



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Galatians 2:1-10

"The Unchanging Truth of the Gospel"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The exposition of the word is from Galatians chapter 2, verses 1 through 10. So if you have your New Testament with you, will you turn there with me for the Scripture reading, Galatians chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 10? You'll remember that in the course of our previous three messages I made the comment, which is made by most students of the Galatians, that the Epistle to the Galatians is very easily divided into three parts, each of two chapters. That the Apostle Paul, in the opening two chapters speaks of personal matters, particularly seeking to vindicate his apostleship, since evidently Judaizers from Jerusalem had come to the churches in Asia Minor, which he had established through preaching, and had sought to lead them into a belief that faith in Jesus Christ was not sufficient for salvation, but that one also must be circumcised in order that one might be saved. They evidently claimed that their teaching was teaching that was acceptable in Jerusalem, and consequently, the apostle had to defend his own apostleship seeking to show that he stood on the same basis with the Law, that the eleven or the twelve stood with him. So the first two chapters represent a defense of the apostle's apostleship.

The next chapters expound in great detail the doctrine of justification by faith. And in the last two chapters we have stress upon the ethical issues that flow out of that doctrine. Now, we are looking at the beginning of chapter 2, and Paul therefore, is continuing to support, and substantiate his own right to stand before them as an ambassador and apostle of Jesus Christ. He does this by showing that his visit to Jerusalem was not an act of submission as some might have interpreted it. But rather, it was an act in which the leaders in Jerusalem acknowledged his own superiority in the sphere of the Gentiles, in which sphere the Galatians lived. So let's begin now with verse 1, you follow along as I read the apostle's account here of his visit to Jerusalem.

"Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain."

By the way, when he speaks of those who were of reputation, it might seem that he is speaking disparagingly of the apostles who were in Jerusalem. Later on, he identifies them as James, Cephas, and John. Now, several times he uses this expression through the account, and it is to be interpreted not as a disparaging comment concerning the Jerusalem apostles, but rather, he speaks of them as these Judaisers had spoken of them. Those who were of reputation, he speaks of them, in the sense of which they were falsely regarded by them. Now, this is not Paul's attempt to downgrade the apostles who ministered in Jerusalem. Now, in verse 3,

"But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To

whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you. But of these who seemed to be somewhat, (whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me: God accepteth no man's person:) for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me: But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John (Here they are identified, those who seem to be somewhat, those who seem to be pillars.), when James, Cephas, and John who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do."

May God bless this magnificent portion from his word. Let's bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we give Thee thanks and praise Thee for the way in which Thou hast come to us, for we never could have reached Thee. We thank Thee that the infinite God has thought it desirable, and necessary, and fruitful to speak to us. We are grateful Lord, and we thank Thee particularly for the ministry of the Holy Spirit who speaks in the word, and who has brought us to the knowledge of the God who has revealed himself to us. We thank Thee for the Lord Jesus Christ who, in his own person of work, is the climax of the revelation of our God. No man has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he has led Thee forth into full revelation. How grateful we are, and how marvelously bless, Lord, we are. We give Thee the praise that is due unto the magnificent eternal name of the Lord God in heaven.

We ask Thy blessing upon everyone here. May we, Lord, sense the ministry of the Spirit to us in our meeting. And then, Lord, may the promises of God sustain us in our daily life, in the ways in which we seek to live before Thee. We thank Thee, too, Lord for the promises of the word of God that sustain us in times of trial and trouble and difficulty. And we pray for all in this audience passing through difficult experiences, that the promises of God may sustain them, and that Thy personal presence may truly be with in very significant ways. We look forward, Lord, to the completion of the purpose of God for us upon this earth when we shall enter Thy presence. What a glorious day that will be.

In the mean time, Lord, we pray Thy blessing upon the ministry of the word of God here, and wherever it goes forth. We lift up before Thee all of our friends, and ones whose names are mentioned in our calendar of concern, for special ministry from Thee. We exalt Thy name as we listen to the word of God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today in our continuation of the exposition of Paul's letter to the Galatians is The Unchanging Truth of the Gospel. We have been saying that Galatians is Paul's most explosive letter. Some of the most vigorous language that the apostle ever uses in his literature is found in the Epistle to the Galatians. And to see the truth of this, we only have to think of the Roman monk, Martin Luther, the "fulfiller and destroyer of the Middle Ages," and reflect upon the impressions that the truth that Paul preaches had upon that Augustinian man of the church.

