

***“Freedom Worth Fighting For”***

December 26, 2010

Text: Galatians 2:1-10

**Just before the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the British naval hero Lord Nelson learned that an admiral and a captain in his fleet were not on good terms.**

Sending for the two men, he placed the hands of the admiral and the captain together.

Staring them both in the face, he said, “Look—*yonder* is the *enemy!*”

A few things are worth fighting over, most things aren’t.

A wise person knows which is which.

**Biblical doctrines pertaining to the essential truths of our faith are worth fighting for.**

In Jude 3, Jude wrote=> *“Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”*

The basic truths of our faith are worth fighting/contenting for—earnestly.

But who is the enemy against whom we must contend?

Those who preach a different faith/gospel.

As long as they continue to pervert the truths God has revealed, we must contend with them by pointing out their errors.

As Martin Luther once said=> “We will suffer our goods to be

taken away, our name, our life, all that we have; but the Gospel, our faith, Jesus Christ, we will never suffer to be wrested from us.”

**In today’s text, we will see that Paul was an implacable, immovable, dogmatic fighter for the truth of the gospel.**

\* He could be very flexible when it came to non-essential matters.

E.g. in 1 Cor 9:20, he wrote=> *“To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; / to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law. / To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, that I may by all means save some”* (9:20-22).

I.e., I’ll be whatever you need me to be if my doing so will advance the cause of your salvation.

\* But Paul knew which fights were worth fighting, & which ones called for a flexibility that backs away from a fight and yields ground.

**Today’s text is an example of Paul’s readiness to stand/fight when it’s necessary to do so.**

If he’d failed to do so out of some ill-conceived hope for peace, the true gospel might have been lost to us forever.

We would prob. never have heard that salvation is by God’s grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Something fallacious would have been added to the gospel,  
and that would have nullified it.

**Paul fought for the doctrine of Xn freedom—freedom from  
the Mosaic Law as a means of salvation.**

The Law said that if you obeyed it, you'd be blessed, but that if  
you disobeyed it, you'd be under a divine curse.

Obedience would lead to life, disobedience to death/hell.

But obedience to the Law meant perfect obedience, and no one  
could ever accomplish that.

So the Law always/inevitably ended up cursing people, by  
condemning them for their moral failures and  
consigning them to eternal punishment.

**Man's 1<sup>st</sup> instinct, whenever he senses his own condemnation,  
is to do something about it to correct it on his own.**

He says to himself, "I've got to shape up & start being more  
religious—reading/obeying my Bible, praying, giving more  
money, burning more candles, witnessing more—whatever  
it takes, I'll have to do it."

But that's just adding human works to what God has  
already accomplished through X's death.

In Gal 3:13, Paul will write=> "*Christ redeemed us from  
the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—  
for it is written, 'CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO  
HANGS ON A TREE [i.e., a cross].*'"

So the right answer is to fall back on one's faith in X's death.

When you feel convicted of sin, you don't need to start doing things to solve the problem.

Jesus has already done everything that needs to be done. Just confess your sin to Him, praise Him for His sacrifice on your behalf, and seek His face, drawing ever nearer to Him until you sense His love once again.

Its a matter of our hearts, not what we do w/ our hands/feet/lips.

**The NT has much to say about the Xn's freedom from the curse of the Law, and it's all good=>**

\* E.g., Rom 8:2=> *"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you **free** from the law of sin and of death."*

The "law of sin/death" is the Mosaic Law, which always & only pointed out our sins and condemned us to death.

Believers are now free from the Law's condemnation, because X has borne its curse on our behalf.

\* Rom 7:6=> *"We have been **released** from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter."*

The Law demanded death as the penalty for sin.

But the Xn died with X on the cross, so the penalty is paid, & he can live his life w/o fear of condemnation and divine retribution.

We still serve the Lord, but now it's in the newness of the Spirit's power, not our old powerless flesh.

\* Jn 8:36=> *"If therefore the Son shall make you **free**, you shall*

*be free indeed.”*

There is no freedom that can compare with our freedom  
in X from the Law's condemnation/guilt/fear.

That's freedom worth fighting for.

\* II Cor 3:17=> *“The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of  
the Lord is, there is **liberty**.”*

And where is the Spirit? In Xns, having been indwelt them  
and bearing witness with their spirits of God's  
acceptance as His adopted children.

**Salvation by God's grace, apart from human works produces  
a freedom that Paul considered worth fighting for.**

False Xns called “Judaizers” wanted to add human works to  
God's grace as part of the gospel.

They said you had to get circumcised & obey Moses' Law,  
because faith in X's death alone wouldn't save you.

But when you add works to grace, you don't supplement grace,  
you nullify grace.

