

PM Galatians 2:1-10

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Preacher: Mr Thomson McKenzie

[0 : 0 0] tonight's service. First of all, just a few intimations. My name is Thompson McKenzie and I've had the pleasure of leading... Oh! Sorry about that. Sorry, my name is Thompson McKenzie. I'm glad to be leading you in worship this evening. Just a few intimations. So Wednesday night we have the prayer meeting and Bible study at 7pm in the lower hall and it will be led by William Kenyon. Next Lord's Day, next Sunday, there will be services at 11am and 6pm and that will be led by the Reverend Robert Dale. It's been good to be back with you for these two services and I thank Robert and Jane for their hospitality this afternoon. Let's start our worship this evening with Psalm 32 and we're going to listen to verses 7 to 11 from Sing Psalms. It starts, You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security. You keep me safe in troubled days. You circle me with joyful praise when you have set me free. God is our refuge and our protection and in Christ we have a life of freedom. So let's listen to

Psalm 32, Psalm 32, verses 7 to 11. Thank you. You are my hiding place, O Lord, my true security. You keep me safe in troubled days. You keep me safe in troubled days. You circle me with joyful praise when you have set me free. I will end strong to buy my word and guide me to the Lord.

you in my way. My counsel I will give to you. My counsel I will give to you. My all I will keep your path in you. And watch you day by day.

To not be like the horse or mule which cannot understand. They must be curbed and kept in check.

[3 : 2 7] And watch you day by day. I will turn their neck to go where you command. The wicked's wolves will much increase. But those who trust them all, His covenant will be.

And mercy will surround. You, Christ, let your joy of mind. And praise the Lord your God.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, Lord, we thank you. Lord, we thank you that once more we can meet and come before you in communal worship.

Even if we're unable to sing praise the Lord your name and have limited fellowship amongst ourselves. We give you the chance just to be meeting together and formally worship to you.

We give you the chance just to be meeting together and we thank you for your prayer. We give you thanks for this congregation in Dumfries. Thanking you for their support that they can offer to each other and to lift each other up in times of difficulty.

[5 : 0 5] We pray that they may be a witness for you and for your gospel in this town. That in their daily actions they will be a witness to your good news of salvation.

We pray for your wider church, Lord, that people will see a unity in the gospel we preach. That our faith in Jesus Christ as our saviour is always to the fore.

We pray for the divisions within our church that there may not be a barrier to people from hearing your message. Help us examine ourselves and our role in witnessing for you in our daily lives.

Make us aware and repent of our sins which cause us to be far from you. We need not face the penalty of our sins of death and separation from you.

That in accepting Christ as our saviour our sins will be forgiven. That they will not be remembered. Christ your son paid the price of our sins on the cross.

[6 : 1 7] Let us endeavour each day to become more Christ-like in our lives. And our thoughts and our interactions with each other. That those around us will see the changes that you bring to our lives.

In the quietness of our hearts we bring before you those we know still requiring your saving grace. Lord, you hear our silent prayers for these people we have mentioned.

And these prayers that we bring to you through your son Jesus Christ. We ask that he goes with us in the weeks ahead. These things we ask through your son and our saviour.

Amen. The reading tonight is taken from Galatians. It's from Galatians 2 verses 1 to 10.
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[7 : 39] Galatians 2. Then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them, though privately before those who seemed influential, the gospel that I proclaimed among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

But even Titus who was with me was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 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 may bring us into slavery.

To them we did not yield in submission, even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who seemed to be influential, what they were makes no difference to me.

God sees no partiality. Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised, for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised, worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles.

And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

[9 : 27] Only they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. Thanks be to God for the reading of his holy word, and to his name be the praise and the glory forever. Amen.

I'm going to have another piece of music from Psalm 100, in verses 1 to 8, and again from Sing Psalms. Another chance just to contemplate on God's word, and our endeavours to lead a distinctly different life in Christ.

So, Psalm 101 from Sing Psalms. A mercy and of justice, O Lord, I'll sing to Thee.

In the brightness and wisdom shall my Thee adore be.

O when in loving kindness will thou do me come near, I'll walk within my dwelling with heart and life sincere.

[10 : 58] Thee adore be reminded, Thee adore be. Thee adore be. Thee ro baptism will thy suffer Si' cara for advice, defer me for my eyes to fear.

