

Bold in Christ

Passage: Galatians 2:6–21 | Speaker: Steve Grothoff | Date: 260823

SUMMARY

Continuing the study of Galatians 2:6–21, Steve traces Paul's trip to Jerusalem to confirm his gospel with the apostles, then his public confrontation of Peter in Antioch after Peter withdrew from eating with Gentile believers under pressure from the circumcision party. Three points come out of the passage: guarding the purity of the gospel for the next generation, that each believer's way of sharing the gospel is unique but the Holy Spirit equips them for it, and that receiving Christ brings real freedom from sin's curse — a freedom a true believer never trades back for the law or for tradition.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It's up to this generation of believers to guard the purity of the gospel — neither adding requirements to it nor softening its hard truths — so it stays intact for the next generation.
- How and who you share the gospel with will look different for you than for anyone else, but the Holy Spirit equips you for whatever conversation you're in.
- Christ's death frees a believer from the curse of sin permanently; Paul confronted Peter precisely because Peter's actions suggested a believer could turn back to the law — a true believer never does.

Opening — The Gospel's Progression

All right, good morning, everybody.

This morning, we are going to kind of, we're going to kind of move through what we talked about a little bit last week, and we're going to talk about it a little bit more this week, but we're going to talk about a bunch of other stuff, too. So if you guys haven't listened to last week's message, there's going to be some of this that will be a little bit of a repeat, but some of it that will be all new, too. So what I want to focus on most this morning is that there is a progression to the gospel. One of the things that we're getting into in these first two chapters of Paul is Paul is telling them in this time, in these two

chapters, he's establishing that he had the gospel shared with him, and that these Galatian churches that he spoke to received the true gospel because that gospel was given to him by Jesus himself. And then here in chapter two, we're going to get into this gospel is confirmed by the apostles in Jerusalem. So he goes to the apostles and says, hey, so here's what I've been preaching.

Is this what you guys have been preaching? The gospel progression starts with us hearing the gospel. It moves forward into us believing the gospel. Then it moves into us wanting to learn more about the gospel and then knowing what we've learned and then living it out and then going out and sharing it. That's the progression of the gospel. That should be every person that you come in contact with. You should be at some state of that, either with yourself or with that person. One of my mentors gave me a card one time and on it, it just simply said the gospel came to you on its way to somebody else. That's what we should be living like. And that's what Paul is trying to explain here that I just want to share the gospel. That's what Paul's telling them. He's like, I just I just want to go share the gospel.

So our three points that I want us to talk about today is number one, it is up to the current generation of believers to ensure the purity of the gospel and that it remains intact for future generations.

Number two, the people you share the gospel with and how you share it will be unique to you. But the Holy Spirit will ensure that you are capable of doing so. And number three, there is freedom that comes from receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior. And a true believer will never turn back.

So I'm going to read this. If you guys would like to stand with me, we're going to read through chapter two and then and then we will get diving into it.

Scripture Reading: Galatians 2:1–21

I'm going to start. We read through the first five verses, but I'm going to start in verse one again. We're just going to read through the whole chapter. Then after 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas and also took Titus with me. And I went up by revelation and communicated with them the gospel, 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 Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of the 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. To whom we did not yield submission for even 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 the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, and the gospel of the circumcised was to Peter. For he who had 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 desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I was also eager to do.

Now, when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face because he was to be blamed. 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. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them, 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? We who were Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, 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 in faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law, no flesh can be justified. But, if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not. For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For through, for I, through the law, died to the law, that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who 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. I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.

Father, we thank you for your word. Father, we thank you for this, the grace that you have given to each and every one of us. Father, we thank you for the ability to, to put our faith in your Son. And Father, that, that, that, that is the, what gives us the salvation that we, the hope that we can have in you. So Father, just help us to understand your word. And Father, just help us as we go through this, to find something that is edifying to each and every one of us.

Now, Father, just be with us as we go through this. Father, let these be your words, not mine.

And we ask all these things through your Son's name. Amen.

Point 1: Guard the Purity of the Gospel

All right, so these first two chapters, why is Paul doing this? Why is Paul writing? Why does he, what, what is he saying? And then, and then really and truly, when he comes down here in verse chapter two, the first verses of chapter two, why is he writing these things? Why is he speaking to the apostles that are in Jerusalem? These false teachers were emerging around, adding requirements to Christianity, and then saying that this was a teaching coming from Jerusalem. So they were saying, well, the apostles told us to tell you guys this.

