

Let The Truth Continue In You
Galatians 2:1-10

This Week's Prayer
Requests:

Memory Verse: Galatians 3:11, "But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Text: "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. 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. Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. 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. 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 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 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. They desire only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do."

Monday

How do you know
when a person's
profession of faith is
true?

There are many in the church who do not let the truth continue in them. They make a pretense of following Christ; they have a name that they are Christians; they would tell you that they love the Lord Jesus Christ and His word, and yet in reality they deny His truth. They do not acknowledge the authority of His word and cling to it in their hearts. They are angry over it; they deny it and they would fight against it, compromise it, make apologies for it, water it down and teach against it when given the opportunity. Our text today calls these people "false brethren." They are not true, but their profession of faith, their naming of themselves as brothers in Christ, is a lie. They are pseudo, fake, sham Christians.

What was the message of the Judaizers? Note Acts 15:1.

Now in Paul's day some of these people came to the Galatian churches after Paul had left, calling themselves Christians, and yet they started denying the Word saying, "Salvation is by grace, yes, and faith in Christ, yes, but it is by faith plus works. In order to be right with God, to be pleasing to Him and to be truly saved you have to add works to your faith. You must be circumcised, and keep the Jewish religious festivals. You must follow the law and perform all of the appropriate rituals. You must live a good life. And if you do these things then you will be fine and God will accept you." So it was not salvation by faith alone; it was not trust in Christ alone and His work; it was faith plus works; it was trusting in Christ plus your own human religious acts. This was a lie being taught by sham Christians, and it was a lie that if believed would damn a soul to hell.

What is a legalist?

You see the Judaizers, Beloved, they were legalists. It's important to get this term right in your head. A legalist **is not** someone that believes you should live a holy life. All Christians believe that. Paul believed it; Peter believed it; God believes it and commands it. No, but a legalist is someone who believes you must obey and perform certain religiously motivated acts, baptism for instance, communion, certain prayers and religious rites, speaking in tongues, **in order to be saved**. Faith isn't good enough. The work of Christ on the cross isn't sufficient to save. One must have faith plus works. That's a legalist, a person who denies the sufficiency of faith in Christ and believes that faith plus works is necessary for salvation.

What other forms of sham Christians will you find today?

Now these kind of false brethren are no strangers to today's church. In fact you will find sham Christians that attack not only the doctrine of salvation as the Judaizers did, but you will find those that attack every area of doctrine, because they deny the word of God. Another example, in 2003 in Minneapolis Minnesota the Episcopalian church bishops voted to install Gene Robinson as the first openly homosexual bishop in that church's history.

Now folks, Gene Robinson and the 62 of 107 Bishops that voted for him are sham Christians, because the Bible teaches that living and practicing that lifestyle is completely incompatible with the indwelling Holy Spirit who seals all believers. It is incompatible with the convicting, cleansing, and transforming power of the Spirit of God. It's not that a homosexual can't be saved. A homosexual can be saved, and I have seen it, but a homosexual cannot be saved and continue to habitually practice or approve the homosexual lifestyle. Why, because the Holy Spirit who indwells him or her will not allow it to continue. Such a

person may even stumble and fall back into this sin for a time in weakness, but through the conviction of the Spirit he will not continue.

What would you say to a person who claims to be a Christian, and yet is habitually practicing one of the “works of the flesh”?

This is the clear testimony of Scripture. For example, in Galatians 5:19 the Scripture says, “Now the **works of the flesh** are evident, which are adultery [unfaithfulness to your spouse], fornication [that’s sex outside of marriage, porneia refers to premarital sex, homosexuality, prostitution and other forms of illicit sex], uncleanness, lewdness, [those words refer to a lack of sexual restraint, addiction to and a practice of looking at pornography would be covered by those], idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that **those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God**. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s **have crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.” (Emphasis added).

What might you say to a person, who doesn’t personally practice a particular sinful lifestyle, but approves of such things in others? Note also Ps. 50:16-18 in your answer.

Get this Beloved. “Those who are Christ’s” are not legalists; meaning, they do not avoid the works of the flesh in order to be saved. That is not their motivation at all. But if they are saved, then they **will** put such things to death through the power of the Spirit out of love for Christ. Elsewhere the Bible says that **those who approve of such things** - the works of the flesh - in others are also not of God (Romans 1:32). Gene Robinson and the Bishops who voted for him are sham Christians according to the Scripture. And of course, it is impossible that they could actually believe what the Word says or take it as their authority, but they must deny the message of the Bible just as the Judaizers denied the message of Paul. Bishop Robert Duncan who spoke for the opposition to Gene Robinson’s appointment said this, “We are filled with sorrow and grief too deep for words. This body has denied the plain teaching of Scripture....May God have mercy on His church.”

