

Galatians 2:1-10

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Preacher: Matt Coburn

[0 : 00] Christians are always trying to add something to the gospel.

They elevate some aspects of Christianity to a place of supreme importance so that the good news becomes faith in Christ plus something else.

Usually what gets added to the gospel is something good in itself. Some particular experience of the Holy Spirit perhaps. Some special ministry, usually the ministry we're involved in.

Some methodology of having devotions, growing a church or raising a family. Some distinctive doctrine or style of worship.

Some political or social cause. Some way of doing or not doing what the world does. So writes Philip Ryken, former pastor of 10th Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia and now the president of Wheaton College in Illinois.

[1 : 19] What he says is true. We are always trying to add something to the gospel. You can see it throughout church history.

You can see it in the contemporary church today. And maybe if you're like me. You can see it in your own heart.

How quickly I want something. That I can do to be added to the gospel. So that I can be accepted by God.

On more than just what Christ has done alone. Is that true for you this morning?

And maybe more importantly, given our passage this morning, is it true for us? When we come together as a community, do the things that Ryken writes about resonate?

[2 : 20] Are there things that you, as you walk in the doors, think, I'll be acceptable if I have this right? Or if I do this right? I'm going to be welcomed when I do this.

Both by the community and by the God we claim to worship. Do you feel that this morning? It is, I think, a key question that we need to ask.

And it is connected to the key question that we've been asking ever since we've started our series in Galatians. So if you want to turn with me in the Bibles in front of you in the pews, it's page 972 to the book of Galatians.

As we're looking at this, I want you to think through where we've been so far. We're going to start chapter 2 today. Let's think through and recap what we've seen so far in Galatians.

Paul begins with this greeting and he says, Grace and peace to you. Because Jesus Christ has died for your sins. To deliver you from this present evil age.

[3 : 29] By the working, the sovereign working of God. What good news this gospel is. That grace and peace are available to us because of Jesus Christ.

And having given this greeting, he then jumps right into the occasion of his letter. I'm so fearful for you. I'm astonished for you. Because it seems you're considering turning away.

Turning away from this gospel of grace. Because false teachers have come in and said, It's not enough. It's not enough, the gospel of grace. You must add the law and circumcision.

Paul says, This will lead to destruction. And then, knowing that he is now pitting himself against these false teachers.

He begins a long biographical section that goes all the way through chapter 2 actually. Starting in verse 11 and 12. He states, The reason why I'm so confident in this is because the gospel that I preach to you, The gospel of grace, Is God's gospel.

[4 : 41] It didn't come from man. I didn't make it up. I didn't get it from the apostles. I didn't get it from anywhere else. But God appeared to me and showed me this. And so he spends his whole argument, The rest of chapter 1 is saying, My development and my ministry of the gospel was independent from any other human source.

It was God's revelation to me. In all this, Paul has been defending the one true gospel, That alone is from God and alone can save.

And having come to this point, We're in the middle of this biographical section. Paul then turns, And part of what he said at the end of chapter 1 is, I didn't go to Jerusalem. Okay, I did once, But it was a really short time.

And it wasn't a major conversation about the nature of the gospel. I didn't get it from them. And this seems to be in response to what we imagine would be What these false teachers and Galatians were saying.

That, well, yeah, Paul's a good guy and he's got a good gospel. But hey, we're good guys. And didn't Paul come from Jerusalem? Well, we come from Jerusalem too. They tried to put themselves on equal footing And to put their false gospel on equal footing with the true gospel.

[6 : 03] So Paul has said, No, no, no. My gospel came from God. And then we get to the beginning of chapter 2.

So read with me. 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 proclaim 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 might 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 are makes no difference to me.

[7 : 14] God shows 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.

Only they asked us to remember the poor, The very thing I was eager to do. Let's pray. Lord, we are thankful this morning For your word.

Lord, you say that it is a Sharper than a two-edged sword, Able to pierce to the very core Of our being. Lord, to lay bare truth and error, To bring life and light, Lord, where there is darkness and death.

God, we pray this morning That you would do Your gospel work In our hearts this morning. That, Lord, you would make yourself known Through this gospel.

[8 : 39] And, Lord, that you would transform our hearts. That we would love you, Lord, And know more of what it means To be in you Because of your gospel.

And we pray these things In Jesus' name. Amen. The central thought for our passage today is this Only the one true gospel of grace Can produce true fellowship For the one true church.

