

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Gospel and the Poor</b> Galatians 2:1-10</p>
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Today we are talking about the gospel and the poor. Galatians is a book about the gospel of Jesus Christ. **What is the gospel?** In simplest terms, *it is the story of Jesus revealed in the Bible.* Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 (site). *We need to hear this gospel every day... Because our minds & hearts drift...*

One of my daughters was telling Kimberly about having bad dreams the other night. Kimberly told her that when she was a little girl, she would try to change the channel in her mind. She turned the channel to the one where she and Jesus were together and happy I heaven, running a playing in a field. Angela said, "What channel is that on?" **We need to keep our minds on the right channel.** The Galatians were considering the wrong channel. In chapter 3, Paul says that it was though they were under a spell. They were "bewitched." Why?

The message that sinners can be forgiven by grace through faith in Christ *alone* **has always come under attack.** False teachers were attacking the message and the messenger (Paul), distorting the true gospel and changed the channel on the Galatians. Paul is contending for the true Gospel here. "the truth of the gospel" (2:5) was at stake.

**Main Idea of the Text**

Paul and the other apostles were in **total agreement** on: (1) **the nature of the gospel**, and (2) **the need to care for the poor.**

In **chapter 1**, Paul described how his message came from Jesus not from any man. He explained how he received his message **independently** from the other apostles through revelation from Jesus. Because of this, he was no second-class apostle.

In chapter 2, Paul describes how even though he received his message independently from the other Jerusalem apostles his message was **identical** to theirs. There is only one gospel.

To prove that his message was identical to the other apostles, Paul stresses how he paid a visit to Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion.

At this meeting, Paul's gospel was endorsed and approved by them. And an important word is said about the poor in v 10.

### Main Point of the Sermon

**As missionaries, we must proclaim the true gospel faithfully, and aid the poor compassionately.**

### **Why Missionaries?**

I want you to notice *the missions* flavor here:

- the commission language ('go to the Gentles, v. 9);
- people groups language (*uncircumcised & circumcised*, v. 7);
- the very idea of an "apostle" An apostle meant, "One who is sent." In classical Greek it was actually used of a *naval expedition ... to send off on a long and arduous mission*.

It can be used in a particular sense for the original, not-to-be-repeated apostles. But it's also used in a general sense; we are all sent as missionaries (Jn 13:16, Phil. 2:25, 2 Cor. 8:23).

"Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." Spurgeon

We too are sent to (1) proclaim the true gospel faithfully; and (2) care for the poor compassionately.

**AS MISSIONARIES WE MUST PROCLAIM THE  
TRUE GOSPEL FAITHFULLY (1-9)**

### 4 Missionary principles at work here.

**#1: Preservation (1-5)** We must protect the purity of Gospel as we reach different cultures... reaching out w/out selling out.

#### **A. Jerusalem: A Historical Meeting (1-2)**

**v. 1a:** "After fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem"

**After 14 years Paul goes up to Jerusalem. He had only visited for 15 days up to this point. The 14 years probably refers to his**

time since his conversion. He had been in Arabia for three years (v. 17), and then in his home regions (Syria and Cilicia) since that time. (The visit to Jerusalem is probably parallel to the events described in Acts 11:25-30 with Paul's "famine visit" that he and Barnabas made to give relief to the poor).

**V. 1b:** "with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me"

**Barnabas**, a Jew, was with Paul when he originally evangelized the Galatian region. He was **Mr. Encouragement!** He was **voted most huggable in High School!** We know that early on Barnabas took Paul when Paul was rejected (**Acts 9**). He was incredibly generous, giving the proceeds of a sale of property that he made (**Acts 4**). He was the type of guy who loved grace. I love what's said in **Acts 11:23**, "When he saw the grace of God, he was glad." Thank God for Barnabas! He wasn't perfect (as you see next week).

**Titus** (a son to Paul – Ti 1:4), a Greek, is important here as we see in a moment.

**V. 2: Why did he go to Jerusalem?**

**2a:** "because of a revelation." Once again it was because of a revelation not because of any man-made reason. What this revelation was, we do not know, but the reference may be to Agabus' prophecy of a famine, as a result of which Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to give relief (**Acts 11:27-30**).