Another o'er Oh, Lord, I'll go ! Seen to Thee! Thee adore be. I hate unfaibldoing ! doing it shall not leave to me the man who stars his sword shall from my presence go and nothing that is either will I consent to know I'll cut him off and slanders his neighbors secretly the proud heart of us to offer for him whose looks are high my life shall see the faithful that will be well with me the man whose heart is perfect my minister shall be the man of works deceitful deceitful within my house shall dwell nor in my sight shall tarry the man who lies the town he swore to to follow him i judge and will the hope of mercy and men continue with our teaching tonight from galatians 2 verses 1 to 10 we have paul paul and his teachings continue to come under attack first it was not he was not a real apostle if you remember in the beginning of chapter 1 and paul asserted his divine calling to the task secondly they said that his gospel was inadequate it was okay and as far as it went but it wasn't enough to believe in christ was a good start but the false teachers insisted that he had admitted to teach the requirements to follow

Jewish rights and customs paul reiterates it was not only enough but it was the only gospel salvation came by the grace of god and faith in christ as saviour alone it had been revealed divinely by christ to him thirdly the false teacher said this morning that he got his message second hand that he had got his message from Jerusalem he was only peddling somebody else's message and if the message had come from Jerusalem the false teachers would claim they were the ones to know the real story that came from Jerusalem paul responded by telling them how he had withdrawn for three years to learn from god and quietness it was three years before he visited jerusalem and then for only fifteen days and only meeting with two of the apostles so now the false teachers attack him by turning their arguments on its head they cry out that he is a loner and he has nothing to do with the Jerusalem church and its message paul is preaching his own message poor paul can't do right for doing wrong paul was an educated man had held authority as a pharisee so surely knew a little about how people worked and if he was going to create a story to encourage people to follow he wouldn't pick the gospel message to preach in the first century AD think how that gospel message would have sounded if it was a message from paul if it was a message without the accompaniment

of God's grace and of the Holy Spirit that moves us imagine Paul saying come hear the story of a great man whom you should give everything up for and follow he was born in Bethlehem in a stable and his parents had to become refugees fleeing to protect him from being killed as a child after a time his family they turned to their home in Nazareth and he grew up to be a carpenter like his father ok so far there's always time for the rags to riches part he's only coming into adulthood only one snag seldom happens in this society that people go from rags to riches but in first century AD it just did not happen so around thirty years of age he goes around the country calling for people to follow him a number of people do and he talks to large crowds 5,000 plus but he tells them things like the meek will inherit the earth imagine first century Palestine when your life experience and history of your nation is one of captivity or being conquered by warlike nations he tells rich people to sell everything and come follow him but he has no home no bed and no pillow to lay his head on rich folk decide not to follow after three years he has been such a thorn in the side of the authorities he is arrested and his friends deny knowing him and they disappear after his trial he is convicted and sentenced to death although an innocent man not to worry though the crowds will save him the people who turn out to cheer him in his entry to

[18:22] Jerusalem will save him when at the annual holiday they can free a prisoner but they call for a terrorist to be freed and that he should be crucified so he is taken to be crucified until death and for good measure he is first whipped and humiliated he is buried and on the third day his tomb is found empty not the story an educated man would use to encourage men to follow him no great military victories no liberation of his suffering nation no land well for position for his supporters no worldly gain but a heck of a lot to lose the opposite story of what a worldly man would be looking to follow an unlikely story to make up to better one's lot particularly if as a

Pharisee you're already part of the establishment of course Paul did not make up his message Paul's story is about God's grace the free and unmerited favour of God and about the saving power of Christ but without God's grace and the Holy Spirit to enlighten us this may well be how the gospel appears to sinful man in this chapter Paul continues his testimony some 14 years from his first visit to Jerusalem he's accompanied by Barnabas and Titus but what was his motivation for returning in verse 2 we're told that Paul has a revelation to return and possibly for reassurance Paul in need of reassurance he was a self-assured Pharisee and in Christ he appeared to have all the assurance he required in

Jesus' promises initially it may look like Paul was concerned about the message he preached or possibly his methods and so wished to meet with other apostles to get confirmation that he was doing things correctly this is not supported by a reading this evening first Paul went in response to revelation from God remember Paul was an apostle he had direct access to God he had received the gospel from a visible risen Christ remember in Acts 9 he first speaks with Christ on the road to Damascus if getting a revelation from God Paul would not go and get the authorization for his message from human beings secondly from a human perspective if he was uncertain about the message he was preaching why wait 14 years before seeking guidance and thirdly

Paul says in chapter 1 verse 8 but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preach to you let him be accursed so Paul had no doubt about the substance of the message he preached but he was concerned possibly about the fruitfulness of his preaching in verse 2 he mentions running his race in vain Paul's concern was not that the Jerusalem church did not share his gospel message but they may not be true to it and stand against the false teachings he was encountering in Galatia so Paul preached the gospel of Christ was for people of all nations and all cultures and folk are saved by faith alone and of the false teachers that claim that not all Jews need to be Christians but all

