



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 2: 1-10

Galatians

“Standing Firm”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We’re beginning Galatians 2 this morning, going to look at verses 1 through 10. Paul has been defending his apostleship, and he is in the midst of that when we read in verse one of chapter two, “Then, after an interval of 14 years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up, and I submitted to them the gospel which I preached among the gentiles. But I did so in private to those who were of reputation for fear that I might be running or had run in vain, but not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

“But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in who had sneaked in to spy at our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. But for those who were of high reputation, what they were makes no difference to me. God chose no partiality.

“Well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me, but, on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised just as Peter had been to the circumcised, for he who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised, effectually worked for me also to the gentiles.

“In recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the gentiles and they do the circumcised. They also asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I also was eager to do.” May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank you for the time we have together this morning, this opportunity to gather on this Lord's day and read the scriptures, study them in some depth together this morning and, in so doing, learn more about you and your grace. We hope to do that and pray that you would lead us in this study and guide our thinking, illuminate our minds. It's a great privilege to do that. So bless us spiritually.

We're here to be built up in the faith and equipped as saints to go out and do the work of the ministry during the week ahead. We are also to worship you, to think about the things of God and be edified, built up in the faith in that way.

So we pray, Lord, in this hour and tonight in the evening meeting that you would bless us in this way. Build us up in the faith and make this an occasion to worship you gladly and joyfully.

We pray, also, for our material needs, Lord, and we pray for those who are sick, that you give them encouragement and healing, for those who are unemployed and those who are discouraged from various circumstances in life. We pray that you give encouragement, that you would give relief, that you'd give opportunity for work, whatever the circumstance may be. So bless your people, Lord.

We thank you for your many blessings upon us. We thank you for the blessings we have of living in this great nation of ours and all the freedoms that we have enjoyed. We pray that you would continue to bless us with those freedoms, bless this land, bless our government. We pray for the military abroad. We pray that you would protect the men and women in the Armed Services and pray that you would use them in a good way, pray that you would bring peace to that troubled part of the world through their efforts.

Father, we pray your blessings upon us now as we turn our attention to your word, and we pray that we be built up in the faith again through this time together. We pray this in Christ name. Amen.

[Message] There's an old Roman legend that I have told here before and one that I'm sure Paul must have known. It is the story of Horatius at the bridge. It tells how Horatius and two friends held off an invading army while the citizens of Rome chopped down the bridge over the Tiber River to save the city from destruction.

Just before the bridge fell, Horatius send his two friends back and stood alone against the enemy then, when the bridge was down and the city was safe, he leapt into the river, wounded, wearing his heavy armor, and he swam to the other side. He saved Rome from the enemy.

The English poet, Thomas McCulloch, who retold the legend in his story, recalled the soldiers at the bridge, and he called them the Brave Three. Galatians 2: 1-10 is Paul’s account of what we might call the Brave Three.

Paul, Barnabas and Titus, who went up to Jerusalem and held off the enemy of the gospel. Paul wrote, “We did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour.” They alone delivered the church from an invasion of the false brethren as he calls them.

It is a story Paul tells in order to show the apostles were united with him in the gospel that he preached. Contrary to what the Judaizers had said, Paul was not a rogue apostle who had developed a message different from the one sanctioned by Jerusalem.

Paul and the apostles were unified in the ministry and in the gospel. So this event in Jerusalem, that he records here in chapter 2, is one of the most important events, one of the decisive battles in church history. Paul defended the church in Jerusalem over the same issue that was troubling the church in Galatia. It was that issue of circumcision.

It was Paul’s first confrontation with men who demanded that ceremonies or human works must be added to the gospel for salvation. He knew how important this issue was, how critical this issue was to the gospel, and so he begins the chapter, in verses 1 and 2, by stating that he went up to Jerusalem and submitted to the leaders there the gospel that he preached among the gentiles.

Now there’s some question about when Paul went to Jerusalem, what visit he is referring to here. The Book of Acts mentions two visits that he made there with Barnabas, the famine relief visit in Acts 11 and the visit to the Jerusalem council that’s recorded in Acts 15.

In Acts 15, we have the Jerusalem council which presents rather attractive visit for this text in which we’re studying here in Galatians 2 because they’re at the council of Jerusalem. The leaders of the church decisively dealt with this issue of circumcision, the very issue that is the controversy that Paul is dealing with here and so it would seem to fit quite well.

