

Galatians 2 - Our Pure Gospel.

Introduction - Will the Real Gospel Please Stand Out?

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Introduction - Will the Read Gospel Please Stand Out? We have been grappling with the defense of the gospel from the day we opened this book. We are now in Galatians 2. Notice the term here.

- In 2:2 Paul tells us that he has visited Jerusalem by revelation to declare *the gospel which he was preaching* among the Gentiles. He explained that there were those dogging him and infiltrating the church at Jerusalem who were pseudo brethren, adding the leaven of Jewish legalism into this liberating gospel.

- In 2:5 Paul underscored that they did not **give place** to these false teachers for so much as a hour. The truth of the gospel, was to *continue*.

Paul was not bringing a brand spanking new gospel to the church at Jerusalem. That is not why he came there. In fact, he helped both the Galatians and the Jerusalem church continue in the gospel which the apostles had already embraced.

- Then, we turn around and notice he records the result of this meeting in Jerusalem and he says in verses 7 through 9.

“But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.”

So, if the gospel is to be taken to both Jew and Gentile and is to be defended, this raises an honest and intelligent question. How many gospels are there, and exactly what is the real gospel? And we don't stop here with gospel descriptors. The Bible speaks of the gospel, the gospel of the kingdom of God, the gospel of Christ and of Jesus Christ, the gospel of God, Isaiah's glad tidings - hash tagged the gospel of peace by Paul, and so on and so forth. These multiple descriptions make it very easy to see why folks who wrest the scriptures to their own destruction, can draw folks away from their own steadfastness in this gospel. (2 Peter 3.) We must know exactly what the gospel is.

It has been said that in the beginning God separated the light from darkness and Satan has been trying to blend the two into gray ever since. Satan, not God, wants to confuse us on the gospel. He wants us to teach a leaky or muddied gospel. He wants loopholes in the gospel so that he can infuse his ultimate lie, the lie that man can ascend and become a god himself. So, let's sort things out.

I. The Gospel is Good News

First, it *is* about good news. Understand that the word gospel (as in when the New Testament refers to Isaiah) or as in its normal use in the New Testament simply means *good news*. The word in some circumstances can be a bit looser and can actually mean good *or* bad news. This occurs several times in the Old Testament, and quite possibly in Revelation 14:6, but this is only a small notation. In most cases, the word gospel means good tidings (mostly O.T.), or good news in its every day use. Please keep in mind that these good tidings are intended for all people! The angel who appeared to the shepherds announced:

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings (or the gospel) of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:10 and 11)

This New Covenant gospel is not for the Jews alone. It is for all people. It is for me. It is for you.

II. The Gospel is According to the Scriptures

When Paul declares the gospel to us in 1 Corinthians 15, he says:

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (1 Corinthians 15:3,4)

He then continues on reminding us how carefully this gospel was witnessed or testified to by those who saw the resurrected Christ, by the apostles, and by Paul himself. The point is, Paul is laying down a carefully worded legal statement. This is exactly what the gospel is.

Now, when Paul says that this good news is according to the scriptures, he means that it is *rooted* in the Bible, not just mentioned. We want to use the scriptures to define the word gospel and we will dig a little further into that momentarily.

1. When we define a word in scripture we start with ***its actual root***. We have done that. We have defined the gospel by the word itself. It means good news.

2. The second thing we do is define a word by ***its use*** in the Bible. This is because the Bible most always adds value to secular terms. Faith, hope, love, and grace all have deeper biblical meaning.

In the broader sense we pay attention to how a word is used in our Bible. That helps us define it properly. The apostles used the word gospel not only describe the core facts of the gospel, but it can describe *how* those facts were being proclaimed. For example, when Paul spoke of “my gospel,” he was not suggesting that he has his own special brand of gospel, he was talking about how *he* proclaimed the gospel, especially as Christ revealed it to him directly. And, yes, we see each of the apostles proclaim the gospel uniquely relative to their listeners. It was the *same* gospel, but it may be explained to the Ethiopian one way and to a Philippian jailer another way, and to the Jews of the dispersion, yet another way and to the gentiles of Galatia, still one more.

Because the gospel was being proclaimed differently doesn't change what it is. It is the *same* gospel ***as long as two core elements are present:*** First, *it must have the right content*, and secondly, *it*

must be appropriated properly. If either of these ingredients were missing it was not a pure gospel. One can believe the facts of the gospel and not be saved because they have not appropriated the gospel correctly. So, you see, our discussion is a very important one.

Let's talk about the content or facts of the gospel. The content of the gospel must include the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ *as they are taught according to the scriptures*. That is what 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 is all about. Make no mistake, every faithful instructor of the Word will be quick to show his listeners that these truths were taught long before Christ.