"If ever a monk got to heaven by monkery," exclaimed Luther, "I would have got there too; all my brothers will testify to that. For if it had gone on much longer, I would simply have martyred myself to death with vigils, prayers, reading and other work." And then listen to Luther's other words, "Then I began to comprehend the 'righteousness of God' through which the righteous are saved by God's grace, namely, through faith; that the 'righteousness of God which is revealed through the gospel was to be understood in a

passive sense in which God through mercy justifies man by faith, as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.' Now I felt exactly as though I had been born again, and I believed that I had entered Paradise through widely opened doors. As violently as I had formerly hated the expression 'righteousness of God,'" a moment later he added, "So I was now as violently compelled to embrace the new conception of grace and, thus, for me, the expression of the apostle really opened the Gates of Paradise."

It's difficult for us to understand Luther's trials because there are not many of us who have the struggles with the kind of legalism that Martin Luther struggled with. We do not live in a day in which men, generally speaking, get off by themselves in a monastery, and seek by vigils and prayers, and through other means to merit our salvation. But Luther had a great struggle, because God had been working very deeply in his conscious. And for him to come finally to the understanding of the gospel of the grace of God was itself truly like an explosion in the heart of that Augustinian monk. The truths that the Epistle to the Galatians set forth are the truth which especially spoke to Martin Luther. A man of the church, but nevertheless a man who was lost.

The situation in Asia Minor to which the apostle addressed himself was something like this, the church and the churches of southern Asia Minor had been brought to faith by the simple preaching of the gospel by the Apostle Paul. After he had preached the gospel to them, soon afterwards evidently, Judaizing teachers from the city of Jerusalem, claiming connections with the apostles there came and said to the young believers that they had not heard all of the gospel from Paul. He had told them that they should believe in Christ, and they agreed that that was true, but he had not told them that they must be circumcised. And so they told these young Christians that they must undergo the rite of circumcision if they were to have hopes of salvation.

One of the things that it is important for us to see here is that there is, so far as we know, no indication in the Epistle to the Galatians that the Judaizing teachers disagreed with the apostle over any of the facts of the gospel. That is, they evidently taught that

Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They evidently taught that he had accomplished an atoning work. They believed in his death, they believed in his resurrection. They believed in all of the facts of the gospel. But they disagreed over the terms by which those benefits, remission of sin, justification by faith, all of the benefits of Christ's salvation become ours. The apostle said that men were justified by faith, by belief in what God had done for them through Christ, trusting only in Christ and what he had done. They taught that one must trust in Christ, but one must also undergo the rite of circumcision. In other words, they agreed in everything except the terms by which the benefits become ours.

This was, for the Apostle Paul, a very serious aberration. We tend to think, living in the 20th century, that if we could get that much agreement in spiritual things that would be sufficient. But for the apostle it was not so, and he did not hesitate to say even this small, apparently small, disagreement was the kind of disagreement that ultimately, in principle, was so great that the gospel that was preached by the Judaisers was not a gospel at all. He says in the 8th verse of the 1st chapter, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." He says in the 6th verse, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel," a different gospel which is not another of the same kind.

One asks, does this have any contemporary relationship to us? Yes, it does. This is a contemporary problem even in evangelical circles. Because there is a tendency, always, to modify the terms by which the gospel comes to us. And I guess that one of the reasons why this is so, is that there is general agreement over the facts of Christ's work, and it is easier to differ and introduce works in the question of terms, or concerning the terms by which the benefits become ours, than it is concerning the facts of the gospel. Let me illustrate. There is a large religious organization, which has a whole sacramental system of salvation. So far as I know, there is no major disagreement on paper between

the doctrinal pronouncements of this large religious organization and the doctrinal beliefs of Reformed Christianity. Both of these interpretations of Christianity affirm the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both affirm that he was truly God and truly man. Both affirm that he accomplished an atoning work on the cross of Calvary that dealt with sins. Both affirm a resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but when it comes to the reception of benefits, which the Lord has won for us by his work, there is a vast divergence.