The problem with that is that is where the issue was settled, and if Galatians were written after the events of Acts 15 then all Paul would have needed to do to settle the issue would be to refer to that council and the decision that the leaders there had made, and it would have been known anyway, and that would have settled the issue.

So he doesn’t do that and that would lead us to believe that it’s probably better to understand the visit to Jerusalem recorded here in Acts 2 as the one that Luke records in Acts

11 which was early in Paul’s ministry. He writes that he went up to Jerusalem after an interval of 14 years. Now that’s another difficulty for interpreters. 14 years from what? 14 years from his conversion or 14 years from his previous visit to Jerusalem. It’s not certain which it is. Some feel that it’s probably from his conversion.

So roughly 11 years after his first visit, when he met Peter and James, he went up again, this time with Barnabas and Titus. Barnabas was a leader figure in the early church. He was a Levite. He was from Cypress. His real name was Joseph. We know him by the name Barnabas, but that was a nickname that was given to him which means son of encouragement, and he was certainly that. He was a great encouragement to Paul in his very early days.

When Paul first came to Jerusalem after his conversion, everyone was afraid of him, and one would understand that. That was quite natural because Paul had been, as Saul of Tarsus, the great persecutor of the church. It was Barnabas who had the courage to approach Paul, took Paul under his wing, introduced him to Peter and calmed people’s fears about him. He was a great encouragement to the apostle.

Later, when the apostles sent Barnabas to oversee the ministry and the church at Antioch, it was Barnabas who brought Paul there to help him in that ministry. While they were there, the prophet Agabus came down from Jerusalem to the church at Antioch, and he prophesied that there would be a great famine all over the world. So the saints in Antioch responded to that prophesy, responded to that great need that the saints in Judea and Jerusalem would have, and they took up a collection for the Christians there.

And they sent Paul and Barnabas to take that collection to Jerusalem. In verse 2, Paul states that it was because of a revelation that he went up, and we might think, putting the two passages together, Acts 11 and this statement by Paul, that the revelation he’s speaking of here is the one that Agabus gave prophesying this great famine that would be on the earth.

More likely though, this was a special revelation that Paul is referring to here indicating that he was to go up to Jerusalem. That is separate from what Agabus had said. The Lord spoke to Paul. Told him, “You must go up there.” We say that because there are other occasions when Paul had such revelations, where Christ spoke to him directly in a trance, in a dream, and that is probably the case here. This is something different from the prophesy of Agabus.

And the significance of that is that Paul didn't go up to Jerusalem on instructions from the apostles. He acts independently of them. He was an apostle in his own right. He was under the authority of Christ, and he went up there on direct revelation from him. It's under the Lord's direction that he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem.

Well, they took with them Titus. Titus was a gentile believer who was converted under Paul's ministry. He was probably from Antioch and a man who had a long ministry with the apostle. As a gentile, he was uncircumcised when he was saved, and he was uncircumcised when he went up to Jerusalem. In fact, Paul may have taken Titus to Jerusalem for that very reason, to make him a test case for the gospel and demonstrate that circumcision was not necessary for salvation.

Paul writes that, when he arrived in Jerusalem, he submitted his gospel to the leaders in the church. He identifies them in verse 9 as James and Cephas, who you know as Peter. James and Peter and John. The gospel he preached was salvation by free grace, salvation through faith in Christ, God's son, salvation in Christ who is the one who was crucified for our sins and raised for our justification. That's how Paul presents the gospel in Romans 4:25.

That's the gospel that Paul preached wherever he went. It was the gospel of grace. It was the gospel of faith alone in Christ alone, Christ who is the eternal Son of God become man who was crucified, buried, raised and ascended into heaven. He submitted this gospel, this message to the apostles, and he writes that he did so in private, “For fear that I might be running or had run in vain.”

Now that's puzzling to some people when you read that. Did Paul really feel that maybe he had been preaching the wrong gospel? Is that the reason that he went to the apostles in Jerusalem and submitted his gospel to them for their examination that they might convince him or confirm to him that he was preaching the right gospel, that he had not been preaching in vain, that his gospel was consistent with theirs as though he did not know that?

Well, that is not what he is indicating here. That would be contrary to his whole argument, the very thing he's proving is that he had been preaching the true gospel, and this is one of the evidences in his argument.

He met with them privately in order to avoid a public discussion that might cause a split within the church. This was a very sensitive issue, this issue about circumcision, and many of those Jews in the early church felt very strongly about it. After all, circumcision

was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant. According to the law, it was required of all Jewish males and of all gentile males who believed in Yahweh, who converted to Judaism.

