

Preserving the Truth of the Gospel • Galatians 2:1-9

Ryan Perz • February 5, 2023

I was invited once by another pastor to go with him to Israel for free.

Sounded great. Until I learned what free meant. It meant bringing 5 other people from my church. If I got 10 to go, my wife went “free” to.

I was pastoring a very small church then, so it would have been taking half of our membership.

I declined since it seemed to me like a ministry multi-level marketing.

But it goes deeper: Everything that a pastor does publicly, demonstrates some level of importance.

So what’s truly important in the church?

—Many say, “preaching the Word”. Amen. “That’s at the top of what I’m looking for when we visit a church.”

—Many believe it is evangelizing the lost. Research has shown that churches that turn totally inward, die.

—Many may answer: Strive for Peace and Unity (John 17).

- These are all good. But can we boil it down to one most important thing?

I think we find it in the text:

(V6) — “That the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.”

The most important thing a church can do is quite simple — preserve the truth of the gospel.

Sounds simple, if there were not so many challenges.

- This passage is a didactic narrative—that’s a fancy way of saying, a story that teaches.
- The story is how God used one single trip to Jerusalem—Paul meeting with the apostles—to bring about his core conviction of the truth of the Gospel.

As we walk through this passage, it’s his NO COMPROMISE mindset that argues his point.

4 areas where we see NO COMPROMISE:

No Compromise in the True Gospel (1-2)

- “After 14 years” is probably after his conversion.
- But the 14 year reference is interesting.
- It’s as if Paul is saying: “I didn’t need the other apostles approval or supervision of this work—since it came from Christ.”

—We need to remember that Paul’s call was very unique: He was not ordained, commissioned, or sent by the apostles...but directly from Jesus.

He was not in a rush or hurry to get approval from any other human being.

Once we start rushing to get approval from other people, we are on dangerous footing.

- Most likely, Acts 11:27-30 is behind this revelation. It describes a prophetic prediction of a famine that would hit Jerusalem.

So the trip had two purposes:

—Help the poor

—Also, to display the gospel

- The first way the gospel is displayed is by who is a chosen traveling companion: Titus.

- Titus could have aided in collecting the contribution from churches. (2 Cor 8:6)

Titus is an example of the power of the Gospel at work. He is a full-blooded Gentile believer.

- › He is proof that a person's right standing before God is by One Thing: by faith alone in Christ alone.

How Discipleship Works

- We have a pretty important lesson by looking at the two traveling companions: Barnabas and Titus.

Barnabas—here is a man who played a vital role in Paul's life (Acts 9:27); they were partners during Paul's first missionary Journey (Acts 13-14).

Barnabas — Side by side discipleship

Titus—A man who could be trusted with ministry. Same man he writes the letter to in NT.

“Taking Titus with me”

- The “with me” factor. That is how the Bible shows us discipleship in action.

Discipleship does not just stop at Bible Study—it's often most fruitful in the life-on-life aspect.

Paul invested his life in many people, but especially these younger men like Titus and Timothy.

It's been said: “Truth is often more caught than taught”

2 Timothy 3:10 ESV

You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness,

(2 Tim 3:10) —how else do you follow someone's conduct, faith, patience, love, steadfastness....unless you see them up close?

Do you have either a Barnabas or Titus in your life? Someone side-by-side; someone you take “with you”.

- Secondly, we also see the gospel in the consistency of the message (2b).

V2 gives us another reason for this trip: Paul went to lay before the apostles the pure gospel that he had been preaching to the Gentiles.

The point is: The true gospel will always be a consistent message.

It will be consistent with the true gospel in church history.

It will be consistent with the true gospel found in the scripture and with the apostles.

No compromise before false brothers (3-5)

- What we read in v3 is very bold.
- It shows that Paul is not playing games and is ready to stick his neck out on the line when it comes to the gospel.

He takes a non-Jewish believer to the most Jewish place in the world....and says in effect: *He Belongs. Accept him As He Is.*

› *He knew this would be confrontational, controversial....yet he did it out of faith.*

- The main conflict is referenced in v4. I think there is a specific teaching lesson: to show these are false “brothers”.