And then they were using this, they were discrediting what Paul was saying. Paul was coming to them and saying, no, that's not true. This is the gospel. Here is what, you don't need to do that. Here is what you should be doing. Here is what it takes to become a Christian. Here is the true gospel. And they were discrediting Paul because they were saying that he wasn't a true apostle. They're like, well, you don't even, you've never even met the apostles. You've never even talked to them. How do you know what the gospel is? You've never met them. And he says, well, Jesus gave me my message. I got my message directly from Jesus. Therefore, that makes me an apostle. So Paul, we see in these first verses or in these first chapters here, first we see Paul state the problem. He says, you guys are turning away from the truth that I preach to you guys because other people have come in and said things to you and you're believing them over me. Then Paul retails his testimony of his conversion. He details his obedience to what Christ called him to do. So he immediately goes to Arabia. He doesn't meet with the apostles. Then after three years of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, he finally goes and he meets up with Peter and James. Then he goes out and he preaches among the churches of Judea, which we see. He says he goes out into Syria and Cilicia, which are in the areas of Judea.

And it says that he was welcomed as a brother in Christ. They welcomed him. They said, we're glad you're here. We're, you know, we know who you used to be, but we're so glad that you're here now who you are.

Then chapter two, the context for today's passage. After 14 years, he comes back to Jerusalem. Upon hearing some of these false teachings, he brings Barnabas, who had been appointed to him by the apostles. And Titus, a Gentile man that he had preached to. And Titus said, you know what? I really like what you're doing. I want to follow you and became a disciple of Paul's and eventually became a preacher and went and did church, planted churches all over Crete and became a leader in the church. So we read there in verse two that he privately pulled the apostles aside. So he grabs the apostles, he pulls them aside and he says, hey, guys, I want to talk to you guys about what I've been hearing.

Here's what I've been preaching. Am I right? Are you right? Are we? Let's make sure we're on the same page here. Let's make sure that what we're talking about is the same. He doesn't do this in public. Look, he does this privately. He pulls them to the side and he says, hey, I just want to make

sure that what we're doing is right. And I want to make sure that what I'm doing is right. But I also want to encourage you guys to make sure that what you're doing is right.

He tells them about the false teachings that he's been hearing. But we see that he's preached this and he's the message that he's been preaching. Titus believed what he had to say so much so that he says that they tried to convince him. It says he was he was compelled to be circumcised. They were compelling him to do this. Like, hey, you need to become a Jew first. Titus is like, no, I don't. That's not the gospel because I know what the gospel is.

So why did Paul bring Barnabas Timothy or Titus with him?

Because he had this is the guy that you guys sent me. And this is the guy that I've preached the gospel to. I have the person that you gave me and the person that God gave me. And between the three of us, we know what the gospel is. This is the gospel we've been preaching. These guys are my witness to what my testimony or to what my ministry has been.

So that you guys don't think that I'm coming to you and making something up.

They were sharing the true gospel of Jesus, which requires nothing to be added or taken away from it. Now, we might think that that doesn't happen nowadays. Well, we don't have that problem. We don't add to or take away from what the gospel says. And boy, if that's there is that is the farthest thing from the truth, because we we do both directions. We take away from and add to the gospel as as as as Christians, that it happens so often. The downplaying and redefining what sin is has been extra pervasive in the last 50 years in the church. We see multiple denominations, not only ignoring what sexual immorality is or or even classifying it as a sin. But we also see that a lot here lately, they're not only endorsing it, but they're celebrating it. There are churches, even in our own communities, that are perfectly OK with saying we we we support homosexuality or we support transgender things. And. That couldn't be farther from the truth, guys, there there are many churches that refuse to share the whole truth of the Bible. There are many churches that are more concerned with filling seats with tithing people than they are with putting with filling heaven with saved souls. There are more people that would rather bring you in because they know that when you're here, you're paying money. And they know that if you're here, you aren't hearing the whole gospel, they're watering down what the gospel is. And they're giving just enough truth to make people feel like what they're doing when they're sitting there is church.

But their sermons are more like motivational speeches or podcast episodes. They're not.

Hitting on the hard points of what sin is. But then we have the other side of the issue. This is the thing that Paul was talking about. This is what he's facing in the Galatian church, adding stipulations and requirements to salvation. This wasn't just a problem then. This is a problem now. People tell you that

you aren't a true Christian because of how you dress, your hairstyle, the music you listen to, the job you have, the friends you have, tattoos on your skin. The things that you did in your past. I could go on and on. People, I've heard it for myself. I've heard it from friends of mine. I've heard it from people forever.