As an aside, I had a friend who was a chaplain in the Navy. He got to preach to marines during their basic training. All the basic trainees would all come to chapel once a week to escape from the drill sergeants and the training environment. So he had the opportunity to preach to literally hundreds if not more every week. One Sunday he preached on everything the Bible says about homosexuality, which of course, they all greatly enjoyed. He concluded the message by saying that the Bible says that no practicing homosexual can enter into the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). This, he said, received a chorus of whoops, hollers, amens

and clapping from over a thousand marines in front of him. Then he said to them, after they calmed down, “Now, I want you to understand that everything I’ve just said to you also applies to heterosexuals, who consistently have premarital or extramarital sex. It also applies to those who approve of such behavior and think it’s alright. It applies to those who consistently enjoy looking at pornography; and, it applies to all those who engage in and practice immoral heterosexual behavior just as much as it applies to homosexuals.”

He said, when he was finished, that you could have heard a pin drop in the chapel, because those thousand marines suddenly realized they were just as guilty before God as any homosexual was. In fact, they were worse, because they were, themselves, full of hypocrisy because of their double standard.

So Paul was confronted by the false teaching of the Judaizers, who denied his authority and denied his message. Last week we saw how Paul demonstrated that his message and apostleship came directly from the Lord Jesus Christ and His revelation through the recounting of his miraculous conversion and his independent witness. But this raises and leaves open the question of whether or not Paul actually preached the same Gospel as the other apostles. After all, if he was in fact an independent witness as he claimed, are we sure that his message was really the same as the other apostles.

The Judaizers, you see, had claimed before in Antioch, according to Acts 15, that they had received their message from the twelve apostles in Jerusalem. And so to answer this possible question, Paul in Galatians 2:1-10 recounts the story of his trip to Jerusalem to deal with this issue. He tells the private side of the story in our text this week, whereas Acts 15 recounts the public counsel that took place. We will begin digging deeper into this passage tomorrow.

Tuesday

Paul tells the story of how he was forced to contend with the Judaizers in the past, so that the truth might continue in the Galatians. In telling this story, Paul reveals to us three facts about contending for the truth that it may continue in you personally and in your church family. The first one is this:

1. There is a real threat of false doctrine arising in the church (vv. 1-4).

Do you think that your church is vulnerable to false doctrine creeping into it? Why or why not?

Paul at this point in his life had been a Christian for seventeen years, fourteen in verse one plus the three from the last chapter. During that time he had only seen one Apostle Peter for a fifteen day period, fourteen years earlier. He was in Antioch the majority of that time, and it says in Acts 15:1-2, “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ Therefore when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.”

Do you think Satan sometimes attacks the church with false teachers? Consider 2 Cor. 11:13-15 in your answer. What do these verses tell us?

Paul describes these men in verse four of Galatians two as “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).” Brought in by whom? Brought in by the Pharisees, the Sanhedrin and the Priesthood, most likely. Brought in by Satan and his demons, definitely.

Now in order to make their version of the Gospel stick they had to discredit Paul. So, being liars they inevitably argue that Paul was a second-hander at best. He was not one of the original twelve apostles who were with Jesus during his life. Therefore, he had learned his gospel secondhand from the Jerusalem apostles and had adapted it in illegitimate ways. His authority was not binding, because it only came from man not God. The first two chapters of Galatians give Paul's powerful defense against these charges. But the question inevitably arises: Is there, then, a contradiction among the apostles themselves? Do we have men of equal authority preaching two different gospels? The Judaizers claimed to represent the apostles in Jerusalem, but their message did not square with Paul's. So even when the question of Paul's authority is settled, another serious and threatening question looms up: Is there disunity among the apostles? If one apostle preaches one gospel and another apostle preaches another gospel, the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20) is cracked and the whole edifice will eventually collapse.

So Paul says he went up again to Jerusalem “by revelation and communicated to them the Gospel, which he preached among the Gentiles.” Paul did not go up to Jerusalem because he had second thoughts about the Gospel message and wanted to make sure it was true. He's just been telling us that he had received it directly from the Lord in the previous chapter. There were no doubts on his part whatsoever. But

What lessons can we glean from these four verses in Galatians chapter 2 about handling false teaching the church?

he went up “by revelation”; that is, because God told him to handle the matter in this way.

After getting to Jerusalem, it says that he met privately with those of reputation, “lest by any means I might run, or had run in vain.” You say “What does he mean there?” What he means is this: he met with them privately before they publicly addressed the issue in Jerusalem, because he wanted to be sure that they were on the same page with him. If the other Apostles were going to be soft on the Judaizers, if they were going to compromise and tolerate their false version of the gospel, if they were going to be soft on legalism, then this would have been utter disaster for the churches and the Christian faith would have collapsed shortly after its birth. The apostles had to stand together on this issue of what is the true Gospel or all their work would have been in vain.

