

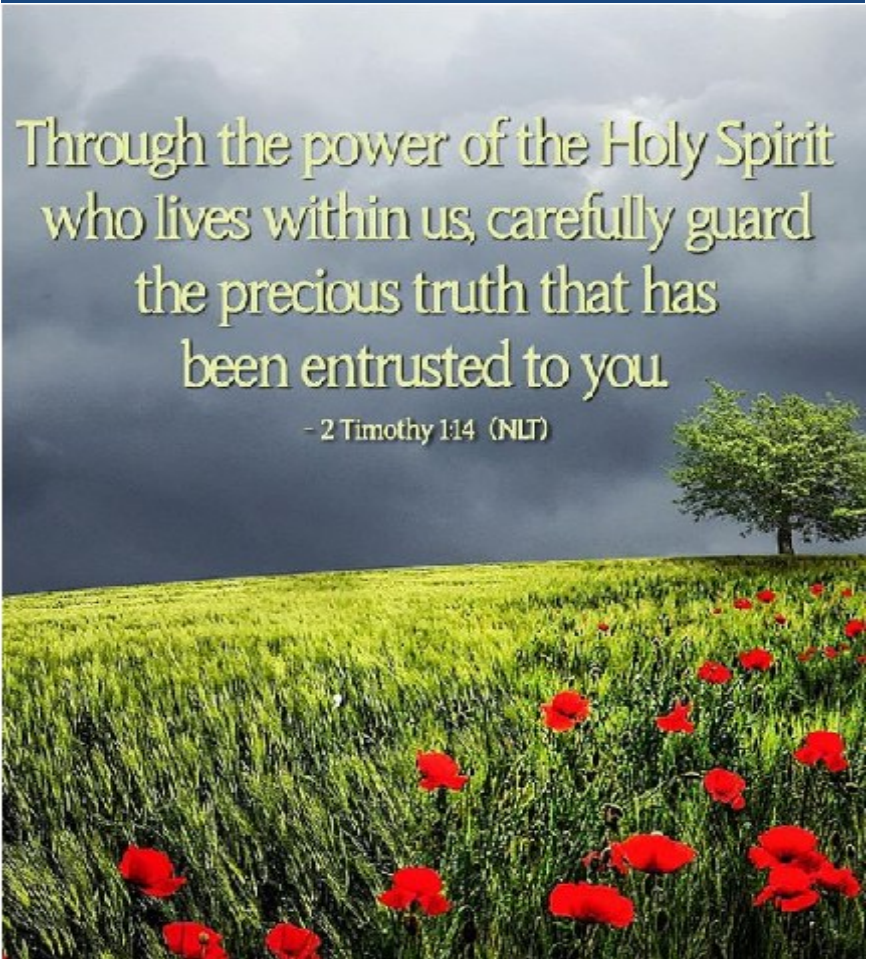
Book 2

The Book of Galatians Guarding the Gospel

**...and Please Don't Exchange It
for Another of a Different Kind**

Through the power of the Holy Spirit
who lives within us, carefully guard
the precious truth that has
been entrusted to you.

- 2 Timothy 1:14 (NLT)



Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Vistoso Community Church

Sermon Series

Guarding the Gospel Part 2 of 2

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. 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.

Galatians 1:6-8

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1992 edition).

First Edition

February 2019

Foreword

The three messages on *Guarding the Gospel* were preached beginning in October of 2018 to my co-laborers in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the length of the material, we needed to divide the material into two parts. The first part covered the first sermon, Volume 1, and part of the second. This second part, which is being released at the same time, includes the rest of Volume 2 and Volume 3.



I trust He was honored and hearts were stimulated with the wonder and beauty of the so-great salvation that is ours in Jesus Christ. With such a precious and momentous gift, we should, of course, expect it to come under attack—and so it has. Join me in guarding the Gospel that we would preserve that, and that alone, which has the power to save.

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "K" and "R".

Kevin Redig

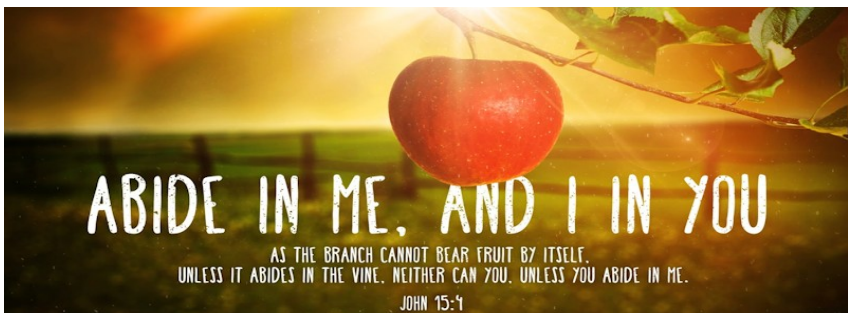
Volume 2 Continued

3. Where Do Works Fit In?

I know you may still question why I am against works. I most certainly am not against works! The issue is that Biblically there is a proper order to incorporating works into the Christian Life. One thing is certain, as we learn to walk by the Spirit and are guided by the Word of God, works will take care of themselves. Again, I remind you: To preach against something that is good but in the wrong place, or taking the place of God's best, is not to be against it. I am not against works, but they are not part of salvation, so let's discuss where works fit in.