For nearly 2,00 years, Israelite men had been circumcised. This is what they knew. This is what had been ingrained in their thinking, and they had fought strongly for this. They had sacrificed much for it. During the Maccabean wars and **Tyacus** the Fourth persecuted Jews by killing Jewish babies who were circumcised along with their mothers.

So Jews felt very deeply about circumcision. They had made great sacrifices for it in order to be faithful to the Lord in this matter, but by the first century, by the time of the apostle, they had come to misunderstand circumcision. It was given as a sign of the covenant not a means of salvation. It illustrated the spiritual truth of repentance and consecration to God.

Circumcision is something like a badge of membership in the covenant community. It signified physically a spiritual condition, a spiritual reality. Moses and the prophets indicated that by commanding the people to circumcise their hearts. That's the real meaning of circumcision. That's what this physical rite pointed to, a circumcision of the heart which is a way of speaking of a spiritual change within them.

But, as people often do, the Jews began to rely on the ritual rather than the meaning of the ritual, and, as I say, by Paul's day, they completely misunderstood and misconstrued the meaning of this rite. And it had taken on an importance that it was never intended to have. As a result, even though Christ had fulfilled the law so that its ceremonies were no longer binding, still, many Jewish believers and I think genuine believers, Jewish believers had a great difficulty of letting go of this aspect of their lives and aspect of their training.

So to avoid a heated discussion that would damage his ministry, Paul presented his gospel to the church leaders knowing that he would get a friendly hearing from them. He got that, but he couldn't avoid trouble. It didn't come from the apostles. They accepted Titus. They accepted him in his uncircumcised condition.

The trouble came from those Paul calls in verse 4 false brethren. These men learned that Titus was uncircumcised any may even have intruded into the meeting with the apostles to demand that he be circumcised. They were evidently men of some standing in the church, probably high standing, men who passed as Christians and were believed by most to be genuine believers but men whom Paul calls false. In his eyes, they were counterfeits. They opposed grace. They wanted to rob gentile converts of the freedom the gospel gave. That freedom meant nothing to these men.

Paul described them as men, “Who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus in order to bring us into bondage.” They approached the apostles as true believers. They approached them as defenders of the faith, as men who were zealous for God’s word and for the truth and for genuine obedience, but Paul reveals their true condition. They were traitors.

He describes them as spies who had infiltrated the church in an attempt to capture the church for a different master. The description of them as false brethren secretly brought in is used elsewhere in other parts of scripture. It’s used, for example, in 2 Peter 2:1 where we are told of those who secretly introduce destructive heresies to ruin the church. Well, that’s the way the enemy works by secret. He comes in by stealth, uses intrigue like a spy.

The enemy doesn’t enter the church as an enemy. He doesn’t come in in that openness. It comes in in disguise. The devil doesn’t reveal himself as a dragon. He appears as an angel of light. He appears to be one who represents the truth and proclaims the truth and may, in fact, proclaim a great deal of truth but not the complete truth and has enough error that’s fatal.

And that’s the case with these false brethren. They posed as friends. They posed as defenders of the faith. That’s how they seduced people. That’s how they win them over, and that’s their goal here.

Paul says that it was to bring believers into bondage, bring them under the yoke of the law, enslave them in the laws, rules and regulations and, in so, take away their freedom. Later, Paul writes in 5:3 that, “Every man who receives circumcision is under obligation to keep the whole law. The law is like a seamless garment.”

You remember the Lord’s garment when the Romans were gambling for it. Well, they gambled for it because it was a seamless garment, and they couldn’t divide it up. If they tried to do that, they’d ruin it. So they gambled. They tossed dice for it, and I think that’s an illustration of the law the way it is. It’s like a seamless garment. You can’t take one part and not the other.

If you adopt one part, you adopt the whole, and that’s what these men wanted to do, to bring the church under the whole law and establish it as the basis of salvation rather than God’s grace given to us in the work of Christ at the cross. They wanted to make the law the regulated principle of people’s lives not only the basis of justification but of sanctification.

The Judaizers were trying to do that same thing in Galatia. That’s the reason that Paul will tell the Galatians in 5:1, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore, keep standing firm,” he says.

Well, that’s what Paul and Barnabas and Titus did. They kept standing firm just like those old Romans defending the bridge in the city. These three stood firm. Verse 5, “We did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.”

