



3Q 2017 The Gospel in Galatians Lesson 2 Paul's Authority and Gospel

SABBATH

“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ”
(Galatians 1:10, NKJV)

In the title of the lesson – is it Paul's Gospel? Or someone else's? Who originated it? When and where did the “Gospel” develop? Is the “Gospel” something that started after the crucifixion / resurrection or has it been around much longer? And what is “the Gospel”? Does it matter which Law lens we view the “Gospel” through?

Paul knew that he spent a long time working in opposition to the “Gospel” [see the memory text].

The lesson poses a hypothetical situation in the first paragraph of Sabbath's lesson.

I would like to pose another one. Suppose one of the prominent professors of theology at a respected Christian university, who had spent many years presenting a *legal* theology, including books, sermons, and sitting on committees tasked with rooting out heresy in the local church, gets up in front of his class and states that he's been presenting a false remedy for many years and begins to present a *healing* theology in an effort to undo his early life's work. How would he be treated by his students? By the other professors? By the church members? By his wife and family?

These are the barriers Paul faced in the presentation of *The Gospel of Christ*, to the Jews and, likely to a lesser extent, to the Gentiles.

SUNDAY

Paul, The Letter Writer

The lesson goes in to some style points and authentication support. My understanding is Paul's authorship of Galatians is generally unquestioned. I'm more interested in the content.

The lesson does provide a provocative question at the bottom of Sunday's lesson.

“If the Bible were to be written today, what kind of medium, format, and style do you think the Lord would use to reach us now?”



MONDAY

Paul's Calling

Who did Saul believe he was working for pre-conversion? Who did he believe he was working for post-conversion? From the lesson:

“The fact that Paul so strongly denies that his apostleship rests on any human being suggests that there was an attempt by some in Galatia to undermine his apostolic authority. Why? As we have seen, some in the church were not happy with *Paul's message* that salvation was based on faith in Christ alone and not on works of the law. They felt that *Paul's gospel* was undermining obedience. These troublemakers were subtle. They knew that the foundation of *Paul's gospel* message was tied directly to the source of his apostolic authority (John 3:34), and they determined to launch a powerful attack against that authority.” Emphasis mine.

¹¹ I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that **the gospel I preached is not of human origin.**

¹² I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, **I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.** Galatians 1: 11, 12. Emphasis mine.

I'm not sure why the lesson keeps referring to “Paul's Gospel”, when Paul, himself states very clearly the origin of the message.

Note the source of the opposition in the above paragraph. “Why?”

As we have seen, some in the church were not happy with *Paul's message* that salvation was based on faith in Christ alone and not on works of the law.”

It would seem that the imposed law mindset predates the conversion of Constantine, and for those needing an Ellen White quote, consider the following:

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. {MB 109.2}

And again:

To the very close of the controversy in heaven, the great usurper continued to justify himself. When it was announced that with all his sympathizers he must be expelled from the abodes of bliss, then the rebel leader boldly avowed his contempt for the Creator's law. He reiterated his claim that angels needed no control, but should be left to follow their own will, which would



ever guide them right. He denounced the divine statutes as a restriction of their liberty, and declared that it was his purpose to secure the abolition of law; that, freed from this restraint, the hosts of heaven might enter upon a more exalted, more glorious state of existence. The Truth About Angels pg. 43.

The Imposed vs Design Law struggle is as old as the controversy between Satan and Christ. It was one of the founding tenets of Lucifer's rebellion, and he's been very successful imparting his viewpoint to humanity, as well.

I'm in the middle of reading Sigve Tonstad's book "God of Sense and Traditions of Nonsense" [<https://www.amazon.com/Sense-Traditions-Non-Sense-Sigve-Tonstad/dp/1498233139>], which I highly recommend. In it, he tackles some of the concepts and stories from both the Old and New Testaments where "sense" seems to be missing or lacking.

He speaks eloquently on the issue of Freedom, and how this is understood, and misunderstood. In one passage he states,

"Proof gives a person no way of retreat. Faced with incontrovertible proof, the person who is in his or her right mind will have to surrender even if yielding happens against his or her will. Jesus offers evidence but not proof, in part because the indisputable proof can be a form of compulsion. In God's economy, it is possible to say no without seeming to be out of one's mind. Assent must be freely given, and it must be given in response to manifestations that are not coercive." Tonstad. God of Sense and Traditions of Nonsense pg. 333.

With this in mind how do we approach the lesson's compelling question at the bottom of Monday's lesson?

"In what ways, even subtly, is the authority of Scripture being challenged today within the confines of our church?"

TUESDAY

Paul's Gospel. Here we go again ...

From the lesson:

"What is the central truth upon which the gospel resides? According to Paul, it is not our conformity to the law—the point that Paul's opponents were trumpeting. On the contrary, the gospel rests fully on what Christ accomplished for us through His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead. Christ's death and resurrection did something that we never could do for ourselves. They broke the power of sin and death, freeing His followers from the power of evil, which holds so many in fear and bondage."

Is this accurate? Is it complete? What's missing? What's correct? Conformity to which "Law"?



WEDNESDAY

No Other Gospel

“No other Gospel”, even one from an angel “of light” that calls fire down from heaven?

What is the real problem Paul is confronting in Galatians 1? If his audience was “turning away” from living in the Grace of Christ [v. 6], what were they turning to? What’s the logical conclusion? A works or legal “gospel”, perhaps?

At least we don’t have those concerns today, right?

From the bottom section in Wednesday’s lesson:

“There is, today, a tendency, even in some of our churches, to emphasize experience over doctrine. What matters most (we are told) is our experience, our relationship with God. However important experience is, what does Paul’s writing here teach us about the importance of correct doctrine?”

Does Paul’s letter really teach us about the importance of correct doctrine? Didn’t he have his doctrines in a row when he was persecuting the early Christian church? Didn’t the Pharisees have their doctrines straight when they nailed Immanuel [“God With Us”] on a cross?

How does our understanding of using multiple threads of evidence to understand Truth help us? Is there a counterfeit for the “Integrative, Evidence-based Approach” we have learned? Consider the following, again, from Tonstad’s book, quoting Dostoevsky’s book, *The Brothers Karamazov*:

“There are three powers, only three powers on earth, capable of conquering and holding captive forever the conscience of these feeble rebels, for their own happiness – these powers are miracle, mystery, and authority.” pg. 255. Emphasis mine.

Do we see these three powers being used as a metric for uncovering and understanding “Truth”?

THURSDAY

The Origin of Paul’s Gospel.

The lesson asks, “Why did Paul not require Gentile converts to be circumcised?”

Was it for increasing his number of converts? What was the original design of the male genitalia? What was the purpose of circumcision in the first place?

“If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of



circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses.” [Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 364.2](#) Emphasis mine.

Paul is quite clear where and when he received **The Gospel of Christ**. His reputation was probably well known among Jews and Gentiles alike, given his enthusiasm for persecution of the early Church. What would have been gained by his opponents by attempting to discredit him?

Do we see any of the same tactics employed today?