Progressive Sanctification

Progressive sanctification is a good place to start. If you recall from our previous study, sanctification can be described as a process whereby we set ourselves apart unto God in terms of purity, priority, and exclusivity. This is a process that only occurs as we learn to *abide in Christ*, seek to grow in grace and knowledge, and live by the Law of the Spirit of Life. Here's the rub: Focusing on a narrowly-defined set of works dictated by church or denominational fruit inspectors is to take the focus off of abiding in Christ and put it instead on squeezing out works.



What does Jesus say?

"If a man abides in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing."

John 15:5

It is *abiding* that leads to bearing fruit that will last and bring honor and glory to our Lord. That's the way the plan of God works! Let me give you a simple example. Many of you were taught as part of your past Sunday School experience to do certain works: read your Bible, put part of your allowance in the offering box, and so on. Let's examine those actions. You may have read your Bible to check the box, but did you allow the Spirit of God to transform you by means of what you read? You may have put something in the offering box, but did you do so grudgingly or cheerfully? Are you seeing the nuances?

As Part of Being a Christian

If you choose not to hold people accountable to produce good works, you will most certainly come under attack. Ironically, I think I have a much better understanding of both the means and place of works than those who feel it necessary to bring such attacks! Consider these two passages of Scripture, which can be very enlightening:

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Therefore, my beloved ... work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:12-13

Certainly we can see that works are part of the Christian Life, but are not part of becoming a Christian. But we must also come to grips with what else is so important.

The works that we do as part of our Christian Life are to be those that God has prepared in advance for us to do. Furthermore, the works He has in mind for us to do are something for which He is going to give us both the desire and the enablement to accomplish.

If you are trying to squeeze out works on your own in an effort to be more spiritual, or to keep the denominational fruit inspectors satisfied, you are completely out of sync with the plan of God. Instead, we need to put our emphasis on seeking the Lord's will on works He might have for us to do. And, if we spend enough time in growing in our faith, we will become sensitive to His desires for our works and more able to appropriate by faith His enablement. Do you see how dramatically different this approach is than church-based pressure to produce works?

Let me take you to two passages I find to be very compelling on this subject. Consider Matthew 26:6-13 and John 12:1-8. I'll leave you to read the passages.



But let's take some time to extract a few important points from the actions described:

- The woman in the narrative is clearly identified in the John passage to be Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.
- Again, in the John passage, Judas complains about what he calls *waste*, which is just a cover for missing out on some additional income from which he can pilfer. Now we could dismiss this as an evil act of an unbeliever, but what about the other Apostles, all of whom are believers:

When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. "This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

Matthew 26:8-9

What they are reacting to is the sight of Mary breaking a jar of very expensive perfume and anointing Jesus' head and feet with it. Did you notice the disciples playing the role of *fruit inspectors*, and their evaluation was a pretty negative one. I wonder if the Lord agrees with their assessment.

- Read the full text of what Jesus says in rebuke of His disciples in Matthew 26:10-13. Here is just an extract:

"She has done a beautiful thing ... When she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. ... wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will be told, in memory of her."

The Lord makes it clear that what Mary has done is a *work*, and, in the eyes of the Lord, it is something worth memorializing.

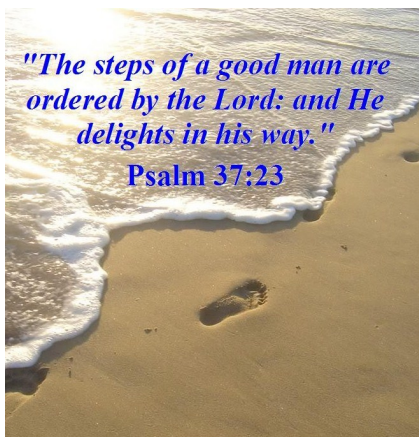
I find this story to be so compelling because:

- Mary performed the work she felt led to do as unto the Lord and in the face of opposition from other believers.
- She is the only one to anoint the Lord in time. Others came on Sunday after the resurrection. Their hearts were in the right place, but they were too late.
- Only one Person in this narrative was satisfied—the Lord Jesus Christ—and He is the only One who mattered.

I pray my life might follow Mary's example—accomplishing the works prepared beforehand for me to do, worked out in fear and trembling, to hear the praise of the Lord. As for the judgment of the world, it is just so much noise that needs to be ignored.

I might sum up the lesson learned by slightly modifying an old refrain: *Only one life will soon be past, only what Christ does through me will last!*

Do you see now why I am resistant to what is often a very superficial command to churn out works? Being in tune with the Lord's leading in one's life, and appropriating His power to accomplish His calling, is a very nuanced thing. It is very much dependent upon spending the time *sitting at His feet and listening to what He has to say*. I am trying to focus my attention on being Christ-centered, rather than man-centered!



