then submit those to the elders, generate questions and contact the people who've applied with those questions.

We're currently checking references.

Obviously there's a wide variety of people who've contacted us but one of the things that's been amazing to us as we've been through this process is the lack of concern by so many about biblical doctrine.

We'll receive a resume from person who's been on staff at an Assembly of God church, then they moved to a Methodist church, and then to a Presbyterian church, and now they're applying with us.

We've asked a couple of them, "How did you manage that doctrinally? Those churches have fundamental differences in beliefs."

And here's the answer they've given, "We just avoided the minor things. We just agreed to disagree."

Of course, as it turns out the reason some of them are looking for another position is that in the end it did matter. In a couple of instances it turned out that there were major problems that developed to the point of churches splitting and staff members being asked to leave.

Doctrine does matter.

No where is this brought into sharper focus than in the book of the Bible we're currently studying, the Book of Galatians.

Galatians is a letter that was written under the inspiration of God by an Apostle named Paul about 20 years after Jesus' cross.

Paul was originally a hater of Christians who became a believer and gave his life wholeheartedly to telling other people the Good News.

He went from being the ringleader of persecution to a totally devoted follower of Christ. He was constantly on the road traveling from city to city talking about Jesus Christ and starting churches.

One of the areas he traveled to was the region of Galatia in Asia Minor.

Although Paul was Jewish in his background he had a way of really identifying with the Galatians who were non-Jews.

His message was straightforward and simple. All people have sinned against God, Jews and Gentiles alike.

All people stand under God's judgment, Jews and Gentiles alike. And God sent His Son to be the Savior for Jews and Gentiles alike.

Paul preached that message and several church congregations were started.

After he got them organized Paul did what he believed God had called him to do, he moved on to other areas to share his faith.

It wasn't long until Paul received the news that there was trouble brewing.

Men had come into town after Paul to undermine his teaching. This is very similar to what's happening with the association of churches we work with in Nicaragua.

It's always easier to hijack a church than it is to start one from scratch. In Nicaragua a group from Columbia has come in and enticed some of our Nicaraguan brethren with their form of teaching that says God wants everybody to be healthy and wealthy.

They said, "You don't have all the truth. You need to have these experience oriented supposed manifestations of the Holy Spirit, and then God will make you rich and you won't get sick.

Some churches have left the association and it's caused confusion for the others congregations.

In Galatia false teachers came in and told the congregations that Paul wasn't really an apostle, that he didn't have the approval of the big guys in Jerusalem, and that he didn't give them the truth.

Paul's message was forgiveness of your sins comes by faith alone. Christ did the complete and total work on the cross. He said, "We serve God because we are His children by faith. We don't serve God to become God's children."

Now last week we saw Paul's claim that he wasn't a "people pleaser." He taught truth from God that didn't depend on anyone else's approval.

Today we're going to look at the beginning of chapter 2.

Turn Gal 2 pg 1034

Unfortunately a lot of the same distortions of concepts like tolerance and diversity that have captured the thinking of our Nation have spilled over into the church.

If it was just the liberal churches, that don't really believe anything anyway, it wouldn't be so bad. The real problem is how it's spilled over into conservative churches.

Very few of the men who have sent us resumes have sent us their statement of faith or have asked to see ours. I find that absolutely astounding.

Obviously we're interested in their past experience in ministry. But what good would it do to bring somebody on who had great organizational skills but thought that Biblical truths were negotiable.

That would like be like hiring someone to build you a house who was an expert at framing and building up the structure, but who didn't care about the foundation.

If you say the foundation doesn't really matter, you can build it any way you want, you can use any materials you want, in the end your house is going to fall down.

I. Doctrinal Truth Matters To God

Read vs 1-2

Here's the tight rope Paul's walking very carefully and with complete integrity. On the one hand, he has to maintain his independence from the Jerusalem apostles to reinforce the truth that his message came from God and not men (he did that in chapter 1); but on the other hand he has to show that the gospel he preaches and the gospel the apostles preach are the same gospel.

He didn't get it from them, but they're all in agreement.

14 years after Paul's 1st 2 week trip to Jerusalem he returned. During those 14 years he had been in Tarsus, worked with Barnabas in Antioch, went up to Jerusalem to take money to the poor, went back to Antioch, and went out with Barnabas on their first missionary journey.

Now he takes Barnabas and Titus and goes up to Jerusalem again. This time, he says, "I went by revelation."

This trip wasn't something he just decided on by himself. He says "God sent me. It was His revelation."

NIV translates it, *I went in response to a revelation...*

What was going on that was so important to God that he would send Paul?

Turn to Acts 15 pg 981 Read vs 1-6

To us, living in this day and age, this all seems strange. We might wonder, "What's the question?"

To the early church, how the Law of Moses and non-Jews fit into Christianity was confusing.

Jesus was Jewish. The Apostles were Jewish. The only Bible was the OT. Everything about Christianity was Jewish.

The question was, what about Gentiles? What about non-Jews like the Galatians? Didn't they have to keep the Law of Moses? Didn't they have to be circumcised? Shouldn't they keep the Jewish feast days?

Paul and Barnabas said, "No. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone." Those who

were Jewish leaders who believed in Jesus said, “Yes they do. Salvation is by faith plus the keeping of God’s law.”

So the first big question the church faced was “Can we earn God’s favor?” That’s the same question we keep coming up against today.

Is it Christ plus baptism? Is it Christ plus turning from sin? Is it Jesus plus living a godly life? Is it Christ plus religious ceremonies? Is it Jesus plus doing anything? What’s the solution?

Read vs 6

The church in Jerusalem was like the mothership. Right in the beginning this was the place of authority. This is the first church council ever held.

Read 7-11

Peter is the spokesman for the rest of the leadership in Jerusalem. Here’s their decision: It’s faith in Christ plus nothing.

Why did God send Paul up to Jerusalem? Because doctrinal truth matters to God.

Our postmodern world says there is no absolute truth. God says, “Not only is there absolute truth, but that truth makes the difference between heaven and hell.”

Back to Gal

- I. Doctrinal Truth Matters To God*
- II. There Are False Brethren*

Read vs 3

I’ll bet Titus was glad of that!

Titus was a Greek that trusted Christ as Savior through Paul’s witness. He became one of Paul’s closest traveling companions. In fact, he’s mentioned 13 times in Paul’s letters.

Since Titus was a Greek he had no background in Jewish law. So Titus is the ideal way to prove Paul's point that Gentiles don't have to keep the Mosaic law.

He says, "I took him up to Jerusalem. I took him to the heart of Jewish territory. And no one questioned his salvation. No apostle said Titus' faith wasn't enough."

He was accepted by everyone. Everyone but one group, that is.

Read vs 4-5

Liberty is a beautiful thing. Think about the meaning of liberty to us in this country. Liberty doesn't mean we're free to break laws, hurt other people, and take what's not ours.

Liberty means we can live where we want, worship as we choose, decide who will govern us, start businesses, make a profit - we're free.

The same is true in Christ. Under the Law of Moses there was no liberty. God laid out regulations and instructions for every move His people made. He even told the men how to trim their beards.

When we trust Christ as Savior we're free. God treats us as adult children in his family. We're free from the power of sin. In our liberty we can be creative. We can be creative in our worship. We can be creative in our Christian life. It's a life of grace and truth.

Legalism wants to rob us of that liberty. Legalism wants to bring us into bondage. Freedom only comes through Jesus Christ.

So Paul says, "We never yielded to them, even for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you."

This was no minor issue. this wasn't just a matter of culture or personal opinion.

The truth of the Gospel is: Jesus is our salvation. You can't budge an inch on that.

As soon as you add any kind of work or human effort to the gospel, 3 things happen:

- 1). It becomes an accursed message (Chapter 1:9)
- 2). It places people under bondage (Chapter 2:4)
- 3). It destroys the truth of the character of God

Suddenly God isn't the holy one who requires absolute perfection, which can only come in Christ, He includes our imperfect works.

Let me encourage you to be nit-picky about the Gospel. There's no room for compromise. If we give place to, or participate in, anything that deviates from the clear message of salvation by faith in Christ only confusion and disruption will take place.

Paul didn't say, "Hey, no big deal. We're all Christians. We just have a little different view of things.

We just word things a little differently than they do." He called these men "false brethren." Those are harsh words. When it came to the message of salvation he wouldn't budge.

We need to stand firm for the truth of the Gospel because there are false brethren who want to change the message.

I. Doctrinal Truth Matters to God

II. There Are False Brethren

III. God Desires Unity In The Pursuit Of Ministry

Read vs 6

Did you catch what he's saying here? He's saying, "The great leaders of the church didn't add anything to my message. I said people are forgiven of their sins and made part of the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ and the apostles didn't say, 'No Paul it's by faith plus what you do.' They said it's by faith and faith alone."

Then he says, "By the way. They're being great leaders didn't make any difference to me. We're all equal before God."

There's a real important concept here that we don't want to miss: He wasn't trying to put down Peter, James, and John. They were Apostles before he was. They were his brothers in the Lord. They had physically walked with Jesus and he had the utmost respect for them.

But in the final analysis, the truth of God stands on it's own. The Christian faith isn't about elevating people. There's no religious hierarchy with God. There's no Papacy.

We're to respect church leaders because of the work that they do, but we don't elevate one person above another.

One of the hallmarks of the cults is a strong central authority. You don't question the leadership. You take everything that's written and said as absolute truth.

It's never to be that way in a church or a ministry. Jesus Christ is the head of the church and God's Word is the final authority.

Now at this point we might get the idea that God just wants His people to kind of be lone rangers. But that's not true. God wants unity, just not at the expense of truth.

Read 7-9

Paul wasn't looking for the approval of others but he didn't turn it down either.

Peter, James, and John didn't try to change the message Paul preached. Instead they shook his hand and said, "Go for it."

Instead of changing anything, the Apostles just officially divided up the work.

Paul and Barnabas would focus on the non-Jews and the rest would focus on the Jewish people.

In verses 7-9 there's three lessons that kind of jump out at you:

1) God's good news, salvation by faith in Jesus, is completely independent. It isn't true because someone preaches it. It isn't true because someone else doesn't preach it. It's true because it's God's message.

2) The Gospel is the same for all people, in all cultures, at all points in history. The methods of presentation vary. Jews, Gentiles, 1st century, 21st century, the bush of Africa, the city of San Palo Brazil, or Washington DC.

The need is the same. People are going to hell without Christ. The message is the same. It's by grace that you're saved through faith.

The language that we bring it in. The context that we present it changes. But in the end the message can't change because it's God's message.

3) The New Testament isn't a hodge podge of conflicting ideas. It's a unit. It doesn't say, "Believe whatever you want about God, just be sincere."

George Barna, who does a tremendous amount of polling and research to determine where Americans are in their thought process, has been pointing out for years how Christians have bought into the spirit of our age.

We'd expect people who aren't believers to say that Jesus isn't the only way to heaven, but these days I'm hearing it from people who say they're Christians. Maybe you heard this, or maybe you believe it, but I hear people say, "Sure Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world, but if someone in another culture sincerely believes in their God, they'll be OK. They'll get to heaven. We all worship the same God. We just do it in different ways."

If that were true then all that Paul suffered in his missionary journeys; the beatings, the imprisonments, his ultimate beheading, was for nothing.

If that were true then all the money we spend on missions is just wasted.

There's a unity in the Bible built around a central theme. At that meeting in Jerusalem Peter, James, John, Barnabas, and Paul shook hands in agreement that salvation was by faith in Jesus Christ plus nothing.

They didn't say, "We sincerely believe this and the other brethren believe it's Jesus plus the Law of Moses and since we're all sincere it's OK."

The only way you can have unity is if it's based on an unchanging standard.

All the major religions of the world don't worship the same God, let alone all the thousands of smaller faiths.

Hinduism says that God exists in all and all beings exist in him. There is nothing other than Him, and there is nothing that is outside of Him. And that salvation is coming to a full understanding of God until you melt into Him.

Buddhism is anti-theistic. There is no Supreme Being in Buddhism.

Few followers of Confucius have a clear belief in any God. They believe in the world of spirits and souls, and some even practice ancestor worship. But Confucianism is just an ethical system.

Islam has a holy and gracious God, but He determines who gets to heaven on the basis of what people do for him. It's faith plus works. So Islam's God must be satisfied by what we do.

Die a Jihadists death and you're immediately admitted into paradise.

Those aren't examples of people worshipping the same God just using a different name. Those are different Gods.

You may not believe what the Bible says about God but you can't say on one hand you believe in Jesus and on the other say every other conflicting belief is right too.

Back in verse 5 Paul wrote: *we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

What is the "truth of the Gospel?"

Titus 3:5 *"...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit."*

Eph 2:8-9 *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

Obviously God values sincerity. Our faith isn't just some fire escape from hell, it's the basis for a relationship with the living God. But sincerity in itself isn't enough.

It's possible to be sincerely wrong. There was an article in the news about a Turkish farmer named Mustafa Kaya was hospitalized after drinking insecticide, which he said he needed because he had swallowed a fly. "I wanted to kill the fly before it reproduced inside me," he said. "I heard (they) reproduce fast."

Fortunately Mr. Kaya lived. He sincerely thought he had a problem with a fly and he sincerely thought he could cure it by drinking insecticide. His sincerity almost cost him his life. He was sincere al right. He was sincerely wrong.

We need to make sure our sincerity is aimed in the right direction.

Well, then finally to this major agreement on the essence of the Gospel and the dividing up of the work, one stipulation is added. **Read vs 10**

The Jewish churches, especially the church in Jerusalem, had trouble financially because Christians were ostracized from Jewish society and lost their jobs.

They apostles said, "You keep going to the Gentiles but don't forget about the poor Jews," which Paul never did. Helping the poor was always a high priority. Serving God and others is high on the priority list of every totally devoted follower of Christ.

What drove a man like Paul to be such a zealot for the gospel? It was this: he knew that it was the only true message.

It's the only message that saves.

It's the only message that frees a person from sin.

And it's the only message that glorifies God and displays his character. Both the holiness and the love of God are displayed fully in the gospel.

The message of the gospel is that God is holy and we are unrighteous.

That our sins have come between us and God.

But that God made the only provision that could be made for that sin. God satisfied His own holy and righteous demands at the cross. Christ died for the ungodly. And all that believe are justified from all things.

Have you believed? Have you trusted in the complete and finished work of Christ?

To do anything else. To trust in anything or anyone else, is to impugn the very character of God.