PM 11-15 The Certified Gospel

Text: Galatians 1:6–2:14

Series: Galatians: One Gospel

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Thesis

The true gospel bears the authority of Jesus Christ, so it admits no substitute, transforms the one who receives it, and stands above every human name.

Hook

A certificate is worth only as much as the authority behind it. A sheet of paper may carry elegant lettering, an impressive signature, and a gold seal, but if the one who issued it had no authority, the document proves nothing.

The King James Version began Galatians 1:11 with the words, “I certify you, brethren.” The NASB says, “For I would have you know, brethren.” Paul was making the gospel's origin known. It did not come from his imagination, a council, or the traditions in which he had been trained. He received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Introduction

1. Teachers were troubling the churches of Galatia by adding circumcision and the Law of Moses as conditions of justification.
2. Paul did not treat their teaching as a harmless difference because changing the message of salvation meant deserting the God who called them.
3. His defense proceeds through facts that could be examined, including his former life, his limited contact with Jerusalem, and the change the gospel produced.
4. The question is not whether a teaching is old, new, popular, or sincere, but whether it belongs to the gospel Jesus Christ revealed.

I. THE CERTIFIED GOSPEL ADMITS NO SUBSTITUTE (1:6–10)

> **Galatians 1:6.** I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;
> **Galatians 1:7.** which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.
> **Galatians 1:8.** But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!
> **Galatians 1:9.** As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!
> **Galatians 1:10.** For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.

A. Accepting a different gospel meant deserting God.

1. The Galatians may have thought they were changing one teaching, but Paul says they were deserting the One who called them.
2. Doctrine about salvation cannot be separated from our relationship with God.

3 We cannot keep the true Christ while replacing the gospel of Christ.

4 Grace does not make the content of the gospel flexible.

B. An altered gospel ceases to be good news.

1 The troublemakers offered something different, but Paul says it was not another legitimate gospel.

2 A counterfeit may mention Jesus, the cross, faith, and grace while changing the response Christ requires.

3 In Galatia, the error appealed to an Old Covenant practice and imposed it as a condition of justification under the New Covenant.

4 A teaching is not certified merely because it quotes the Bible. It must respect the covenant, context, and purpose of the text.

C. The authority of the message stands above the messenger.

1 If Paul changed the gospel, the churches were to reject the changed message.

2 If an angel from heaven preached the contrary, the angel was also to be rejected.

3 The messenger's fame, the age of a tradition, and the force of an experience cannot certify a contradiction of apostolic revelation.

4 Paul places even himself beneath the gospel he preached, because the messenger never becomes the authority that gave the message.

II. THE CERTIFIED GOSPEL CAME FROM JESUS CHRIST (1:11–17)

Galatians 1:11. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man.
Galatians 1:12. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.
Galatians 1:13. For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it;
Galatians 1:14. and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions.
Galatians 1:15. But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased
Galatians 1:16. to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,
Galatians 1:17. nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.

A. The gospel was not designed according to human thought.

1 Paul says the gospel is “not according to man.”

2 Pride wants to earn salvation, the flesh wants forgiveness without surrender, and party spirit measures truth by the messenger's name.

3 Jesus Christ crucified removes every ground of human boasting.

4 No one can purchase his own redemption or take the place of the Lord who died and rose again.

B. Paul received the gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ.

1 He did not receive it from a man as a tradition handed down to him.

2 He was not taught it by a human teacher as preparation for apostleship.

3 The gospel was not true because Paul preached it. Paul preached with authority because Jesus Christ had revealed it.

4 Paul's revelation belonged to his unique apostolic commission, while Christians today learn the gospel through the apostolic word.

C. Paul's former life rules out a natural explanation for his message.

1. He had persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy the faith he later proclaimed.
2. He had advanced beyond many of his contemporaries and had been extremely zealous for ancestral traditions.
3. Zeal did not certify his former course, because he had been sincere while persecuting the church.
4. Grace called him to leave that course and preach the Son of God among the Gentiles.

D. Jerusalem did not originate Paul's preaching.

1. Paul did not immediately consult with flesh and blood or go to Jerusalem to have other apostles manufacture his message.
2. Later fellowship with the apostles did not make them the source of his gospel.
3. Books and history can help us investigate what people believed, but no council, teacher, or ruler holds a seat among the apostles.
4. Historical witnesses may be examined, but they cannot correct the revelation of Jesus Christ.