4. Why Is Changing the Gospel a Problem?

There will always be those who find some aspect of the Gospel message objectionable. It may be a case of violating their own reason or an effort to compromise with the world. Let me give you a few examples:

- **Taking away Christ's substitutionary atonement.**

The dying of one in the place of others is an objectionable concept to a number of quite prevalent groups in our day. In fact, the whole concept of dying for sin is simply unacceptable to many groups who label themselves Christian. For example, this is the position of today's *emerging church movement*. The truth that man is a sinner, sin must be punished by a holy God, and Christ's willingly taking our place is repugnant to those who gather for the purpose of feeling good about themselves. But, that does not make it untrue.

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.

I Peter 2:24-25

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

I John 2:2

Apart from Christ bearing our sins, there is no bridging of the gulf separating mankind from God. Apart from propitiation (satisfaction of God), there is no removal of the curse of sin. If you take away the substitutionary atonement of Christ, you no longer have a message that has the power to save anyone—no matter how good you might feel about what remains.

- **Denying the supernatural!** Atheist scientist and skeptic S. J. Gould famously said,

There is no such thing as the supernatural, and you had better just get used to it.

Since the advent of higher Biblical criticism in the early 1900's, it has been in vogue to dismiss the supernatural. After all, we are so technologically sophisticated in our day, and we know so much about the universe in which



we live, that the problem of things that don't fit the natural has become a huge obstacle. We have forgotten the simple fact that *super* literally means *above*. So, by definition, the supernatural is going to be above our everyday experience. Just how basic is the fact that God is by definition supernatural?

Therefore, when God acts, we should expect it quite often to be in the realm of the supernatural. Without question, the Gospel is a supernatural solution to man's problem; for it deals with payment for sin at the cross and a supernatural resurrection to a supernatural body as a promise of a supernatural future. God is most certainly not going to limit Himself to the laws He put in place to preserve our physical universe. Nor,

will He be bound by our limited understanding of those laws. Right from the start, we should understand that the Gospel is a message about supernatural things that supernaturally have the power to save a person from a destiny in hell to one in heaven. Try to force this message into the natural, and you won't have anything left with the power to save!

- **Removing dogmatism.** "You Christians would be okay if you just weren't so dogmatic!" Have you ever heard some version of this? I have, many times. And, it is usually in response to the truths that every man is a sinner and every man needs a savior. Many people are comfortable with the idea that there may be some out there who need to be saved, but it is simply unpalatable to make the dogmatic suggestion that this need might also apply to them!
- **Removing the narrow-mindedness of exclusivity!** This is closely related to the dogmatism point above, for part of the dogmatism of anyone who holds to a pure Gospel message is that there is only one way to be saved—faith in the person and work of Christ.

Salvation is found in no one else (other than the Lord Jesus Christ), **for there is no other name** (person) **under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.** Acts 4:12

That means no other religious system can do it. There are not many ways to an eternal home in heaven. There is just one!

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

What this discussion means is that we are probably not sharing a pure Gospel message, one that has the power

to save, unless it is rejected by the world and quite likely by the majority of Christendom! And, that is sometimes a challenging position from which to persevere in holding out the truth. The follow-up questions in our own thinking should always be the same:

- Are we trying to please God or men?
- Are we going to *heal the wound slightly* by trying to make spiritually-dead people better?
- Or, are we going to share the means by which a spiritually-dead person can become spiritually alive, and in the process, change their eternal destiny?

5. Why Must We Guard the Gospel?

The message of the Gospel, and only the Biblical message, has the power to save. So I trust by now you have seen how important it is to guard this message: No adding parts that we think are important and should be included; and no removing those parts that some might find objectionable. The Gospel message is from God, and it is our calling to bear witness and to act as ambassadors to His message! What is the origin of this idea of *bearing witness* or being an *ambassador*? Jesus said:

"You shall be My witnesses ... to the end of the earth."

Acts 1:8

To what are we supposed to be witnesses? To the Gospel, of course, as we see in II Corinthians 5:20:

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Now consider the role of an ambassador. An ambassador is someone who carries important messages from his sovereign to a foreign nation. Does the ambassador deliver the message as received, or does he take it out of the diplomatic pouch and add his own touches, or erase the parts he doesn't agree with? Perish the thought! Following this thought, God is quite capable of developing a plan of salvation without us adding our own touches or deleting parts we don't like. Our job is to hold fast to His message, and deliver it whether it is politically correct or not, whether it is well received or not. The only thing that matters is what does the Lord think of the job we did as His ambassadors?

The Gospel is compelling, it is winsome, and it is true. Examine it from every angle! You will find nothing like it. God has done the work, He is calling our name, and ours is to respond. If you have responded, then yours is to hold out a Biblically-sound message so that others might also be saved.

If you have not yet responded, what are you waiting for?