Many churches close themselves off from some of their greatest assets for the kingdom because they can't get back past the fact that not all Christians look and act the same. Sometimes we get stuck in tradition. I'm going to share a story with you guys that I heard when I joined the military. I'm going to clean it up a lot from what the military version of it is. It's the story of monkeys in a cage. I don't know if you guys might have heard this story before. There's five monkeys. They put them in a cage. There's a ladder. There's bananas at the top of the ladder. The first monkey goes and tries to go up the ladder and he gets electrocuted by the ladder and the rest of the monkeys get sprayed with water. They do this. They leave them in there for a while. They decide, you know what, we're not going to do this anymore. They take one of those monkeys out and they put a new monkey in.

Same thing happens second time around. This monkey is like, oh, look, bananas. I'm going to climb up there and I'm going to get them. He gets shocked. They all get sprayed with water. Do this again. They take one of those monkeys out. They put another one in. This time, they don't electrocute the ladder and they don't spray the monkeys. But what happens? The new monkey goes to try and climb up the ladder and all the rest of them grab him, throw him down and start beating him.

They're like, no, we can't do that. That's not OK. We can't. You can't. You can't do that. We aren't allowed to do that. Here's what's going to happen. And they do this and they keep doing this, taking the monkeys out and putting new monkeys in. Till eventually there's five monkeys in there that have no idea why they're beating each other up when one of them starts going towards the ladder. They got stuck in a tradition of here's what we've always done. Here's how we've always done it. And they don't even know why.

Churches get stuck in that. Trust me, I get it. I came out of a Catholic church. It's all tradition. But most of the people, you ask them, why do you do this or why do you believe this? They say, well, we've always done that.

Do you know why you believe what you believe or do you just believe it because somebody else told you to?

The problem is, is a lot of times we get stuck in things like that. And we get stuck in a place where we close ourselves off. The opposite should be true. We as Christians should be the most inviting, loving and gracious group of people in the world. But too often we see someone who's struggling in life, who's lost or searching for the truth, and we don't want to tell them about Jesus. We're like, I'm not going to talk to that person. I'd rather. Or maybe your judgment of them is, well, they're just not

ready. I just don't think they'd hear what I have to say. And we get in our own way of sharing the gospel with people. We downplay it. We talk ourselves out of wanting to go and share the gospel with somebody because we think that they're not ready for it. Or we think that that's not going to be the case. That I'm going to go say something to them and they're going to be hostile towards me. Well, you don't know until you go. Well, we need to be better about being inviting, about being loving, about being gracious towards people, meeting people where they are. Jesus met people where they were. Jesus went and called the disciples. They were all busy. They were all doing something. It's not like they were all sitting around waiting for somebody to show up and tell them what to do. They had life going on. They were doing things. And Jesus showed up and said, hey, I want you to come follow me.

How much better would we be at sharing the gospel if we just did it? Too often we don't because we think we put stipulations on it. We say, well, I can't go talk to this person about it because I don't know what I'm going to say. Well, the Bible clearly tells us that go share the gospel because the Holy Spirit is going to give you words. If you're going to go do it, if you're bold enough to go and you're going to be bold enough to go talk to somebody and share the gospel with them, guess what? The Holy Spirit is on your side. You, the words that you say to them and the way that they handle it, the way that they take it. If you are going and doing, that is all God asks of us for the most part. Go and do it. You can't go and make disciples of all nations if you're just sitting around looking at people and saying, well, I would go talk to them, but I just don't think they're ready. Or, well, I just, I don't know that that's the kind of person that I'd like to invite to my church. Or I don't know that that would be the kind of person that I would like to see, that I would like to be associated with. I have a men's group that I have been, not here recently, but that I led for three years of the biggest group of misfits ever. Remember, we're all different, we're all weird, we're all crazy, and we all have crazy pasts. But you know what? There's one thing that we all have in common that has brought us closer together than any other group of people, and people that I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that if I ever needed anything, I could call on them.

We all have Christ in our life. He is the center of our friendship. He is the reason why we are friends. And because of that, all these other bonds that we have have grown. I have some of the guys, one of my absolute best friends from that group is a guy that when I first met him, I was like, he and I are never going to get along. This guy's totally different than I am. I don't get it. Like, but you know what? He and I talk all the time. I talk with him probably once a week. We meet every couple weeks and just catch up with one another.

You would be surprised at the kind of people that you will bring into your life that will be the best people that you've ever had in your life because you shared the gospel with them.

Point 2: Sharing the Gospel Is Unique to You

Which takes us into our other point, our second point, and what we talked about a little bit more last week, so I'm not going to beleaguer it a lot. The people you share the gospel with and how you share it will be unique to you. But the Holy Spirit will ensure that you are capable. We all have different paths. We all have different likes. We all have different things that we, we all have preferences. If we were all the same, life would be boring.

