

Paul Answers the Agitators – 3-28-10

The arguments of the agitators against Paul and the gospel he preached:

- Paul did not receive the gospel that he preaches from the mother church, Jerusalem. After all, Jerusalem was the center of God's work on the earth. The twelve apostles therefore were the only authority for what is the true gospel because they were commissioned by Christ Himself. Paul, the agitators said did not come from Jerusalem, and he was not commissioned by Christ.
- Paul is preaching an easy gospel. He's leaving out the hard parts for the sake of making the gospel easier for the gentiles to receive. Therefore, he's a man-pleaser.
- The Jerusalem leaders believe in the God-given practice of circumcision and observing the law and traditions. These are the "hard" parts of the gospel. Because Paul is a man-pleaser he is omitting these parts. The Law-free gospel he proclaims is not supported by the apostles or the Jerusalem church. Believing in Jesus coupled with obeying the Law of Moses justifies and sanctifies a man before God.
- Peter is the chief apostle among the twelve. Paul had the arrogance to rebuke the apostle Peter to his face! This proves that Paul is a free-lancer who is engaging in an independent work apart from the ministry of the twelve.

In a nutshell, the agitators taught the Galatian believers that they must gain by merit what they in fact already had by faith. They must get from God by individual, personal merit that which they already possessed.

Our nature, after all, is to need a gospel centered on ourselves, so we can earn our salvation. After our conversion, the same basic fallen need prevails, to keep our favor with God by what we ourselves do.

God will have none of that. Nor will Paul. So Paul boldly confronted the arguments of the agitators and affirmed the purity of the gospel that he preached.

Galatians 1:6-2:13

6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

11 But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. 14 And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

18 Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. 19 But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. 20 (Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)

21 Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. 22 And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. 23 But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." 24 And they glorified God in me.

2 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. 2 And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. 3 Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. 4 And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), 5 to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

6 But from those who seemed to be something — whatever they were, it makes no difference to me; God shows personal favoritism to no man — for those who seemed to be something added nothing to me. 7 But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter 8 (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), 9 and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. 10 They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

11 Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.