

*“Christian Liberty”*

*Galatians Lesson #4*

Galatians 2:1-10

Dr. Bruce Bickel

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**Bruce:** Lord Jesus, we thank You that things can be well with our soul because of who You are, not anything that we have done. It's because of Your mercy and Your grace, Your sovereignty and Your love for us. Father, as we celebrate the gift of eternal life, may we realize that Sunday's coming even though Fridays are difficult. May it be so for Jesus' sake, that we glorify You and thank You. And may Your name be uplifted forever and ever. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** You know, men, one of the great things we experience here in our fellowship is not only having the Holy Spirit be our teacher by the verse by verse teaching of the Scripture, but also how we minister to one another in times of need, in times of trouble, in times of success, in times of hurt and pain. I think it's important that we just recognize that there is much more going on here than just someone teaching us, and that is the wonderful experience that we have of being members of the body of Christ.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** So I'm just going to ask if you would just get up and go say hello to somebody you don't know and welcome them in the name of Christ. Let's just enjoy each other for a few moments of fellowship. Let's do that together.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Thank you, men. I appreciate you doing that. It's important that we realize the great gift we have in our friendship in Christ.

**Participant:** Amen!

**Bruce:** We need to enjoy that, to enjoy each other. And I trust that when you come on Fridays week after week, not only does the Holy Spirit teach us and enrich our souls, but also that you're enriched by the fellowship that we have with our brothers in Christ.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** We need to enjoy each other, men.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** We just need to do that. Let's make an effort that we do that in the next coming months.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Bruce:** Let's pray, would you please? Father, for all the things that we are not, and all the things that You are, we ask that You'd forgive us. For all the things that we think that are not Your thoughts, would You forgive us? And Father, for the attitudes that we have that are not Your attitudes, would You forgive us? Father, it sometimes seems presumptuous to think that we can say, "Lord, use us for Your glory." How vain that is, to think that we could be a part of anything that you're doing! Yet that is exactly what You've called us to do because of Your grace—not because of anything that we are, but

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it's because of everything that You are in Christ. So Father, we just pray that You would open our eyes once again, that we might behold You for Jesus' sake. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** We have a poet laureate among us today. *(Laughter.)* I'm going to ask that our poet laureate, the birthday boy, would stand up. He recited a poem to me last week and I thought it had some merit. And so I'm going to ask that the poet laureate would now speak.

**Dale:**

"I dreamed one night death came to me,  
And heaven's gates flew open wide.  
St. Peter came and graciously  
Ushered me inside.  
There I saw many I'd known on earth,  
Many I considered unfit,  
And many of little worth.  
Evil words flew to my lips,  
Words I could not set free,  
Because, much to my astonishment,  
No one expected me!" *(Laughter and applause.)*

**Bruce:** Amen. Thank you. How true that is!

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** No one expected me. Why is it that God was pleased to save us? There's no answer to that men. It's just God's grace. You see, that's the great theme of the book of Galatians that we're studying—the great theme of the freedom that we have in Christ—liberty! Liberty does not mean license to do what we want. It means the responsibility to live as we should.

The key verse is chapter 5, verse 1 in the book of Galatians which Paul is teaching us. *"For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery."*

That's the theme that Paul is dealing with in the book of Galatians—the freedom that we have in Christ. As we've seen in chapter 1, we saw that he spoke about the gospel that the Lord Jesus Christ gave to him in a revelation. And He anointed him with a divinely appointed position as an apostle in a nontraditional way, which caused some problems with the Jewish and Gentile believers, because he was appointed as an apostle in a nontraditional way. He was given the message of the gospel in a nontraditional way, a direct revelation from the Lord Jesus Himself.

In chapter 1 Paul taught us this: that Christ died for our sins, but He lives for our sanctification.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** He died for our sins, but lives for our sanctification. In chapter 1 we also discover this: that the message that was given to Paul, the message that you and I preach today with clarity and power because of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is a ministry that

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is not of man. Paul says that it is not of man, meaning that it is not of human origin. It is not something that was created by man.