Let me say it again Only the one true gospel of grace Can produce true fellowship For God's one true church. Paul, having had this argument Through chapter one Then comes to chapter two And he begins by saying Then, after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem.

Now, you must be thinking Given what I had just said He had just spent this whole time In chapter one Distancing himself from Jerusalem At least in the sense of saying I didn't get my gospel from there.

So why did Paul go up to Jerusalem? Well, there are many answers to this But what I want you to see Is that at the very core of it The very center of Paul's story This part of his narrative From verses one through ten He wants to know That he is in unity with Let me rephrase that He wants to make sure That God's work In the world of the gospel Is unified.

[10 : 20] Gospel in Jerusalem The gospel in Antioch The gospel to the ends of the earth That Paul is taking That it is one He's going because He wants to make sure We're in this together We are partners in this We have fellowship In this gospel And in this gospel mission If you look at the flow Just quickly glancing down He starts out in verses one and two He says, I went up to Jerusalem

And in verse three He says, and there's this thing With Titus It was really important Because it indicated to me We were on the same page And then four and five He says, well But then there were these other guys Who came in And we're going to explore All these in a little bit more depth He said, these other guys came in And said, no, they shouldn't be But then six through ten Is this one extended sentence And the central verb in it Is in verse nine Look in verse nine John, Cephas, James

They extended the right hand of fellowship To Barnabas and me And what that meant was We are in this together We are in agreement Our gospel is the same And our gospel mission is the same And that's the flow of thought In this whole passage And not only does Paul want The Galatians to hear this So that he has confidence In their gospel But he wants us to hear it Because we too Lord willing Are a part of this Same movement of God In the world This same gospel believing church Separated by thousands of years Thousands of miles Untold number of cultural differences We too are called to be

One In the true gospel With this true gospel mission So what I want to do Is go back and work through this passage To explore today Two aspects of this gospel fellowship This gospel work And the first one is that The one true gospel Creates fellowship in the church Based on an identity In Christ alone And secondly The one true gospel Creates fellowship in the church Partnering together On a mission to reach The whole world Okay so that first dynamic Looking at verses One through five The one true gospel Creates fellowship in the church Based on an identity In Christ Look with me Verses one two So Paul has said I didn't get my gospel From them And it says After fourteen years We went up to Jerusalem Me and my partners in ministry Barnabas and Titus And they headed up to Jerusalem And again The question is why And he gives a couple of reasons here Beyond the Well not beyond I think we'll see that It's actually all one reason But here it says In verse two He says I went up because of a revelation Well what revelation was that?

Well if you turn with me To Acts chapter eleven Let me give you a sense Of what I think Clearly it is There's some interesting discussion About this And as a side If you are a student Over at Yale University And you take New Testament Introduction course This passage in Galatians Will be presented to you In the fifth lecture Of the course To help demonstrate to you Why the scriptures Cannot be a historically Reliable document And I simply want to expose it Because there are enough of you Related to Yale That this is an argument That people wonder about And I want you to know I listened to the lecture I sat down I looked at Galatians I looked at Acts And it took me about ten minutes Despite the professor's Protestation to the contrary It didn't take A brilliant intellect Because I don't know If I have one of those And it didn't take me Very long To simply look at The evidence Even the evidence That he put up

[14 : 43] On his chalkboard In his lecture To see how these actually Mer They actually Historically Resonate Pretty easily And if you have Questions about that Please come talk to me He argues that Because of Galatians And Acts You can't Treat the Bible As historically reliable I just think Gosh There are a lot of Presuppositions That shape his conclusion That I don't think Are necessary And I don't think Are helpful So that was an aside Acts 11 Starting in verse 27 Paul is ministering In the church In Antioch At this point And it says Now in these days Prophets came down From Jerusalem To Antioch And one of them Named Agabus Stood up And foretold By the spirit That there would be A great famine Over all the world And this took place In the days of Claudius So the disciples Determined Everyone according To his own ability To send relief To the brothers Living in Judea

And they did so Sending it To the elders By the hand Of Barnabas And Saul And when you put The timeline together It actually seems To me that this Is the clearest Understanding of what Paul could be Talking about I went up because Of a revelation A prophet named Agabus came and said There's going to be A great famine And us As the church In Antioch We thought Oh my goodness We need to care For our brothers In Jerusalem The Antioch church Which was primarily Gentiles Expressed a concern For the church In Jerusalem Which was almost Certainly mostly Jews And they said We need to care About our brothers And so that's why Paul went up He went up To take this offering To help the church In Jerusalem That was suffering And while he was there Then verse 2 He said

And I met with Those who are important The leaders of the church Because I wanted To make sure That we were not Running in vain I told them What gospel I was preaching Because I was so afraid That somehow There had been a rift Somehow there had been Something That has us Heading in

this.