**The Gospel is true
because it deprives men
of all glory, wisdom, and
righteousness and
turns over all honor to
the Creator alone.
It is safer to attribute
too much glory unto
God than unto man.**

Martin Luther

Guarding Volume 3

I love the Gospel message! For this reason I am not quite ready to bring this booklet to a close. We have been bluntly challenged in Galatians Chapter 1 to guard the Gospel message and keep it pure. We can add to our understanding, and greatly enhance it by taking a look at the second chapter of Galatians as well. It is a chapter of transition, where Paul moves from how a person gets saved to how a saved person lives the Christian Life. There is much to be learned as part of this transition. Consider the following four items:

1. The Gospel needs to continue. (Galatians 2:1-5)
2. The Gospel is not limited by culture, geography or time. (Galatians 2:6-10)
3. Error can come from many sources—some very unexpected! (Galatians 2:11-14)
4. Scripture clarifies a point of doctrine. (Galatians 2:15-16)

1. The Gospel Needs to Continue

First, let's work our way through Galatians 2:1-5. Back in Galatians 1:18, Paul mentions his first trip to Jerusalem. Then in Verse 2:1, he mentions his second trip. Note the period of 14 years between these two visits, indicating that Paul has been a believer for at least 17 years. This second trip is most likely his trip from Antioch to Jerusalem in order to attend the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15. The occasion for this council was the issue of whether or not Gentile converts should be instructed to keep the Mosaic Law. In fact, some had gone so far as to say the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were circumcised

according to the Law of Moses. This, of course, would undermine the Gospel message Paul took everywhere he went. And so, naturally, he confronted this false teaching, and was commissioned by the church in Antioch to go to Jerusalem and get to the bottom of this issue.

The Decision of the Jerusalem Council

Paul was eager to go and state his case, lest his ministry be in *vain*. Paul has no doubts about the Gospel and its impact. What he is worried about is working so hard to reach others, and then to have the ministry compromised. For the word translated *vain* carries the connotation of *without effect*, or *failing to achieve its goal*. Paul knew that adding adherence to the Mosaic Law to the Gospel would undermine the message, and re-entangle those who had been saved. The larger issue was whether the Church was going to be split into two parts—a Jewish Church and a Gentile Church.



Thankfully, the Jerusalem Council came down squarely on a Gospel message that was bounded by faith alone in Christ alone. This is the reason for the result of Verse 3:

... not even Titus ... being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Galatians 2:3

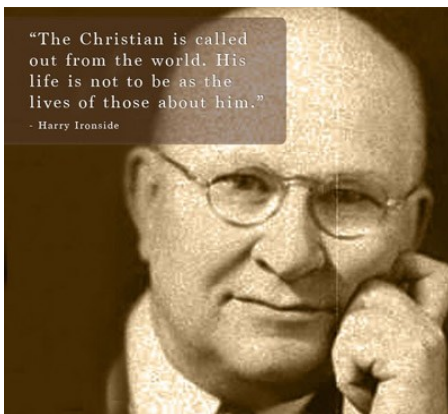
A Practical Example

Now what was the source of this teaching regarding the Law and circumcision? False teachers! And here is how Paul immediately responded to their teaching:

... to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.

Galatians 2:5

This is a tremendous example for us. For, we need to respond in the same way to any in our day who want to add a list of requirements to the Gospel of grace. Here is an example of what I am talking about: It is a story told by a famed preacher of the past, Dr. Harry Ironside, following a bit of street preaching. Following his message, an individual came up and said the following:



"I detest this idea that through the death and righteousness of Another I should be saved. I do not want to be indebted to anybody for my salvation. I am not coming to God as a mendicant, but I believe that if a man lives up to the Sermon on the Mount and keeps the Ten Commandments, God does not require any more of him."

First, do you see faith in Christ anywhere in that man's gospel? I don't either! This is a gospel of a different kind altogether and doesn't have the power to save anyone. Second, consider how Dr. Ironside went on to interact with this man. He asked the man:

"Have you lived up to the Ten Commandments and kept the Sermon on the Mount?"

The man replied, "Perhaps not perfectly, but I am sincerely trying."

Now let me ask you, what does the law have to say about sincerely trying?

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

James 2:10

Cursed is everyone that does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them.

Galatians 3:10

Do you see the terrible predicament of this man? He does not want to come to God as a mendicant (beggar), and so he is going to come based upon his law-keeping and sincerity. Yet, he readily admits he has not kept the Law perfectly. So he is guilty of breaking it all and he is under a curse. The man really is a beggar, spiritually speaking, for the Law has done its work of showing him he is a sinner in need of a Savior and that is the full extent of what it can do. The Law can't save anyone!

That raises the essential question, how are we ever going to obtain a righteousness that will stand the scrutiny of a Holy God? If we can't measure up to His righteousness, then we can expect to come under His wrath. The Bible makes it clear:

There is no one righteous, not even one ...