Did any of the great Greek scholars and philosophers think about the Incarnation? They could not have dreamed that up. Did any of the great Oriental minds ever think of writing a book to condemn men in their sinfulness, and that brought men down low and gave sin no reprise? Is that something man could do? That's not something that mankind could do. And Paul reminds us of this: that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not of man. It is not something that mankind created. In other words, it is not of us.

But he also said this. It's not only not of man, but it's not from man, meaning that it's not delivered by man. It's communicated by the ministry of the Holy Spirit because of His power.

Can any one of us take a message that would regenerate someone? That is not something we can do. It is not from us. It's from the Holy Spirit.

And Paul reminds us again that the gospel message is not of man and it is not from man. We may hear it with our ears, but God is the only One who can apply it to our hearts. And that's because it has the regenerative power, the sanctifying power of God Himself through the Holy Spirit.

So Paul reminds us that the gospel that we're studying today in the book of Galatians is a gospel that is not of man. It's not something that we thought up and created. Nor is it from man. It is not delivered by us. It is delivered by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the critical issue, men, is this. You and I vacate the power of the Holy Spirit when we begin to tamper with the content of the gospel. For when we make abuse of the gospel and make it man-centered, we're removing the power of the Holy Spirit from the communicating of a gospel message that is of God and not of man.

So Paul makes it very, very clear that the message he is teaching came from direct revelation. And that's why those of us who engage in Biblical preaching are basically engaging in plagiarism. You just take a message that has already been given and you re-give it. And the message that has been given is the Scripture.

And so now we're going to come to chapter 2. Now let's take a look at chapter 2, verses 1-10. Paul now goes to the church at Jerusalem to defend his position as an apostle, to defend the message he has been given by direct revelation from Jesus Christ, a message that is not of man or from man. And we pick up the story here in chapter 2 of the book of Galatians.

*"Then after fourteen years I went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them, though privately before those who seemed influential, the gospel that I proclaimed among the Gentiles, in order to make sure that I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Jesus Christ, so that they might bring us back into slavery, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you. And from those who seemed to be influential—what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality—those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On*

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*the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised. For He who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles. And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave me the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only they asked to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.”*

This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and Amen. When we pick up the story, a correlation chapter for you would be Acts chapter 15. I ask you to turn to that now and review that as we go through this. Acts chapter 15 is a correlative chapter that will help us understand the context of what we're going to be teaching in Galatians chapter 2.

Paul's visit to Jerusalem, we're told, came fourteen years after his first visit. And he went with his brothers Barnabas and Titus who accompanied him to Jerusalem.

Now when you look at Acts chapter 15 and Galatians chapter 2, you see that there are four different types of meetings that Paul went to. First of all, there was the *public meeting*, where Paul recounted what God was doing among the Gentiles. You can read about that in Acts chapter 15, verse 4.

**Transcriber's Note:** Acts 15:4. *“And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.”*

**Bruce:** Then there was a *private meeting* with the leaders of the church at Jerusalem. You can read about that in Galatians chapter 2, verse 2. And then there was the *public debate* that Paul had with the people. You can read about that in Acts chapter 15, verse 5, and also in Galatians chapter 2, verses 3-5.

**Transcriber's Note:** Acts 15:5. *“But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.’”*

(For Galatians 2:3-5, see Scripture quotation above.)

**Bruce:** And then finally, there is the council session in which the matter that was brought to the people is discussed and clarified. And so the time and the reason for this visit was to confer with the Christian leaders concerning the ministry that Paul had to the Gentiles. He wanted to make sure that this was a valid ministry that had been given to him by direct revelation from the Lord Jesus. He wanted to make sure that the people understood that this was not something that he was making up. And remember that one of the reasons, perhaps, that God was pleased not to call Paul by the traditional method of being an apostle was so that the people would understand that he did not borrow the same message from the apostolic men. This was something that came directly from Christ, because it was a message that was of God and a message from God, not of man and not from man.