Indeed they did stand firm. After the dispute arose in the council, Acts 15:7 says Peter rose up and said to them, “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. [He’s talking about Cornelius and those associated with him in Caesarea]. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts **by faith**. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they?” (Emphasis added). Now those were Peter’s words. Salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. Then James wrote a letter to be delivered by Paul saying, “...we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’ – to whom we gave no such commandment” (Acts 15:24).

Now you’ll notice that Paul brought Titus with him, an outstanding Gentile believer and leader in the church, who was uncircumcised. He did so, because he is not playing games. His gospel has laid hold on real people. Titus is going to be Exhibit A of Paul's gospel preaching. Titus is a Greek and he is not circumcised according to Old Testament laws. Yet, he is a brother in Christ *by faith*. This is the freedom Paul stands for, and Titus is his best case. Will he be forced to be circumcised by the apostles in Jerusalem or won't he? There was no better way of forcing the real issue than to take along a real person.

So Paul had to take all of these steps because false doctrine arose in the church, brought in by false brethren, which was a real threat and danger to the people and to the gospel message.

Wednesday

What are some areas where a believer can yield to the conscience of others and what would be the motive for this?

There is a second fact about contending for the truth that we see in our text this week:

2. Believers must contend for gospel truth without yielding (v. 5).

Paul continues, “to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue in you.” Now, there are many things that you can yield in and in which you can freely submit yourself to the conscience of others, so that you can minister to them and not give offense or cause a stumbling block. Paul says to the Corinthians, for example, “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Cor. 8:13).

What are the areas where a believer simply cannot yield his or her conscience? Why?

In college, a group of us conducted services at a nursing home, and we discovered that one of the older women, who was a little confused, was literally terrified of the color red. So we decided that none of us would wear red clothing when we went to the nursing home, in order that we would still have an opportunity to minister to and share the love of Christ with this woman. There are many churches, Beloved, that fight and divide over things that are simply nonsense, like whether the piano should be placed on the right or left side of the auditorium, or whether the carpet should be replaced, or whether the building should be painted one color or another color, or whether the toilet paper should unroll from the top or the bottom in the bathrooms. That stuff is just horsey - ducky nonsense in comparison with matters of doctrine touching on the salvation of souls; and, it’s hardly worth talking about and wasting your breath let alone fighting over and threatening the unity of a congregation.

But as you can see from our text, there are some matters, doctrinal matters, especially those relating to the heart of the gospel, on which believers must be completely unyielding. Paul would not yield an inch or make even the slightest concession regarding the means of salvation to accommodate a weak or false Christian; and, the leaders of the church at Jerusalem were wholeheartedly in agreement with Him in this matter. What is very interesting to me, is that it is precisely these extremely important matters of eternal significance that people who are very

opinionated about the carpet color will refuse to talk about and are very willing to agree to disagree over. Why is that? There can only be one reason ...

Has there ever been a time when you were required to contend for the truth of the Gospel without yielding? What happened?

Was there ever a time when you were compelled by Scripture to submit to the conscience of others as Paul describes in Romans 14:14-15? What happened?

Thursday

When does love require confrontation?

Thinking about verses one to five a little longer. There are two further implications for us to draw out. First, the fact that Paul went up to Jerusalem by revelation and refused to yield submission for even an hour teaches us that Christ wants us to *confront* some doctrinal disagreements head on. If we are going to be a Biblical people we must sometimes be a confronting people. If we think someone is wrong, or if we think the ministry of the church might be in jeopardy, we must seek God for grace to go to the person and lay before them our position. Almost none of us does that naturally. It creates tense feelings and we would just as soon avoid it.

What hinders us from necessary confrontation?

But the desire for personal comfort and the fear of conflict which hinders our confronting one another in love, does not spring from faith in Christ. This desire and fear are not the fruit of the Spirit. They are products of the flesh. They are the kind of thing we experience when we do not look to Christ for resources of power beyond our selves. But Paul says in Galatians 5:24, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh - with its passions and desires."

Where do we draw strength when confrontation becomes necessary?

By putting our faith in Christ and drawing on the power of His Spirit we cease to be enslaved by the love of comfort and the fear of conflict. We experience a freedom to do what Paul did -- to confront disagreement head on. Whatever peace we maintain in our personal relationships or in the church by avoiding needed confrontation will be a superficial and spiritually unproductive peace, and will make us weak in the long run because it will mean that we are walking by the flesh and not by the Spirit. That's one implication of these verses. Christ wants us to confront such critical doctrinal disagreement head on.

Why is doctrinal unity important?

The second implication from these verses is that we ought to care about doctrinal unity, especially on points that are crucial. It ought to bother us that there is so much indifference in the church over matters of important doctrine. The disunity of God's people on important matters of faith should send us to prayer and the study of Scripture; but I fear that what it does is make us think disunity is harmless or even valuable.