Romans 3:10

How are we ever going to find a way out of this predicament? Hold that question and let's summarize!

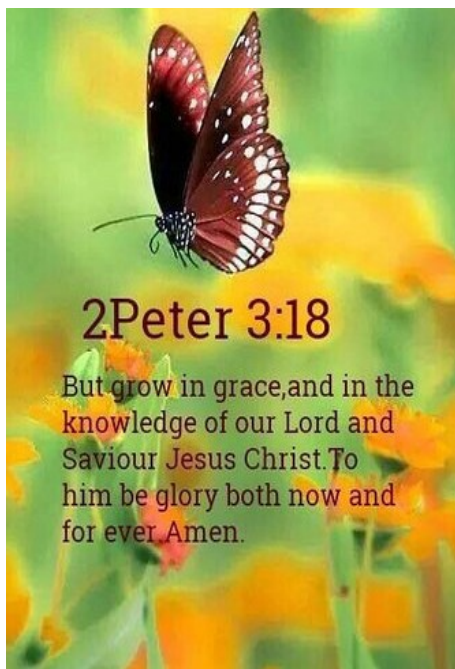
How Does the Gospel Continue?

Let me outline four points:

1. There is both an outward and inward aspect to Gospel continuance.
2. The Gospel continues outwardly when you send out a pure message of how a lost person can get saved. When a person responds, the Gospel has continued in terms of saved people reproducing more saved people.
3. The Gospel continues inwardly when you continue in the Christian Life upon the same basis by which you started—faith in the promise and provision of God.

So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

Colossians 2:6



But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever Amen.

In this case, we are not talking about a lost person getting saved, but a saved person growing in the faith!

4. The vitality of this and every local church is totally dependent upon the truth of the Gospel *continuing* with us! This is not as clear as it should be, for we often think of the Gospel only in terms of a message to be heard by the lost. In reality, as used by Paul in the book of Galatians, it is good news about how a lost person gets saved and good news about how a saved person is transformed.

Do you want to know what happened to the church in Ephesus that left its first love, the church in Sardis that was dead, and the church in Laodicea that became lukewarm? Among other things, they failed to continue in the Gospel!

2. The Gospel Is Not Limited by Culture, Geography, or Time

In Galatians 2:6-10, we see that Paul was called to take the Gospel to the Gentiles while Peter was called to take it to the Jews. We need to realize that this was not a strict segregation, and there was lots of crossover. For example, in Acts 10, we have Peter in the house of a Gentile leading the whole household to the Lord. And, of course, Paul typically went to the synagogue first on his missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire. Nonetheless, when a large number of Gentiles responded in Antioch and the first Gentile church began to form, Barnabas went to Tarsus to find Paul and bring him back.

In short, the Church started out very Jewish and spread into the gentile regions. In the book of Acts we start with the Church centered in Jerusalem, but it isn't long until we start to read names like: Antioch, Samaria, Ethiopia, Derbe, Lystra, Philippi, Colossae, and Rome. As mentioned, the Gospel is not limited by culture or geography.

This same truth is apparent in the record of those who have responded to the Gospel:

... and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb ... they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Revelation 7:9-11

When the Scriptures say that God is *not wanting any to perish ...*, and when it says that God sent His Son to, *"... save the world through Him,"* it is referring to the fact that God doesn't want any people or language to perish. Jesus came to provide what was necessary to save every single human being. Not all will be saved, but that's not because the Gospel is limited by culture, geography, or time. That happens because of unbelief on the part of those He came to save!

We haven't yet addressed the time factor. Within the past several weeks, we have had missions speakers or received communiqués from those laboring half-way around the world, those involved in Bible translation and training pastors, and those working on college campuses. In some cases, the labor has gone on for decades. And, everywhere, it is the same Gospel message. Everywhere, the message that saves is faith alone in Christ alone.

We are not spreading an American message nor a western European message, it is a *whosoever will come* message centered in the person and work of Christ! A necessary part of anyone who comes is what the Bible calls repentance—where repentance is a change of mind wherein we see ourselves as God does—as sinners in need of a Savior. In all cases, Jesus is the Savior we so desperately need! And, is there a time limit on this whole process of the lost

being brought into the kingdom of the Son? The only time limit is until He comes to take His Bride, the Church, to be with Him in the place He has prepared. (John 14:1-3)

3. Error Can Come From Many Sources—Some Very Unexpected!

So as we continue to Galatians 2:11-14, we come across a problem in the church in Antioch. Not surprisingly, problems spring up all the time. What, or who, is the problem? It's Peter!

Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed. Galatians 2:11

Peter was at fault for an act of hypocrisy, and then leading others into the same hypocrisy. Paul did not let this go unchecked, and corrected Peter publicly (that must have been interesting).



Consider the Sources of Error

No wonder we have to learn to guard the Gospel closely—if you have to watch out for an Apostle who is adding things that don't belong, then you really have to be on guard. For people are always prone to add things to the Gospel that don't belong and to remove essential parts.