And so the reason he went to Jerusalem was to discuss with the Christian leaders concerning the ministry that he had to the uncircumcised, which is a synonym for the

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Gentiles. He also attended a church council on the problem of law and grace. Let's turn to Acts chapter 15. Would somebody read Acts chapter 15 verses 1-6, please? I'm going to ask you to read several verses as we go through this, understanding the consistency of the Scripture. Acts chapter 15:1-6, please.

**Participant:** *"And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. So being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles. And they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders. And they reported all the things that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.' Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter."*

**Bruce:** Thank you.

**Participant:** That's the Jerusalem council.

**Bruce:** That's the context of what we're discussing now in Galatians chapter 2. And so the reason that Paul and Barnabas went there, as we saw in Acts chapter fifteen, was that many Gentiles were coming to saving faith because of the gospel that Paul was preaching, and there were great things happening in the Asia Minor churches. And they came to give a testimony of what God was doing in the churches of Asia Minor.

In the future of his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul was concerned and he wanted to have verification and validation of the church in Jerusalem by this council of the leaders of the apostolic church, to make sure that they were supportive of the ministry that he was having to the Gentiles or the uncircumcised.

Now this caused great problems for the Jewish elders and the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees because they said that a Gentile had to become a Jew before he could become a Christian. We just read that in Acts chapter 15, verse 1. In other words, they were saying this. They have to be circumcised before they can become Christians. If they are Gentiles and they're going to embrace the Person and work of Christ, they've got to be circumcised first to become Jews. Then they can become Christians. And that was the issue that Paul was dealing with, because they were infusing law into the doctrine of grace. They said that the Gentiles had to become Jews before they could become Christians.

Now look at Genesis chapter 17. You don't have to read this. But just go back to this sometime, because this is the crux of this. Circumcision was an important Jewish rite handed down from the days of Abraham. You read about that in Genesis chapter 17. But many of these Jews had forgotten the inner spiritual meaning of the rite of circumcision. You can read about that in Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 16. You can read about that in Jeremiah chapter 4, verses 1-4.

**Transcriber's Note:** Deuteronomy 10:16. *"Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer."*

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Jeremiah 4:1-4. *"If you will return, O Israel," says the LORD, 'Return to Me, and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. And you shall fear, saying, 'The LORD lives,' in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory.' For thus says the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: 'Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.'"*

**Bruce:** And let's go to Romans chapter 2, verses 25-29. Would somebody read that? Romans chapter 2, verses 25-29. And here again, my point is this: that many of these Jewish leaders had forgotten that the rite of circumcision was really an internal issue, not an external one, although they limited it to the external. In other words, if you're not circumcised, you don't have the sign of Abraham and you don't have the sign of the Jewish culture, and you're not part of the nation of Israel. They had forgotten that circumcision is really an internal thing, a matter of the heart, not necessarily the foreskin. So would somebody read Romans chapter 2:25-29?

**Participant:** *"Circumcision has value if you observe the law. But if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, they will be regarded as though they were circumcised. The one who is not circumcised physically, and yet obeys the law, will condemn you, who even though you have the written code of circumcision, are a lawbreaker. A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical."*

**Bruce:** Now there's the key point. They had forgotten that it was the internal circumcision of the heart that was the issue, not the external foreskin circumcision.

Now we also see that today. Now we have a tendency to do the same thing in our culture today with what?

**Participant:** Baptism.

**Bruce:** Baptism, exactly right. We do the same thing. We bring baptism back into the ministry of grace by saying this. You have to be baptized before you can become a Christian. If you're not baptized, you won't. In fact, there's a whole movement in history past within the Baptist church called *baptismal regeneration*. In other words, if you are not baptized, if you're not immersed in the water, you can't be saved. They were doing the same thing that the church of Galatia was doing with circumcision. They were doing the same thing with baptism.

Now we've got to be careful about the things that we bring into the gospel ministry, men, and the things that we do externally--to say that we've got to do these external things to make us Christians, as opposed to the internal circumcision of the heart.

