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The Pure Gospel

Reflections

The Epistle to the Galatians

The Pure Gospel

(Quick-Read)

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To my wife and children for their love and support

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One

Problems in Galatia

Chapter Two

Paul's Defense of the Gospel

Chapter Three

The Effects of a Perverted Gospel

Chapter Four

The Effects of the Pure Gospel

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEMS AMONG THE GALATIAN BELIEVERS

Several problems become immediately evident as we review the epistle written to the Galatians.

1. False brethren had crept into the fellowship to spy out the Christian liberty
2. False brethren had introduced a perverted gospel in which they taught that righteousness is acquired by keeping the ceremonial Laws of Moses. (dietary, special days, and circumcision).
3. By returning to the practice of the ceremonial Laws of Moses, the false brethren would bring the Christians into bondage.
4. Some Christians had embraced the perverted gospel.
5. False brethren taught that men were perfected and justified by the works of the Law.
6. Christians were confused about the proper place of the Law within the Christian context.
7. Christians under the influence of this doctrine began to make class distinctions based upon racial lines.
8. Paul had become an enemy to some Christians for his doctrinal correction.
9. False brethren caused the believers to become zealous for them.

10. An erroneous view of justification leavened the whole lump of God's truth.

CHAPTER TWO

Paul's Defense of the Gospel

The Solution

Paul begins his epistle by stating the source of his apostleship and pointing out that the God who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised (Jews) had also worked effectively in him for the apostleship to the uncircumcised. (All other non-Jew human beings) Paul was quick to defend the gospel. He did so in various ways.

Defense of the Gospel #1: Paul's Testimony

Beginnings: Paul shares his testimony in order to inform the church that he is no stranger to the problems of the Galatians. Paul had been a zealous Judaizer who persecuted Christians and tried to destroy the church. Even though he was noted among his contemporaries, God intervened and turned His life around.

His Turning Point: Paul declares that God's intervention included three actions:

1. God separated him from his mother's womb
2. God called him into His grace
3. God revealed His Son to Him

As a result of God's activity, Paul was launched into a new direction. Paul's new assignment included preaching Christ as Messiah. He did not counsel with men when he received a revelation of the gospel; instead, he went to Arabia to seek God for understanding. The Christian Jews glorified God

for His transforming work in Paul. The persecutor had become a preacher of the faith which he formerly destroyed.

His Battles for the Faith: Paul became a defender of the Christian faith. He did not give in the perverted gospel for a moment. In fact, he withstood both Peter and the false brethren to their face. He opposed the idea that the church should be compelled to live as Jews.

Defense for the Gospel #2: The Finished Work of Christ:

In his epistle, Paul immediately highlighted the work of Jesus Christ.

“Our Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age (Judaism), according to the will of our God.”

Paul focused on the following points as a defense to the gospel:

1. We are to be justified **by faith in** Jesus Christ.
2. We who **believe in Christ** Jesus are justified by faith in Christ.
3. We should **seek to be justified by Christ**.
4. We, through the law, have died to the law that we may live to God.
5. We have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer we who live, but Christ lives in us. The *life* which we now live in the flesh **we live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved and gave Himself for us.

Paul makes clear that Christians will contaminate the pure gospel and set aside the grace of God by assuming that righteousness *comes* through the keeping of the ceremonial Law. Paul indicates that such belief would indicate that Christ has died in vain.

Defense of the Gospel #3: The Life of Abraham:

Paul states, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Paul argues that Abraham's righteousness was imputed to him **through faith in the source of righteousness**, not by human effort. *Only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. **The just shall live by faith.**

Defense for the Gospel #4: The Law

Paul states, Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law having become a curse for us that **the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus**, that we might **receive the promise of the Spirit through faith**. Paul argues that God's promise was made to Abraham and his Seed, Jesus Christ. The promise was not annulled by the law because it came 430 years later. Paul points out that the whole idea of justification was born 430 year prior to the giving of the law. He indicates that the practice of the ceremonial law cannot annul the promise God made to Abraham.

Paul directs the false brethren to Abraham for a proper understanding of justification. He then moves on to explain the proper place of the Law.

What purpose then *does* the law *serve*?

“It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed (Jesus) should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one.”

*Paul continues, “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the **promise by faith in Jesus Christ** might be **given to those who believe.** ²³*

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, **kept for the faith** which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore **the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ**, that we might be **justified by faith.** ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

Paul summarizes his discussion of the Law by showing that **faith in Jesus Christ is the source of righteousness.** The ceremonial Law points to Christ and finds its fulfillment in the life and works of Jesus. The **purpose of the law** is to define sin, shine the light on our sinful condition and then make us aware of our need for a Savior who will both forgive our law-breaking and transfer to us the righteousness required to stand in the presence of God. Because of the righteousness of Christ, we have received the adoption as sons.