And we need to stop and think, why is it so hard? Well, it's because we naturally gravitate towards the people who are like us. It reinforces our identity, our significance, by connecting with others who share the same life situation. And so the parents like to talk with the parents and the students like to talk to the students and the high school kids with the high school kids and the townies with the townies and the gownies with the gownies. And we just like people who are like us. It's really easy. But it's easy to undermine, to see how subtly that kind of social dynamic undermines the truth of the gospel and how easily it creates other standards. Jesus plus, do you have the right degree or education? Jesus plus, can we talk about the right things?

Jesus plus, do you wear the right clothes? Jesus plus, are you married? Are you single? Do you have a family? Whatever it is, we create all sorts of false gospels by the way that we act. But the true gospel says something different. Galatians 3.28 says, there is no Jew or Gentile. There is no slave or free. There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ. And for those who are in Christ and who have put their faith in this one true gospel, that becomes your most fundamental identity. And this lays the foundation for the true community.

So how does this live out? Let me just give you one very practical thing. At the end of this service, I will say, before the benediction, we're glad you're here. Welcome. Downstairs, there's a great opportunity for fellowship and coffee. I hope you take advantage to get to know some people around you.

What are you going to talk about? It's going to be really easy to talk about the Patriots and the Giants. It's going to be really easy to talk about your schooling, what's going on with your kids, your job, those sorts of things. And you know what?

[26 : 48] There's nothing wrong with talking about those things. But do you see how those kinds of conversations may end up excluding people with whom they don't care about the Patriots or the Giants, or they can't participate because they don't, their life situation or the things that they're concerned about are really different. What would it look like if our fellowship hour actively pursued connecting with one another about the gospel? How did you know come to know the Lord?

What has God been teaching you recently? Hey, can you pray for me? This is what I'm, what's going on in my life. And I want God and the gospel to be in the center of it.

I'm not very good at this. I'll just confess it. This isn't easy to do. But I think that it's right. And it's how we live out the calling of this passage, verses 1 through 5, that what we have in the one true gospel is a true fellowship that gives us a new identity. And I can look at someone that I have nothing earthly in common with, and I can look at them and say, because we are in Christ, we have everything that we need in common. So the one true gospel creates fellowship in the church based on an identity in Christ. And then in verses 6 through 10, the one true gospel motivates gospel partnership of the one true church to the whole world. As I mentioned before, verses 6 through 10 is actually in the original one really big sentence with lots of clauses and phrases hanging on the one main verse, or the one main verb in chapter 9. So the centerpiece of this is the outcome is Paul and Barnabas were extended by the apostles in Jerusalem, the right hand of fellowship. But let's see how he gets there. In verse 6 he says, let's look at it. And from those who seemed influential, and notice Paul's working this funny thing here, right, where he says, hey, they're not that important, right? I mean, God shows no partiality, but you know, they're the apostles, so I guess I ought to, I mean, he's playing this funny game, isn't he? And he says it twice. And I don't think he's being dismissive or disrespectful, but what he's trying to do is undermine, I think, argument that the false teachers were bringing in Galatia saying, well, the apostles in Jerusalem, that's where it's at. And Paul gets his derived from them, and we get ours derived from them, and so we have this equal standing. And Paul's just saying, hey, you know what? The one true gospel, it was revealed by God, and that's the authority that we go to. And those false apostles just test the gospel. Is it the same gospel or not? Don't consider them important because of their claim to have shared authority with us. That's not what he's getting at there. He's saying, these men, you know, they're used by God to lead the church, and so we want to know that we're together with them.

But God is no respecter of men. So he says, these men, they added nothing to me. And in the context of what we've been talking about so far, they didn't add anything to my gospel of free grace, that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, and by faith in this, you may have new life in Christ, justification before God, a standing in the community of God's people. You are acceptable to God and to God's people because of your faith in Christ and nothing else. They added nothing to

me.

And then it goes on in verse 7. It says, in fact, not only did they not add anything to me, but when they heard, when they looked at what we were doing, me and Barnabas, in verse 7, they said, they saw that I had been going to the uncircumcised, to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been going to the uncircumcised, to the Jewish community. And so Paul says, okay, we have the same gospel. And now in verse 7, it's saying, we have the same gospel mission.