So, what kinds of things cause problems? We can certainly learn how easy it is to slip into error from this short narrative involving Peter and his slipping back into the eating restrictions of the Law because of the presence of Jewish peers. Let me point out that the purity of the Gospel can come under pressure both from without and from within the Church.

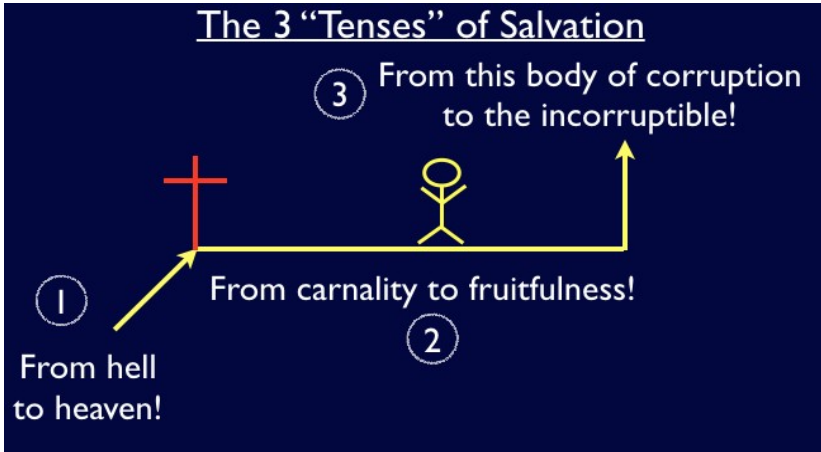
- **From without.** Society and culture will bring pressure upon the Church to conform. This has happened many times during history, and always to the great detriment of the Church. In our day, we see it as the pressure to accept things which are clearly sinful in order to avoid being persecuted by the culture. This is happening on an unprecedented scale in America, as many churches have decided to embrace what culture embraces.
- **From within.** The pastor/author of one of the most influential churches in America recently advocated *unhitching* the Old Testament from the Gospel. It would seem that he sees the Gospel message as needing to change:

Today we preach, teach, write and communicate as if nothing has changed. As if "The Bible says it," still settles it.

Shockingly, this is coming from inside the Church. We have no Christian fellowship if we are not agreed that the Bible is our sole and sufficient source for matters of faith and practice! The Gospel message that fostered the Church in Acts, and has been advancing ever since, most definitely is not in need of 21st century adjustments! To do so would be to preach a gospel of another kind altogether!

Consider Errors in the Salvation Message

Another problematic situation occurs when aspects of the Christian Life are forced to be part of the means by which a person receives eternal life. To discuss this further, our diagram of the tenses of salvation can be helpful.



1. The first *tense* of salvation, has happened in the past if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the result of placing your faith in the person and work of Christ—His person in that He is the Son of God, and His work in terms of the complete sufficiency of the cross to address our sin problem. God does the work of salvation and offers it to us as a gift, which we receive by faith.
2. The second *tense* of our salvation is the life that we live as Christians in the present. God calls us, as Christians, to live fruitful, productive, God-pleasing lives consistent with our new position in Christ. As we begin to know more about God, we will understand that it couldn't be any other way. It is in this *tense* that both transformation and the bearing of fruit occur.

But it is also in the second *tense* of salvation where a problem arises, and it is very common. If you take the desirable aspects of the Christian Life—transformation and fruit-bearing—and move them back to the first tense of salvation as a necessary condition, you have a gospel of another kind!

What I mean by this is that, if you make transformation and fruit-bearing part of a lost person getting saved, you have a works-based salvation. Then, typically, before you know it the salvation emphasis is off of the finished work of Christ and on to the works of the individual. That's a message that won't save anyone.

Consider the Lesson in Correction

We dare not overlook a very important side benefit of this passage—how to properly receive correction! Look at our passage in Galatians 2:11-14. There is no evidence of a blow-up. There is no record of Peter saying, "I was with Jesus for three years, who are you to correct me?" In our day, Paul and Peter would be enemies for life. But look at what we find Peter writing in Scripture:

... be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and consider that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation—as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do the rest of the Scriptures. II Peter 3:14-16

This passage was written right near the end of Peter's life, and we find him endorsing Paul's teaching and calling him a "beloved brother." What a great model for us as we deal with theological differences in our own fellowship.

And, while we are considering Peter's failure, let me point out once again that failure is a poor test for salvation. There are many in our day who preach a message that, because of his hypocrisy, would indict Peter as never *truly* saved. Listen, Peter failed because he was in the thick of it. Although we would like to avoid his failure, we really need to imitate his response to correction.