Paul goes on in this chapter to make it clear that these facts were also witnessed by the apostles. Now, there is no fudging on this. We have a thoroughly scriptural gospel which, by the way, begins to be taught in the very first book of the Bible. Paul's statement does presume we know just who Jesus Christ is, when, how, and why He died, and what it really means to be resurrected. Sometimes when I read gospel tracts I believe they prepackage the gospel so tightly that they assume the reader understands these facts. So, we must be careful. But let's stay on track.

So, how did the scriptures teach the gospel and how was it appropriated in the days before Paul? Remember, the gospel was not new. We are going to show you when and where the basic elements of the gospel show up in your Bible and, while the gospel is not mentioned by name in our first few exhibits, its identifiers are there. They will jump right out at us. We want to look at the building blocks of the gospel.

Scriptural Exhibit A. When it comes to learning the very first facts of the gospel we begin with Genesis 3:15: "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*" Now, admittedly, this is the gospel in embryonic form here. We have to look back on this scripture from the New Testament in order to understand that the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus Christ who was born of a virgin, would be the one to rise victorious over Satan. This seems unimportant at first, but the ancients took this very seriously. Even Eve, we believe, began looking immediately for this serpent destroyer. For today, however, we will set it aside, mentioning only that it is the piling underneath the whole gospel structure. We may simply say that a solution for sin and its bondage will be found in a person.

Scriptural Exhibit B. We follow up the question, where do we begin to see the actual elements of the gospel appear? Now, I'm certain that Adam and Even were saved (to use our terms), but the first one who is officially credited as a certified example of exercising *saving faith* was Abel, Adam's son. Learn three key words when speaking of Abel: **1.** Hebrews 11:4 says that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than his brother and that this act remains as a witness for us to this day. Among the primitive facts we learn about this gospel from Abel is that it is sacrifice based. From this point forward, biblical sacrifices are associated with substitution for sin. **2.** Now, the truth about sacrifice will be expanded later, but the Bible highlights Abel's *sacrifice* and Abel's witness of faith. Abel was a faith witness. **3.** Thirdly, now, you may have heard of a famous president who describes others with nicknames such as Sleepy Joe or Pocahontas. Well, the Lord Jesus gives Abel such a name, and it is a good one! Abel is going to be known as Righteous Abel! (Matthew 23:35.) When we think of Abel then we think sacrifice, righteousness, and faith witness.

Now, just to clarify, notice that this is a faith witness. That is no small point. In the Bible, faith is always based on the *facts* of a promise which God has given to us. As a result, faith is a witness to *facts*. Abel acted on the *facts* God had revealed by faith. The faith walker knows

that the promises of God are certifiable fact. This is *not* this foolish blind faith that the creation worshipers around you espouse. In our time, you and I now rest on a new promise, called the New Covenant which speaks better things than Abel's (Hebrews 12:24), but regardless, Abel, then Enoch, and then others stand in a long line of faith witnesses. We will never see the subject of faith removed from the gospel. When you accept Christ, you are believing God. You are believing a promise of God.

Our core ingredients, so far then, are sacrifice, righteousness, and faith (witness).

Scriptural Exhibit C. We cannot recount the whole story of Noah, but we do know he is a huge player in helping us understand the gospel as it begins to be revealed in the Old Testament. He was exhibiting these same gospel intrinsic traits. He exercised faith in the promise of God (Hebrews 11:) and his faith produced righteousness in his life, just as it did with Abel. We also know that his faith was sacrifice based (Genesis 8:20). Interestingly, the Bible actually calls Noah a *preacher* of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5). But please notice! One more gospel rich term pops up with our discussion of Noah. Genesis 6:8 tells us that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Now, grace is no small subject. It carries with it the idea of unmerited favor. Grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. Our Roman Catholic friends, and even some evangelicals such as Bill Gothard, teach that grace was given to Noah because he was righteous. That is not at all true. Men such as Abel, and Noah became righteous because they were graced by God. The Bible says,

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.(Ephesians 2:8-10)

We never want to mix that principle up! One can never earn grace.

Okay, so we are beginning to see the gospel take shape in the Old Testament. We are seeing the root principles demonstrated in Abel and Noah. These include the words sacrifice, righteousness, faith, and grace. They are all there. They all contribute to our understanding of the gospel.

Scriptural Exhibit D. Our most powerful Old Testament emphasis on the gospel in the Bible has to do, yes, with Abraham. While Hebrews lists a long line of faith walkers like Enoch, the *most famous faith walker of all* has to be Abraham. Abraham, who appeared long before the Jewish people and the law (Romans 4:13), serves as God's **prime legal exhibit** in the courtroom of righteousness. The Bible says that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3). Now, Abraham was not the first to exercise faith and he wasn't the first to be called righteous. He was, however, the first showcase as to how this faith and righteousness dynamic works. In court, we would use Abraham as a precedent. The Bible carries forward this argument in the New Testament. Abraham believed God and it was credited unto him as righteousness, (Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6, and James 2:23). If you would like a fancy word for this, we call this imputation. As believers, you and I know that Jesus Christ has imputed His righteousness to us (Philippians 3:9).