There were probably people there in that meeting or in the events surrounding the meeting who advised Paul and Barnabas and Titus against doing that, counseled a more broad-minded approach and suggested that this issue of circumcision wasn’t all that important. It’s just a single ceremony. They must have said something like, “Circumcise Titus. Be done with this. Avoid the controversy. This is one small issue. It’s better to preserve unity in the church than fight over this.”

And, to some, Paul’s refusal to do that, to give even an inch on this matter must have seemed rather petty of Paul. Paul was a tolerant man. Don’t think that Paul was hardheaded. Don’t think of him as a narrow-minded man who had his ideas about things and wouldn’t budge or accommodate himself to others who had disagreements with him. He was tolerant.

He became all things to all men. That’s what he told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. “To those who are under the law,” he said, “As one under the law, to those without the law as without law, so that I may win more,” he said. “So that I might bring in more into God’s heavenly kingdom and win more to the gospel.”

In fact, when he took Titus on his second missionary journey, Paul had him circumcised, so that he wouldn’t be an offense to the Jews. He did that in order to promote the gospel. Since we are not under the law, we are not obligated to observe the rites and rituals of the law. Since we’re not under the law, circumcision is not necessary for us to observe, and, yet, because we’re not under the law, we are free to observe those things if we choose to do it and choose to do so for the right reason, for example, choose to do that in order to remove an unnecessary obstacle to the gospel.

Now that’s what Paul was doing when he chose to circumcise Timothy. He did that for missionary strategy. What he chose to do had nothing to do with the terms of salvation. It had to do with strategy in bringing salvation to Jews and the gentiles of that region.

With Titus, it was different. Paul knew that, in his case, the essence of the gospel was at stake and not only for those in Jerusalem but for people everywhere, for the Galatians.

He didn't know that at the time, of course, but for others, for the Galatians, for us. And so this is where Paul drew his line in the sand, and because he did no doubt some unity in the church was lost. But the gospel was preserved and grace triumphed for all of us over the world and across the ages.

British historian Sir Edward Creasy wrote a book that was published in 1951 entitled *15 Decisive Battles of the World*. I suppose there would be a few added to that since he wrote that book, but the first one that he wrote of was the Battle of Marathon between Greece and Persia. And the historian wrote that the result that depended on the decision of the Greeks to fight was not merely the fate of two armies but the whole future progress of civilization.

Paul's decision to fight the good fight there in Jerusalem was one of the decisive battles of the church and of the world on which the whole future progress of the gospel depended. That was the gravity of this moment in Jerusalem. Paul made a courageous stand, one that put him against powerful enemy, an influential enemy, but it was not a confrontation and a battle that is unique. In fact, every generation fights these battles. Every local church must contend for the faith of the gospel and defend it, and the gospel's always under attack often by moral and admirable people, some that may rise within the assembly or some that you may meet at work or school or in the neighborhood, may come to your door, more people admirable people. That's where the battle is fought so often.

In the 1990s, there was the ECT document, Evangelicals of Catholics Together in which some evangelical and Catholic leaders dismissed their differences and accepted each other as Christians, and they agreed not to evangelize each other's communities.

And now let me say I don't question the genuine decency of many Roman Catholics. They defend much of the moral ground that I hold to, that you hold to, that Christians hold to, and I don't question that there are genuine Christians in the Catholic church but that is not because of Catholicism. It is in spite of it.

The official position of the Catholic Church is that men are justified. They are saved by faith plus works. That justification is a process, that it begins with baptism. It can be lost. It's not certain until the very end. At the Council of Trent in the 16th Century, the church opposed the reformers doctrine of justification by faith alone. Trent declared, "If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in divine mercy which remits sin for Christ's sake alone, let him be anathema. Let him be cursed."

In other words, if anyone believes salvation is through faith alone and Christ alone, let him be cursed and yet what they condemned is what Paul preached. It's the gospel of the apostles, salvation by grace alone through faith alone and Christ alone.

The Catholic Church believes that people are saved by faith plus the sacraments, baptism, the mass and the others. That's the very thing that Paul was fighting against. Faith plus circumcision is no different from faith plus baptism. That is what Paul called a different gospel. That's what he pronounced anathema upon. It's what he wrote the Book of Galatians to expose and oppose, so we must do the same, unpopular as that may be.

And if we really love those who are of a different persuasion from us, we will explain these things. We'll explain them graciously to them, clearly when we're given the opportunity, but we will do that. We will explain these things and stand firm in the truth. Paul did that, did that along with Barnabas and Titus. It no doubt cost them some friends in Jerusalem and so influential friends. Some of those friends or those people from whom they were no doubt estranged must have been some of those who came to Galatia to preach a different gospel and spread the untruths that they did about the apostle Paul.