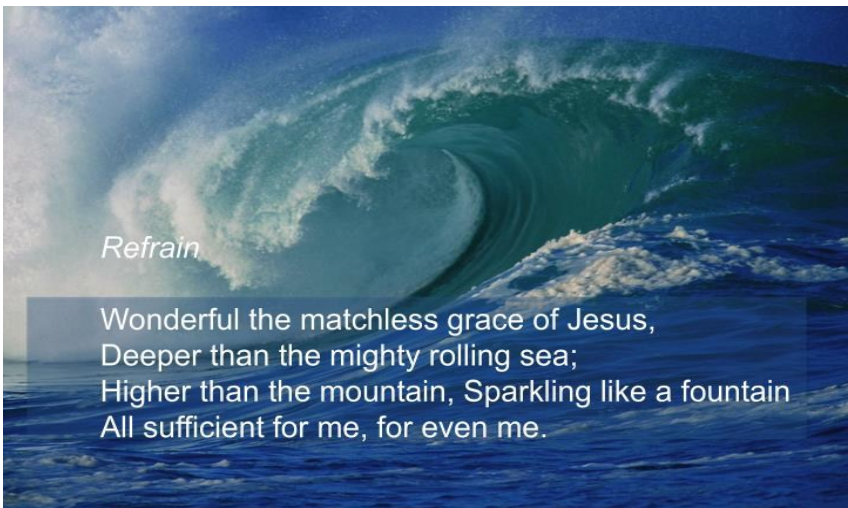
The Bible doesn't sugar coat the shortcomings of man:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

II Corinthians 4:7

It is most certainly true that we sometimes show we have *feet of clay*, but isn't it amazing that God uses imperfect vessels to accomplish His perfect will!

As a point of application, let me encourage all of us to avoid finding fault with God's choice of imperfect vessels. But rather, praise Him for His perfect plan and His willingness to produce fruit through those abiding in Him. *Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus!*



Refrain

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus,
Deeper than the mighty rolling sea;
Higher than the mountain, Sparkling like a fountain
All sufficient for me, for even me.

4. Scripture Clarifies a Point of Doctrine

In Galatians 2:15-16, Paul starts by saying, in essence:

Even we, who thought we were better than gentile sinners, have come to realize a man cannot be justified by the works of the Law, but only through faith in Christ!

To support this truth, here is how the Scripture says it:

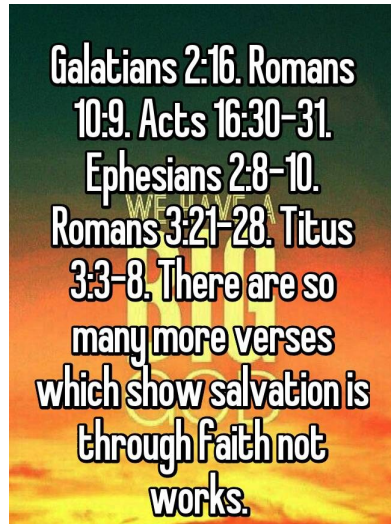
Therefore by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight ... But now the righteousness of God is revealed ... even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

Romans 3:20-22

Or, the short version of this message from our passage in Galatians:

... for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified.

Galatians 2:16



No Justification by Works

Could it be any more clear? No one, ever, will be justified before God by the works he or she has performed. Yet, countless numbers in our day are counting on their religious affiliation and good deeds to somehow make them acceptable before God. The religious practice of our day is the Law of our day, and by it no flesh shall be justified.

There is only one way to be justified (made righteous) before a holy God, and that is His way—through faith in the Son of God and what He accomplished for us on the cross.

I always cringe when I hear someone say, usually at a memorial or funeral, “If anyone is going to be in heaven, dear old Charlie is going to be!” Then they go on to recount the good deeds of dear old Charlie. Here is what God has to say about that in the Romans passage:

... by the works of the Law (or any religious practice)
no flesh shall be justified. Romans 3:20

There is an even more common, and erroneous, way in which the *dear old Charlie* drama plays itself out. Most reasonably Biblical Christians would agree that, if you are trying to work your way into heaven, you are not going to get there. Most would also agree that our salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. We are going to consider these two ends of the spectrum to be *black and white* with respect to how a person gets saved.



For by the works of the Law
no flesh shall be justified. . .
***He who does not believe
in the Son shall not
see life!***



Saved by God's grace
through faith in Christ. . .
***He who believes in the
Son has everlasting
life!***

But there is a third position, which is very commonly held. It goes something like this: “I believe in Jesus and _____.” Of course, people fill in that blank with all kinds of things: faithful to attend church; tried to be the best mother/father, husband/wife I could be; always

followed the *golden rule*; and many, many others. Now we have something that looks like this:



For by the works
of the Law. . .



I believe in Jesus
and _____.



Saved by God's
grace. . .

