

If you have your Bibles, why don't you go ahead and grab them? Galatians, chapter 2, is where we're going to be. It's a bit of a complex text. It's going to take us a good amount of time to break it apart and put it back together. While you're turning there, I just want to do a quick recap of where we have been out of Galatians, chapter 1. In Galatians 1, Paul contends there is only one gospel. That is all there is. There is one gospel, and if you tweak it or make any kind of variation to it at all, it actually ceases to become the gospel.

You can't tweak the gospel. You can't add to it. You can't take away from it, and the second you do that, you're no longer dealing with the gospel at all. What we looked at in Galatians, chapter 1 is when the gospel message goes out and the gospel is very simple, you and I are, by our nature, broken. You don't learn how to sin because of environment. You are born sinful; therefore, you sin. I have for years tried to point you toward children to show you this is true.

I didn't teach my kids to bite. I didn't teach them to shove anybody down when they don't get what they want. I never have thrown myself on the floor and screamed when I don't get what I want. (Maybe once.) Ultimately, your kids do that and need to be disciplined out of that by their nature. They're not learning it from you. They are born broken. So we set out to establish in the gospel that you and I are broken. We chase after things for our fulfillment that aren't God, but God has made provision for us and our rebellion in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

That's a two-way street and it kind of works like this. I don't want you to misunderstand what I mean by two-way street. I mean that God does two things, and in those two things we are saved out of our rebellion. Here are those two things: In Christ in his perfect life, he imputes or grants to us his righteousness, so where we are unrighteous, we are given in the gospel the righteousness of Christ. Then Christ takes upon himself in the cross the wrath due us by our rebellion onto himself so the great exchange is that Christ gives you his righteousness and takes from you God's wrath toward you.

That is the gospel message. It is as simple as that. You are unbelievably passive in the whole thing. All the glory, honor, and praise due salvation belongs to Christ and Christ alone. If you have anything good to point to in your life, who deserves that glory is Christ. If your kids are good and they love the Lord, that is on Christ. That is not on you. Maybe you did a family devotional or maybe you raised them right, but ultimately a transformed soul belongs to Jesus, not you. On and on and on I could go. That is the simple gospel message.

Now what we said is when that message goes out, there are two great perversions of that message. Some people hear it and go, *You know what? Just faith in Christ? That's just a little too easy, so let me help Jesus out.* So it becomes Jesus and his cross and his life plus something else. People fill their lives with stuff they think is going to help justify them before God. *I'm going to do these things and I'm going to not do these things, and in my doing of these things and not doing of these things, I'm going to be justified before God.*

Do you see now over here you have already left the gospel? Paul's contention is true. If the gospel is that Christ does it all and all glory, honor, and praise is due Christ for what he has done for us and we add to what Christ has done in order to say, *Christ did this, but I did this, so I deserve some glory,* do you see you're already off the gospel? That this is no gospel at all if this is *the* gospel. The second perversion I think you see just as often as this perversion over here is people hear the gospel message and go, *That's awesome news. You're telling me Jesus will forgive me for anything I do, so I can do whatever I want?*

Over here, this lane over here is just kind of fire insurance. *There might be a hell, and I don't want to go there,* so ultimately people over here are functionally atheists. Here is what I mean by that: You haven't been impacted by the gospel message. You just identify yourself as a Christian. So it will look something like this. "Are you a Christian?"

"Yeah. I was baptized when I was 11."

"Do you read your Bible?"

"Yeah. I have like 14 of them."

"Well, do you go to church?"

"Yeah. This is where I go to church."

"Well, tell me about your relationship with Christ."

"I just did." Really, Christianity isn't about a relationship with Jesus Christ at all. It's not about pursuing him. It's not about knowing him, loving him, serving him, or submitting to him. It's just kind of this list of things we have done. Ultimately, this is fire insurance, and it's not the gospel at all. Paul is going to contend, "Man, if you're over here in either one of these, you're outside the lines of the gospel. You're

believing something that isn't God's offer to you in Jesus Christ of salvation." So we walked through that in Galatians, chapter 1.

There were a lot of other great pieces in that where Paul is going to say, "Listen. I received this revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ by Jesus Christ. Christ gave it to me. No man preached it to me. I wasn't disciplined by the apostles. Christ knocked me off my horse on the way to Damascus and gave me the gospel." Then he lays out there (this is kind of where we camped out two weeks ago) this great offer of a former life.

That for anyone who would trust and believe in Jesus Christ, what we have on the table is an offer to have a former life, which means no matter how you came in here today, whether you're overly legalistic or overly licentious, the offer is you can leave different than you came. You can leave with a former life, and Paul was the perfect case study for this because he was far more religious than those of you who are church kids, and he was far more violent and wicked than those of you who have set to break all the rules of God as your way of running from God.