Two labels we use in church walls:

—brothers

—teachers

Both are good.

--We want to call each other brother and sister genuinely.

--We want to respect the teachers.

But it also comes with a warning. Where can a false gospel come from? It can from one you thought was a brother; one you sat under his teaching.

- The resolution comes in v5.
 - But—what is evidence that the true gospel has been tampered with?
 - (v4) “so that they might bring us back into slavery”
- Freedom is a major theme of this letter. We will unpack later.

But here is the test case (v3)

—The true gospel is not going to force you to do something or conform to something that Christ does not require.

That’s the freedom test: Does the Gospel require this? Demand this?

No Compromise in Partiality (v6)

- A few of the main characters in this narrative are the Pillar apostles (James, Peter, John).
- v6 is very confident—almost a bit rude.

But notice that Paul does not have an “I don’t care what people think about me...” attitude.

It’s grounded in something great: The Doctrine of God.

—See, it’s one thing to say, “People’s opinions don’t matter to me because that is just who I am. I’ve got thick skin; I know who I am.”

—But it’s another thing to say: People’s opinions don’t matter to me...because of WHO GOD IS.

- › Paul’s attitude is based on his right view of God/

God shows no partiality.

Deuteronomy 10:16–17 ESV

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe.

The point: God does not look at the pedigree, he looks at the heart.

- God’s end-time judgment has no mixture of partiality—he is no respecter of persons; he has no favorites.

Romans 2:9–11 ESV

There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.

› That should strike us with a bit of holy fear—God does not grade on a curve.

- Not only is Paul driven by a solid doctrine of God,
- He also is secure - “they added nothing to me”.

Those are strong words. Words of great confidence that nothing can be added to what Christ has already done.

For the truth of the Gospel to be preserved, we need to remember the final appeal of authority—it’s never to one man....but to the Gospel itself.

Schreiner: “Leaders are to be respected, but not venerated, honored but not exalted above the gospel.”

› Never exalt any man above the gospel.

It’s a good reminder: God’s not impressed by anyone.

The human reputation of a person means nothing.

The number of followers on social media or the amount of the dollar in books sales—God doesn't care!

Sometimes an addiction to personality, big names, celebrity could put us in a dangerous place if we are not careful.

Look too much to man...and lose the gospel.

No compromise on doing mission (7-9)

- Having strong convictions about the gospel should lead to doing something with it.

That's what we see in these remaining verses:

- First, we see that a unified message brings a unified mission.
- Second, grace for the work is always the primary focus - (v8) "he who worked"; (v9) "grace that was given to me".

This is certainly true for the apostle; how much more does it need to be true of any of our service?

- › Any good we do will be done by grace—Not I, but Christ in me.

- It's helpful to remind ourselves what Paul's main work was.

—Some who love theology tend to see Paul as a great theologian. From his pen comes Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians.

- But Paul's main work was not to write theology—his main work was missions.

**At the heart of who Paul was, he was a church-planting missionary.

- The way that God's gospel gets preserved is by his church staying on mission.

(v9) —That we should GO to the Gentiles.

- The reason that Paul continues to labor:

--Preserving the Gospel is not just about defending it doctrinally.

--It also takes a church that not going to compromise on doing mission.

A church that is SENDING church is a Church that is Preserving the Gospel.

When I was a candidate here for lead pastor, one thing that stood out—the major thing really— was not that I shared doctrine...but that TRB has been historically a strong sending church....That shows me a concern for the gospel.

Let's be sure not to compromise this.

Conclusion:

The most important thing the church does is preserve the truth of the gospel.

This text shows the roles of men like Paul, Barnabas, Titus, the churches of Galatia.

They all had a role to play in preserving the gospel.

I want to leave you with the challenge: You also have a role to play in preserving the truth of the gospel.

You have a role to play:

As you grow in the gospel,

As you do discipleship around the gospel,

As you stand firm, defending it in this confusing age,

As some of you may Go. On Mission.

Let's continue to seek God's grace so his gospel will be preserved.