You can't be a real Xn, and be a real legalist (who adds the  
works of the Law, to God's grace).

E.g. in Gal 5, Paul told the Galatians=> *“Behold, I Paul,  
say to you, that if you receive circumcision [a human  
work], Christ will be of no benefit to you./ And I  
testify again to every man who receives circumcision,  
that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. /  
You have been severed from Christ, you who are  
seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from  
grace” (5:2-4).*

I.e., make up your mind, whether you're going to trust X for your salvation, or trust your perfect obedience of the Law.

You can't have it both ways.

This is an extremely important principle for us to understand.

Does this mean that Xns are free to sin? Absolutely not!

Xn freedom isn't license to sin, but emancipation from one's old slavery to sin, so we no longer have to sin.

In Rom 6:15, Paul asks=> *"Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be!"*

**This whole issue was settled at the Jerusalem Council, where Paul fought for the principle of Xn freedom from the Law.**

He describes that fight in our text (Gal 2:1-10).

This passage was part of his defense against the Judaizers who had gone to Galatia and spread the rumor that he was a false apostle, & his gospel was a false gospel.

**Paul describes his fight for Xn freedom in five scenes=> the Delegation/Deliberation/Decision/Dispute/Determination.**

**\* The Delegation**

[Galatians 2:1]=> *"Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with **Barnabas**, taking **Titus** along also."*

**Paul had preached his gospel message a long time before he met with the other apostles to discuss it.**

\* In Gal 1, he showed that X had revealed the gospel to him.

No man—including the Apostles—had taught it to him.

This was his answer to the Judaizers' charge that he had stolen his gospel from the other Apostles then modified it.

\* Now Paul is answering another of the Judaizers' accusations=>

That his gospel was very different from that of the other Apostles'.

This time he'll show that his gospel is the same as theirs, which is why they had endorsed it.

**The delegation that went to Jerusalem included Paul, Barnabas, and a Gentile convert named Titus.**

Titus' presence was very important to these proceedings, because he was a living example of an uncircumcised Gentile who was saved, as a result of Paul's ministry.

The Judaizers said Gentiles couldn't be saved w/o becoming circumcised, but Titus obviously was.

If the Judaizers got their way, they were going to have Titus circumcised before he left Jerusalem.

\* **The Deliberation**

[Verse 2]=> *“And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.”*

**Paul says he went to Jerusalem to get this matter settled,  
because God had revealed that he was to do so.**

Acts 15:2 says the church at Antioch (where he was a pastor)  
had sent him, because the Judaizers had come there, stirring  
up trouble among its people with their false gospel.  
So Paul went for both reasons.

**Paul “submitted” the gospel he preached, to the other  
Apostles for their consideration.**

It wasn't that he had doubts about what he had been teaching for  
over 14 years now;

It was that this issue needed to be settled by the Church's  
top leadership, once/for all.

Paul knew what the Lord had revealed to him, but he didn't know  
how deep the other Apostles' understanding of it all was,  
nor how deeply committed they were to these doctrines.

In next week's text, we'll see that Paul had to confront  
Peter for wavering on the issue of Gentile's  
becoming saved apart from the Jewish Law, and  
becoming the spiritual equals of Jews.

So it was important that the Church's leaders think the  
issue through, & decide where they stood on it.

Xn orthodoxy had to be set in stone, and they were the ones  
who had to do it.

**Paul says he feared that he might have run in vain.**

He means that, if the other Apostles had adopted the Judaizers' view, the whole Church would become so contaminated with false doctrine, that even the churches he had planted could be led into the spiritual chaos and the bondage of legalism.

**Throughout this text, Paul will repeatedly use the phrase=>**

*“those who were of reputation.”*

This refers to the Jerusalem church's leaders (James/Peter/John), using the descriptive name given them by the Judaizers.

It was an underhanded way of insinuating that Paul was not among those of high reputation, and that the real Apostles would never have approved of Paul's gospel (salvation by grace through faith, apart from the Law).

Paul is going to throw this title back in the Judaizers' faces, by saying, “Those whom you consider to be of high reputation actually ratified me as an apostle, a/w/a my gospel.”

**\* The Decision**

[Verse 3]=> *“But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”*

**“But” is the Gk conjunction of strongest contrast.**

But in the verse just before this, we don't find anything with which to really contrast the notion of Titus not being circumcised.

This is one of several peculiar anomalies in this text,  
including a series of uncompleted sentences/thoughts,  
and parentheses inserted in the middle of other ideas.

Most scholars believe this was because of Paul's emotional state.

He desperately wanted to stop the Judaizers from spreading  
their heresy, & he had become perturbed/excited,  
thinking about their past ruthless tactics and  
underhanded deceptions.