How should respond to the absence of such unity in your church?

Very few people today stand up and praise the incredible unity and coherence of truth recorded in Scripture. The way that trickles down to us is that we simply take disunity and disagreement for granted. Relativism is equated with humility, indifference to error is equated with respect and tolerance for other persons. We are hard put to imagine any doctrine being clear and certain enough to die for. It seems to me that Paul's example here teaches us that it matters a lot whether Christians agree on crucial doctrines of our faith.

In fact, it is the difference between heaven and hell. Now, Beloved, if I am bound for hell, the absolute worst thing you can do for me is say, "Ah well, live and let live. After all to each his own." The most loving thing you can do is confront the error in my thinking and lead me to truth.

Friday

Thus far this week, we have seen that there is a real threat of false doctrine arising in the church and that believers must contend for Gospel truth truth without yielding. There is a third fact that is critical.

3. The ground of truth is the unified message of the apostles (vv. 6-10).

We see this in verses 6-10, where Paul completely debunks the lie of the Judaizers that he taught a different message than the one taught by the other leaders in the Jerusalem church.

Who is Paul's sarcasm in these verses directed against?

You probably noticed a hint of sarcasm here as Paul refers to the other Apostles as those who "seemed to be something" and "seemed to be pillars." His sarcasm, however, is not directed against the other apostles in Jerusalem; but, his sarcasm is directed against the Judaizers, who evidently referred to these men by these terms as a backhanded way of slapping Paul in the face. They must have said it something like this, "Well I know what Paul taught you when he founded this church; but, the pillars in Jerusalem, the ones of reputation, you know the ones who really are something, they say this..." And so Paul throws these terms back at them.

How did Paul rank in authority as an Apostle compared with the other Apostles?

His point, of course, is that all that he was and all that they were was by the gift of God's grace, verse 9. And even though he was called last of all to be an apostle, did not have the advantage of walking this earth with the Lord Jesus, and did not feel fit for this honor because he had persecuted the church, even so, by God's grace he was equal in his calling with all the other apostles. In 2 Cor. 11:5, he says, "For I consider that I am not at all inferior to the most eminent apostles." In fact in the very next passage of Galatians, Paul relates a time when he had to correct Peter. Now who could correct another apostle, but one of equal authority.

The key is at the end of verse 6. Look at it. He says, "they added nothing to me." There was no correction of doctrine. There was no revision of the message he preached. "You're doing good Paul, just remember the poor." Note also in verse 9 where it says, "they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship." What do you suppose is the significance of these words in the ancient near east?

So the representatives of Christ, the ones chosen to lay the foundation of the church and who gave us the Scripture through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, were completely unified in their message. That message is, in truth, the very word of God.

Beloved, if we don't have that, then we don't have anything. The Gene Robinsons and those who approve of them may be happy to reject the Apostle Paul when he speaks concerning homosexuality. But in doing so they lose all of Scripture.

Why? Because if you say that Paul was in error on that point, then he didn't speak as a true apostle of God, and the other apostle's who acknowledged his word and who gave him the right hand of fellowship, which in that day meant full partnership and a solemn vow of unity, and those same men, who called his letters Scripture as Peter did, well they must have been in error also. Now if they were in error, then we no longer can trust Matthew, and we can no longer trust Mark, given to us through Peter, and we can no longer trust Luke, affirmed for the church by Peter and Paul together, and we can no longer trust John. If we cannot trust John, then we can no longer rely on John 3:16 and the promise that whoever believes in Jesus Christ shall have eternal life. We can no longer trust the Roman's road either, and we can no longer trust a multitude of other precious passages. Because beloved, it all stands or falls together. If Paul was wrong about homosexuality, he cannot be trusted on the issue of salvation by grace through faith in Christ. All we have are the musings of men just like us; or far worse, men who were devils, bent on lying and deception. Our whole hope falls into the dust if the Gene Robinsons of this world are correct.

All hope dies. Why? Because beloved, I don't care what some vain and prideful universalist says. The simple obvious truth is that we are all sinners. We all know it. And, we all need grace. If the Bible isn't true, then there is no hope for any of us in any religion or other belief system in this whole world. Because none but biblical Christianity are in actual accord with real humanity, real experience and real life.

Praise God, though, the Apostles did not lie. They were true apostles who gave us the very word of God.

This week we have seen three critical facts in this text: there is a real danger of false doctrine arising in the church through false, sham Christians, that believers must contend for Gospel truth without yielding and that the ground of this truth is the unified message of the apostles. Paul said salvation is by grace, through faith, not of works lest any man should boast. Are you relying on yourself? If so give over such vain and empty thinking. Rely on Christ alone. Believe in Him. For that is faith that will not fail.