There are two ways to run from God. First, is to do everything God says in order to not have a relationship with him. Secondly, is just to break all the rules of God. Those are the two paths people try to take, and Paul is a great example of both, so he trumps you. If you're coming in here today and you have a ton of Sunday school pins, Paul has more pins than you. If you've come in here today and you have bumper stickers and fish on your car, he has more.

If you've come in here today and you have a clean mouth... Any type of cussing you do is in your head or something you have invented that you throw out. (Ding Fod, or something like that.) Paul would be able to trump you. On and on and on I could go here. Paul is the perfect example for us, because he is more religious than those of you who are religious in here, and he walked in oppression and injustice and murder, which is going to outdo those of you who have come in here today and maybe you have addictions, or maybe you're walking in adultery or something like that.

He just beats you, and yet he tells us in Galatians, chapter 1 that it pleased God to reveal the Son to him. We get this picture of a God who is pleased to save those who are stuck in legalism or licentiousness. It brings pleasure to the heart of God to reveal to us our need for Jesus Christ and then to save us. That is what we covered in Galatians, chapter 1, and that leads us into Galatians, chapter 2. Now let me set up Galatians, chapter 2 like this. It has been my experience when it comes to those who are skeptical about the Christian faith, there is kind of a ground-level skepticism, and then there is kind of a high-level skepticism.

There is a type of skepticism you are prone to hear if you are telling people about Jesus. There are going to be the same kind of 10 questions over and over and over again. I found when I share the gospel with people and I talk to people who aren't believers, there are questions that kind of come up all the time. There are questions rooted in, "If God is good, then why do these things happen?" There are questions like, "Do I really believe Jesus is the only way to God?" There are questions about what I believe about the Bible. "Would a good God actually send people to hell?"

These are questions you'll get all the time. You'll get, "The church is filled with hypocrites." That to me is always the easiest one. *Absolutely, it is. The most hypocritical group I've ever been around. You ought to join us. I think you'd find a real home here. Since you're so inconsistent yourself, shouldn't you just join us and be under the covering of the forgiveness of Christ in your hypocrisy?* I don't know how that is a slam against us. We're like you. Come on. Come hang out. There are these kind of questions. They are ground-level, and here has been my experience.

For the genuine seeker, they are birthed out of real life scenarios, so when someone sits across a cup of coffee with me and says, "Man, I feel drawn to the person and work of Christ. I love this idea of the gospel, but I don't know how to reconcile what you're saying with what I saw my Dad go through in his cancer or what I saw my Mom go through or this experience I had that was so dark and so painful and so hard. I don't know how to reconcile God's goodness with this scenario." That is a legitimate question and we are to shepherd well and walk well and encourage them well and, as best we can, help them get to the bottom of that.

Nine times out of ten at the ground level, skepticism is simply rooted in a life experience that doesn't jive with their understanding of what we are saying, so our role as men and women who love and know Jesus is to gently, patiently, and graciously walk with them to seek to find answers to their questions. Some of you might be saying, *So you're telling me I need to be able to unpack the origin of evil and suffering in the world? Hasn't philosophy been trying to do that for a couple of thousand years and coming up bankrupt?* Kind of. I'm kind of saying that to you.

What I'm saying is you walk with someone in love and seek with them those answers. Maybe they are a reader, and you can help them read some things on it. Maybe you can study yourself and explain it to them. Maybe you can connect them with people who have had similar experiences but Christ has redeemed those experiences. We serve them. Now the reason I said, "nine times out of ten," is there are people who ultimately define themselves as seekers, but they're not seekers at all.

They're just argumentative. They're not really interested in Jesus. They just want you to be impressed with their intellect. They just want you to know how smart they are and how they have thought through things.

They have no intention of actually even hearing your answer to their questions. They just want to argue, and you see this a lot in the New Testament with the Pharisees. Do you ever realize Jesus always answers the Pharisees questions and it never reveals to them maybe he is who he says he is? "Jesus, should we pay taxes to Caesar?"

"Does somebody have a coin? Thank you. Who is that on the coin? Caesar? Okay. Here you go, bro." (This is a paraphrase. Don't start looking for some of these words.) "Give unto Caesar that which is Caesar's. Give unto me that which is mine."

Now did anybody worship after he said that? Did anybody go, "Oh, he must be..."? No! They huddled back. They were like, "Dang it! He got us. What are we going to say now? Ooh! I have one. I have one." It always goes here. It always goes to some sort of ethereal, maybe even impossible situation people want an explanation for. "Let's just say there was a man." (This is completely hypothetical. We're off the ground into la-la land. Just a created scenario.)