This large organization says that original sin is removed by the waters of baptism. It says that daily sin is removed by the non-bloody sacrifices of the mass. Let you doubt that, listen to the pronouncements of the council at Trent, which say, "Let him be accursed who saith that sins are not removed by the non-bloody sacrifice of the mass. Venial sins are removed by that aural of extreme unction, and other sins are removed by purgatory." Now, there is a purgatory mentioned in the Bible. It is mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the 3rd verse. It is the only purgatory mentioned in all of the Bible. It is the purgatory of the saving work of Jesus Christ. The writer of that epistle says, "Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Notice those expressions concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." That is the only purgatory in the Bible.

Well, what is left for the cross of Christ, if sins are removed by water, by bread, by oil, and by fire? Where water, bread, oil, and fire remove sin, what does the blood do? When so much is done by works, little is done by grace. It is evident then that the pronouncements of the large religious organization are contrary to the teaching of the word of God. And even though there is agreement upon the facts of the gospel, a salvation by works is introduced through the sacraments of the church.

Now, there are, someone might say, well of course, we don't agree with that system, but then we have others in more evangelical groups, too. We have some who say

to us that in order to be saved we must repent, we must confess, we must believe, and we must be baptized in order to be saved. Now, it is my opinion that this doctrine ultimately comes to a salvation through works as well. The apostle says in Galatians very plainly that to be circumcised is to fall into a system of works. So circumcision is a work. Circumcision is an act performed visibly. Baptism is an act performed visibly. Circumcision is an act performed by an instrumentality, a knife. Baptism is an act performed through an instrumentality, water. Baptism is an act that is performed visibly before all, physically. Circumcision is an act, visible and physical. All of the features of circumcision are found in principle in baptism.

Now, if it then seems obvious, at least to me, that if we say a man must be baptized in order to be saved, we are saying in effect that a person is not saved by grace, but by works. Now, furthermore, in the New Testament you will remember that when the Apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost said, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." He added, "And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Later on that same apostle is preaching in the 10th chapter in the house of Cornelius, and he utters the statement, "To him give all the prophets' witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. The same expression found in Acts chapter 2, verse 38. And then we read, "The Holy Spirit fall on them." As soon as Peter uttered those words, which contained the gospel of salvation through faith, and the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit fell upon them. Then Peter said, "Who can forbid these being baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as me?" In other words, in the 10th chapter, we have the explanation of what Peter meant in the 10th chapter when he said, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost." It becomes evident then that the important term is the repent. And the being baptized is in token of profession of what has happened internally through the reception of the Holy Spirit, and the justification by faith. So in the New Testament then, biblically as well as logically, salvation by baptism is a confusion of the grace of the gospel.



Now, there are others in evangelicals in who perhaps do not make quite as serious an error, but nevertheless an error when they tell us that we must believe and surrender in order to be saved. Or when they use such terms as "open the door of your heart" or "commit yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ." These are confusing terms, because the stress in them rests not upon the content of the gospel, as we have in the New Testament, but rather upon the subjective feelings and actions of the individual. It is much better, in my opinion, it is much better to simply stick to the term which the New Testament uses so frequently, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." True belief includes true repentance. And belief is the stress of the New Testament.

John wrote a gospel, the Gospel of John. He said he wrote this gospel that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that in believing they might have life through his name. Never once does he mention the term baptism. In other words, a gospel written to bring men to life does not mention baptism, but it does mention over and over again that men believe unto salvation. Now, this was the question then that the apostle faced when he wrote his letter to the Galatians. And in it, he performs this admirable task of explaining very full to us what it means to be saved through grace. He is defending his apostleship, and thus his gospel. And we read in the 1st verse of the 2nd chapter, "Then fourteen years after I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also." We do not know the exact time referred to by the fourteen years, but lets just assume that it means fourteen years after my conversion. The visit to which he refers is the visit described by Luke in Acts chapter 11, verse 27 through verse 30. It has been called the famine relief visit.

Barnabas and Paul went up, and they took Titus with them. This visit, evidently, was known to the Judaisers, and they may have said, "Paul went up to Jerusalem, and the fact that he went up to Jerusalem indicates that he recognizes that he should be in submission to those who are in Jerusalem. Paul turns the tables on them and says, "I went up to Jerusalem, its true. But when I went up to Jerusalem, I did not submit to

them. As a matter of fact, they acknowledged my superiority in the sphere of the Gentiles. For, when I took Titus up with me, he was not compelled to be circumcised. And furthermore, Peter, James, and John, the pillar apostles, they extended to me the right hand of fellowship. And they acknowledged that it was my commission from the Lord to go to the Gentiles, as it had been Peter's to go to the Jews."