The fact that we're not all the same is the greatest thing that God has ever done, in my opinion, for humanity, besides salvation, was making us unique. There is something awesome about each and every person not being the same, but being able to connect with one another because you have been through something that somebody else is going through concurrently. We talked last week about how sometimes that equipping is immediate and supernatural. Sometimes you go and you have decided that you're going to go. You feel called to go and talk to somebody and you're like, man, I don't have any clue what I'm going to say. I don't even know how I'm going to say it. I don't even know how I'm going to start. And you go.

And the very first thing that you say to them just connects with them. And in a way that you would have never, ever thought.

And never, ever underestimate the power of planting a seed with somebody. Never, ever underestimate that. Go and tell somebody about Jesus. And then one day, maybe they might completely ignore you. They might look at you and say, you're crazy. I don't believe in all that stuff. There may be a day that that person comes back to you when they have hit rock bottom and they say, you know what? What you said to me has kind of resonated a little bit. What you've said to me has been working on me a little bit.

Never, ever, ever underestimate the power of planting a seed. And then we talked last week about how sometimes that equipping comes from blood, sweat, and tears of our own past experiences and our own wisdom. But nonetheless, as we read there in verse 8, that effectiveness comes from God via the Holy Spirit. There in verse 8, he says, For he who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship of the circumcised has worked effectively for me towards the Gentiles. Peter is better equipped to talk to the Jewish people about everything. Paul, I, Paul, am more equipped and feel more called to go and share the gospel with the Gentiles.

We're not all going to be able to do the same things. We're not all going to be the same. And then you read there in verse 9 and 10, the others recognize this in Paul. They recognize this in him and they were willing and able.

They let him go and share the gospel with the Gentiles. They said, yeah, you've absolutely, you, what we've seen and what we've heard from you, we absolutely think you should be doing this among the Gentiles. They encouraged him, they encouraged one another, and they set off on their own directions to preach where they were the most effective.

But at the center of it all was sharing the gospel. And then it says there in verse 10, they also, they desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I was also eager to do.

If you know, if you are willing to go and share the gospel and you know that somebody else is more effective in a different place, let somebody else go somewhere else. Don't feel like you have to be the only person that's doing it. The apostles hadn't met Paul, but Peter and James met him one time, 14 years prior. That was the only experience that they had really, truly had personally with Paul.

And they met with him and they said, keep going. Keep doing what you're doing. You're doing great. Keep doing it.

Our third point, there is freedom that comes from receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior, and true believers will never turn back.

Point 3: Freedom in Christ

Paul recounts a time where he met with Peter in Antioch.

Antioch was considered essentially, for lack of better terms, the Gentile capital of Christianity. So much like Jerusalem was for the Jewish converts, Antioch was the place where most of the Gentiles met up. That was their place where they went out from.

It says that Peter came to visit. He sat down. They had a meal, multiple meals probably. Now, most of these places, when they would have meals like this, they would have two different sets of tables. They would have the Gentile tables, and they would have the kosher Jewish tables. So, what Paul is saying in this is, I was sitting over here with the Gentiles in the Gentile tables. We were eating pork chops, bacon. We were, you know, doing all the things that Jewish people were like, nope, we can't do that. They're over here doing this. Peter's over there just happy as can be being with them too until, sorry, until certain Jewish people came. People that they were like, that Peter's sitting there, and then the next night he's at the meal, and all the Jewish people that had come to visit were sitting over here with the Jewish people, and they said, and Peter is like, oh, well, I better go sit over there with them. And he starts following the same customs that he had followed before he became a Christian. And it says that not only did Peter go, but it says, and the rest of the Jews also went. And he says, even Barnabas.

And I think that was probably the point where Paul was like, that's enough. He's like, man, my own guy, the guy that's been following me around, he has decided to go sit over here. He's like, nope, we're going to, I'm going to go talk to him. So, what does he do?

He doesn't pull Peter aside. He approaches Peter, and he talks to Peter. It says that I approached him, I withstood him to his face.

And he says, 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? He says, if you've been doing this, you were just doing this, you were just sitting over here with me yesterday. We were having, you know, we had pork chops and all sorts of good things, and now you're wanting to sit over here and eat unleavened bread and everything with the Jews. Like, why, what, what happened? Why is this?

And in this spiel that he gives, it is wordy, and it is kind of hard to follow, but essentially what he's saying there from verses 15 to 19 is,

why are you turning back?