"Let's just say a man married a wife, and then he died. His brother married the woman, and then he died. Then the other brother married the woman, and then he died. Then the other brother married the woman, and then he died. Then another brother married the woman, and then he died." At that point, I'm like, *The fool deserves to die if he married her now. There are like five dead brothers. If he marries her, he should kill himself!* The question, the big stumping, "here's why I don't want to believe in you, Jesus" is...*At the resurrection, whose wife is she?*

Jesus clearly answers them. "Well, you misunderstand the resurrection and you misunderstand marriage. Marriage is a picture of something greater than marriage. It is a shadow of something far more glorious than itself, so at the resurrection we don't need the image, we don't need the shadow, because we have the fullness of the form." Nobody worships. They draw back and go, "Okay. What are we going to get him with now?" You're going to run across people who are just combative.

Now here is how I would encourage you. I think even those type of people need to be walked with for a season. I try to very lovingly point out some of their own hypocrisy because the reality is if you're an atheist, you have a ton of faith. You have a belief system, a grid, a doctrine. Most often what happens is the accusation comes on the Christian that we are arrogant and closed-minded. I just want to put reality on the table.

So I'm arrogant for putting my trust in thousands of years of history and thought, and you're not arrogant for being uppermost in your own intellect? I'm the arrogant one because I look at history and teaching

across every continent in the world and say, "I'm going to get underneath that," but you're not arrogant for saying what I believe rooted in nothing but my understanding today is supreme? I'm the arrogant one?

Now, again, I don't do it like that. I don't start yelling at Starbucks, all right, but I want to just point that out. I just want to point out I don't know I'm arrogant for living in submission to something, but you're not arrogant for being uppermost in your own authority. There is some arrogance going on here, but I don't know if that label should be slapped on me.

As far as being closed-minded, I've always enjoyed that accusation. It's madness. What is closed-minded? I celebrate sex. Sex is an amazing gift from God. Wine is an amazing gift from God. They just have purposes and usages God has given us for the fullness of joy in those things. We're hedonists. We're just trying to tap into the deepest possible joy, not cheap, fleeting joy that carries with it pain and baggage. That is kind of ground-level skepticism, but there is a higher level of skepticism you're probably not going to hear, but if you just pay attention, you'll sometimes catch wind of it on television.

That kind of academic argument against our faith. It's subversive. It's not a direct attack, but it takes on this form. You're going to see it on the National Geographic channel or Discovery or History. I love those channels. I'm a big fan of all those channels, but the subversive attack against our faith is packaged something like this: The message Jesus Christ preached was a message of love, trust, and pixie dust, and his apostles taught that same message. It was forgiveness for all. It was based on love.

Now if we could just talk. It's a very cheap love. It's a kind of love that would have a parent saying, "Oh, you want to play in the street? Play in the street." It's a hollowed out, empty kind of love, and the historical theory is Jesus preached this and his apostles preached this. Then this guy, Paul, came along, and Paul hijacked the gospel from the original apostles. Then what happened is a big rift broke out between those two camps, and there was a battle over the heart of Christianity, and Paul's Christianity won.

You would find some semblance of that argument often on those type of channels. They would quickly go, "Yeah. I can see why you would believe that, but historically what you're believing is a hijacked version of the gospel. It's not the actual gospel." There are a ton of historical problems with that. There are a ton of biblical problems with that, and Galatians 2 is going to show one of them. We want to look at...*Is there a rift between the apostles, who walked with Jesus while he was on earth and were taught by Jesus directly, and the gospel the apostle Paul is preaching that he also received by divine revelation from Jesus?*

Let's look at Galatians 2, starting in verse 1. **"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 [the apostles] (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." Now I want to kind of just walk you through this text.

For 14 years, Paul has been preaching the gospel among the Gentiles, among the non-Jewish people in the ancient world. As he preaches the gospel... That same gospel we've covered that you and I are sinners but God has made a way to reconcile us to himself in Christ if we would trust and believe we are saved by grace through faith. No work of our own. We're saved by God directly in Christ. He preaches that. What we see in Acts is it appears thousands of men and women are converted by this gospel and become believers in Jesus Christ.

There is a minority of Jews, a very loud minority. Why is it that in arguments that always seems to be true? There is a very loud minority who has massive problems with the gospel Paul is preaching. They are over here in this lane and they say, "Yes. We believe in Christ, and we believe he died for our sins, and we believe he rose from the grave, but ultimately we also believe he's given us the law for specific reasons, and those reasons don't go away upon our conversion to Christ, so in order to be a real Christian, it is Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection *and* circumcision *and* the dietary laws."

