



CONTENDING FOR THE TRUTH

OCTOBER 9TH & 10TH, 2010

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The book of Galatians is a book written by a Father fighting for his children – fighting for the truth – fighting for the purity of the gospel. In our passage today we see this so clearly. At the end of chapter one, Paul built a case for the authenticity and independence of this apostolic message and authority. Now, in chapter two, Paul puts his message and authority to work.

PAUL'S **CONCERN** FOR GOSPEL PURITY & UNITY (2:1-2)

¹ Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. ² I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

Galatians 2:1-2 (ESV)

Now we don't know when or where Paul had a revelation, and we don't really even know the content of it but we see the result. God called Paul to journey to Jerusalem to fight for the purity and integrity of the gospel message. It seems that Paul knew what was at stake by the fact that he brought Titus – an uncircumcised Gentile disciple – with him.

In essence, Titus was Paul's 'show and tell' of the gospel going to the Gentiles through him. His presence, in fellowship with Jewish disciples brought the issue of the New Covenant reality of God's acceptance of Jews and Gentiles on the basis of faith in Christ and faith in Christ alone to the forefront.

¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:11 (ESV)

PAUL'S GOSPEL CHALLENGED & CHAMPIONED (2:3-5)

³ But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. ⁴ Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery— ⁵ to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Galatians 2:3-5 (ESV)

Paul and Titus create quite a controversy among the church in Jerusalem. There are those in Jerusalem who claim to be Christians but in reality hate the gospel of grace. They can't stomach a gospel that rejects human performance and submission to the Law. The thought of Gentiles being accepted by God outside of the Law is too much for them. So they launch a campaign to mold the gospel and the church to something that fits with their worldview. They want Titus to be circumcised.

This is battle for Paul. Notice the language – 'spy out' and 'slavery' and 'not yield in submission'. Paul won't stand for anything to be added or taken away from the gospel of grace. Paul didn't fight this battle to 'be right'; he did it for his children in the faith. He fought because some things are worth fighting for.

³ *Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to **contend for the faith** that was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Jude 1:3 (ESV)



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PAUL'S GOSPEL CONFIRMED (2:6-10)

⁶ And from those who seemed to be influential (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. ⁷ On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

Galatians 2:6-10 (ESV)

Among the apostles there was a theological unity in their understanding of the gospel. It was evident to them – they could see in front of them in Titus the reality that God had called Paul to bring the gospels to the Gentiles. *They agree to stand in unity as they minister in diversity.*

PAUL CONTENDS FOR GOSPEL CONSISTENCY (2:11-14)

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Galatians 2:11-14 (ESV)

It didn't take long for this unity to be put to the test. Sometime later, Peter journeys to Antioch. Here in a moment of weakness, a moment of inconsistency with the gospel, he steps out of line with truth of the gospel and concedes to the Judaizers. Peter's influence is so great that even Barnabas along with all the other Jewish disciples withdraw from table fellowship with their Gentile brothers and sisters. This seemingly small decision had the potential to split the church and move it away from the heart and will of God.



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Peter should have known better. After all, it was through Peter that God first revealed the reality that the gospel was for all men – Jew and Gentile.

¹ At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ² a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God. ³ About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius.” ⁴ And he stared at him in terror and said, “What is it, Lord?” And he said to him, “Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. ⁵ And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter. ⁶ He is lodging with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea.” ⁷ When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those who attended him, ⁸ and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa. ⁹ The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰ And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹ and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air. ¹³ And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” ¹⁴ But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” ¹⁵ And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has made clean, do not call common.” ¹⁶ This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Acts 10:1-16 (ESV)

Not only did God clearly tell Peter that the Gentiles could and would be accepted in Christ, he made it clear that Old Covenant dietary laws were now finished. To Peter’s defense, when he first arrived in Antioch he was living this reality out – he was eating and fellowshiping with Gentiles. However, when the Judaizers arrived – he faltered. He was afraid. He acted hypocritically. He reverted to legalism. His actions had the potential to lead the entire church away from the gospel of grace to a false gospel of legalism.

So Paul confronts him – in love – face to face. He doesn’t do this to shame Peter but to save Peter from a horrible mistake. He does it to save the purity of the gospel and the practice of the church.

Just like Peter, we all have areas of lives where we are ‘out of step with the truth of the gospel.’ Fear, doubt, greed, pride – all of these and a host of other sins can lead us to live in a way that is inconsistent with the gospel. Like Peter, we need a Paul who will love us enough to call us out – to help us see – to extend grace and truth to us.