Why are you going back to the things that you know are insufficient? The law was not put in place. Christ came to get rid of the law. We don't longer have to follow the law. We know now as Christians that the law is insufficient. Why are you going back to it? Why are you thinking this is where you need to be? Why are you turning back to that? It just takes me back to what he says there in verse 4, where he says, they came in by stealth to spy out our liberty, our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage again. There is freedom.

There is absolute freedom in Christianity.

Now, that doesn't mean you're free to do whatever you want. That doesn't mean you're free. But what you are free from is you are free from the curse of sin. Christ died for your sins, verses 20 and 21. Christ died for your sins so that when you receive him into your heart, you turn away from the sin of earthly life. You die to your flesh, and you live out the rest of your life in service to Christ.

Your life in Christ is freedom from the curse of sin, but not necessarily from the temptation of sin. His death was for you. The only righteousness you have comes from the grace of God. That's what he says right there at the end. Do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. God came, or Jesus came. God gave his only son for you so that you don't have to worry about following the law anymore. Why are you still following the law, Peter?

And then as we get into verse 3, which we'll talk about next week, we're going to get into where that grace and freedom from the curse of sin comes from and what it means for us as believers.

We're going to start diving into a little bit deeper theology, but at the same time, we're going to keep it very easy to understand. Paul is difficult to understand sometimes as you read through his stuff. You read it and you're just like, I just read six verses and I don't know what any of it means. So I want to help us all unpack that. I want us to do that together so that we can understand what it is that Paul is telling us there.

Conclusion & Closing Prayer

In conclusion, our three points that we covered today, it's up to the current generation of believers to ensure the purity of the gospel remains intact for future generations. We need to share the whole truth of the gospel and not be scared of the parts that may offend others. We need to not shy away from the things, but we also need to not add to and add things and add stipulations and add our own ideas. If it's not directly coming from the word of God, we don't need to try and force it on anybody.

Number two,

the people you share the gospel with and how you share it will be unique to you. But the Holy Spirit ensures that we are capable.

We each have, like I said last week, we each have a unique sphere of influence. Each and every one of us will run into somebody different that everybody else in this church will not run into.

You will have a relationship with that person. You will have, you will build a relationship with somebody that nobody else is capable of building a relationship with in quite the same way. You may or may not be the only Christian influence that that person has in their life.

What are you going to do about that? What are you doing with it?

Number three, there is freedom that comes from receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior and true believers never turn back. We don't need to turn back. We don't need to go back to the things that we thought we knew. We don't need to go back to the things that we thought were going to save us. We need to just trust in Christ. And if we are in Christ, we are victorious over sin and death. Our faith in Christ's finished work on the cross provides us with the grace of God. We don't need the rules. We don't need all the regulations. We just need to be obedient to the commands of Christ. The commands of Christ were simple. We talked about them in Sunday school this morning. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And love your neighbor as yourself. Those are the two biggest things. If everything that you do in your life falls under those two things, then you've got most of that covered. His third command was go and share the gospel and make disciples of all nations.

If you love your neighbor, if you love somebody else, and if you love God, you're going to want them in heaven with you.

They all flow from one another. They're really and truly, if you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you're going to go out and share his word because you're going to want his creation, his image bearers to also be in heaven with you. We don't do it enough. I am guilty of it, and I know that we can all look back on a situation in our life, even in just in the last week where it's like, man, I fumbled that. I had an opportunity. I should have shared the gospel, and I didn't. But we need to do it, and we need to be better at it. And really, at the end of the day, it's just going to come down to do it because the Holy Spirit's going to guide you.

So let's pray.

Father, we thank you. We thank you for your word. Father, we thank you for your Holy Spirit. Father, we thank you for the truth of the gospel. We thank you for the sacrifice of your Son for us to just have that freedom from sin and have a joy and a hope for the future because we know, as your word says, that once we are in your hand, nothing can pluck us out of it. So, Father, I pray for anybody in here that hasn't turned to you. Father, anybody in here that hasn't received you into their heart. Because, Father, just the absolute power that we have when we have you. Father, the freedom, the joy, and the hope that we have when we have you. Because, Father, we live in a world that the more we look around, the more disturbing and the more just dismaying it is.

So, Father, be with us. Help us to go out. Help us to be the light in this world that is getting seemingly darker. By the day. Help us to be that light.

Help us to share your word. And, Father, just help us to go and share the love of who you are with everyone.

Father, we love you. Father, we love your word. Father, we love your Son and what he has done for us. And, Father, we ask all of these things in your Son's name.

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