Now, Abraham was NOT the first, nor the last to believe God and have it credited unto him for righteousness. That would likely be Adam, or most certainly Abel. So, why does the Bible make such a big deal about Abraham? Well, the answer is that Abraham is going to be both a physical and spiritual father of many nations including the Jewish people and, yes gentiles as well. Now, the Jewish

people had buried this truth about their father. They wanted to believe that Paul was teaching a strange new doctrine when he talked about this matter of being justified by faith alone. And so Paul is effectively saying, no! You guys have ignored your natural and spiritual father! He is the Bible's legal witness which will one day condemn you.

So, here we have it. We have found all the main ingredients of the gospel (not just Christ's death and resurrection) building on each other throughout the Old Testament. These include the words sacrifice, righteousness, faith, and grace and the important truth of imputation - the fact that God gives us His righteousness when we believe what God says. Now, we have gone to a lot of work to make one point very clear.

There will always be only one gospel. We simply grow in our knowledge of it. We have already seen its core ingredients. This gospel, however will be administered among two people groups. Both of these groups descend from Abraham. Both have the gospel made available unto them, but both of them will take entirely unique paths. This makes it very important that we understand Abraham and his relationship to the gospel.

What makes Abraham significant is that God made a specific and unique *covenant* with him.

In this covenant, beginning with Genesis 12:1-3 we find that God reveals even more of Himself and His program. He promises Abraham a unique seed, a land, a throne, and blessing. This covenant, in turn form the basis for an additional covenant concerning the land, an additional covenant concerning the throne, and an additional covenant concerning the blessing. We call these the Land Covenant (or Palestinian Covenant), the Davidic Covenant, and the New Covenant. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10, 2 Samuel 7:12-16, and Jeremiah 31:31-34. Each of these covenants build on the Abrahamic covenant and each become more detailed about a specific aspect of its promises. *But here is the unique thing.* All of these additional covenants have yet to be fulfilled in their entirety. They will all be consummated by one and the same person, Abraham' seed and the seed of David who is known as the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:16, 2 Timothy 2:8). So, the covenant made to Abraham is then expanded into three more covenants. Abraham will ultimately see these promises God made to him personally, made to Christ personally, and fulfilled in Him (Galatians 3:16).

Now, Galatians condenses this whole discussion relative to the gospel in chapter 3:

*Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, **preached before the gospel unto Abraham**, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. Galatians 3:6-9*

We're building a case about the gospel. The gospel is ONE gospel. The gospel was preached to Abel. The gospel was preached by Noah. The gospel was preached to Abraham. Now, we have a final exhibit, and this one is not so pleasant. It deals with the negative side of the gospel. Remember, we told you that the gospel means good news, but it can also spell bad news:

Scriptural Exhibit E. The Warning. We want to turn to one more Old Testament reference which teaches us the *bad news* about the good news. We find the reference, once again, in the book of Hebrews. Speaking of the children of Israel and their failure to enter the promised land, Hebrews 4:1-3 warns:

*Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. 2 **For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them:** but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. 3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.* Hebrews 4:1-3

Now folks who think Israel did not have the gospel are just full of balogna! Here we learn that the same gospel which was preached “unto us” was preached “unto them.” And what was the good news from which Israel would walk away?

The good news was the *promise* of God, a promise in which they could rest. They would not enter the promised land on the basis of their own works, but rather, they were to rest on the basis of God’s promise. That’s all that was required. The bad news was, the promise did not benefit them because they did not appropriate it by faith.

The hardest lesson for man to learn is that he cannot rely on his own works either in salvation or in pleasing God. This is why God gave the Mosaic law to Israel. In a word, it was to show them that they couldn’t keep it in their own strength. No flesh has ever pleased God through obedience!

We have learned:

- We believe the gospel.
- We believe the same gospel preached to Abel, and to Abraham and it was the same gospel rejected almost universally by Israel in the wilderness.
- This gospel has always been based on the promises of God.
- This gospel **MUST** be appropriated by faith, and we need to fear, lest we do not rest in it.
- This gospel has always contained the same core facts, but those facts have been illuminated over time.

While God has progressively unveiled more about this gospel the gospel has not changed, ever. It is always there, right from the foundation of the world. It is the same gospel, but God has revealed far more truth about it than the ancients knew. Now, here’s what we know that the ancients did not fully see. Yes, it was there, way back in Genesis 3:15, but the full information had not been revealed. Paul has declared that this gospel **NOW** concerns Jesus Christ and includes specific facts about Christ. God has added more details about this gospel. Now, with greater knowledge comes greater responsibility.