Christians must be Jewish and follow their rights and rituals if the Jerusalem apostles had backed Paul or simply not taking sides against this latter view the church would have been split in its infancy both sides would have questioned each other's salvation with the danger of Christianity being just another sect of Judaism that's why Paul said in verse 4 that the freedom we have in Christ was under threat and therefore the very truth of the gospel had to be preserved in verse 5 it sounds that he is in a physical struggle he says to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you it seems sensible to take support if he was going to such an important meeting but was it wise to take

[23:35] Titus an uncircumcised Greek convert to Christianity or as some might suggest was Paul being provocative and rubbing the face of the false teachers it may have been provocative but I

agree with Tim Keller it was crucial the false teachers would have insisted that to be saved Titus had to trust in Christ and live according to Jewish rituals so in Titus Paul confronts the other apostles with a live concrete test case this meeting was not going to be an abstract theological discussion by God's grace the apostles in Jerusalem rose to the occasion they backed Paul in not declaring that Titus should be circumcised the apostles agreed that it is faith in Christ alone not any other performance of ritual acts that is necessary for salvation the countless regulations for cleanliness in the laws of Moses were designed to show us how impossible it was to make ourselves perfectly acceptable before a holy God it showed the need for salvation through Christ alone but false teachers clung to the regulations to teach we could make ourselves pure and more acceptable to God and the number of times the

New Testament talks about this error of teaching it shows how people tried to lead people away from following Christ two brief examples are seen in Hebrews 9 9 and 10 and Galatians 2 but it is only in Christ that we become holy and blameless and above all reproach in verse 4 Paul draws a stark contrast between the two sides the false teachers wish to make us slaves preventing the enjoyment of the freedom we have in Christ the biblical gospel gives freedom false teachings offering to earn their salvation lead people into slavery and death but I can hear the non-believers question how do we have freedom if obedecent to God's teachings how can we be free and yet follow what someone else tells us one the gospel gives us cultural freedom moralistic religions press its members to adapt very specific rules and regulations for dress or eating or daily behaviours if you're to depend on obeying rules when you don't want them to be ambiguous or wooly you want your rules to be specific doable and clear you want to know exactly what it is what is in and what is out of bounds you don't want demanding or unending directives like Christ gives in Mark and in

Matthew love thy neighbour as thyself which sets high bars and endless implications the person seeking their own salvation to adherence to the laws wants don't drink alcohol don't eat this type of food don't make the stis of that group these rules do eventually foot and foot infiltrate our cultural lives second the gospel leads to emotional freedom the gospel provides freedom culturally and emotionally so from this meeting in Jerusalem we see a unity of the church today it is often easier especially on the west coast of Scotland to be caught up in denominational divisions so what does church unity look like first it means accepting everyone who is in Jesus

Christ verse 6 Paul sees no difference in who he is speaking and states God is impartial regardless of culture and ethnic background we have more important things in common with a gospel believer in the Himalayas than we do with a white Scottish non-believer living in your street the person may drive a similar car we can have kids going to the same schools even belonging to the same sports clubs but they have a different world view if you believe your relationship with God is based in sustaining moral behaviour your excuse me a moment excuse me can we just go back a wee bit I've mixed up the pages I thought it was the right as I was reading it that's why I paused second the gospel leads to emotional freedom if you believe your relationship with God is based in sustaining moral behaviour you're on an endless treadmill of guilt and insecurity if constantly watching were P's and Q's making sure you don't stand in the cracks in the pavement laws take on a life and importance of their own and you become bound up in legalism Paul's letters and Christ's teachings do not free us or our predecessors from the moral imperatives of God's teachings such as the Ten Commandments Christians are not free to lie steal or commit adultery in Christ we're trying to walk more closely to his teachings and his example but are free from it by means of our means to salvation we obey not from fear and security of earning our own salvation but we obey out of gratitude because the sinners we were saved by God's grace through our faith in

[30 : 19] Jesus Christ is our redeemer so unless your obedience of God's law is out of gratitude for your salvation you're in slavery the gospel provides freedom culturally and emotionally so as we say in this meeting in Jerusalem we see a unity of the church today it's often easier especially on the west coast of Scotland to be caught up in denominational divisions so what does church unity look like first it means accepting everyone who is in Christ in verse 6 Paul sees no difference in who he is speaking in state God is impartial regardless of cultural or ethnic background we have more things in common with a gospel believer in the hymn it lays than we do with a white Scottish non-believer living in your street the person may drive a similar car we can have the kids going to the same schools or even belong to the same sports clubs but they have a different world view

Christian unity takes no account of cultural differences and is never dependent on cultural similarities but we share a common world view Christ is our saviour all of man requires God's forgiveness and we have a responsibility to assist in the spread of the gospel and just as Titus was not forced to be circumcised so we must not insist in additions to the gospel beliefs some would teach we must believe in Christ and be baptised to be saved others that we must belong to their church to be saved many types of Christianity add their own distinctions such as abstinence from alcohol or speaking in tongues as ways we can be sure we are Christians they will say we are saved by faith alone but can only be sure we are real