**2b:** "to set before them [the other apostles] ... the gospel that I proclaim to the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain." Paul wanted to confirm for practical reasons that he and the apostles were preaching the same gospel. He did not need their approval; for he already has stated that his message came from Jesus. He did not doubt the substance of his fourteen years of preaching. He wanted to make sure he was not running in vain for practical reasons, not theological reasons.

He needed their fellowship in order to execute his mission effectively. A division between his mission and the mother church would have been disastrous.

**It is no exaggeration to say that this was one of the most important meetings in the history of the world.** So they had a private meeting.<sup>1</sup> This is a good example for leaders: get together.

## **B. Titus: A Test Case (3) - Preservation**

This is the first of many references to circumcision in Galatians.

- Since the day of Abraham, this act had been a visible sign of belonging to the community of faith.
- In the past, if a Gentile wanted to become a Jew, he had to be circumcised.
- It was part of the ceremonial law (which included a number of laws), not the moral law (like the ten commandments) – intended to set the Jews apart culturally and illustrate that God was holy.

Then Paul comes along with his law free gospel and says: Jesus already met the requirements of the law so that they are not necessary for salvation. You don't have to become a Jew to be a Christian; you need only to believe.

The False teachers were saying that salvation was Jesus + circumcision.

“Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:2)

**So Paul has Titus with him. What a great test case! Remember, Titus was a Greek. So, the argument from the false teachers was that to be a Christian you needed to be circumcised. So Paul says, “What about this guy?”**

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<sup>1</sup>Not a public meeting like in Acts 15. This is one reason why I take the South Galatia theory and the early date. This private meeting happened before Acts 15. Another pointer that this is not Acts 15 is that the outcome of the Jerusalem council is not mentioned in Galatians. See George, Schreiner, and Stott.

It's a great move. He says, "I have a flesh and blood example here." Was Titus a Christian? Uh, yes. He has a book of the Bible named after him! If you get a book named after you, then you are probably a Christian. Just saying. He later goes and pastors in Crete.

What was the answer? "No, Titus does not need to be circumcised." (Titus must have loved Paul. If I had been Titus, I would have asked if we could send someone else or a letter!).

This was revolutionary. Keller says, "Paul's opponents were saying, "Not all Jewish persons are Christians, but all Christians must also be Jewish." Paul was saying that the gospel is for every culture."

If you're new to IDC, you might think it strange to talk about this subject. It doesn't seem to be a matter of great debate today. You are right, but it is all through Galatians, so we will deal with it. **But it is relevant**, for this reason: people still want to mix ritual and rule keeping with the free gospel of grace.

This matter is wonderfully summarized in Galatians **6:15**, "what counts is a new creation!" Salvation is about inward change not external rituals.

### **What about Timothy? - Adaptation**

It is true that Timothy was circumcised (Acts 16:3) but not to be saved. He did it to minister in the synagogues.

It'd be like me being asked to wear a Yamaka. If they asked me to come and talk about why I believe Jesus is the Messiah, but I have to wear a Yamaka, I'm happy to do it. I actually like it. It keeps my head warm. Or, if you go in some countries, the pastor sits down to teach. In some places, with their legs crossed sitting down. They may hurt me but I'm glad to do it!

**The issue is that that we will adapt to culture, so long as we 1) don't sin, and 2) so long as the message is not changed.**

**Titus** ministered mainly to **Greeks**; **Timothy** went with Paul into the **synagogues**. Because circumcision isn't a sin issue for Paul, he says, sure do it – not to be saved but so we can minister. *He didn't tell Titus to be like the Cretans who were "evil beasts, lazy gluttons, and liars" – that would be sin.*

"I've become all things to all people that by all means, I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel."

(1 Cor 9:22b-23)- just so long as I don't sin (1 Cor 9:27)

### **C. False Brothers: Changing the Message (4-5)**

In every age, there are those who do not like the gospel of grace. Here they are again in Galatians.

"False brothers" slip into the meeting. A lot is unknowable here. Apparently, while the meeting was going on (or later?), some false brothers slipped into the meeting, as he says, to "spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they may bring us into slavery." They were like undercover agents and conspirators who hated the gospel of free grace.

Paul says anyone who adds works of the law to the gospel of grace is *promoting slavery*.

**Verse 5:** Paul says that they "did not yield in submission even for a moment!" The truth of the gospel would not have been preserved if they had yielded to their demands for Titus to be circumcised.

