

Trust the Gospel (Part 2) – Gal 2:1-10

Gal 2:1-10; We started this passage *last* week, and we’re in the middle of Paul’s testimony
Something he shares for one reason, and one reason alone – to bolster our trust in the
gospel; The good news of Jesus Christ; That’s the point of chapter 1:11-2:10

Trust the gospel

- It came from God (1:12)
- It comes with grace (1:15)
- It changes lives (1:23)
- It’s open to scrutiny (2:1)
- It was thoroughly vetted (2:1-2)

That’s what we’ve found so far, through 2:2

➤ So let’s pick it up back in v1 to get the flow of thought, and then go from there
[1] *Then after fourteen years* [after his conversion and first visit] *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.* [That’s what we covered last week; And then he says this]
[3] *But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.*

➤ The next reason we find here to trust the gospel, is that . . .

- It was rightfully applied (v3)

V3 – *But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek*; If he *had* been forced . . .

That would have been *wrongly* applying the gospel; Contrary to the Gospel

Let me see if I can explain; **4 Thoughts**

1. This is the first time **Paul identifies the “different gospel”**

The false teaching and distortion he mentions in chapter 1; That Gentile believers had to be circumcised in order to be saved; That’s the teaching he’s up in arms about

Implied, by Paul’s *statement* here in v3

That even Titus, a Gentile himself, a Greek – *was not forced to be circumcised*

Indicating, that some people were saying otherwise; That he *should* be circumcised

In fact, we know from Acts 15, that they were saying *everybody* should be circumcised

That was the issue

Which begs the question – Why? Why advocate that *males*, be circumcised of all things?

What does that have to do with anything? And the answer is this . . .

2. To the Jews, **circumcision equaled salvation**

Circumcision was the crux of the matter, b/c it was *the* defining factor under the OT

Law, to show that you were a child of God; That you were saved

It originated in the *covenant* God made with Abraham, all the way back in Gen 17; That every male had to be circumcised on the 8th day after birth

Signifying their entry *into*, and participation *with*, the people of God

So for 2000 years, Jewish males had been circumcised, to set them apart for the Lord;

To mark them as his own

➤ Not only that, but circumcision was elevated even *more* in the Jewish mindset, when a ruler named Antiochus IV (175-163BC), *banned* it in the 2nd century BC
And tried to put to *death* all the babies and mothers who practiced it
So that by the time of Christ, 170 years later, it was even *more* important; Even *more* a mark of identity and holiness
Tell people they can’t do something, and it becomes the be-all-end-all

To the point that some people thought the Messiah would *not* come, until the land had been purified of all the *uncircumcised*; It was a big deal
So of course they were going to say you still had to do it

3. But Paul and the other Apostles knew, that **such a mindset was contrary to the Gospel**

They knew that the Gospel did *away* with the Law; At least the particulars and consequences; And went on to write about it

Saying that the *New Covenant*, the new promise of life to the full and life forever through faith in Jesus – rendered the *Old Covenant*, the Law, obsolete

They knew that; They knew, that the Gospel, made the Law, no longer applicable

Like it says in **Heb 8:13** – *In speaking of a new covenant, he [God] makes the first one [the Old Covenant] obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*

Which means that *circumcision*, is out; B/c it’s part of the Law; Crystal clear

➤ But 20 years *before* that was written, it was still being argued*****

Not b/c it wasn’t true, or b/c the Apostles were making it up as they went along

But b/c some people were wrongly trying to hold on to the past, and impose it on the future

4. Thankfully however, **the truth prevailed**; Paul and the other Apostles knew better

They knew, that circumcision could not be retained as a requirement for salvation, b/c it would undermine the perfect work of *Jesus*

Who did it *all*; All the work; In life *and* death; *For* us; 100%; They knew that

And they knew, that the free gift of *salvation* he offers, comes only by grace through faith; *Not* works; Not even acts of righteousness like circumcision

So the truth of the Gospel prevailed, and they rightfully *applied* it to Titus (**Summary**)

Instead of forcing *him* to be circumcised, like they were, they let it go

Instead of forcing him to *keep* the Law, they set him free

They got it right then, so that we would trust it, and get it right now

➤ But now, it has less to do with circumcision, which is a matter of personal preference, and more to do with *other* things we “require” for salvation
Other works that undermine the work of Christ
Adding to the requirements for salvation, wasn’t just a 1st century issue, it’s a current issue