But he and his friends held their ground on this issue of circumcision and refused to let go of the gospel, and they didn't stand alone in this. The apostles stood with them. That's Paul's point, the point that he makes in the remaining verses. They, the apostles in Jerusalem, gave official recognition to Paul and his ministry. In verse 9, he states that they gave to him the right hand of fellowship, and in verse 6, he says that they contributed nothing or adding nothing to him. Meaning they didn't add anything to the ministry that he had. They didn't add anything to the gospel that he preached. They accepted it as he preached it. They believed the same gospel, so the apostles in Jerusalem agreed with him.

That's the point in all of this. That's what Paul is arguing here, but before making that point, he first gives a kind of disclaimer about his relationship to the apostles and his reason for referring to them. He calls them men of high reputation, and they were that among the saints in Jerusalem but then he adds that their standing made no difference to him.

In other words, he wasn't appealing to the apostles because of their high standing. That's what the Judaizers had done, and they had used the prestige of the apostles to enhance their position to give them a kind of authority to speak to these Galatians.

They'd come there. They'd come to Galatia dropping names, so to speak, to add to the authority that they claimed to have had for themselves. Paul wasn't doing that. He didn't need to do that. Paul was an equal with the apostles. He had the authority of the

apostles. He's a true apostle. He didn't need their prestige, the prestige of the men in Jerusalem to enhance his position as God shows no partiality.

God was not more favorable toward the 12 because they had walked with Jesus in his earthly life, in his earthly ministry than he was toward Paul. Paul was as much an apostle in God's eyes as were Peter and John and the rest. He called Paul to be an apostle. He had chosen him directly, and the message he preached was true regardless of what men said.

Doesn't matter what the apostles in Jerusalem said in this anyway. As Paul said in the beginning, if you'll remember, if he or an angel, if an apostle or an angel preached a different gospel, let that man be a curse.

So the point isn't that the apostles or anyone makes the gospel what it is. It is what it is regardless of what men say. His sole reason for referring to the leaders in Jerusalem was to state that they had agreed with him about the gospel. They were unified with Paul on this point. They were not unified with the Judaizers as those false teachers had claimed.

As he says, "They contributed nothing to me," meaning they made no corrections or modifications to his ministry. They added nothing to his message. They didn't tell him to go preach circumcision. They were all in agreement about the gospel of salvation.

Paul goes on to say, in verses 7 and 8, that they recognize that he had a special mission to the gentiles, that God, they knew, had called him to that because he was working effectively or effectually through him just as he had worked effectually through Peter in his ministry to the Jews. The apostles recognized that Paul was not their competitor. He was their companion. He was equal with the 12.

And so, with that recognition, he says that they gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship. Now that was a way of making public acknowledgement that they were all partners in the same cause. They are equal in that cause. They are joined together in the same cause, the cause of Christ.

Paul and Barnabas would minister mainly to the gentiles. They ministered to Jews as well, just as Peter ministered to gentiles as well as Jews, but Paul and Barnabas would minister mainly to the gentiles, and they, the 12, would minister mainly to the Jews as God had called them to do.

Now two things to notice here, first, the apostles recognized Paul's calling as the Apostle and the missionary to the gentiles by the fruit of his ministry. Titus was proof of that. Barnabas testified to Paul's ministry. Paul's understanding of God's word was proof of his calling. It was an evidence that God was effectually ministering through him. He knew

God’s word very well, well enough to carry the day and the debates. He was a brilliant man. He knew God’s word.

After 14 plus years of ministry, the evidence of Paul’s learning and gifts, his calling were clear and unimpeachable, and there’s, I think, a lesson in that for us. We shouldn’t be anxious for recognition by men. Should never make that the goal of our lives. We should be faithful in the task that God has given to us, the recognition which is important, whatever that may be, if it’s important, it will come in time, and it will come with fruit. It will come with the deeds that we do. So what we are to do is be obedient to the task that God has given us for today and leave the results to God.

Secondly, good results in the ministry, as in life, whether it’s in business or in the family or in school or whatever area of life, but in life and in ministry, good results are divinely produced. The 12 apostles recognized that God was working in Paul just as he was in Peter. Verse 8, “He who effectually worked for Peter worked for me.” Now that’s grace.

