

## Galatians 1:11-2:10 “God’s Gospel of Freedom.... demonstrated”

### CCH Sermon 15SEP24

- **Pray**
- **v11-12** Key Point. Rest of reading proves or demonstrates that point.
- If the Christian good news was an article of clothing, what label would it have on it?
  - Not “wash at 30degrees, don’t tumble dry”.
  - Not “M&S” or “TK Maxx” or even “Gucci”.
  - Not “made in the EU”.
  - But the gospel would have the label “DESIGNED BY GOD”.
- Looked at these verses in kids spot last week v11-12
  - tarmac or meteorite!
  - Gospel is out of this world.
    - designed by God!
- Galatians is helping us to see that we have wonderful good news.
  - News of freedom
  - but it’s so different from anything else find on planet earth.
  - because designed by God.
- Is that really true?
  - or is Christianity just another human philosophy or ideology as good as any other
    - Is there really a real God in heaven
    - and real angels,
    - and real miracles
    - and a real Jesus?
- Well today’s passage says yes, it says there’s a message from God, from heaven given to Paul
  - And Paul is going to prove it.
- But he does it in a surprising way!
  - He takes us through his travel itinerary
    - v17 I went to Arabia
    - v18 Then I went to Jerusalem
    - v21 Then I went to Syria
    - 2v1 Then after 14 years I went to Jerusalem!
  - We might say Paul spare us the souvenirs and the travel snaps from 2000 years ago
- And Paul says, “No I want to prove to you something.”
  - **I want to demonstrate: The gospel has to be from God!”**

## 1) The Gospel has to be from God.... look at its power.

- Here Paul takes us right back to what we call his conversion.
- He's saying he never learned his gospel from Harvard University or the BBC today programme or more importantly one of the apostles. The gospel is from out of this world. A real living Jesus Christ, alive from the dead met him on the Damascus Road.
- Look at the before then the after
  - BEFORE v13-14
  - AFTER v14-16
- My friend Giles was sitting next to me in A level double chemistry.
  - He had plans for his life all mapped out.
  - To get a wife, get a job in the city, make millions.
  - But God had other plans.
- I met up with him a few years later and he had got a wife, a son, a job in the city, but he had been converted. HE had become a Christian.
- And Paul had his plans, to advance in Judaism.
  - You could say he was a real high flyer.
    - Tipped for the top.
    - A rising young star.
  - He even stood there when Christians were brutally murdered, giving approval
- But God had other plans.
  - **Chosen**- from before he was born v15 in his mothers womb.
  - **Called**- to faith in Christ
  - **Commissioned**- to preach him among the Gentiles.
- Just the power of the gospel in Paul's life should be enough to convince us
- **And the lesson? Share this gospel!**

▲ 'Cause every night I lie in bed  
The brightest colors fill my head  
A million dreams are keepin' me awake  
I think of what the world could be  
A vision of the one I see  
A million dreams is all it's gonna take  
Oh, a million dreams for the world we're gonna make

- We all love those lyrics, we all want a dream to be part of and a cause to champion.

- But are they true? “We can live in a world that we design”? Can we!?
- What a joy as a Christian, on Partnership Sunday to be part of a world that we don’t have to design- because God has. And to be part of a mission that isn’t going to fail, because God is behind it, choosing, calling, commissioning.
- *'Cause every night I lie in bed The brightest colors fill my head*
  - Your colours are too grey Hugh Jackman. Building a family, building a circus!
- You can be part of building the Kingdom of God.
- Because the gospel is real. It’s designed by God.
  - It’s incredibly powerful.
- It changes lives. That’s a message worth sharing.
- I can’t wait for you to meet Annie who will be baptised in 3 weeks time. A single mum from a Jehovah witness background who we first got to know through carol singing and door knocking. Well in the last 6 years this powerful gospel has reached her, and one day she realised that Jesus was real and God and alive!
- And she’s a regular at the Carpenters Arms.
- The gospel has to be from God – look at its power.
- Will you share it?
- I don’t mean talking about church or charity work, but about Jesus.
- It takes real guts and nothing short of a miracle to actually speak to unbelievers about Jesus, but it’s worth it. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. It’s from God. And it changes lives, and that’s part of the evidence.