Let's look at Colossians. Would somebody read Colossians 2, verses 10 and 11?

**Participant:** I'll read it.

**Bruce:** Don, please?

**Don:** I'll start with verse 9.

**Bruce:** Okay.

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**Don:** *"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision in Christ."*

**Bruce:** You're complete in Christ. That means that you don't add anything to Him. You don't add baptism to Him. You don't add circumcision to Him, because circumcision is really the circumcision of the what?

**Participant:** The heart.

**Bruce:** Of the heart. You get rid of that sin, and that is how a person becomes a true believer.

Now we have to be very, very careful in our culture that we don't do the same thing that the church at Galatia was doing. And that was adding these external rites on to something, dealing with the salvation that is by grace.

Notice that key verse in verse 9 that Don read in Colossians chapter 2. You are complete in Christ. That means that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in you bodily because of the Person and work of Christ. That's what it means to be in Christ. You're complete in Christ. You don't need anything else to complete you.

How often do we hear somebody say this. I used to hear this a lot before I was married. "Well, when are you going to become complete?" (*Laughter.*) What they meant was, "When are you going to start dating? When are you going to get married?" You see, I was fed this line a long time ago when I was single. "Bruce, you can't be complete until you get married."

Marriage doesn't complete anybody. God will use marriage. Your wife will be the one who will be the primary refiner of your character. But it doesn't complete you.

What makes a complete marriage? It's a complete woman and a complete man who are complete in Christ. We don't need to add anything to that.

And that's the whole point that Paul was making at the church in Jerusalem. They had forgotten that aspect of the circumcision that is internal versus the circumcision that was only external. And they had added something in addition to the doctrine of grace that Paul had been given. And they threw law in with grace, and it became a gospel of law and grace. If you do these things, you will be saved. If you don't do these things, you can't be saved. And that was the whole point of Paul going to Jerusalem.

True Christians have experienced the circumcision of the heart. There is no need for a physical operation.

Now that had been a very difficult lesson for these Jewish people to learn, these Jewish elders, because centuries before, there was a great difference between the Jews and the Gentiles. In other words, when you look at the book of Leviticus, in chapter 11, verses 43-47—a cross reference for you—and Leviticus chapter 20, verses 22-27, here were some of the instructions about what made the Jewish people different from the rest of the world.

**Transcriber's Note:** Leviticus 11:43-47. *"You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps; nor shall you make yourselves unclean with them, lest you be defiled by them. For I am the LORD your God. You shall therefore consecrate*

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*yourself, and you shall be holy; for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the LORD who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten."*

*Leviticus 20:22-27. "You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out. And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them. But I have said to you, 'You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You shall therefore distinguish between clean animals and unclean, between unclean birds and clean, and you shall not make yourselves abominable by beast or by bird, or by any kind of living thing that creeps on the ground, which I have separated from you as unclean. And you shall be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be Mine. A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them."*

**Bruce:** Now we need to remember that God's chosen people were the Jews. And he said, "You're going to be different." And some of those verses I just referred to in Leviticus 11 and Leviticus 20 will help you understand the differences that set them apart from the rest of the world.

And in summary, it is basically this." As God's chosen people, you're going to have to be different in four areas. You're going to eat differently. You're going to dress differently. You're going to govern yourselves differently. And you're going to worship differently."

Now that's what made them different. Notice the references I just gave you. For Paul to come along and say, "You don't have to do all this circumcision bit. You don't have to do that to become a Christian,"-that was really an offense to them because they were saying, "Look! We were the called people of God and we were called to be different. And this is what makes us different. Circumcision makes us different, because it's the sign of us having been called as God's children." And so this is a very difficult message for them to understand because of their history, because they understood this. "We are separate from the Gentiles because of these areas. We don't marry the way they do. We don't govern ourselves the way they do. We don't eat the things they eat. We don't dress the same way. And we don't worship the same way they do." And so for somebody to come along and say that they were the same was a hard lesson for them to learn, a hard lesson for them to accept.