It was a daring thing, in a sense, for the apostle to take Titus, a Gentile, up to the city of Jerusalem and make him a test case. But that is exactly what he did. One thing I always admire about the Apostle Paul, he really had the courage of his convictions. And he was certain of the message that he was proclaiming. So he took Titus, a Gentile to the city of Jerusalem. And he was a test case. Is it necessary to be circumcised in order to be saved? Now, I want you to notice another thing. In the 2nd verse he says he went up by revelation, probably a prophet like Agabus, he's referred to in the context of Acts 11. Stood up in the church, and said, "I foresee, by the Holy Spirit that the Apostle Paul should go to Jerusalem." Paul says he went up by revelation.

In the early church they had the right of standing up in the meeting and expressing themselves. Incidentally, that's of course why in Believer's Chapel we have the Lord's Supper in an open meeting on Sunday night. And the men who have spiritual gifts are given the freedom to exercise their spiritual gift, and also their priesthood. It was the New Testament practice. I do earnestly believe this that if the Apostle Paul were alive today, suddenly thrust into the city of Dallas. And were by some hook or crook, now that's not the right expression to use, [Laughter] but anyway in some way were brought to Believer's Chapel on Sunday night. Why, he would come in, and find himself right at home in the meeting, because there would be freedom of utterance. Agabus in a meeting in Antioch, evidently, and gave the apostle confirmation of the leading of the Holy Spirit that he should go to Jerusalem.

Now, it's possible this revelation is private, but in the light of the mention of Agabus back in Acts 11, and the prophecy that he prophesied, it seems to me that this is

what happened. "And I went up by revelation," and notice what he did. He "communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles." Now, I want you to notice here that the apostle lays a great deal of stress upon the content of the message, not simply the result. He did not go up and speak primarily about what God had done through them. That is given for us in Acts chapter 15, the salvation that had been wrought among the Gentiles. But here, he communicated unto them the gospel that he was preaching. How contrary to our missionary meetings, in which we often have men come as missionaries and tell us of the results that they have accomplished through the preaching of the gospel. Now, there is a place for that, of course. There is an important place for stress upon the works of God. But always first, stress should rest upon the word of God. How often have we had missionaries come in churches, and have the elders say, "Now, we want to have a little conference? We want to know what the gospel is, that you are preaching. What kind of gospel are you preaching?"

The apostle set before them the gospel that he was preaching. The reason this was necessary is that it is possible for the terms of the gospel to become confused. And if we confuse the terms of the gospel, we are inclined to confuse the principle of the gospel, the principle of grace. There are those like the Jehovah's witnesses who say that they believe that we should believe and do good works in order to be saved. A simple citation of Scripture is sufficient to refute that doctrine, "For by grace are ye saved through faith. And that not of yourself. It is the gift of God, not of works lest any one should boast." Then there are those who say that we should repent and believe in order to be saved. Now, the Bible does use this term, but unfortunately the term repent has been misused as often as it has been used properly. To repent, biblically, means to change your mind with the result that actions are changed. That is involved in true repentance. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a changed life.

Now, if that is the sense in which we use the term, it is a biblical term to call upon people to repent and believe. But unfortunately, the term repent has historically become

confused with the term "to regret or to be sorry." And the implication has often been given to people that if they are to be saved, they must be sorry in a physical sense, that is that they must weep and cry over their sins. And that would be, again, a confusion of the principle of grace. There are those who say that we must repent and confess our sins. And by confession, incidentally, that is biblical, but by confession they mean stand up in a public meeting, before the congregation and confess that you have believed in Jesus Christ. Again, that is to turn a biblical term into a work. There are some people who have genuinely believed in Jesus Christ, but who in their early Christian experience find it very difficult to stand up in a crowd of people and make confession of their faith. They don't really know how to say a sentence or two in front of a crowd. And I know exactly how that is, because that's the way I was. When I was in college, when the day came for me to read my theme in class, I took a cut, and had one of my friends do it. And not simply, because I wanted to be on the golf course, either. It's because I was fearful of standing up in front of people. I still am fearful. Anybody looking at you would see, of course, that a man would have to be fearful. [Laughter]

But seriously, to say to people that they must confess their sin before a group of people is to turn what is a gospel of grace into a gospel of works. Now, if we mean that it is essential that a man who comes to faith expresses salvation in testimony to it in a normal way, then that is all right. It's all right to say believe and confess in that sense. That's the biblical sense of the term in Romans 10:9-10. The person who has come to faith in Jesus Christ will express that faith. But to express it publicly in a meeting, and to make that a condition for salvation, is to give to the term confess a meaning that it does not have in the New Testament.