Circumcision and the dietary laws for the Jews were all about a cleanliness that set them apart from the rest of the nations. A Jew would look at how they ate and circumcision as a physical mark of their purity and how God had set them apart from the rest of the world. The Judaizers were coming behind Paul. Paul is coming into ancient cities, preaching the gospel, setting up churches, raising up leaders, and then moving on.

They would come in behind him and kind of erode what he taught and would say, "Well, he kind of got it right," but the apostles in Jerusalem say, "Yes, it is Jesus. Yes, it is his life, death, and resurrection, but it's also on top of those things circumcision and the dietary laws." For 14 years, Paul doesn't directly assault these guys outside of letters. He writes back to kind of what we're reading in Galatians where he aggressively is saying what they believe is no gospel at all. After 14 years, Paul, because Christ told him to... Now this is important. He's not summoned by the apostles.

Peter, James, John... The Twelve who are in Jerusalem, all of them Jews, don't call Paul in. It's not like he's getting summoned to the principal's office. It's not like they grew weary of what he was doing and said, "You come in and plead your case before us." Paul goes because Christ told him to go, and he takes with him Barnabas, who is also a Jew, as a witness, and he takes Titus with him. Titus is a full-on, bacon-eating Greek, uncircumcised, pork-sandwich-loving, non-Jew lover of Jesus.

Now do you see what he is doing? "Here is Barnabas, my fellow Jew, and we obey some of the Jewish laws. We don't put on Jews that they should break from the law immediately, but we have freedom in Christ, and Barnabas is going to attest when I preach the gospel that these men and women hear the gospel, and the Holy Spirit opens up their hearts and they become believers." He goes to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus, and he steps in front of the apostles, and he lays out the gospel.

"This is what I preach and when I preach this, men and women who are Gentiles (Greeks) are saved, and they are saved without circumcision, and they are saved without having to conform to the law. They are justified by Christ alone." He lays it before the apostles, and in round one of this fight between the false apostles and Paul, Paul wins, because did you notice Titus wasn't compelled to be circumcised? They hear the laying out of the gospel presentation. They hear Barnabas' testimony. They talk with Titus and decide Titus is obviously a believer in Christ who loves Jesus and has had his world rearranged by Jesus, and yet he is uncircumcised.

So round one goes to the true gospel. Now let's keep reading. I want you to see this next text, and I'll explain to you why they are so frustrated by Paul's gospel. **"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."** Now there were two arguments against the gospel. There is residue of those arguments even today.

Here are the two arguments: If you just preach the gospel and you don't preach the Law, then people are going to walk in licentiousness. Without the Law to make people moral, they will not naturally become moral, so if you say it's by grace alone, through faith alone... If you remove the fear of hell... If you remove the fear of guilt and damnation, people are not going to fly straight. They're going to do what they want. They're going to do this error we talked about over here. That was one of the first arguments.

The second argument against the gospel was simply that the Law was holy. The Law was divine. The Law was given by God, and for two millennium, the Law had been the guide for God's covenant people. Now here is Paul saying the Law doesn't justify you? One answer solves both issues. I'm going to try to do it two ways, because it's really important today this really sinks into your heart in a real, deep way. The Law has every right to tell me I must love God. I must love my neighbor. I should not worship things that are not God. I should not covet another man's wife. I should obey my parents unto 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, but follow me here. The Law has no ability to save me from my failures to obey the Law. The Law is diagnostic; it is not a cure. I'll unpack it like this. Two and half years

ago, I got up on Thanksgiving morning. I poured myself a cup of coffee. I walked and put my coffee down next to my chair. My wife asked me to give our youngest daughter, who was 6 months old at the time, her bottle, so I held Nora. I gave her a bottle. I burped her until all that gas was out. Then I walked and put her in her Johnny Jump Up.

Do you know what that is? It is a spectacular invention, and if they made them for adults and had doorways that were large enough, you would have one. I put my daughter in her Johnny Jump Up, and I turned and headed back to my chair and woke up in the hospital. I had a grand mal seizure in front of my three kids. I hit the fireplace and then on down onto the ground. Lauren heard the rattling and kind of came in and blocked the kids' view of me while she dialed 9-1-1.

The ambulance showed up at the house. They put me on the gurney. I woke up as they were putting me on the gurney. Apparently, I have some rage in my soul because as I came to, I tried to punch the guy who was trying to strap me to the gurney. They popped a needle into my leg and knocked me out, so I woke up in the hospital. I have no memory of the CT scan. They did a CT scan on me. I have no memory of that scan. From there they came in, and I had started to come to, and they said, "We see some shading in your right frontal lobe, so we're going to put you into the MRI machine."