III. THE CERTIFIED GOSPEL TRANSFORMS THE ONE WHO RECEIVES IT (1:18–24)

> **Galatians 1:18.** Then three years later I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas, and stayed with him fifteen days.
> **Galatians 1:19.** But I did not see any other of the apostles except James, the Lord's brother.
> **Galatians 1:20.** (Now in what I am writing to you, I assure you before God that I am not lying.)
> **Galatians 1:21.** Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
> **Galatians 1:22.** I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea which were in Christ;
> **Galatians 1:23.** but only, they kept hearing, “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.”
> **Galatians 1:24.** And they were glorifying God because of me.

A. The facts of Paul's life could be examined.

1. Three years later, he stayed with Cephas for only fifteen days and also saw James, the Lord's brother.
2. Paul names people, places, and time periods rather than hiding behind a vague claim that no one could test.
3. The churches of Judea did not know him by sight and had not served as his school.
4. His limited contact with Jerusalem could not explain the message he had already begun to preach.

B. The direction of his life had changed.

1. The man who once persecuted the faith was now preaching it.
2. Paul did not revise the gospel to justify the religious life he had built.
3. His position, relationships, and advantages had to surrender to the truth revealed by Christ.
4. We do not change the gospel to protect the life we want to keep. We allow Christ to change the life we once defended.

C. The transformation brought glory to God.

1. The Judean Christians knew Paul's former reputation, and they heard that the persecutor had become a preacher.
2. They glorified God rather than praising Paul's willpower.
3. Conversion does not mean that a Christian instantly reaches maturity, but it does change the fundamental allegiance of his life.
4. The congregation should see that the gospel preached by a man also governs the man who preaches it.

IV. THE CERTIFIED GOSPEL STANDS ABOVE EVERY MAN (2:1–5, 11–14)

A. Unity did not require surrendering the truth of the gospel.

> **Galatians 2:1.** Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.
> **Galatians 2:2.** It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach 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.
> **Galatians 2:3.** But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.
> **Galatians 2:4.** But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.
> **Galatians 2:5.** But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

1. Paul presented his work to respected men, but the truth was not created by a vote.
2. Titus was a Greek, and he was not compelled to be circumcised.
3. False brethren wanted to bring Gentile Christians into bondage.
4. Paul refused to yield because the truth of the gospel had to remain with the churches.

B. Even an apostle had to walk according to the truth of the gospel.

> **Galatians 2:11.** But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.
> **Galatians 2:12.** For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.
> **Galatians 2:13.** The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.
> **Galatians 2:14.** But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

1. Cephas knew the truth concerning the Gentiles and had eaten with them.
2. Fear moved him to withdraw, and his conduct carried other Jews and even Barnabas into hypocrisy.
3. His behavior communicated a denial of the unity the gospel had created.
4. Respect for a brother does not require calling wrong conduct right, and correction does not authorize contempt or party spirit.

C. Conviction must remain under the humility of the gospel.

1. No one should believe a doctrine merely because an American, a Chilean, or a respected preacher taught it.
2. Gratitude toward faithful teachers does not turn their opinions into revelation, and their flaws do not automatically make everything they taught false.
3. A teaching is not false merely because it is new to us, nor is novelty evidence that everyone before us failed to understand Scripture.
4. Truth needs no insult, and every Christian who defends it must remain under the gospel he teaches.

Application

Examine what you believe by the apostolic word. Ask whether the teaching respects its context, covenant, and purpose, and whether it agrees with the gospel revealed by Jesus Christ. History can tell us when a practice appeared and who defended it, but it cannot turn a later practice into apostolic doctrine.

Allow the gospel to correct your conduct as well as your doctrine. Peter knew the truth about Gentile Christians, but fear led him to act against it. The same gospel that corrects circumcision as a condition of salvation also corrects fear, hypocrisy, and favoritism.

Work for unity without yielding the gospel. Listen patiently, examine your own understanding, and speak with humility, but do not accept a substitute message simply because it comes with an old name, a large following, or an impressive messenger.

Conclusion

1. The certified gospel admits no substitute because changing the message deserts the God who calls by grace.
2. It comes from Jesus Christ rather than human invention or tradition.
3. It transformed the persecutor into a preacher and brought glory to God.
4. It stands above false brethren, respected apostles, and every Christian who claims to live by it.

Invitation

The gospel proclaims the Son of God who gave Himself for our sins and rose again. It calls you to believe in Christ, repent of sin, confess His name, and be baptized into Him.

> **Galatians 3:26.** For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
> **Galatians 3:27.** For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.
> **Galatians 3:28.** There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
> **Galatians 3:29.** And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

If you have not clothed yourself with Christ, obey the gospel tonight. If you are a Christian whose doctrine or conduct has contradicted the truth, repent and return to the Lord.

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