When you believe in Jesus and something else (anything else) as the means by which you are going to be acceptable before God, you are in a gray area. The two ends of the spectrum are clear, but many, wanting to hold on to a little bit of each, have put themselves squarely into the gray. I have several very serious concerns about those in this gray area. Let me share them with you:

1. Even if we assume it is possible, where in the gray area is a person actually saved? Do you have to believe in Jesus and your works 50/50? You might agree that 10/90 won't do it, but will 90/10? Here is the problem: No one can tell you where that point really is, if it exists at all. Neither can you know where you actually are. With these problems in mind, the only prudent thing to do is to get into a place where you can know for sure:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

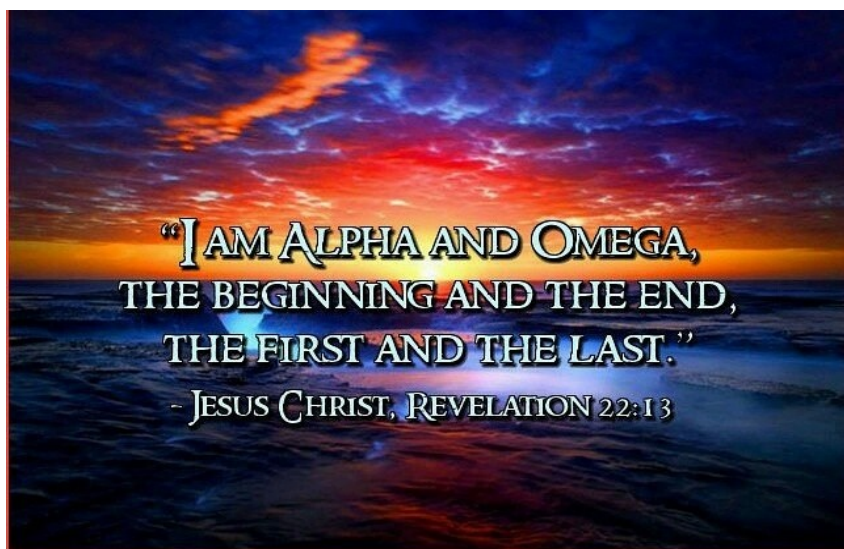
I John 5:13

2. I am very skeptical that God is ever going to accept anything that takes away from the total sufficiency of the work of His Son in saving lost mankind. Do you see that is exactly what we are doing when we try to approach God through *I believe and* _____?

We are, in essence, telling God that the work of the cross wasn't quite enough to save us, and we need to provide the extra 10, 20, or 30%. I have very grave reservations that God is going to accept anyone on that basis. The answer is to get into the white where you can know you are *accepted in the Beloved*.

3. I don't think you actually believe in Jesus if you are in the grey area. I know many will argue with that. But, here is what I mean: If a person thinks that he or she can get to heaven by believing in Jesus plus something else that is not believing in the Biblical Jesus who has provided a means for our salvation! For the Biblical Jesus is *the way, the truth, and the life* (John 14:6), He is *the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world* (John 1:29), and He is *the Alpha and the Omega* (Revelation 22:13).

This Jesus, the One who came to save, doesn't need our help in the least in order to save a lost person.



The Message for Us

So, if we truly love a lost person, what should we do? Work tirelessly, compassionately, and with great discernment through the enablement of the Holy Spirit to try and lead him or her into the white block—saved by faith alone in Christ alone.

My Mom was a believer in Jesus and _____ kind of person for many years. In fact, she started out mostly with a works-based salvation. We had many



theological discussions, and, over the years, she saw the necessity of faith in Christ in order to be saved. But, she still held onto her faith-plus approach. We kept discussing it back and forth, looking at Scripture, and, of course, a great deal of prayer on my part. Then, one day, when the topic of heaven came up, I asked her, “Mom, do you think you are going to heaven when you die?”

She said, “Yes!” So I asked upon what basis she thought she was going to heaven. She responded, “I have trusted in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross to save me.” I then asked, “Plus what else Mom?” To which I had always before gotten additions. But, this time, she dropped her head and replied, “Plus nothing!”

It is not my job to judge anyone. But, upon the authority of God’s Word, I can tell you that at that moment I felt greatly relieved concerning my Mom’s eternal destiny. Not too long before the end of her life, my mother got out of the grey and into the white. Praise God!

In Closing

Let me close with a few thoughts from the final verse in Galatians Chapter 2:

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died for nothing.

Galatians 2:21

Let me break this verse down a bit:

- **I do not set aside the grace of God. . .** The grace of God is a summary term for all that He provides.
- **... for if righteousness comes through the Law ...** We have already seen that by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.
- **... then Christ died for nothing.** How could we ever think that on the cross Christ died needlessly?

Christ's death wasn't needless, but absolutely essential—for all our *righteousness is as filthy rags before the Lord*. (Isaiah 64:6) What we could never do, Christ did for us.

This world will not look out for you, Satan will most certainly not, but as Paul points out:

... the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

Christ died for me. He personally had me in mind. I will never find anything greater than His love, and I most certainly can't add to it. I am trusting in the person of Jesus Christ—the eternally existent Second Person of the Trinity—and what He did for me at the cross—died in my place. It is for this reason that I know I have eternal life, and you can too! God bless you in the grace of the Lord!



Publications written and produced by

Vistoso Community Church

1200 E. Rancho Vistoso Blvd., Oro Valley, AZ 85755 ☎ 520 825-0652

Website: www.vistoso.org