

Paul's Gospel

Galatians 1-2

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Have you ever noticed reading through Galatians how many times Paul uses the word "gospel" in chapters 1 and 2? He mentions "gospel" ten times in these chapters; only twice in the rest of the book (3:8; 4:13). Why does Paul give so much attention to the gospel in these chapters? The Galatians were in danger of leaving behind the most important thing given them - the gospel - for something else - the old law. The gospel was the logical place to begin for Paul; begin by going back and talking about what is being left behind, before proceeding to a discussion of the present situation. Between two exclamatory statements, "I marvel" (1:6) and "O foolish Galatians" (3:1), Paul teaches four lessons about the gospel.* In each lesson Paul discusses a) the reality (truth or facts about) the gospel; b) the rule concerning the gospel; and c) the results (both good and bad) toward the gospel. What is Paul's gospel, and how can we make Paul's gospel our gospel? Let us examine the four lessons about Paul's gospel from Galatians 1-2.

A SINGULAR GOSPEL (1:6-10). Paul's gospel is a singular in number. The reality of Paul's gospel is that there is one gospel to be preached and received (vv.6-9). Because there is one gospel, the rule is that there is to be no other gospel preached or received (vv.6-9). Preaching another gospel will result in drifting (v.6), a different gospel (v.6), trouble and perversion (v.7), the pronouncement of anathema (vv.8-9), and, the pleasing of men, not God (v.10).

A DIVINE GOSPEL (1:11-24). Paul's gospel is divine in origin. The reality of Paul's gospel is that it came through Jesus Christ, not man (vv.11-12). Because the gospel is divine in origin, the rule is that Jesus' gospel is to be preached, not man's gospel (vv.13-16). The result of preaching a divine gospel is that man does not need to be consulted (vv.16-22), the faith is preached (v.23), and God is glorified (v.24).

A UNITED GOSPEL (2:1-10). Paul's gospel is united in its benefits and demands. The reality of Paul's gospel is that the benefits and demands of the gospel are the same for

the Gentile and Jew alike (vv.1-3). Because the gospel is the same for the Gentile and Jew alike, the gospel is to be defended from those who would alter its benefits and demands (vv.4-5). Preaching a united gospel will result in the right hand of fellowship and unity of work (vv.6-10).

A LIFE-REGULATING GOSPEL (2:11-21). Paul's gospel is life-regulating in its application. The reality of Paul's gospel is that what is preached to others must be practiced by self; that is, we are to walk according truth of the gospel (v.14). Because the gospel is our standard for daily living, when one does not walk according to the truth of the gospel, the rule is that the unlawful behavior of that person must be resisted (v.11) and rebuked (vv.11,14). Not walking according to the truth of the gospel will result in condemnation (v.11), drawing back, separation and fear (v.12), and, hypocrisy in self and others (vv.12-13).

What can we learn from these four lessons? First, are you preaching the one gospel found in the NT? If you are not preaching the gospel which was preached and received in the first century and recorded in the New Testament, you are not preaching Paul's gospel. Second, are you preaching the gospel that Jesus gave in the NT? If you are not preaching the inspired gospel found in the NT, you are not preaching Paul's gospel. Third, are you preaching a gospel that offers the same benefits and demands to all mankind alike? If you are not preaching the benefits and demands of the gospel found in the NT, you are not preaching Paul's gospel. Fourth, are you walking according the gospel that you preach to others? If you are not living by the gospel found in the NT, you are not preaching Paul's gospel.

And what if you are preaching a gospel that is not Paul's gospel? You are preaching a gospel that is accursed, a gospel that is human, a gospel that divides, and a gospel that is hypocritical. Let us make Paul's gospel, our gospel!

* Note the words "For" (1:11), "Then" (1:18), "Then" (2:1), and "But" (2:11) that tie together the four lessons and the main thought of these two chapters.

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