Summary: Paul's ministry was *not* "in vain" for they all agreed that salvation was by grace alone through faith alone, not from works of the law. The gospel was preserved.

### **Application:**

- As a church, we must not add to the gospel. How? In Galatians, it was social and racial issues that were being added. For us, it is not **Jesus + a particular race. Jesus + country music; Jesus + Republican party; Jesus + not smoking. It is Jesus + nothing = everything.**

- As missionaries, it is absolutely essential that we get the gospel right. It is not enough to send missionaries. We must send them with the gospel. We work hard to communicate it, but we don't change it.

**Matthew 23:15**, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.”

Obviously, there are missionaries in other religions that are not preaching the gospel (Islam, Mormonism, etc). When I was in Australia, they thought I was a Mormon. When I was in Nigeria, I talked with people who said that the prosperity gospel had taken over their area.

The greatest need around the world is for the nations to be saturated with the pure gospel.

As missionaries, we have to adapt to culture at times while presenting the unchanging Gospel.

- Nigeria - African attire (and time)
- Learn language
- **Next week** you will meet some of our missionaries, and our great prayer is that the pure gospel would saturate those people in East Asia. And while preserving the message they will have to *adapt to the culture*.

## **#2: Stewardship. Deliver the True Gospel (6-7)**

**V. 6:** “those who seemed influential (what they are makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality). Paul respects the authority of leaders, but he doesn't idolize them. Leaders are respected but not venerated, honored but not above the gospel. When you see the risen Jesus, it puts your view of people in their proper perspective.

“those ... added nothing to me.” Paul's means that they did not correct him or add to his message, but rather acknowledged that he had been preaching the same message.

**V.7:** “they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised.”

**Street language interpretation: If you heard Peter preach, or James, or John, or Paul they would not be preaching a different gospel. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:11, “Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”**

**Application:**

- Like the apostles, we have been **“entrusted”** with the gospel, to not only preserve **but also to pass on, to our neighbors and to the nations.**

- **2 Cor 5:19** - "entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

A good steward takes what is given to him and presents it to the recipient in pristine condition.

**The Mona Lisa is probably the world’s most famous painting. It resides in a purpose-built, bullet-proof case in the Louvre. It is considered so precious that it has only been exhibited outside of the Louvre twice in the last century, once in D.C. in 63 and once in Tokyo in 74 (Jenson, *The Archer*). Can you imagine what would have happened to those responsible for delivering the painting would’ve decided that the Mona Lisa needed some additional artistic merit? Perhaps, a blue dress instead a black one; maybe some birds behind her; maybe a necklace – just brightening her up a little!**

No. No. No. Their job wasn’t to improve the painting, but to deliver it in the original condition.

As missionaries, our job is to deliver this message as we have received it in the same condition. It

It's not enough to simply preserve the Gospel,  
we must deliver it!

Show it off. Showcase the Gospel. Put it on display, and God  
will save.

**We may use different avenues to get it there. A friend of mine was speaking on the campus of Colorado, at a Christian meeting, and he was talking to the students about what they**



were *studying*. They were saying, “yeah, I’m studying biology. I want to be a biologist in Indonesia.” Another said, “I’m studying education. I want to teach school in China.”

### #3: **Empowerment** – Rely on God’s power (8)

Briefly notice how Paul describes God’s working through Peter and Paul, “for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked through me for mine to the Gentiles.”

These men were good missionaries because of God’s power in them. The next passage shows that they were not perfect men!

#### **Application:**

- Our hope is in God’s mighty power, not our cleverness.
- Luke 24. They received the best instruction in the history of the world, yet lacked one thing: Power.
- "God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:20)

*Preservation, Stewardship, Empowerment and...*

### #4: **Partnership** – Unite w/ others in Spreading the Gospel (9)

Finally, the Jerusalem leaders agree that “grace was given” to Paul so they give him the “right hand of fellowship.” (If anyone is allowed to serve God in any way, it is *because of his grace*).

The Jerusalem pillars recognized the unity that they shared in the gospel and that they were partners with Paul and Barnabas.

“that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.”

The Jerusalem apostles recognized that Paul and Barnabas had a special calling. They were to go into Gentile lands, with the others would go to the Jewish people. We should not make the distinction too rigidly, for there was overlap (Paul ministered to Jews). It is more of a distinction in emphasis.