What produced this fruit in Paul’s life and ministry? It was God working in him just as he worked in Peter. We are responsible to act. We are responsible to serve. We are responsible to many tasks that God has given to us, and we must move our self to do that. We must encourage ours self to do that. Sometimes we must preach to ourselves in order to move ourselves to do what we must do.

But we can only do that, we can only succeed in the work that God has given us to do and, ultimately, we can only desire to do it by the grace of God, by the work that he produces in us, the work that he does in us. Later, in chapter 5, Paul will speak of the fruit of the spirit, and he lists the virtues that comprise the fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, nine virtues in all. And I don’t think that’s the extent of them, but that’s what he lists in that verse.

Those are virtues that God supernaturally produces in us. We cannot create them in our heart. They are divinely given, and that’s true of all that we do that is profitable to God, profitable for his people. So to have those virtues and to have the fruit of our labor, to have a work that’s pleasing to God, we must look to the Lord. We must be obedient to the Lord. We must draw close to him. The fruit that we bear, the light that we have is in him, and so to have it, we must look to him. We must be obedient. We must walk with him.

That’s, in fact, what Paul advises us to do in 5:16, walk by the spirit. That’s the way to a productive and joyful life. Grace is not only about freely receiving God’s blessing. It is also about being what we should be and gladly doing what God would have us to do. It’s

about becoming like Christ. The gospel is justification by faith alone apart from the works of the law, but faith that is real saving faith is a faith that acts. It is a faith that obeys. It is never a faith without works.

The Reformers used to say we are saved by faith alone but not by a faith that is alone. If there is life in the tree, the tree will bear fruit, and if faith is real, it will work. If there's life in the individual, eternal life, the life of Christ and the fruit of Christ will be seen.

Specifically, the true Christian will care for others, and it was that concern that the apostles, James and Peter and John, expressed to Paul and Barnabas, at the end of their meeting. We read, in verse 10, “They only asked us to remember the poor, the very thing that I also was eager to do.” In other words, the only instruction that the apostles gave to Paul, they added nothing to his ministry, he said. They didn't correct his preaching. They didn't tell him to be doing this or that.

The only instruction they gave to Paul, the only suggestion they made is something that he was already doing, helping the poor. He'd come to up Jerusalem with a great gift for famine relief. So, even on this point Paul was not under the direction of the leaders in Jerusalem. They acknowledged him as their equal. They acknowledged him as their partner in the ministry and agreed with the gospel that he preached, the gospel of grace.

And, finally, they were all in agreement that true Christian faith is active faith. It is caring faith. It makes sacrifices for others, sacrifices of money or time or effort for others for those who are in need. That is essential to the Christian life.

It won't save you. We're not saved by doing good things, but if you're saved, you will be like that. Later in 6:2, Paul tells the Galatians, “Bear one another's burdens and thereby fulfill the Law of Christ.” Verses 9 and 10, “Let us not lose heart in doing good. For, in due time, we will reap if we do not grow weary. So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

In other words, don't waste time. Don't miss the opportunities that God gives you to help others, whoever they may be, whoever is in need but especially God's people, those of the church.

So then we're saved by faith alone but not a faith that is alone. True faith loves others. That is the faith that we are to fight for, to stand firm for. We are to defend the truth and live the life. So may God help us to do that in our generation, but to defend the truth, you must know the truth.

Do you know the truth? Do you understand the gospel that Paul and Barnabas and Titus defended? Have you trusted in Christ? It's very simple, the gospel, and it's simply this. We are all sinners. We are separated from God, but God has acted to bring us to himself, to reconcile us to him, and he did that through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ died for sinners. He suffered the punishment in our place, and the estrangement that existed between God and men was overcome. God was propitiated. His justice was satisfied by the punishment of his son, and as a result of faith, we are reconciled to him and brought together as friends, brought into his family as children and given eternal life.

If you do not believe in Christ, if you're here without him then look to him. He is the only one in whom there is salvation. Trust in in and then live for him and stand firm for the grace of God. May God help all of us to do that. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the truth that Paul and Barnabas and Titus stood firm for, what they defended. It's only for that moment. It was for all of history. It was for us as well as those in Jerusalem, those in Galatia.

And, Father, we have that same responsibility. Help us to do that. Help us to understand the gospel more clearly, to preach it more readily and to be staunch defenders of it when the opportunity comes and the need is present.

So we look to you to do that. We recognize all good things that we do come by your grace, and we pray for that. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who died for us, and it's in his name we pray. Amen.