Like for instance, when people say you have to be *baptized* to be saved; Infant *or* adult
It’s Jesus *plus* baptism that equals salvation they say; Or in other camps it’s Jesus *plus* *tongues*; Or Jesus *plus* good works; Or Jesus *plus* the *Mass*; Or Confirmation . . .
Or Communion; We may not add circumcision, but we sure do add *other* things

And yet Paul's point remains

“That nothing [in the words of one commentator], absolutely nothing, can be mingled with Christ as a ground of our acceptance with God” (George, NAC Galatians, 153)
Our hope is built on nothing less, and nothing more, than Jesus' blood and righteousness; His righteousness

It's something Paul and the Apostles got right, and rightfully applied – so we could *trust* it, and do the same; Trust the Gospel b/c it was rightfully applied

2nd, trust the gospel b/c . . .

- **It was successfully defended (v4-5)**

V4-5; Having just said that Titus wasn't forced to be circumcised, he says . . .

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.

Paul and Barnabas successfully defended the Gospel; They *did not yield in submission* it says in v5; They didn't agree; They didn't fold
And as a result, we not only *have* the Gospel, but we can trust it all the more
That much is apparent

What's *not* so apparent, is the *massive opposition* they were up against; In defending it
It would have been something like defending the Declaration of Independence in British courts, with British judges; And hearing that they ruled in our favor
Never would have happened; But if it had, we would trust it all the more; That it's right, and good, and necessary

Bottom line? It was successfully defended **against all odds**

For 2000 years God's people had been living this way, and they weren't about to give it up; They were zealous about it
To the point of bringing *false brothers* in, counterfeit believers, who tried to undermine the discussion, and derail the conclusion

- And they did so, by arguing that Paul and Titus' freedom in Christ, was wrong
Thereby trying to *enslave* them once again, to the constraints/consequences of the *Law*
That's what Paul means when he says in v4, that the false brothers *slipped in to spy out our freedom* . . . *that they might bring us into slavery*
They were trying to make them live under the *control* of the *Law*

Which thankfully, Paul and the other apostles, had no tolerance for
B/c once again, they already knew, what they later wrote
That while we are held to the *principles* of the *Law*, for godly *living*, we're not held to the *particulars* – the crossing of the t's and dotting of the i's
Or to say it another way – we're held to the heart of God *behind* the *Law*, his desires for our good and his glory, but not the *penalties* of the *Law*
The penalties and particulars are obsolete

IOW they successfully defended the Gospel . . .

Because we're held to the principles of the OT Law, not the particulars/consequences
The particulars and penalties are obsolete

- For instance, we continue to observe a *Sabbath* every week, b/c the heart of God in *giving* that law, or the principle *behind* the law, is that we do best with a day rest
And God deserves a day dedicated to *him*, each week
Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy he said (Ex 20)

But we *don't* have to observe it on the particular day of *Saturday* – the *original* Sabbath in the Old Testament; B/c **Romans 14:5** says . . .

One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

And then goes on to say that whatever day you *do* observe, do so to honor the Lord; The heart of the *Law* in the first place

Which the *early* church did, on the *first* day of the week – Sunday; The day of Jesus' resurrection; Showing beyond a shadow of doubt . . .
That we're held to the principles, but not the particulars; The particulars are obsolete

- As are, the *penalties*, the consequences*****

Failure to keep the Sabbath, or *any* of the 613 laws found in the Old Testament, does not subject us to the consequences; The *punishments* associated with those laws
B/c *Jesus* already suffered those; On the cross; In our place
He already *paid* the price for our sins in that respect; So that *now we are released from the law* Paul says in Rom 7
No longer serving *under the old written code, but in the new life of the Spirit* (Rom 7:6)

That's what freedom in Christ, in v4, and freedom from slavery, means
We're held to the *principles*, but not the particulars; The *heart*, but not the penalties
The heart of *God*, as conveyed by the *Spirit* of God, within us
So the Gospel was successfully defended – **So we could be free in Christ**

- Unfortunately, that truth has been so misunderstood, it's turned into a free pass to live however you want; When nothing could be further from the truth
The freedom for which Christ set us free, the same freedom that Paul preached and Titus celebrated, is not the kind of privatized individualism . . .
That says you can do whatever you want, or believe whatever you please

Rather, it's a God-*glorifying* liberty, that's free of the constraints and consequences of the *Law*, and full of life in the Spirit; To live *his* way; It's freedom to live *God's* way

- So here are these *false brothers*, who have been *brought in* – by whom, we don't know – *so that they might bring us* [Paul said] *into slavery* (**Summary**)
And notice Paul's response in v5 – *to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.*

Paul and Barnabas weren't about to give in; There weren't about to buckle
Not only would that have involved a betrayal of their message and ministry, but a betrayal of the very *essence* of the Good News

They stood firm; And successfully defended the gospel in the face of direct opposition, so that it would be faithfully preserved for *us*; And confidently trusted, *by* us
Trust the Gospel, b/c it was successfully defended

And then last, b/c . . .