So there is partnership here. Paul is partners with Barnabas and Titus in the Gentile mission, the Pillars in the Jewish mission. Together, they are on the same team taking the gospel to the nations.

#### **Application:**

- We have several partners at IDC. (J.D., Tyler, NAMB, IMB, Todd, Chip/Joel, Cardonas).

**AS MISSIONARIES, WE MUST AID THE POOR  
COMPASSIONATELY (2:10).**

This verse probably has to do with the background, as mentioned in Acts 11:27-30; that is, with the famine relief for the poor saints in Jerusalem. If this is indeed the situation, then Paul had already been taking up money for the poor.

Notice 4 Principles at work here:

**#1: Unity** – The Apostles agreed on the need to care for the poor, “They” "Poor"

The **poor** here refers to poor believers in Jerusalem primarily, but obviously Scripture teaches us to care for those in need who may not be believers.

**Galatians 6:10**, “Let us do good to everyone, and especially those who are of the household of faith.” We are to care for everyone (believer or not), and especially those in the family of faith. Paul even said that we should feed our enemies! (Rom. 12:20)

True, there is a distinction between the lazy who will not work and those who are really poor and in need (see Proverbs). We should love our neighbors as ourselves as they are in real need. I have in my mind the millions around the world who are in real need. Many times it includes children!

- Today, more than a billion people in the world live and die in desperate poverty (*Radical*, 108). They attempt to live on *less than a dollar a day*. Close to 2 billion try to live on less than two dollars. **That’s nearly half of the world struggling today to find food, water, and shelter.**
- Today **26,000 children will breath their last breath due to starvation and preventable disease** (*Radical*, 108).
- The U.N. Development Program estimates that the basic

health and nutrition needs of the world's poorest people could be met for an additional \$13 billion a year. Animal lovers in the United States and Europe spend more than that on pet food each year. (<http://www.bread.org/>).

**Not only did the apostles agree on the gospel, but they also agreed on the need care for the poor. Their letters reflect this:**

- **Peter: 1 Peter 4:9** (hospitality)
- **James: 2:14-17**
- **John: 1 John 3:16-18**
- **Paul: 2 Cor. 8-9**
- **Acts: 4:34**

**Another myth about care for the poor is that it minimizes the purpose of evangelism. This is a myth because in many places the poorest of the poor are the least evangelized people in the world. Many of them are orphans!**

**John Piper notes:** Half of the least developed countries are also the least evangelized countries. The other half have very few Christians. One study of poverty and spiritual need expressed this observation: The most dominant impression one gains from looking at the world in this way is that the poor are the lost and the lost are the poor. Whether one approaches the data from a desire to learn where the Good News needs to be heard, or a desire to find the poorest of the poor, the answer is the same.

**With that said, there are poor in our neighborhood, not just around the world.**

- We should be practicing “Good Samaritan mercy” caring for our neighbors as ourselves.
- We should practice Luke 14, “invite those who cannot repay you to dinner.”
- We should work hard to aid the poor holistically:
  - Step 1: **Relief** – emergency, stop the bleeding
  - Step 2: **Restore** – get them up and going
  - Step 3: **Development** – process of ongoing change, especially spiritually developing them (*When Helping Hurts*, 104)

What made the early church different? Their concern for people and the courageous witness.

*Who can you care for this week?*

**#2: Priority** – The Apostles placed care for the poor right after the purity of the Gospel!

**“Next to the proclamation of the Gospel it is the task of a good pastor to be mindful of the poor”** (Luther).

Think of all that could have been said. They could have talked about worship styles, polity, or buildings. They talk about the poor. Why? **Because it is so obvious in the Bible** (“There should be no poor among you, Deut. 15:4)! Consider Proverbs:

*Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and the needy.*

**Proverbs 31:8-9**

*She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy.*

**Proverbs 31:20**

*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.*

**Proverbs 3:27**

*Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.*

**Prov. 21:13**

**One of the marks of the church is care and involvement with the poor. That is how God designed the church.** Jonathan Edwards who is not what you would call a **“Liberal humanist** preached a sermon called **“A Christian’s duty to the poor.”** In it, he said, **“This duty is absolutely commanded, and much insisted on, in the Word of God. Where have we any command in the Bible laid down in stronger terms, and in a more**

**absolute urgent manner, than the command of giving to the poor?” You aren’t a liberal humanist if you care for the poor. You are simply a biblical Christian.**

It shouldn’t take a book called *Radical* to get us to care for the poor. It should be called “Normal,” because that’s what Christians should do.