Let’s go to Paul’s next destination (in v18) to see more evidence that there is a God in heaven who has spoken, but actually the point is made in this paragraph too.

## **2) The gospel has to be from God- look at its independence. v18-24**

- And the point here is that Paul didn’t rely on humans to get his gospel. It was independent of the other apostles.  
Let’s recap from v15-17.
- You might think that because Paul wasn’t around with in Galilee during Jesus’ earthly ministry that he might need a training session from the Jerusalem Apostles or at least a kind of validation ceremony. But no!

- Paul gets preaching the gospel straight away, and any training session he has is with Jesus alone out in Arabia.
- “My immediate response was not to consult any human being”.
- Paul’s gospel is independent of humans. We’ll see in the next story that it matches with the other apostles. But it’s not dependent on them. That’s important because it underlines the fact that it wasn’t made on planet earth.
- Look at the 4 stops on the itinerary, Paul is making the point how little
  - 1) v15 Damascus Road- **contact from Jesus**.
  - 2) v17 Arabia- **no human contact**. (didn’t go to Jerusalem)
  - 3) v18 Jerusalem- **limited contact** (with the apostles).
    - (This is really interesting, Paul only stays the length of a short mini break with Peter (he’s using his Aramaic name Cephas) – 2 weeks, certainly not that of an intensive university term or training course). And the word he uses for “visiting” is that of surveying or examining a town. Paul was thrilled to meet Peter and share time with him, but it was fellowship for a limited time not to receive from him the gospel), and to meet the very brother of Jesus, James. But the trip was seriously limited
  - 4) v21 Syria and Cilicia- **first contact**. (He didn’t know them, they didn’t know him, but they were stunned by his turnaround).

### The lesson? Believe this gospel!

- Now this is kind of surprising if you are looking for evidence to be a Christian, (and it’s lovely to have people with us each week who are looking into the Christian faith), but it’s very helpful.
- If you are weighing up whether something is true, you want to verify it from different angles.
- ▲ You are a teacher, and you arrive just after there’s a punch up and a fire extinguisher has been let off in the corridor.
- Who did it? No-one owns up. They are all pointing at each other.
- So you ask for independent evidence. While you put someone else in charge of the class, you independently listen to what people say.
- And by hearing different people’s accounts INDEPENDENT of each other
- If Fred says it was Emily, but 7 of the class independently say it was Fred and Tyler, you have your corroborating evidence. And whatever you do, keep Fred and Tyler apart so that they can’t cook up a story!

- Mt, Mk, Lk, Jn. AND Paul!
- Peter and Paul didn't cook up the story together. They hardly spoke!
- Yes apostles have different styles, different contexts (James lawless, Paul writing to legalists) but same gospel of Jesus Christ and his free grace. God's gospel of freedom.
- This is not made on planet earth. The gospel is the gospel of God. It's so completely different.
- In Christianity we're not calling you to be more religious or to add a generous veneer to your life.
- We're calling you to follow Jesus, God come into the world to save us.

### 3) The gospel has to be from God- look at its consistency. v16b-24

- If the last travel destinations were demonstrating Paul's independence from the Jerusalem apostles, now he's deliberately wanting to compare his gospel with theirs.
- Next destination is back to Jerusalem, but this time there's a big showdown.
- v1-2
- Now what's happening. and how do we understand that phrase that Paul was fearful "he had run his race in vain"?
- One way to read it is to think that Paul is checking that his message is OK. He's been preaching a gospel of grace without circumcision but after all this time has he lost confidence and needs to go up to Jerusalem for a gospel comparison meeting to check whether he's got it wrong all these years? So is he worried about **his** gospel?
- I don't think that's the case. For a start Paul went to Jerusalem because of a revelation, quite possibly related to his desire to see finances given to the poorer Jerusalem church.
- And he's been adamant in his argument all along that his gospel is from God. He's worried about **their** gospel.
- Now it's quite understandable that in the early days of Christianity there was going to be a debate about whether non-Jews should have circumcision- the mark of being part of the people of God as promised to Abraham. It was in the Old Testament and it was required by God. Jesus was a Jew and so was Paul.
- So should a convert to Christianity be a convert to Judaism?