[31 : 30] And then in verse 8, in a parenthetical statement, he says, for he who worked through Peter also worked through me. So it's the same gospel, the same gospel mission. It's the same God.

This is the unity. And all of this is in the framework of, we're taking this gospel to the ends of the earth, which is what God commanded us to do.

I go here, they go there, but we are together in this gospel mission. And then you see this reinforced in verse 9. They extended the right hand to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the Jews. And then verse 10, only this, will you remember the poor? I don't think this is a blanket statement. There's certainly a theme in scripture that God has a special care for the poor. But I don't think that here it is a blanket statement like that. Here, I think it's very specifically, he was concerned about the poor in the church in Jerusalem who were suffering during the famine. And so this whole passage ties itself together. Why did Paul go up? Because he wanted to make sure that there was unity in the church. And part of that was doctrinal. And part of that was fellowship. And part of that was mission.

And part of it was simply personal care. We love you, church of Jerusalem. We Gentiles. And we want to make sure that you know it by the way that we show it.

The sense of being in gospel mission together, this right hand of fellowship extended, in the midst of the recognizing that there are two very different people groups that God has called us to, Jew and Gentile. This is a pattern that we see today.

[33 : 40] That God has called our church to be going to the ends of the earth. All sorts of different cultures and people and languages and races and tongues. With the same gospel in a united gospel ministry.

What does this look like? Well, there are some cults out there that would say, well, we're going to produce the one message that you have to say. And then we're going to tell you to go say it exactly the same way in every culture and in every place.

That's not actually the way that we see it happening in the New Testament. Consider for, you can look at this later to, in depth to get the sense of this. But if you look at Acts 3, Peter is preaching to a predominantly Jewish community. And he refers to the history of the Old Testament and the God of the Old Testament and God's faithful work, covenant work with them.

And his holiness and his redemption and his patience with his people. Bringing them to a point of, this Jesus is the one that everything was pointing to.

He is the one savior that you've been waiting for, you Jews, for your whole lives. Therefore, repent and believe in Jesus. And then if you turn forward to Acts 17, you see Paul walking into Athens, a Greek city filled with pagan gods of many stripes. And he sees this one God that's labeled to an unknown God, which was there just to make sure that they didn't miss out one. They wanted, they were very sort of open-minded in Athens about that. Hey, where's the God? We may not know him, so we're going to worship him anyway. And Paul says, these people know nothing of the God of the Bible.

[35 : 38] So we can't start with the covenants in the history of the Old Testament. We need to start with the God who created the heavens and the earth does not live in temples built by human hands. And he goes on and he builds his case for who God is and how God relates to his creation and what it is that God has called his creation to respond to him to do. And you know where it ends?

And he has, he has sealed all of this, that God is not far off by raising a man from the dead, this Jesus Christ. Repent and believe therefore in Jesus Christ that you may be saved. Two sermons with totally different angles. Two approaches to reaching different cultures with different starting points.

But do you see the gospel is the same? Repent and believe.

One gospel, one gospel mission, one God. Reichen writes this, the evangelization of the world depends on this kind of cooperation in the church.

Rather than taking pride in our ministry, we should celebrate what God is doing through others. We can participate in different campus groups, for example, or belong to different church denominations.

[37 : 27] We can engage in various means of outreach. We can take diverse approaches to evangelism. We can allow space for different styles of music according to the cultural context. We not only allow for these differences, but rejoice in them, provided that we are all preaching the same gospel.

This qualification must be emphasized. Partnership in the gospel goals only so far as the gospel itself does, and no further, which is precisely why the apostles took the time to discuss exactly what they were preaching.

Friends, God has called Trinity Baptist Church to be in this city, to be this kind of a gospel church, a church that wants to reach the diversity of Prospect Street and Whaley Street, Fairhaven and Goatville, downtown and the Hill.

God has called us to reach this city with its diversity of cultures, literally people from all over the world.

And he calls us to hold out the one true gospel to all of them. We gather here on Sunday as a church to be reminded of the one true gospel.

[39 : 03] That's why we're preaching through the book of Galatians, so that we are sure that we have firmly in mind what the one true gospel is, and that we are not fuzzy, that we are not unclear, that we have not unwittingly or wittingly grabbed onto a gospel of Jesus plus something, but that we would hold forth the gospel of grace by itself.