Paul again states, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to **redeem** those who were under the law, that we might **receive the adoption as sons.**”

Defense of the Gospel #5: Two Covenants

In the following passages, Paul compares two covenants and then invites the reader to judge for himself. Paul links the

false brethren to Ishmael. He recommends to the true believers that they imitate Abraham and cast out the false brethren in the same way Abraham cast out Ishmael and the bondswoman. Paul then links the true believer to Isaac and encourages them to embrace the promise.

Paul declares, "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondswoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³But he *who was* of the bondswoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — ²⁵for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — ²⁶but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free.

We through the Spirit eagerly wait for **the hope of righteousness by faith.**

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Those led by the Spirit are not under the law."

After presenting his defense of the Gospel, Paul moves on to warn the Galatian Christians regarding the outcome of embracing a perverted gospel.

CHAPTER THREE

The Effects of Embracing a Perverted Gospel

As a result of embracing the perverted gospel, they would in fact turn away from Him who called them into the grace of Christ. Those who preached the perverted gospel would be cursed. The wages of embracing a false gospel were becoming evident. Believers were being compelled to be circumcised. There was favoritism among the church leadership. They practiced hypocrisy by separating themselves from non Jews who were being compelled to live as Jews. The believers had been cast under a spell and it was evident in their disobedience to the truth.

By choosing to believe in justification through the law, they put themselves under a curse. Believers were turning again to weak and beggarly elements which led to bondage through the observance of days, months, seasons and years. They had become entangled again with a yoke of bondage. They had become estranged from Christ because they sought to be justified by being circumcised. They had in fact fallen from grace by embracing the belief that justification was possible through keeping the law.

The believers had been hindered from obeying the truth. Some were using their liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. They were biting, devouring, and consuming one another! Others had become conceited, were provoking and envying one another. Some may have been fulfilling the lust of the flesh. Paul warned them that those working under the premise of “salvation through law keeping” would not inherit the kingdom.

Some believers were not helping others bear their burdens. Those who had embraced the false gospel thought highly of themselves. They no longer felt the need to share their resources with those who taught the truth. Some deceived

themselves and mocked God. They were sowing to the flesh and would soon reap corruption. Some had grown weary of doing good and had lost heart. They had stopped doing the good to those of the household of faith. These were but a few of the effects of embracing a perverted gospel.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Effects of Embracing the Pure Gospel

Paul also informed the believers regarding the effects embracing the pure gospel. The believer received the Spirit by the hearing the message of faith. The Spirit was supplied and miracles performed by the hearing of faith. Believers became sons and daughters of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Those baptized into Christ put on Christ. In union with Christ, all class distinctions disappeared and all become one.

Those who belonged to Christ became Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul informed the believers that, "God sent forth His Son to **redeem** those who were under the law that men might **receive the adoption as sons**. God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore **we are no longer slaves but sons**, and if sons, then heirs of God through Christ."

Paul then stated, "I labor in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

Paul encouraged the believers by teaching them that the pure gospel delivered positive results. Paul declared,

"... the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

And those *who are* Christ's have **crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.

If we **live in the Spirit**, let us also **walk in the Spirit**.

Bear one another's **burdens**, and so **fulfill the law of Christ**.

Let him who is taught the word **share in all good things** with him who teaches.

He who **sows to the Spirit** will of the Spirit **reap everlasting life**.

Let us **not grow weary** while doing good, for in due season we **shall reap** if we do not lose heart.

As we have opportunity, let us **do good to all**, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but **a new creation**.

And as many as walk according to this rule, **peace and mercy** be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

These are but of a few of the benefits that those who embrace and obey the pure gospel will experience. Paul provides the reader with a contrast between a pure and perverted gospel.

What was Paul's Recommendation?

Paul's recommendation was three-fold: First, Do not tolerate the evil influence (leaven) of the false brethren. Cast them out. Second, Paul recommended that believers return to the original version of the gospel thereby receiving the full reward that it brings. He encouraged them to embrace freedom and turn away from the bondage delivered by a work-based

justification. Thirdly, Paul encouraged the believers to restore those had been deceived by the false brethren. Paul's focus was not to condemn them, but to bring the wayward back to freedom in Christ.

OTHER BOOKS AND QUICK READS

BOOKS

The Narratives of Christ (Gospel)
Is God Speaking? (Minor Prophets)
God's Life-Changing Curriculum (An Agent of Change)
Worship (In the New Testament)

QUICK-READS

The Authority of the Believer
Transforming Power
Redeemed from the Curse (Entitled to the Blessing)
Emotional Intelligence (Models: A Brief Review)
Why He Came
The Kingdom (13 Parables)
Divine Transition
Divine Expectation
Unclaimed Wealth
Times of Refreshing
Unlocking God's Diary
The House of James
The Will of God (In James)
The Pure Gospel (Galatians)
Paul's Vision of God (Ephesians)
The Journey

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