There are those who say that we should "Believe and make Christ the Lord of our lives." This is very common in evangelicalism. But let me say to you that it is impossible for us to preach a gospel of grace and say that we should believe and make Christ the Lord of our lives. Now, if what is meant by this is simply the acknowledgment that Christ

is the Lord, well that is a necessity. We cannot believe in someone who is not the Lord. So to believe in Christ, who is the Lord, is a true expression of the New Testament terms for salvation. But to make Christ the Lord of your life is the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. So to say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and make Christ the Lord of your life," is to confuse justification with sanctification. When we come to faith in Christ, Christ is usually not the complete Lord of our lives in the practical sense. That's why the apostle appeals to the Roman Christians by the mercies of God to "present your bodies a living sacrifice," because that's part of one's sanctification. And it's a very difficult part of the work of the Holy Spirit, because it takes all of the rest of our lives for the Holy Spirit to accomplish the work of sanctification. And even then it's not complete until we pass into the presence of the Lord.

There are those who say, if we say simply, that men should believe in Christ, well that's easy believism, and it leads to a kind of Christian life that is not really Christian life. It's a real deep experiential salvation. I remind you that the person who's used the expression "only believe" is our Lord Jesus Christ himself. Then what about these other terms that are so popular? We always like to transform the terms of the Bible, for some reason. I don't know exactly why, because it seems to me that the biblical terms are chosen by the Holy Spirit and they are the best terms to express the truths of the spiritual life. How often do you hear people say, "Open the door of your heart, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, I am sure that is done with the desire to make plain and simple the act of salvation. But think of what we have done by that. When we say, "Open the door of our hearts." Or when we say, "Commit yourself to the Lord." These terms deemphasize the content of the gospel. They lay stress on, not the facts of the gospel, the saving atoning work of Christ, but they lay great stress on the individual experience in response. It is much better, in my opinion, to stick to the terms that the Bible uses. And overwhelming, the popular term of the New Testament is to "believe in our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is true that people misuse the term "believe" but the answer is not to give us another term manufactured by some of us in our minds, but rather to explain the true significance of the biblical term. So the apostle says, "I communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but" he said, I did it, "privately to them which were of reputation," Peter, James, and John, "lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain." Now, Paul does not mean by that, incidentally, that he was worried about his own gospel. He didn't have any personal doubts about it. He didn't need any reassurance. It is possible that he realized that if there was a conflict between Jerusalem and him that the result of his ministry would be in doubt. I am rather inclined to think that he communicated unto them his gospel, and when he says, "Lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain." He wanted to overthrow the influence of the Judaisers, and explain clearly to the Jerusalem apostles the exact sense in which he is preaching the gospel, so that they would not be confused by what Judaisers were saying. And would stand with him in the grace of the gospel. That is what I think he had in mind when he said, "Lest y any means should run, or had run in vain." He didn't want the Judaisers influence to destroy the effectiveness of his preaching.

The controversy of Titus, described in verses 3 through 5, is very important to Paul. He said, "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised." So, if circumcision is necessary for salvation, and if they had said it was necessary for a Gentile, Titus became a test case. And Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. So you Galatians, you see that from Titus' experience, that in Jerusalem, they said that circumcision was not necessary for salvation. Why did all of this come about? Well, Paul says in verse 4, and that because of false brethren unawares brought in." Notice the expression, "brought in." The Greek expression used here is passive in sense, and it is a reference to the fact that evidently members in the local church had brought these false brethren in who raised the question of adherence to the Law concerning circumcision.

And further he says, "They came in secretly," or they wormed their way in. The Greek term might well be rendered freely. Here are the fifth columnists again, workers, the legalists. Incidentally, legalists were always treacherous. Legalists always act like spies. They come in among the congregation. Seek to bring in simple-minded members who do not yet fully understand all of the grace principle of the gospel. And seek to bring them into bondage to their own legalistic ways. They are Satan's CIA. So they are the ones who have come in secretly to spy out the liberty that they had in the gospel. Now, notice Paul's response. He said, "We invited them all to tea, and we had a nice little discussion, and we tried to encourage one another. And I tried to slip in a little word that might be used by the Holy Spirit to clarify their thinking." No, it was not that. He said, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." The gospel must be cure.

Luther was a man who had a marvelous combination of softness and strength. He said that with reference to spiritual things, he said, "God assisting me, my forehead shall be more hard than all men's foreheads. And I take upon me this title, according to the proverb *cedo nulli*, 'I give place to none.' Yea, I am glad even with all my heart, in this point, the point of the gospel, to seem rebellious and obstinate. And here I confess that I am ever and ever will be stout and stern and will not one inch give place to any creature." The he adds, "Charity giveth place for it bears all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, but faith giveth no place." What he means by that is simply this. That in matters that have to do with the relationship that Christians have with one another or with non-Christians, it is proper to be loving. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. But when it comes to the message of the gospel of the word of God, then faith gives no place. That's the time to be obstinate, that's the time to be firm. That's the time to insist upon the truth of God, because the truth of God is not our truth, it is God's truth. And when a man betray us the truthfulness over the word of God, over the false application of the principle of love, he is betraying

God himself. And that is not very pleasing to God. So the apostle says, "That the truth of the gospel might continue with you, I gave no place at all in subjection to the legalizers."

In the history of the Christian church, incidentally, this has been a matter, which at certain key points has had great significance. Take, for example, the Arian controversy, in which there was great controversy in the Christian church over a diphthong. For the Arians said that Jesus Christ was a created being. They said that he was the Son of God, but not the eternal Son of God. Alexander and Athanasius and others struggled with the Arians over this question. Gibbon made merry over the whole world convulsed over a diphthong! But you see, all the difference in the world rested between the two Greek expressions *hompousios* and *homoiousios*. The only difference in Greek is the one little letter, *iota*, but one of them means that the Son of God was of the same substance as the Father. The other meant that he was of like substance with the Father, not the same, similar. But you see if the Lord Jesus Christ is worshipped as the Arians insisted, then what they were saying is that we should worship someone who was not truly God, and in worshipping someone who is not truly God, the Christianity then becomes nothing more than another one of the pagan religions, full of the idolatry that characterized them.

Freud, one of the greatest of the historians tell us that in earlier years, Mr. Carlyle had spoken contemptuously of the Athanasian controversy, of the "Christian world torn in pieces over a diphthong." But later, told him that he perceived that Christianity itself was at stake. If the Arians had won, it would have dwindled away to a legend. "The Arian Christology, someone else has said, "in inwardly the most untenable and dogmatically worthless of all the Christologies that lead us in the history of dogma." There is a time when Christians must stand firm when the truth of the gospel is at stake.

By the way, this is true even in natural life. There is an old story, it's supposed to be true, of a woman went to Europe many years ago, before the cablegrams were written as they were written a few years back. She found a bracelet that was of great value, she thought, and she thought the price was very fair. So she cabled for her husband, and



asked for permission to buy it. And he cabled back and the words were simply, "No. Price too high." But in those days, in the cablegrams, instead of spelling out the punctuation, there were symbols, that is dots and dashes, for the marks of punctuation. Well, of course, you know what happened. The individual who was transmitting the message left out the period. And so the cable came back to the lady, "No price too high." And she went out and bought. Well, when she returned to the United States, her husband was very angry over it. And sued the cable company, Western Union I presume, and won the case. And that's the reason why, afterwards, in telegrams you would see "Stop. Stop. No. Stop. Price too high." And so forth. [Laughter] So you can see that often on little things great issues hang, and the difference between hompousios and homoiousios was just as great as the difference over the omission of the punctuation mark, and the STOP that would have made the sentence clear.

Paul said he communicated unto them his gospel. "We did not give subjection to the Judaisers, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might remain with you." The conclusion of the matter is given us in the remaining verses. And the apostle here sets forth the fact that simply, the leaders in Jerusalem supported him. Those who seemed to be somewhat, when we got together and discussed the truths that I had been preaching, they didn't add anything to me. My gospel was a gospel of which they approved. And further, on the contrary they saw that the gospel to the uncircumcision had been committed to me, as the gospel to the circumcision had been committed unto Peter. They saw that the same Holy Spirit that was working effectually in Peter, in his ministry, was working effectually in my ministry. And at the conclusion of my conference, Peter, James, and John extended the right hand of fellowship to me, in token of the fact that they approved of the message that I was proclaiming, and acknowledged that my proper sphere of preaching was among the Gentiles, as their proper sphere was among the Jewish people.

Well, we must conclude, our time is just about up. Let me conclude by simply saying this. That in the changing ages, there is only one ageless and unchanging gospel. It is the gospel of the grace of God. It has as its subject the Lord Jesus Christ. It has as its content the death, burial, and resurrection of the Messianic Savior. And it has as its rationale that penal substitutionary death, by which the sins of sinners is paid for in the blood of our great Lamb of God. And it has as its terms upon which the benefits of His work become ours, faith alone. For if salvation were through works, not a single one of us could ever be saved. To add anything to the terms of the gospel, simple faith, is to confuse the grace of God in the gospel.

Incidentally, when we add, as I said two or three weeks ago, when we add anything to believe, as a term of the reception of the work of Jesus Christ, several things happen. Number one, we invalidate the conception of salvation by grace. Number two, we insult the work of Jesus Christ for he said, "It is finished." If we add anything to this we insult him. We say, No, it was not finished. I must finish it by my good works. And third and I hesitate to say this, but nevertheless it is the word of the Apostle Paul, the Holy Spirit says to us, "Go to hell." For he says, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." What then does require of men, well, just as Luther discovered, God simply wants to be believed. That is the most important thing for us to realize. God wants to be believed.

There is man to whom I am greatly indebted, who in one of his books tells the story of a conversation with another man about the health of his soul. The conversation went on for some time; he sought to explain to him the salvation of God through the grace of the gospel. And this man seems to be in total darkness. The Holy Spirit had not illumined him. He was a total natural man who received not the things of the Spirit of God. They were foolishness to him. "All he could say," he said, "failed to penetrate the murk of his fallen spirit." "Finally," he said. "The man said to me in a somewhat

desperate tone, 'but what does God want? Tell me what does God want?'" And he said that God gave him an answer in a coruscating line, a gibbering line. I said to him, "God wants to be believed. More than anything else, God wants to be believed. If you sand piper your life until you have taken off all the surface roughness, and yet do not believe in him, he will have to cast you into outer darkness, but if you understand that he longs and yearns with deep desire that men shall simply take him at his word and believe what he says, then he is satisfied to completion. And will declare you to himself. God wants to be believed. He wants to be believed that we are sinners and under condemnation. He wants to be believed when he says that Jesus Christ has died for sinners. He wants to be believed when he says, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'" Finally the man said, "I begin to see, after all, the honor of God is involved."

In the final analysis, it really comes down to that. It's the truthfulness of God. He says that we are lost. He says he has provided a remedy in the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." The Messiah of Israel, the promised Messiah, believe and you shall be saved. He wants to be believed. He wants us to understand that it is through grace that we are saved. And when, by the grace of God, we bow our hearts before the Lord, acknowledge our guilt and condemnation, and receive as a free gift the Lord Jesus Christ, we have that which means everlasting life. The honor of God is involved. May God, through the Holy Spirit speak to us, and bring us to the place where we acknowledge the truthfulness of his word, with reference to us, and with reference to Christ, and the saved. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for the staunch position of the Apostle Paul at a critical time in the history of the early church. We thank Thee for the boldness and the spiritual bravery of the man of God, who at a most significant point, stood for the grace of God in the gospel. For surely, Lord, had salvation depended upon good works, we could never have merited it. But we praise Thee for the Lamb of God who

accomplished the work of salvation, and has merited all of the salvation that is involved in the plan of God. And we praise Thee that the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ are given us by our gracious God through faith in him. We worship Thee, and we praise Thee. And we pray, O God, that if there should be some here who have not yet come to him, O give them no rest nor peace until they rest in Christ. Now, may grace, and mercy, and peace go with us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.