We gather here to remind ourselves of that, and then we leave. And I know that some of you go into the dorms and the classrooms. Some of you go into the local schools and the local neighborhoods. Some of you are in the hospital. Some of you are in a nursery. Some of you are in a shelter. And in each of those places, God has called you to be a part of this one gospel mission.

Trinity is a crossroads church. We are not going to be the church for the up and outers or the down and outers. We're going to be a church for both. We're not going to be a church just for the university or just for the city.

We're going to be a church for both. And this is the unique opportunity that God has given us. We go from here to very different contexts, but our mission is the same.

[40 : 35] And my fear is that many of you leave here and go out into those mission fields feeling very much alone, lacking the sense of partnership that Paul and the apostles shared.

That you go out into your little mission field and you think, I am the only one here and you know what? My church is great on Sunday, but man, what happens to me on, or my church is great on Sunday, but what happens to me on Monday morning, it feels so different.

There is no connection. And so, again, there's much to be said, but my one application for you is going to be, again, in the fellowship hall downstairs.

As you talk to one another, what's it like for you to be a Christian in your life on Monday morning? What are the barriers to people hearing the gospel there?

What are the opportunities that you're seeing? How can I pray for you that you would be an ambassador for Christ in the places that you are?

[41 : 45] How can I pray for you, Colossians 4, 2 through 6, where Paul asks the Colossians to pray for him, that God would open a door for the gospel, that he would be bold and speak clearly as he has opportunity, that his speech would be seasoned with salt, that he would be wise in his interactions with people who aren't begging him, please tell me about Jesus, to help them see that even so, Jesus is the answer.

Jesus is their only hope. Jesus is the God who's called them to himself. The true gospel produces true gospel fellowship.

The true gospel produces true gospel mission. True gospel community. And you know what? It's hard. It's hard to stay on task.

But we have this hope. Philippians 3, Paul expresses his desire that he would press on to take hold of, do you guys know this verse?

That for which Christ Jesus has taken hold of me. What I've laid out before you this morning is a vision of what kind of work the true gospel can do in our church and through our church in the world as the gospel takes deep root in us.

[43 : 15] But you know what? The real fuel for that is not that we're going to go and do this all right. But it's that Christ Jesus has taken hold of us.

He reached out to us when we were enemies. He brought life to us when we were dead. He gave faith to me when I was a doubter and a skeptic.

As we have faith in Christ, He has made me His. He has made us His.

And it is on that basis that we can go forth from here. Knowing that He who took hold of us will continue this work in us as we press on to pursue Him.

Let us press on individually but even more let us press on as a community. A community of the one true gospel producing true fellowship.

[44 : 29] True identity, true mission in God's church. Let me pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord, we thank You that Your design for Your church is such a beautiful and surprising thing.

Lord, the things that You call us to are things we would never have come up with on our own. That Your gospel is a gospel for the whole world. That Your gospel is meant to bridge the barriers that so easily divide us.

Lord, we, Lord, have mercy on us for how little we understand and how little we embody this. But Lord, we thank You and praise You that You have, Lord, taken hold of us by Your gospel and by Your Spirit.

Lord, that You are building Your church. Lord, may we, may we, Lord, know the power of Your gospel in us. May we see You, Lord, building these things in us for Your glory.

In Jesus' name, Amen. We've been talking about the fellowship of the one true gospel and how much, how much more wonderful is it that we get to then celebrate communion together, come to the Lord's table this morning.

[46 : 08] Because what we do here is a communal action. We do this together in order to demonstrate that we are in this together.

We who have placed our faith in this one true gospel, we do this to remind ourselves of this gospel and to proclaim this gospel to the world.

as we, just to make sure we're clear, for you, if you're a visitor this morning and you don't know if you've really put your faith in this one true gospel, I would say to you, don't take this.

This is meant for the fellowship of those who place their faith in it. Instead, take this opportunity to consider Jesus Christ that he loved you and died for you and that maybe even this morning you might enter into the fellowship of the one true gospel by placing your faith in him.

So let it pass if you're here and you're unsure about where you stand and just a little bit about logistics and this is important this morning. The reason why we pass it out and do it together is because this is meant to be a community celebration.

[47 : 26] We could do it a different way. You could come up and get it and eat it on your own but we pass it around and ask you to hold it and then we do it together because it's meant to be a community expression of our remembering Jesus Christ.

If I can ask those who are serving to come up, I'm going to read from 1 Corinthians. the words of institution. For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the night he was betrayed took bread and when he had given thanks he broke it and said, this body, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. John, we pray for you.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.