The point Paul seems to be making in verse 3, is that Paul hadn't  
run in vain, that the Judaizers were completely discredited  
and routed at the Jerusalem Council, and that the clearest  
indication of their defeat was their failure to force Titus to  
get circumcised.

If they couldn't win the issue of Gentile circumcision in  
Jerusalem—the Jewish heartland—they certainly  
wouldn't win it in the Gentiles' own homelands.

**It's clear from Acts, that the Apostles' decision completely  
vindicated Paul, & that it denounced the Judaizers.**

\* E.g. Acts 15:10 says Peter declared=> "*Why do you [Judaizers]  
put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples  
a yoke [the Law] which neither our fathers nor we have  
been able to bear? / But we believe that we are saved  
through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as  
they [Gentiles] also are*" (i.e., w/o the Law/circumcision).

- \* Acts 15:12 says that Paul/Barnabas told of all the signs/wonders God had performed through them, among the Gentiles to confirm both them/their-message. God doesn't confirm error—which is an irrefutable argument proving that theirs was the true gospel.
- \* In Acts 15:19, James declared that Gentiles should not be troubled by being forced to become circumcised.
- \* Acts 15:24 says the Council sent out a letter denouncing the Judaizers to all the churches of Syria/Cilicia/Antioch.

The decision of the Jerusalem Council was=>

- \* Far-reaching
- \* Unequivocal
- \* A total vindication of Paul and his gospel-message.

### \* **The Dispute**

**Again we see the disjointed nature of Paul's narrative, due to his excitement, as he now goes back and provides additional insight into the specifics of the dispute.**

1<sup>st</sup> he describes the antagonists—the Judaizers.

[Verse 4]=> *“But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.”*

\* **Paul identifies the Judaizers as “false brethren.”**

These aren't weak brethren (true Xns who are hung up on the Law).

These are false brethren (Jews who'd accepted Jesus as Messiah, but merely added that idea to all their old Jewish creeds).

They hadn't trusted Jesus to save their souls, but merely accepted Him as Messiah.

Jesus had told a parable about tares sown among the wheat.

In Mt 13:38, He explained it saying "*The field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one.*"

The Judaizers were tares, sown by Satan, in the Church.

\* Paul also identifies their methodology=>

They sneak into the Church secretly, hiding their true identity/intentions until they have established themselves there by forming friendships and relationships.

Paul says "*They spy out our liberty*"—sitting back silently for awhile, watching for weaknesses they can take advantage of when they start teaching their heresies.

\* Thirdly, Paul identifies their objective=> To enslave Xns, by bringing them into the bondage of the Law.

These people enter the church with an agenda=>

To subject others to the Law, so they'll trust their own obedience of it for their salvation, not in the grace of God, & faith in the substitutionary, atoning death of X for sin.

**Having described the Judaizers' role in this dispute, Paul now describes his own role.**

[Verse 5]=> "*But we [he/Barnabas] did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might*

*remain with you.”*

Paul/Barnabas fought unflinchingly at the Jerusalem Council for the truth of the gospel of God’s grace.

They didn’t yield an inch to the Judaizers’ attempts to add good works to God’s grace applied to a person’s heart through faith in X.

Paul left his enemies back in Galatia no room to claim that the Jerusalem’s Apostles secretly agreed with them.

He forced those Apostles to publicly acknowledge that Titus was indeed a true Xn, even though he had never been circumcised.

**Why did Paul/Barnabas take such a dogmatic/implacable stand?**

So the Galatians to whom he was writing this letter might have the true gospel, untainted w/ legalism/works-righteousness.

**\* The Determination**

[Verse 6]=> *“But from those who were of high reputation [same phrase as before used of Peter/John/James] (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.”*

**Paul had laid the gospel before the Apostles to make sure he & they were in full agreement.**

They added nothing that they thought he had left out.

Nor did they contradict/modify his gospel in any way.

They hadn't yet read what Paul would write in Ephesians 2:8-9 (because Paul hadn't written it yet), but it's clear that they agreed w/ it, nonetheless=> *“By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; / not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”*

The other Apostles determined that Paul had gotten the gospel exactly right.

**What does Paul mean when he says, “What *they* [the Apostles] were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality”?**

“*Were*” is an imperfect tense verb, referring to what the Apostles were when they used to walk/talk with Jesus personally.

Though they had an advantage over Paul for that reason, God wasn't partial to them over him, because of it.

God cares about a person's heart/character at present, not what he has done in the past, or some advantage he enjoyed in the past.

Regardless of the unique opportunities they had while Jesus was still alive, they'd added nothing to Paul's understanding of the gospel.

