



Sunday 11.07.2021

Why should we believe the Gospel? That is the theme that I have been given to talk to you about this morning. Perhaps before we ask why we ought to find out what the gospel is. There are several statements for the word gospel.

- 1 the gospel truth an unquestionable truth *to take someone's word as gospel*
- 2 a doctrine maintained to be of great importance
- 3 Black religious music originating in the churches of the Southern states of the United States
- 4 the message or doctrine of a religious teacher
- 5 the story of Christ's life and teachings as narrated in the Gospels
- 6 the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ

The last 2 are the most important ones for us and in my opinion, they are the true meanings of the word. And these are found in the first four books of the New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They all tell of the life of Jesus up to and including his resurrection. In our passage this morning, we find Paul talking to the Galatian church about how he is qualified to talk about the Gospel of Christ.

so, let us first look at a bit of background to Paul.

First of all, his name was not Paul it was Saul and he came from Tarsus, he was brought up as a Jew, he was trained as a rabbi and a Pharisee. He became one of the most violent persecutors of the early Christian church and all it stood for. He was a religious fanatic who did his evil deeds in the name of the God of the Bible. He hated Christ and his followers so much that he did his very best to eradicate Christianity as if it was some sort of virus. The chief priests and leaders gave him permission to imprison and persecute all the Christians he could find and was even present and approving at the stoning of the Apostle Stephen. All in all, he was a nasty piece of work. He would stop at nothing to rid the earth of what he considered to be against all the teachings of Judaism.

His conversion came on the road to Damascus, it was an extremely dramatic conversion to say the least. Jesus appeared to him and asked him why he was persecuting him. You can read about this in Acts chapter 9. Christ revealed himself to Saul at that time to show him the error of his ways and to tell him that he could change his life and the lives of so many others. And to this end his name was changed from Saul to Paul and he began to minister, teach and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ under the authority of the one who called him. Paul wanted to make sure that the Galatian church didn't think that the Gospel he was preaching was not man made but as a revelation from Jesus Christ himself. Paul wanted to refute the claim being made by the false teachers that he was somehow a renegade understudy of the true Apostles who had gone out on his own and contorted and twisted their message of Truth. Paul wrote,

11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 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 NIV)



These verses emphasise two important truths for us, 1st the Gospel was not Paul's idea he is merely the speaker for the truth not its source and 2nd the Gospel comes from God, it does not spring from legends or dreams, it is not the result of human arguments or deals, it is God's good news of salvation through Jesus his son. Which goes against the teaching of today's society where they say that all faiths are the same, and that no faith can be considered to be superior to another. To me this is complete nonsense but sadly to many it is accepted as a gospel truth. They haven't grasped what Jesus himself said in John 14 v 6, *I am the way, the truth and the life, NO-ONE comes to the Father except through me.* The only way to eternal life is through Jesus and not any other prophets or idols that people worship today.

We then come to chapter 2 v 1-10 here it seems that Paul has been called to Jerusalem, but this is not the case, could you imagine anyone forcing Paul to do anything if he didn't know that it was what God wanted him to do. He tells the Galatians that *'He met with "those who seemed influential." He's not saying they weren't influential. They were! He's merely saying that their influence didn't matter to him. He needed no approval or validation for his gospel message or for his ministry. Because Jesus himself had given him that a long time ago.'* This could have caused a problem. Especially around the practice of circumcision because some of the Jews were indignant that those who hadn't been circumcised ie Gentiles, could receive the same blessing from God as them. But here we see the grace of God at work bringing unity between the two.

Chapter 2 v 6 As for those who were held in high esteem—whatever they were makes no difference to me; God does not show favouritism—they added nothing to my message. ⁷ On the contrary, they recognized that I had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised,^[a] just as Peter had been to the circumcised.^[b] ⁸ For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles James, Cephas[c] and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. 10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.

Those people who had been trying to create a divide between the church Leaders in Jerusalem and Paul had failed because they had expected the Leaders to disagree with Paul but they didn't and God used this occasion to give out the message that was loud and clear, the message of salvation is the gospel of grace & freedom. Freedom and grace in unity with each other. Wouldn't it be great if all the denominations of the Christian faith got together and agreed that despite their differences on how things are done the fundamental truth of the Gospel is preached, that Jesus is Lord of all and in all circumstances, not just the ones we want him to be. And this through faith alone and not by good works

So to answer the question 'why should we believe in the Gospel?' we should because it is the word and truth that comes directly from God, it tells us that we are saved by faith alone and through the righteousness and graciousness of Jesus Christ who gave his life for us on the cross, and no human being can take it away from us