So Paul has to go before the council and bear witness to the fact that he was preaching the same gospel that the apostles were preaching.

Now we have to notice this. Would somebody go to Ephesians chapter 2, verses 11-22? By the death of Christ on the cross, Jesus had broken down the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles, so that in Christ there are no racial differences. There are no



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positional or racial differences in Christ, because you are complete. Would somebody read Ephesians 2:11-22, please?

**Participant:** *"Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, (called the uncircumcision by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands),--remember that you were at one time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down in His flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that He might create in Himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And He came and He preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So now you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the Cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In Him you are also being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."*

**Bruce:** And men, that's one of the most treasured passages that we could read in the context of the book of Galatians. For that is exactly what the Person and work of Jesus Christ did. He broke down that barrier, the barrier between the Jews and the Gentiles, and now they all became one. He's basically saying this. There are no racial differences or racial preferences.

Now go to Galatians chapter 3, verse 28. Somebody read that, please.

**Participant:** *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

**Bruce:** Now that's a good summary verse of what Paul is teaching us now in Galatians, as well as in Ephesians chapter two. Now the difficulty we have in this verse is that people take it out of context. That is talking about position. It's a positional relationship. It does not separate the distinctions between men and women. A lot of times people will say that because there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, that we can do anything we want. That is not talking about the distinctions of men and women and their responsibilities Biblically. It's saying that positionally they are one in Christ. But they have distinct responsibilities. And a lot of times people are going to take that, abuse it and say this. "Well, that means that women can do everything in the church that men can do." That's not what that verse is teaching. It's saying *positionally* that you're equal. There is no racial distinction. There is no sexual distinction. You are all one in Christ because the barrier has been brought down.

You can go back and read Ephesians chapter 2:11-22 to help us understand that. We just have to be careful not to take that out of context. Galatians 3:28 is saying that positionally, in Christ, we are all equal. But it does not remove the distinctive responsibilities that men have, and the unique and distinctive responsibilities that women have. That is not the context of that verse.

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We have to be careful not to add things to the Scripture, just as the Galatians were doing, who wanted to bring law back into the gospel of grace. We have to be careful about the same things today.

**Participant:** It does allow us to use the same bathroom, right? *(Sighs and laughter.)*

**Bruce:** I'll leave that for another day. *(Laughter.)*

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Since Scripture doesn't teach it, I'm not going to touch it. *(Laughter.)*

**Participant:** Good answer.

**Bruce:** Now what were the results of this meeting that they had in Jerusalem? There are a couple of very good results that we need to understand. Paul met with the leaders. We see that in verse 3 of chapter 2 of Galatians, and all the way from verses 6-10. And the leaders agreed with Paul that Titus should not be circumcised.

Now we need to understand that some people thought there was a difficulty, that Paul was being inconsistent because he had circumcised one person and not circumcised another.

Now the difference was this. Titus was fully a Gentile. If they had circumcised him, they would have been saying that he needed to be circumcised in order to become a Christian. He was fully a Gentile. He would have been missing something if he wasn't circumcised. So he did not circumcise him.

But with Timothy, he went ahead and circumcised him. And that's because Timothy was part Jew and part Gentile. And had he not been circumcised, it might have hindered his ministry with the people of Israel. So there is a distinction between the two.

Some people would say that Paul was inconsistent because he did one thing with one and one thing with the other. You have to understand the two situations. Don't take it out of context. Paul was very consistent in what he was doing for those reasons.

And so the leaders agreed with Paul that Titus did not need to be circumcised because he had become a Christian through the gospel of grace, not one of law and grace.