In 252, a plague hit Carthage, people were leaving the city for the threat of contamination and losing everything. Cyprian, drew all the Christian leaders together in the middle of the town and said that if we are going to live like Jesus, then “I call you to fan out through this town to give to all according to their need” – even if they are not Christians. And they would not abandon the city in the midst of the plague. **Later**, one of the Roman Emperor Julian who hated Christianity and tried revive the pagan religion said, **“Their success lies in their charity to all. They take care of the poor not only their own.”**

I want to be that church – loving and living like Jesus. Many of the world’s poor are not only poor, they are powerless, and often abused. Who would you expect to come to your rescue? Shouldn’t be people who have been rescued?

**#3: Eagerness** – Paul said that this was not a burden, but something that he was thrilled to do!

Paul had a lot going on! He:

- Wrote 13 letters of the NT.
- Evangelized pagan cities
- Started churches
- Established and equipped leaders
- Got thrown in prison
- Dealt with ongoing problems in the churches
- And more...

Yet, Paul says he was “eager” to care for the poor. Are you eager? Are you too busy?

**Care for the poor was not a burden, but a blessing to Paul.**

**"Blessed is the one who considers the poor" (Prov 41:1)**

**This gets us to the final point. Why? What motivated this type of love?**

**#4: Motive** – The Apostles were motivated by their observance of the life of Jesus, and their understanding of the gospel itself.

**A. Compassion flows from one who understands the life and ministry of Jesus.**

**The apostles watched Jesus for three years. They observed his care for the poor personally, and they heard his teaching on this subject. They watched mercy ministry embodied in the person of Jesus.**

**Think about a few examples:**

- Matthew 25 (35-36) “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”
- Zachaeus gives half of his possessions to the poor, and Jesus says, “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:9). The evidence of salvation is practical, financial compassion for the poor.
- “When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13-14).
- Luke 4:18, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.”
- **And there are many more...**

**A. Compassion flows from one who has been changed by the gospel of grace.**

**We identify with the poor, as believers. We are not better than the poor. We are the poor. We are all in spiritual poverty.**

*Blessed are the poor in spirit for they shall see God. (Matt. 5:3)*

We don't come to Jesus **middle class in spirit**. We don't say, "I can do it, and grace makes up for what I can't do." The Gospel only comes to those who say, "I have no power and I must rely on the sheer grace of Jesus."

The Gospel says we are spiritually bankrupt and there's *one hope*: Jesus.

"Come, you who have NO Money..." (Isa 55). We have no money (no good works).

We Remember the poor because Jesus remembered us when we were spiritually bankrupt crying out like **the thief on the cross saying** "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

All of this is because Jesus became poor..

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you [!] by his poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9)

*Jesus Christ, the rich one, became poor - the suffering servant, born in a manger, homeless, rejected, cast off; he rode in to Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey; he held the Last Supper in a borrowed room, was placed in a borrowed tomb, and died naked without anything – only because he did this, can we be saved.*

**What motivates a love for the poor? Simple: An understanding of grace.** He became poor so we who were spiritually in poverty could become spiritually rich.

**Some think if you preach grace, people won't do anything.** Wrong. That's why you aren't God.

*When you get the gospel you will gladly pour out your life. If you are tight fisted, and not generous, it is evidence that you haven't worked the gospel down deep.*

**Tullian** - I can get 3 checks but not 300 out of guilt or fear.  
Only the gospel gets a lifetime of generosity of time, talent, and treasure.

**Tim Keller** says, “Only if you see that you have been saved graciously by someone who owes you the opposite will you go out into the world looking to help absolutely anyone in need.”

That spirit is conveyed in the words of this hymn:

*“Nothing in my hand I bring,  
simply to the cross I cling;  
naked, come to thee for dress;  
helpless look to thee for grace;  
foul, I to the fountain fly;  
wash me, Savior, or I die.”*

**We come to Christ the same way a kid in poverty from India comes for food: desperate.**

Once you begin to see that you identify with the poor, once you begin to get grace, you will be **Eager** to care for the poor.

**Praise God that Jesus was Eager to care for us when we were in spiritual poverty.**

**Let’s proclaim the true Gospel faithfully, and aid the poor compassionately.**