III. The Gospel is Now in a Person and is Personal

We are not through with the Old Testament. We must go through one more level of understanding the gospel. We understand that it is sacrifice based, promised based and covenant based, righteousness based, grace based, and appropriated by faith. We understand that the gospel is good news for those who enter into its rest and very bad news for those who do not.

The Old Testament, however, teaches us one more thing about this gospel. We could bring many scriptures to the forefront, but let’s settle for one gospel passage tucked away in Isaiah 61. I am only quoting verse 1 and part of verse 2:

1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, (Isaiah 61:1,2a)

Remember, the term good tidings is the exact same term as gospel. Now compare this passage with Luke 4:18:

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:18-21)

What we encounter now is the starting point for the most significant, tectonic plate change in all of the Word of God and in all of history. Verse after verse in the New Testament is going to argue that this wonderful gospel was going to be provided, effected, and proclaimed by a Person. This Person is Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember, we began our study by talking about those good tidings of great joy - a Saviour was given to all mankind.

From this point on in your Bible, this gospel is NEVER EVER REFERRED TO except in the context of this wonderful Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was His death, burial, and resurrection which made all those earlier expressions of the gospel possible. When one receives the gospel, he is receiving a person. Now, listen, the gospel he receives is the gospel of grace, it is based on the cross of Christ, it is appropriated by faith, and it always imparts righteousness to us. We have taught you all of those things today. However, we must finish with a serious warning.

IV. The Gospel is Under Attack by False Brethren (The Fifth Column)

There is another gospel in your Bible, a wonderful gospel. It is called the gospel of the kingdom. It provided the good news that, if the Jewish people would repent and turn back to God they could have their Messiah and their coming kingdom. Now, that was good news, just like other times glad tidings were given for other reasons in the Old Testament. However, as good as that good news was, it was not the ONE GOSPEL about which we have been speaking. And how do we know that? There is no sacrifice associated with it, no cross. There is no grace associated with it, (it was works driven) and no justification by faith taught in it. God's righteousness is not reckoned unto men who receive it.

Now, the gospel of the kingdom was a good gospel. Like the law of Moses, it was given under the law to help show folks their sin and shut them up to the gospel of the grace of God. The gospel of the kingdom is a works based gospel. There's no cross in it, no blood sacrifice, no grace, no imputed righteousness ever associated with the gospel of the kingdom. That's why the Lord Jesus said what He said to Nicodemus. This is not just about repentance. One must be born again. He must be come a new creation in Christ Jesus, if he is ever going to enter that coming Kingdom - the kingdom which our Messiah has both promised and offered to the Jewish people.

We might picture the gospel of the kingdom as cleaning solution. We might picture the gospel as pure water. We make a terrible error when we blend them. We create a toxic gospel. Here's the tragedy:

A. I want to issue a small warning about the Bible Project and its use of this word gospel. They practice theology by etymology, and by that I mean, they take one use of the word in the Old Testament and boldly declare that this gospel is “*not just any news, in the Bible this phrase, the good news, is always about the reign of a new king.*” (Bible Project Video: G.K. 01:42.) Now, folks, that is an egregious error. They go on to say “*And, in the New Testament the gospels use this phrase to summarize all of their teachings. That is to say He went about proclaiming the good news of God’s Kingdom.*”

B. In that same vein, I want to warn about the gospel blenders that are in such control of our Christian media today. The great majority of evangelicals today are blurring the lines and confusing kingdom truth with grace truth. They have infiltrated Anglicanism, Arminianism, Calvinism, Baptist, and even independent circles, along with all of our major book and media publishers - without exception. And still, we turn a blind eye. By mixing the gospel of the kingdom with the gospel of grace they have contaminated the one saving gospel and the true doctrine of justification by faith.

They have made the rules for entering the kingdom the same rules for being saved. You must hate your family, count the cost, give all your goods to the poor, pick up your cross daily, and completely and utterly own the Lordship of Jesus Christ (things no one has ever been able to do) before appropriating the gospel of Christ. They left a long and tragic trail of believers behind them despair of any absolute hope that they are saved.

The gospel of the grace of God and the gospel of the kingdom are two entirely different gospels. This confuses the gospel of God’s grace - the gospel by which you are saved as presented in John 3:16, Romans 1:16, Ephesians 2:8,9, Titus 3:5, and so forth with rules for entering the coming earthly kingdom of Christ. So here’s the question. Will you cease from your works and enter into that rest? Or, will you, along with Israel, fail to enter into the rest that is found only in the pure gospel? Will you insist on preaching a hard gospel, agonizing to enter into it, forever doomed to wondering if you have repented enough or whether you will persevere sufficiently? Let me tell you right now. You won’t.

Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to enter into that rest once and for all.