- **It was confirmed by others (v6-10)**

V6 – *And from those who seemed to be influential* [still referring to the apostles with whom he met; men who were influential b/c of their leadership roles] . . .

Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. That's the *last* part of the verse

And in the middle he adds this – (*what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality*)

IOW just b/c they occupied a leadership role, didn't mean they had a lock on gospel truth; God makes it available to everyone

But just in case you misunderstand, this isn't Paul with an attitude

This is Paul reiterating his point, that he didn't receive his gospel from men, but from God (1:11); The *other* apostles, influential as they were, added nothing Paul already *had* the gospel, and he already *understood* the gospel; Fully so They *added nothing*

➤ [7] *On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised* [referring to Gentiles; non-Jews], *just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised [Jews]* [8] (*for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles*)..

When they saw that; When they recognized that Paul's message and ministry *came* from God and was *blessed* by God, just like Peter's . . .

And that his gospel wasn't a *different* gospel than theirs – just proclaimed to different *people*; When they recognized that . . .

[9] *and when James [v9] and Cephas [another name for Peter] and John, who seemed to be pillars* [key leaders in the church; without whom it wouldn't have stood; just like a building won't stand without *it's* pillars] . . .

[When they] *perceived the grace that was given to me* [Paul said; Referring to the favor, and calling, and hand of God on his life] . . .

[When they perceived that,] *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.*
[Especially so, b/c they were *in* Jerusalem, to deliver a *gift* to the poor]

➤ The point is this: Paul, and the gospel he preached, was confirmed by others And not just *any* others – like Joe-Schmoes off the street, or close friends, or family members; But apostles; And **the main apostles** at that We can trust the Gospel, b/c it was confirmed by the *main* apostles

Like *James*, the half-brother of Jesus; Who *pastored* the church in Jerusalem, and had already written a letter to the church at *large*, 5 years before A letter that now bears his *name* in the New Testament *He* confirmed the gospel Paul was preaching

And so did *Peter*, one of Christ's closest *disciples*; Who not only served as the source of *Mark's* gospel 5 years *after* this, but wrote his own letters 10 years after that

And then there was *John*, the “beloved disciple;” Who Jesus spoke to on the cross And took Mary, the mother of Jesus, into his home And wrote an account of Christ's *life* 40 years later – the *Gospel* of John And penned the epistles bearing his name about the same time (1,2,3 John) And then the book of Revelation a few years after that

It wasn't just *anybody* who confirmed the gospel Paul preached, but the *pillars* of the *church*; Then *and* now

➤ And they did so, **with the right hand of fellowship** They confirmed the gospel with a proverbial handshake; Whether actual, metaphorical, or both – we don't know

What we *do* know, based on the context, is that it was a gesture of confirmation and inclusion

Confirmation, that the *gospel* Paul was preaching was spot on And *inclusion*, in the partnership to fulfill the Great Commission

The other apostles gave Paul and Barnabas *the right hand of fellowship*, so that together, they could proclaim the gospel to the whole *world*; Jew and Gentile alike Of which we are the beneficiaries It was a gesture of confirmation and inclusion

Which is why we do it now, when new *members* join our church It's a way to confirm their walk with Christ, and say, “You're in” And a way to seal the deal of our partnership, to do more together than we ever could alone (**Summary**)

➤ Far from a vacuum, Paul operated in community A community that thoroughly *vetted* him, and thoroughly vetted his message A community with the credentials to do so Confirming what they saw and heard, so that we can do the same So that we can see and hear the gospel today, and trust it, for our *lives*

Prayer – Lord, thank you for the gospel you embody; For good news that saves our soul and makes us whole; Find us trusting it more and more, to save, keep, sanctify, and bless, for all eternity

We worship you; In our hearts, and with our tithes now; For your glory and our joy