Secondly, *the leaders accepted Paul as a coworker.* You'll see that in Galatians chapter 2, verses 6-10. They accepted him and said, "You go preach to the uncircumcised—the Gentiles. Peter and the apostles will go and preach to the circumcised, to the Jewish nation, the people of Israel," because it is the same Holy Spirit who called Paul to go and preach to the Gentiles. And it was the same Holy Spirit who worked in Peter to call them to go and preach to the Jewish nation. The same Holy Spirit was calling both men to different ministries. There is a uniqueness in their ministry. And so the leaders accepted Paul as a coworker.

What about Paul and these legalizers, these men who crept into the council and tried to get law back into grace? Well, they made an unsuccessful attempt to push legalism upon them. And so Paul is set free to go and preach the gospel of grace alone—that you're saved by grace alone, not bringing in the law as part of one's salvation.

Now why don't we make some applications on this? When you look at this history lesson, the important thing about this—I trust that I brought out some key points for us—but the real issue is this. What am I going to do with what I just learned about this

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situation with Paul in Galatians 2? There are a couple of things I would offer for your consideration.

First of all, I think that we need to appreciate *Paul's stand for the gospel*—the courageous stand that Paul and his associates made for the liberty of the gospel of Christ. They paid a price for the gospel of liberty—Galatians chapter 5, verse 1.

Secondly, I think that it's important to know this: that Paul's concern was for *the truth of the gospel*, not peace within the church. Take a look at Galatians chapter 2 verse 5, as well as verse 14.

**Transcriber's Note:** Galatians 2:4-5. *"Yet because of false brothers, secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you."*

2:14. *"But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"*

**Bruce:** He was after the truth of the gospel, not necessarily peace within the church. And here we note him going to Jerusalem to make his appeal and his stand before the people.

Also, I think it's important to realize this. *While peace is important in the life of the church, true wisdom that comes from God is first of all "pure, then peaceable,"*—James chapter 3, verse 17. Pure meaning that it's true, then it's peaceable. Peace at all price was not Paul's philosophy, and it cannot be ours. Peace at all cost was not Paul's philosophy, and it cannot be ours in ministry.

Now that does not mean that we don't make every effort to be peaceful with people. The Scripture says to make every effort to be at peace with all men. We need to take on that responsibility. But at the same time, we do not compromise truth for the sake of peace. We don't settle for peace and invalidate the content of the gospel, because the gospel is not of man and it's not from man. So peace at all cost is not his philosophy, nor should it be ours. We need to be very careful about how significantly we work that out in our lives, because the real issue is this—the truth of the gospel. Yes, Don?

**Don:** And it's so subtle.

**Bruce:** Oh my, yes.

**Don:** I mean, people in our culture say it today, and they may have said it if we had the kind of culture today that we had back then. People will say, "What's the big deal, Paul? It's circumcision, a little act of circumcision. You're making such a mountain out of a molehill." And yet it meant everything to Paul. People say, "So what if you believe in baptismal regeneration," or whatever? It strikes at the heart of the gospel

**Bruce:** Amen! That's the whole point of Galatians chapter 2, verses 1-7. You must understand that the truth of the gospel is the issue that happens there. That's the thing that we need to apply in our lives. How do I take the truth of the gospel and make sure that's what I'm preaching when I have a chance to witness for Jesus Christ? It is the truth that is the important thing. That's the whole point of chapter 2, verses 1-10.

## *“Christian Liberty”*

And ever since Paul's time, the enemies of grace have been trying to slip something into the simple gospel to make it more than just grace, to make it law and grace. We've got to be very careful that people don't add things on to the doctrine of grace. We need to be very careful about that, because from time immemorial, they've been trying to do that, as we've seen in Galatians chapter 2.

**Participant:** Bruce?

**Bruce:** Yes, please?

**Participant:** Going off of that subject, with the freedom that we have in that we don't have to do the extra works, why the sacraments? Can you help us understand the importance of Communion and Baptism versus the freedom in the gospel in the covenant of grace?