**Not only was Paul's gospel-message correct, the Apostles also determined that Paul himself was a true apostle, whose apostolic authority was equal to their own.**

[Verses 7-9]=> *“But on the **contrary** [contrary to their thinking Paul's gospel fell short in some sense], seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the **uncircumcised** [Gentiles], just as Peter had been to the **circumcised** [Jews] / (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his*

*apostleship to the circumcised, effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), / and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.”*

The Apostles were made confident that God had attested to Paul’s apostleship to Gentiles by working signs/miracles through him, & by His miraculously regenerating people like Titus through him.

God had “*effectually worked,*” meaning He had spiritually energized & empowered Paul’s ministry, producing its fruit.

**The other Apostles were so confident that God had called Paul as an apostle to evangelize Gentiles, that they officially assigned that task to him.**

They recognized that (as Paul said in Rom 15) being entrusted with such a ministry, is a gift of God’s grace.

In Rom 15:16-17, he wrote=> “*The **grace** that was given me from God, / to be a **minister** of Christ Jesus to the **Gentiles**, ministering as a **priest** the **gospel** of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.”*

Peter/John/James had enjoyed a fruitful ministry among the Jews.

So they would continue working among their own Jewish people.

**Paul's saying that the 3 leaders of Jerusalem's church gave him the right hand of fellowship was a blow to the Judaizers.**

Clasping right hands was a pledge of friendship/partnership, just as it was for those 2 British naval officers under Lord Nelson.

It meant that the other Apostles recognized Paul as a partner in ministry, equal to themselves.

The Judaizers of Galatia had undoubtedly said nothing about this hand-clasp, in their efforts to deceive the Xns there about Paul.

[Verse 10]=> *"They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do."*

**The 3 "pillars" of Jerusalem's church (Peter/John/James) were ready to send Paul off as God's choice for an apostle to the Gentiles, but there were also certain Jews they didn't want him to forget.**

These were the impoverished Jews of Jerusalem's church, whose financial woes just seemed to keep getting worse/worse.

Paul had already brought relief to them from the church at Antioch in Acts 11, but he earnestly intended to continue doing so, involving the Galatian church, a/w/a others.

Not only did he recognize that helping the poor is a Xn duty; He also saw the potential of such gifts for welding Jewish/Gentile Xns together, in bonds of love.

**Conclusion=> Paul had fought for the Xn's liberty/freedom at  
Jerusalem, & now again in his letter to the Galatians.**

May we be as steadfast as he was in defending the true gospel of  
God's grace, which is received by faith in Jesus X alone,  
and which excludes our own righteousness.

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1. Biblical doctrines pertaining to the essential truths of our [12 faith] are worth fighting for.

Jude 3; I Cor 9:20-22

2. Paul fought for the doctrine of Christian freedom from the Mosaic [8 Law] as a means of salvation.

Gal 3:13

3. The NT has much to say about the Christian’s freedom from the curse of the Law; and it’s all [10 good].

Rom 8:2; 7:6; Jn 8:36; II Cor 3:17

4. False Christians called Judaizers wanted to add human [12 works] to grace.

Gal 5:2-4; Rom 6:15

**This whole issue was settled at the Jerusalem Council; Paul describes his fight for Christian freedom in five scenes...**

### **\* The Delegation**

Galatians 2:1—*“Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with **Barnabas**, taking **Titus** along also.”*

5. The delegation that went to Jerusalem included Titus; the Judaizers said Gentiles couldn’t be saved without becoming circumcised, but Titus obviously [8 was].

### **\* The Deliberation**

Verse 2—*“And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.”*

Acts 15:2

6. Paul feared that, if the other Apostles had adopted the Judaizers’ view, the whole Church would become contaminated with [12 false] doctrine.

### **\* The Decision**

Verse 3—*“But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”*

7. It’s clear from Acts that the Apostles’ decision completely vindicated Paul and [22 denounced] the Judaizers.

Acts 15:10, 12, 19, 24

### \* The Dispute

Verse 4—*“But it was because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.”*

Mt 13:38

8. The Judaizers’ objective was to enslave Christians by bringing them into the [16 bondage] of the Law.

Verse 5—*“But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.”*

### \* The Determination

Verse 6—*“But from **those who were of high reputation** (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.”*

9. Paul had laid the gospel before the Apostles; they added nothing that they thought he had [10 left] out.

Eph 2:8-9

Verses 7-9—*“But on the **contrary**, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the **uncircumcised**, just as Peter had been to the **circumcised** / (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised, effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), / and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.”*

10. The other Apostles were so confident that God had called Paul as an apostle to evangelize Gentiles that they officially [20 assigned] that task to him.

Rom 15:16-17

Verse 10—*“They only asked us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.”*

11. Not only did Paul recognize that helping the poor is a Christian duty, he also saw the potential of such gifts for welding Jewish and Gentile Christians together in [12 bonds] of love.