Christians if we have these distinctions wrong the starting point is faith in Christ alone and the finishing point is in Christ alone there is no additions there is no additives yes I keep going back to the point but so does Paul and so does Christ secondly Paul recognises the church is diverse and has different callings in verse 7 Paul writes they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised Peter and Paul were preaching the same gospel and recognising there were different ways to go about it to different audiences it is important we can adapt the presentation of the gospel to different people while preserving its essence this is important implications for mission if we have failed to adapt the presentation of the gospel message at all to the interests of people or if we over adapt it and lose its essence we fail to persuade and win people into its joy and freedom how may we fail to preserve the message today one by adopting the gospel of modern world by removing offensive elements like miracles moral behaviour or same sex or issues in same sex marriage we can only come to God through Christ we can equally go too far in the other direction and fail to adapt many are so worried to their music organisation or jargon that they are not willing to adapt to incorporate the tastes and sensibilities of others regardless of whether we under adapt or over adapt we lose the gospel if we raise traditions to the place of being non negotiable we create a system of legalism seeing real

Christians always do things this way adding to the teachings of God we distort his gospel a third view of unity in this passage is to remember the poor verse 10 final verse says only they asked us to remember the poor the very thing I was eager to do there could be two reasons why the poor were so important in this letter a particular reason in relation to the meeting in Jerusalem was that the Judean church were much poorer than the new churches of Asia we see the support offered by the Gentile churches in Romans 15 and in 1st and 2nd Corinthians a more general reason was that the poor are constant in the Bible Jesus proves that he is the Christ to join the Baptist in Matthew 11 by healing bodies and preaching to the poor we are saved by faith alone but as we are sanctified we should become more Christ like in our daily lives this story does not end with our conversion we should be more

Christ like in our daily lives Christ's example was for spiritual and the physical care of the poor and the outcast we are to go beyond the simple care of those within our cozy circle in Matthew 5 43 to 48 Jesus teaches you have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy but I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust for if you love those who love you what reward do you have do not even the tax collectors do the same and if you greet only your brothers what more are you doing than others do not even the Gentiles do the same you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect if we keep ourselves within a closed group where is a witness to [37 : 17] God's glory are we not just the same as the Jews and unbelievers in Matthew 25 God will judge whether or not we are justifying faith by looking at our service to the poor the refugee the sick and the prisoner again in Matthew's gospel verse 25 verses 31 to 40 we read when the son of man comes in his glory and all the angels with him then he will sit on his glorious throne beside him will be gathered all the nations and he will separate people one from another as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats and he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on the left then the king will say to those on the right come you who are blessed by my father inherit the kingdom and prepare for you from the foundation of the world for 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 then the righteous will answer him saying Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you drink and when did we see you a stranger and welcome you or naked and clothe you and when did you see you when did we see you sick and prison and visit you and the king will answer him

truly I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me

Christ lived ate and associated with the lowest classes of society and the bible demands we emulate his example and our faith should show itself through deeds James writes that faith without works is dead while reminding us that our salvation is in Christ alone so the unity of the church is important and we demonstrate it in our daily lives however there must be also there will also be limits to unity yes the priority should be to preserve Christian unity and we should accept all who proclaim Christ but the whole gospel they preach must be biblical and glorify God and his teachings remember the whole need for Paul's visit to Jerusalem was because of false teachers who accepted Paul's teachings but they said it fell short of the full acts required salvation but Paul won the day there is nothing more required there is nothing needing added man cannot save himself by his own actions our salvation comes by God's unmerited blessings on us and by faith in Christ alone to finish the service this evening we're going to listen to another piece of music a hymn 10,000 reasons bless the Lord our God is rich in love he is slow to anger and he's always with us through even through death until our home and glory so let's listen to 10,000 reasons thank you bless the Lord oh my soul oh my soul worship his holy name sing like never before oh my soul I worship your holy name the sun comes up it's a new day dawning it's time to sing your song again whatever may pass and whatever lies before me let me be singing when the evening comes bless the Lord oh my soul oh my soul worship his holy name sing like never before oh my soul I worship your holy name you're rich in love and you're slow to anger your name is great and your heart is God for all your goodness

I will keep on singing 10,000 reasons for my heart to find bless the Lord oh my soul oh my soul worship his holy name sing like never before oh my soul I worship your holy name and on that day when my strength is failing the end draws near and my time has come still my soul will sing your praise and on that day 10,000 years and then forever bless the Lord oh my soul oh my soul worship his holy name sing like never oh my soul oh my soul

I worship your holy name bless the Lord oh my soul oh my soul worship his holy name sing like never before oh my soul oh my soul oh my soul I worship your holy name I worship your holy name I worship your holy name may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit go with us all amen