**Bruce:** There are three keys to the Kingdom. The first one is *the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ*. That's the first key. The second one is *the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper*, because in those two sacraments you're describing and demonstrating what? The gospel of Christ. That's why this is one of the keys of the Kingdom. When somebody observes a baptism or observes a Communion service, it may be that the Holy Spirit is going to work in that person because it is one of the keys to the Kingdom. And the third key is *church discipline*. Those are the three keys to the Kingdom—the proclamation of the gospel, the ordination and administration of the sacraments, and church discipline. These are the three keys of the Kingdom. That's why it's important. Yes, Don?

**Don:** The distinction seen in the Old Testament with circumcision, or of Baptism in the New, is the expression of something which has already happened inside. You don't baptize to get saved. You baptize because you are saved. It's an outward expression of what Christ has already done in the heart.

**Bruce:** That's the Baptist position; that's correct. Now the Pedo-baptist would say that when you baptize a child, you're bringing him into the covenant of grace.

**Participant:** Yes.

**Bruce:** You're bringing him into the covenant of grace.

**Participant:** Right.

**Bruce:** So we need to understand both sides of that, not just one or the other. We don't throw the baby out with the bath water, literally. *(Laughter.)* Yes?

**Participant:** And part of it, and being part of a church that puts heavy emphasis on the sacraments, as we have Communion every Sunday,—

**Bruce:** Right.

**Participant:** We would say that often the whole idea of one of the keys—the sacraments—is stated, but actually not thought to be very important, because the sacrament is not treated with a lot of respect.

**Bruce:** Yes. We need to treat the sacraments with respect because they are one of the three keys to the Kingdom, men. That's the only way that people are going to come into the Kingdom—through the gospel, by observing the sacraments, and through church discipline. These are the three means which the Holy Spirit will use to bring people into the Kingdom. Those are the three keys.

## *“Christian Liberty”*

Now we also need to be careful about this. The world is going to tell us that a person can be saved by faith in Christ plus something else. That's exactly the mission that Paul is undertaking in the truth of the gospel. It was not about law and grace. It was about grace alone.

Now what are some of the things that we add on for a person to be saved? First of all, *good works*. We must do certain things to be saved.

How about *fulfilling the Ten Commandments*? If you live by the Ten Commandments, you can be saved. Can you fulfill the Ten Commandments?

**Participant:** No.

**Bruce:** No! It's an impossibility! You fulfill them because Christ fulfilled them. He didn't come to abolish the Law. He came to fulfill the Law. You and I get credit for His obedience to the Ten Commandments because of the Person and work of Christ. For somebody to say that you must obey the Ten Commandments to be saved is an impossibility. He will never be saved at all, because you can't do that in your own human strength.

What else do we add? Sometimes we add Baptism. How about church membership, or other religious rites that we have? Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** Bruce, I was thinking that in the distinction between the Ten Commandments or the sacraments is that we don't get saved by doing those things. But if we don't do them once we're saved, there are consequences.

**Bruce:** Absolutely there are. Good point. It's an act of loving obedience that we participate in those. It's not an act of gaining salvation through them. It's an act of loving obedience and an expression of gratitude from our hearts for what God has done for us.

So we just need to be careful in our churches that we don't add things on to the doctrine of grace, to make it like law and grace. In fact, notice this: that Paul pronounces a curse on anybody, man or angel, who preaches any other gospel than the gospel of grace. *"Let him be anathema!"* He pronounces a curse on them. If it's not centered in the Person and the work of Jesus Christ, let them be anathema! As we saw, that's in Galatians chapter 1, verses 6-9.

I would conclude with this, men. It's a very serious thing to tamper with the content of the gospel.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** It's a very, very serious thing. May God be pleased that we would never do that, for His glory and our benefit.

Let's pray. Father, it's so easy for us to go along with culture. It's so easy for us to want to sue for peace and to have everything be wonderfully copacetic and relational. And oftentimes, Father, when we do that, we vacate the truth. Father, help us realize that we have freedom in Christ. The liberty that we have is not license, but the responsibility to be all that we can be in Christ Jesus. And may it be so for Your glory and our benefit for Your kingdom's glory. And all the Brave Men said,

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Thank you, men.