- But Paul was adamant that a Gentile didn't have to become a Jew to be a Christian. He could be circumcised, and in Acts 16 we saw that Paul did have Timothy circumcised.
- But the key thing was that it wasn't essential to their right standing with God. Is the sign of circumcision mandatory to being a Christian?
- If it is, you are actually adding something to the requirement simply to believe in Jesus.
- Whenever you add something to the gospel, whether it be that
  - you have to take communion,
  - or be baptised,
  - or not smoke
  - or go to the correct church, only then will you be saved
  - Then you are adding rules to the gospel.
    - Now there may be a place for all those things. But our standing with God (and we'll see this more in a couple of weeks) is due to God's work, not ours.
- If the Jerusalem apostles are now adding circumcision to how you get right with God, then Paul fears that his whole ministry will have been in vain because Christianity will be split down the middle, a Jewish half and a Christian half.
- But that's not the case.
- Paul was convinced you shouldn't add works of the law to belief
  - AND PETER was convinced too !
- Paul goes onto demonstrate that the Jerusalem apostles (for all their importance) didn't demand Titus got circumcised. v3
- He talks about a group of people who were deliberately trying to turn Christians into slaves (v4), it's just like what was happening in Galatia, and we'll see would happen to Peter in the next episode. But he resisted them, and he's saying
  - Christ Church Galatia,
  - and Christ Church Huntingdon, you need to resist them too.
- Don't move from the gospel of grace.

## The lesson? Stick with this gospel!

- You get chatting in lifegroup and someone has a “have to”...
  - You have to speak in tongues.
  - Have to be baptised in a certain way.
  - Have to read a certain version of the Bible
- Well they’ve just moved from grace to law.
- The gospel of grace is wonderfully simple.
  - Whoever you are, whatever you’ve done, come in repentance and faith to Jesus.
- Does that mean we all need to be the same?
- NO- Paul talks a little more about his interactions with the other apostles.
  - Same gospel, different locations.
  - It’s a lovely picture of partnership.
- And note the very moving emphasis in v10 Remember the poor.

Don’t give an inch.

There’s a false gospel about.

Stick with the gospel of the Bible. There’s only one. It was preached by Paul, James, Peter, John. It’s the gospel of grace.

The death of Jesus alone for our sins.

▲ At Cambridge university in 1910 there was a strong group of Christian students called the SCM- Student Christian Movement. But they were moving away from the Bible and the gospel. And the Cambridge Inter Collegiate Christian Union had to make a decision as to whether they .

Norman Grubb was one of those- (met with Rollo Pelly secretary of SCM) Trinity Gt Ct.

After an hour’s talk, I asked Rollo point-blank, ‘Does the SCM put the atoning blood of Christ central?’ He hesitated, and then said, ‘Well, we acknowledge it, but not necessarily central.’ Dan Dick and I then said that this settled the matter for us in the CICCU. We could never join something that did not maintain the atoning blood of Jesus Christ as its centre; and we parted company.<sup>[1]</sup>

## ***So are you getting v11-12? DESIGNED BY GOD***

You may disagree with the gospel,  
you may hate the gospel,  
you may reject the gospel

But you can't sit lukewarmly and give it a social media "thumbs up" or like and then carry on with your normal life.

It's just not like any other message.

It's DESIGNED by God.

- It has huge power to change people's lives- **will you share it**
- It wasn't cooked up by the apostles- because they preached it independently- **will you believe it?**
- And yet when you bring what they shared together, there's a perfect consistency. So **will you stick with the gospel?**
  - Not diluting it by taking out repentance
  - Not distorting it by making it all about us
  - Not denying it by adding in rules (as tragically, we're going to see Peter tempted to do next week).

But by getting on board

- Giving up your Sunday lie in to
- Giving up your spare cash to support Christian work

THE WONDER OF THE GOSPEL DRIVES THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL.

Let's pray.

QUESTIONS?

YET NOT I BUT THROUGH CHRIST IN ME

He is my joy, my righteousness and freedom,  
my steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace.