

THE DIAGNOSTIC AND THE CURE

Review:

- Anyone who adds to or takes away from the Gospel is preaching a false Gospel.
- God allows us the freedom to make our stupid choices and waits patiently for us to surrender to Him.
- God grants us His righteousness and takes from us our sin.
- We are unbelievably passive in this process. It is Christ and Christ alone that gets the glory for this. Even if your kids are walking with Christ, you might pray with them or read some devotions with them, but the transformed soul belongs to Him not you.
- When that simple message goes out, it can often fall into one of two perversions:
- Perversion A: God's grace is not enough. Too easy. Let me help Jesus.
- Perversion B: Fire Insurance. Functionally Atheists.
- Paul explains clearly that this message comes from God not man.
- God wants you to have a former life. No matter the life you lived, a "good life" or a "bad life," we all need the same salvation and your life can be a former life.
- Whatever excuses you have made for yourself, Paul was far more religious than you church kids and far more violent than you people who have tried to break all God's rules.
- If you think you are a good guy, Paul has more Sunday School pins, fish bumper stickers than you.
- If you think you are a bad guy, he's worse than you. And if you're as bad as Paul, it doesn't matter because it is in your past.
- It pleased God to reveal the Son to him. It brings pleasure to the heart of God to save people from themselves.

Background

A common misunderstanding you will encounter on tv or the internet or in person is this: the message Jesus and his disciples preached was love. A love that doesn't judge any decision you make, just accepts you the way you are and doesn't demand anything from you.

This is not what they taught and is in fact not even real love, but a cheap version of love. The type of love where a parent tells their kid, you wanna play in the street, go ahead and play in the street. A hollowed out empty kind of love.

The theory is that Jesus and His apostles preached this and then Paul comes along and hijacks it from the original apostles and there's this rift between them and a battle for the heart of Christianity takes place and Paul's Christianity won.

We want to address those things today.

Galatians 2:1-3

Then after fourteen years I went up again 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 proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure 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.

Paul has been sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles for 14 years. Most people have been cool with it, but a loud minority are making a stink. Specifically the ones who had been brought up in the ancient customs of the Jews. Martin Luther says they "accused Paul of propagating a Gospel of lawlessness."

Paul was not preaching about the Law but about Christ and what He did on the cross. The Holy Spirit showed up, lives were changed and they were convinced that since Holy Spirit was showing up, He must be pleased with these conversions.

These old skool Jewish converts contended that Jesus died for their sins, but that they were given the Law for specific reasons and those reasons don't go away upon their conversion to Christ.

So if you want to be a REAL Christian, it's Jesus: his Life, Death, Resurrection, AND circumcision, AND the dietary laws. These two things were all about a cleanliness that set them apart from the rest of the nations. A Jew would look at how they ate and their circumcision as a physical mark of their purity and how God had set them apart from the rest of the world.

Circumcision

- Its a Latin word meaning "to cut around"
- Studies have shown that circumcision had been around in other cultures prior to Abraham. So he wouldn't be completely unfamiliar with the procedure.
- Origins: shedding of blood is universally associated with covenant making in the OT and ancient world.
- It was also for reasons of cleanliness and purity
- Symbolically for Abraham and his inability to produce children, it was a sign that he was yielding his procreation powers to God.
- If I have descendants enough to become a nation, it will be Yahweh's doing and not my own.

The Judaizers would follow behind Paul and erode what he had tried to do. By informing them that the Christians in Jerusalem also followed the circumcision and dietary laws.

Barnabas is a Jew and comes with Paul as a witness that the Holy Spirit is changing lives through this "simple gospel" to anyone who may doubt Paul.

Titus was a Gentile, a full on bacon eating Greek, uncircumcised, pork sandwich loving, non-Jew lover of Jesus. He was probably a convert of Paul. It has been suggested by some scholars that the

fact Titus was even mentioned could be that he was known in Galatia and was even a superintendent in Crete and that may be one of the reasons he was brought along.

He lays out the Gospel before the apostles in Jerusalem.

Barnabas will attest that Gentiles are being saved without circumcision and without following the dietary laws. They are justified by Christ alone. Paul wins because Titus is not compelled to be circumcised. They can tell that Titus is a new man who has had his world rearranged by Jesus and he is uncircumcised.

Galatians 2:4-6

4 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— 5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the Truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you. 6 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.

There are two arguments against this new GOSPEL and we see residue of these today.

Argument 1: if you just preach the Gospel and don't preach the Law, people will walk in licentiousness (promiscuous; unprincipled, sexual discipline). Translation: they will do whatever the heck they want. Without the law to make people moral, they will not naturally become moral. If you believe its just grace and faith and you get rid of the fear of hell and guilt and damnation people will do what they want.

Argument 2: The Law is holy. The Law is Divine. The Law was given by God. It was good enough for our people for two thousand years, but its not good enough for you?

Two questions = One Answer

The Law has every right to tell me that I need to love God, love my neighbor, that I should not worship things that are not God, that I should not covet another man's wife, that I should obey my parents in The Lord. The Law has every right to REVEAL to me the commands of God that God would lay upon me to line me up to how he created the universe to work.

The Law has NO ABILITY to save me from my failures to obey the Law. It is diagnostic, it is not a cure.

X-Rays

All of my brothers have broken bones and have gotten stitches. I broke my arm jumping off an AC unit in my Nana's backyard when I was three, before that I ran through her sliding glass door and got this nifty scar. Several years later at my Nana's house, my brother James jumped off her wooden deck and got his head ripped open on an exposed nail as she was arriving for her surprise party. My parents put a towel on his head shouted surprise and rushed off to the hospital. My brother Mark broke his ankle falling off his bike, then he cracked his head open on the curb playing kickball in the street, and my brother Jonny broke his arm jumping on my parents bed and falling off.

All of the those injuries required scans and X-rays. But the the X-ray never fixed any of us.

An X-ray shows that you have a problem, but it was powerless to cure you, no matter how many times you get in the machine, no matter how many times you get scanned, it wasn't going to cure anything, it is simply going to diagnose that something is wrong.

The Law is Holy, it is the Holy, divine diagnostic tool that shows you that something is wrong, but the Law will never heal you. Never. Some of the reason so many of us don't walk in the joy that Christ brings is that we keep going back to the scan. The scan will always show you that you are sick, it will always show you that you don't measure up. The Law shows us that we need healing. Jesus is the cure. The Law is diagnostic, Jesus is the cure.

Martin Luther:

Some will object that the Law is divine and holy. Let it be divine and holy. The Law has no right to tell me that I must be justified by it. The Law has the right to tell me that I should love God and my neighbor, that I should live in chastity, temperance, patience, etc. The Law has no right to tell me how I may be delivered from sin, death, and hell. It is the Gospel's business to tell me that. I must listen to the Gospel. It tells me, not what I must do, but what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has done for me.

Paul is not against the Law, he's just showing us how it ought to be used. It should show us how desperate we are for a Savior and should guide us towards Christ's righteousness and the fullness of life that only He can give.

Galatians 2:5

(To these false brothers) to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Paul never gives in, this is not a compromise. "We'll give you guys pork, and we'll take circumcision off the table. Because, I can probably convince the Greeks to give up sausage, but its a tougher sell for them for grown men to accept circumcision." Nope. He's not giving ground, because the Gospel is at stake and these people and this Gospel mean too much to him.

Galatians 2:6

6 *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.*

That's a sick burn! Paul sounds like a jerk here. It seems like everything's going so well and he cranks it up a notch.

I don't care who they are or how important you say they are. I don't care how many streams or followers they have online or how many people are in their congregation. They are wrong.

He's not trying to disrespect the Apostles, he's just pointing out that there's someone bigger than the Apostles.

The false apostles argued that Paul did not walk with Jesus, he is the last and the least of the teachers of Jesus, why should we listen to him?

What could Paul say to that? "What they say has no bearing on the argument. If the apostles were angels from heaven, that wouldn't impress me. We are not talking about the excellency of the apostles. We're talking about the Word of God, and the truth of the Gospel. That Gospel is more excellent than all apostles!

Again, no disrespect, but "you don't applaud the servants when the Master is present." These guys are great men but there is someone greater. Ultimate authority belongs to Jesus Christ. Paul realizes he's in that same category (Galatians 1:8).

Galatians 2:7-9

On 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 (Peter) and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

Paul says Barnabas worked with both me and Peter and those guys that you think are so important (James, Cephas, who is Peter, and John) said I was cool and preaching the same message as them. They just preach to the Jews, and I preach to the Gentiles.

The fight is now over. The idea that Paul is preaching a different Gospel than the apostles has just been revealed by the apostles to be a false argument. They extended the "right hand of fellowship."

But there are some contextual issues-Peter was called to the Jews, Paul was called to the Gentiles. The message is the same, but the context is different.

Inner City Pastors vs Suburban Pastor vs Rural Pastors

The message is the same, but the method is different.

Galatians 2:10

Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

There are issues that are unclear in the Bible and there some that are clear as day, and one of those is that we are to take care of the most vulnerable in our society. The Bible consistently mentions the poor, the widows, the orphans, the foreigner. Those who have no money, those that have no power, those that have no voice. It is the responsibility of the followers of God to look out for, take care of and give a voice to these people.

No matter the location or denomination, we need to be the CHURCH preaching THE GOSPEL. We need to take care of those who can't take care of themselves. We can't put our hope in self-serving politicians, no matter what political affiliation, some will be successful, some not, but Christians can always succeed in bringing relief and most importantly the Truth of the Gospel to the world.

SMALL GROUP QUESTION

Why do you think Paul felt it was important to go to Jerusalem and present "The Gospel" he preached to the Gentiles (vv. 1–2)? What does this teach us about accountability and unity in the church?

In verses 3–5, Paul strongly resists pressure to have Titus circumcised. What was really at stake here beyond the physical act itself?

Paul says he did not yield "even for a moment" so that "the truth of the gospel might be preserved" (v. 5). How can we tell the difference between being flexible for the sake of love and standing firm for the sake of truth?

What stands out to you about how Paul describes the leaders in Jerusalem (vv. 6–9)? What does this passage suggest about authority, reputation, and God's work in different people?

The leaders recognized that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter was to the circumcised (vv. 7–9). How does this shape our understanding of calling, diversity of roles, and partnership in ministry?

Verse 10 highlights the call to "remember the poor." Why do you think this was the one specific instruction emphasized, and how should it shape the life of our group or church today?