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The Mission
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Galatians 2.1-21

Galatians 2:1, Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), 5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But from those who seemed to be something—whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man—for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived

the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? 15 We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

17 “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! 18 For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. 19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. 20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of

God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. 21 I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Henry Clay was an American congressman, senator, and secretary of state. His negotiating abilities earned him the nickname, the “Great Compromiser.” He was able to bring opposing parties together to find common ground. And over the years there have been a few men in politics who have had that gift, but for the most part, the men and women in politics, especially in this country have been very one sided. And though we could use more politicians like Henry Clay who have the gift to mediate certain issues in our nation, we don’t need men and women who are willing to compromise the Word of God in the process.

Because when it comes to God’s word and especially the truth of the gospe, there can never be any compromise. And as it relates to faith in Christ alone for salvation, the apostle Paul could never be accused of compromising. He stood firm on that truth and the truth of all Scripture. And the truth is, we could use **more** people like that in the church today.

And so as we continue into Galatians 2, Paul is still addressing this issue of compromise and this false teaching that was being taught by these Judaizers. And these Judaizers as we learned last time were Jewish teachers, who kept insisting that followers of Christ must also continue to follow the Mosaic law.

And the issue here is centered around Gentiles who had believed in Christ. And the Judaizers were teaching, among other things, that these Gentile converts had to receive the rite of circumcision.

In fact, Acts 15 fills in the backstory and explains that the Judaizers were going as far as to make circumcision a requirement for salvation. But this was not the gospel of grace that Paul was preaching.

Now, back in chapter 1, Paul made it clear that his message had been given to him directly from the Lord. And here in chapter 2, Paul makes it clear that his message had also been approved by the other apostles.

In fact, Paul refers to a meeting he had with some of the other apostles in verse 1: He says,

“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.”

This tells us that Paul up to this time, had been ministering primarily on his own and independently from the Jerusalem church, but his message was no different from theirs. And this visit along with this meeting with the other apostles affirmed that.

Now, it's not clear exactly when this visit took place. It could have been when Paul and Barnabas brought the relief offering in Acts 11, or perhaps when they visited Jerusalem for the great council meeting in Acts 15, which dealt with the issue of Gentiles being added to the church.

But whenever it occurred, Paul's point is that his visit achieved the support of the other apostles. And that it was the Judaizers who were preaching a false gospel.

Now, Paul never doubted that he was preaching the truth, but to confirm it, he brought Titus along with him to meet with the the apostles.

And in verse 3 Paul writes that Titus **“was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek [Gentile].”**

In other words, the Jerusalem church—which was the very center of Jewish Christianity—**did not** insist that Titus be circumcised, nor it says, did they require it of any other Gentile convert.

And so Paul cuts to the chase in verse 4, and he declares that the Judaizers are **“false brothers who had slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery.”**

And what he means when he says, “to return to slavery” is that a return to the law is to reject Christ’s work on the cross. And this is a very serious matter, and that’s why Paul writes in verse 5 that he did not **“yield in submission to them even for a moment.”**

Paul left room for no compromise here. He was standing firm on what he believed and the truth of the gospel. And then he tells us why. He says: **“So that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.”**

And that final statement is the reason that Paul wrote this book. He was in a battle against those who were propagating a false gospel. They were, in his case, called Judaizers. They were Jews from Jerusalem who had come into the region of Galatia, and into the Gentile communities and they were purposely following Paul into these churches that he had established in the region of Galatia.

And there were a number of cities there where he had planted churches. And so they followed him, they dogged his steps, and they came into those churches and they were preaching a different gospel, a false gospel. And Paul was shocked that these believers in Galatia had given them an ear, much less believed what they were teaching.

But really it shouldn’t have surprised Paul because Jesus Himself had predicted that things like this would happen.

Go back with me for a moment back to the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and let me read to you a warning Jesus gave to His disciples in which He describes life in the kingdom: and how it's going to be, and what it's going to be like to evangelize in the kingdom, and to preach the gospel in the kingdom.

And one of the things that He lets us in on is that as busy as **we** are, that's how busy **Satan's** going to be. Satan is not just going to be devising religions that are alternatives to Christianity, and religions that are anti-Christianity –but Satan will also be devising all kinds of false forms of Christianity. And this is where we have to be most wary.

And so our Lord tells the disciples a parable in **Matthew chapter 13, verse 24: Another parable He put forth to them, saying: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ 28 He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ 29 But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’ ’ ”**

Now they would have understood this, because this is what happened in the ancient world when an enemy wanted to do damage to someone. This

was one sure way you could do damage to your neighbor, by sowing noxious tares in their wheat field, and therefore corrupting the grain. And, of course, the tares, or the weeds, and all these noxious elements would choke out the good crop. And so this was something an enemy would do.

And then the Lord explains the significance of all this in the kingdom down in verse 36.

36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.”

37 He answered and said to them: “He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

In other words, it will not be well for the tares in the time of judgment.

So Jesus Himself tells us that, “There are going to be tares, sown by Satan, inside the kingdom, and they will be indiscernible in many cases. You won’t be able to tell them apart, and you can’t go around ripping them out, because you may be doing damage to true believers.

He says, just leave that to Me at the end of the age.”

The kingdom is going to be populated by true believers and false believers, which means there will be people who believe the true gospel, and there will be people who believe a lie, and all the false gospels and they'll all be within the framework of the church and the kingdom.

And of course we all know this already; and we see it all the time. It's just something we have to contend with.

And everywhere Paul went, he had to contend with it. These false teachers dogged his every step; and that hasn't changed. It still happens today. Satan is always at it, not only in religions outside of Christianity, but also within Christianity in forms of Christianity; and that's where he does his greatest damage.

And so Paul is writing to the Galatian churches and he's saying, "Don't be mislead. Come back and accept the true gospel which I preached to you in the beginning.

And so it was very important when these Jerusalem church leaders mentioned here in verse 9 were in agreement with Paul. Because here it tells us **that James, Peter, and John all gave him and Barnabas "the right hand of fellowship."**

Now, here's the point: If the Galatian churches rejected Paul's message, then they would also be rejecting the teaching of the apostles. And so it was very important that Paul receive the backing of these apostles and so he did.

And then beginning in verse 11, Paul refers to a confrontation he had with Peter. And let me just tell you ahead of time, this incident is very disappointing and unfortunate, but it's also very instructive. And just one example that the Scriptures don't put any one person, save Jesus, on a pedestal, including the apostles or any other Christian leader for that matter and that includes the apostle Peter.

And so here's what happened. When Paul and Barnabas were ministering at the church in Antioch, which consisted of both Jews and Gentiles, Peter came to visit. And Paul writes this in **verse 11, He says, "I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned."**

Now, that's pretty strong language! Here are the two most prominent apostles in the New Testament, and one of them is rebuking the other one in public for making a mistake, because it was a **big** mistake.

So what did Peter do?

Well, Paul explains it in verses 12-13: he says,

For before certain men came from James, he, (and he's talking about Peter), was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

In other words, Peter and some others were hanging out with these Gentiles, and they were enjoying all these non-kosher meals and he was fellowshiping with all these uncircumcised Christians. But then when these Jewish leaders arrived from Jerusalem, Peter turned his back on these Gentiles he had been socializing with and he acted like he didn't even know them. And he did that, because he didn't want to offend these Jewish leaders.

In other words, Peter was compromising the gospel. He was evidently ashamed or at the very least no confident in what he believed. And so he wasn't standing firm on what he supposedly believed. And to be wishy washy or to be blown in whatever direction the wind's blowing at the time is not a good thing.

And so, Paul confronted Peter's hypocrisy. And rightly so!

Now, apparently, the matter was settled very quickly. And to Peter's credit, he evidently apologized and made things right again with his Gentile brothers in Christ. But now had Paul not confronted him, well, there's no telling what damage may have been done.

And today there's a lot of that going on in the church. People act one way with one group and another way with others and there's a lot of hypocrisy today which is driven by the fear of man, and by the pressure to conform to some institutional idea of holiness, or some popular idea of what a Christian should, or should not do.

But what we ought to be concerned with, is the truth and to conforming to the teaching of Scripture, regardless of what others say and do. And just like the apostle Peter, sometimes we may need somebody in our lives, like the apostle Paul, who is concerned enough about us, to confront us, and to help us recognize the hypocrisy in our lives.

Now with that, Paul recites a very important truth with respect to the gospel that we all need to remember. It's in verse 16 and it says: **"A person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ."**

For Jews and Gentiles alike, to be justified—or to be declared right with God through faith in Christ—that frees us from trying to be perfect in our own strength and try in vain to keep the law.

But, as Paul says in **verse 18**, **"If I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor"**.

In other words, "If I lead people back into the law, and away from grace, then I'm just building back up the false teaching, 'that justification comes through works.'"

And then Paul writes these familiar words in **verse 20: He says,**

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.

What a powerful verse! In fact, this is one of the verses we focus on in our Friday night recovery program. It's through faith and faith alone that we are identified with Christ in both His death and His resurrection. In other words, we died to sin, and we died to the power of sin.

Before we were saved, we were headed in the wrong direction, but now, through Christ we're headed in the right direction.

You may have read the story of Roy Riegels. He played center for the California Bears and they were the underdogs in a game against Georgia Tech for the national championship in the 1929 Rose Bowl.

Late in the second quarter, Roy picks up a fumble from Georgia Tech and begins running for a touchdown. The fans were hollering and screaming and cheering him on. Only problem was, he was running the wrong way. He was running toward the wrong goal line.

Finally, just before he crossed the wrong goal line, one of his own teammates stopped him. Of course the opposing team was there as well and so they tackled him on the one yard line. And until his death, in 1993, he was known everywhere he went as "Wrong Way Riegels."

Well, that's basically what happened to Peter that day. He was running in the wrong direction for a few minutes. But then he was tackled by the Apostle Paul.

And the truth is, the same thing can happen to anybody if they're not careful. Most anybody can get confused by the pressure and the noise around them if their not careful.

And so Paul in essence is says here, “Let’s make sure we keep heading in the right direction. Make sure we don’t find ourselves running back toward the law, but toward the grace and the freedom that Christ died for and that can only come by faith in Him alone.”