I got to have my first full-on in-the-tube MRI. I don't know if you've had the opportunity to do that. It's awesome. I went into the MRI. I came out of the MRI. I'm back in my room, and the doctor was very gracious. He came in and scooted up his little bench right next to my bed and said, "Man, you have a mass in your right frontal lobe. I don't know. This isn't my expertise, but you're going to need to go see a neurosurgeon." I left that day. That's heavy news.

I am a vibrant, young man with no history of illness in my family. I don't need a ton of sleep. I have more energy than I probably should have and felt, at 35, with no history, I was immortal. Now I know I'm going to die. I mean, you know you're going to die, but you're not dialed into that right now. I most certainly wasn't dialed into it on Thanksgiving two and a half years ago. So we get this MRI. We have to go see a neurosurgeon down in Dallas. Once again, he flipped the switch. There's that MRI again. There's that glowing, red, and yellow golf ball in my right frontal lobe, and Dr. Barnett says, "This looks really bad. We're going to need you to do surgery immediately."

Eight days after my seizure, I go in for a seven-and-a-half to eight-hour craniotomy, where they not only removed the tumor but removed all the tissue around the tumor they could remove and allow me to continue to be me. I came through and had to do some rehab because of some weakness on my left side. From there, we sat down. I knew it was going to go badly because Dr. Barnett was like, "Why don't we meet

at my office? Why don't you bring some family members and some friends?" *Subtle, bro. That's really subtle.* Bring your support group and maybe something to drink and meet me in my office. Right?

So we sit in and they lay out both the diagnosis and the prognosis: "You have anaplastic, or malignant, non-encapsulated oligodendroglioma, WHO grade 3. You're going to die in the next two to three years." We sit down. We process that information. Behind him on the screen is that dad gum MRI with that glowing little red and orange the profusion creates on the screen. Then here is what we did: We laid out the battle plan that next day. We were going to do six weeks of radiation and chemo. We were going to give my body a month, and then for 18 months they were going to pound me with high-dose chemo.

That was the battle plan. Lines were drawn. I was going to do some other homeopathic stuff. Don't think that is witchcraft. It's not entertaining a bunch of crystals in my living room. It's vitamin C, all right? Vitamin C is not witchcraft, okay? We get all that set up, and for the next two years, man, we just take a pounding, and God was unbelievably gracious and merciful through all of it. We're well past the long end of the tail now at this point. Here is what I want you to hear. I'm telling you my story; I don't talk about it much at all.

I don't want to be the cancer guy, all right? I want to be the gospel guy, but I think this will help you. Here is what the MRI did: The MRI showed I had a problem, but the MRI was powerless to cure me. No matter how many times I got in that machine, no matter how many times I got scans, it wasn't going to cure anything. It was simply going to diagnose something was wrong. Now the Law is holy and it is divine in that it is the holy, divine, diagnostic tool that lets us know something is wrong, but the Law will never heal you. Never.

I think some of the reason so few of you walk in the joy Christ brings is you keep going back to the scan. The scan is always going to show you that you are sick. The scan is always going to show you that you fall short. The scan is always going to show you that you're a liar, you're not holy enough, you don't measure up, or you're not good enough for the forgiveness and mercy of Jesus Christ. You continually run back to the same sins over and over and over again. That is what the Law does. It shows us we need healing.

Jesus is the cure. Do you see what we did there? The Law is diagnostic, but Jesus Christ is the cure. What happens to carry this illustration out through is the great exchange. When Christ imputes to us his righteousness and takes from us God's wrath toward us, Christ comes to live inside of us. We are in him; he is in us. So now when you get into the diagnostic, it's all been fulfilled. It is clear, because Jesus is the diagnostic now. This is why the Bible says when God looks at you, if you're in Christ, he sees you as perfect, spotless, and blameless. Why? Because Christ is.

You are in Christ, and he is in you, and those who would say the gospel leads to licentiousness and the Law is holy and divine, I would say the Law is holy and divine, but what happens when you get that the Law is

diagnostic and Jesus is the cure, then what ends up happening is you're set free to pursue God and pursue Christ, because the diagnostic isn't always telling you you're too sick and too nasty to come before him. What I contend is the reason most of you don't pray and read your Bible and pursue Jesus Christ is you think he's disappointed in you.

He looks at you and he's like, *Golly! I died for this? You?* That doesn't help us approach the throne of grace with confidence. It doesn't help us delight in the Lord. It doesn't fill our hearts with joy. So the transforming work of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that the kindness of God... When we become aware of the kindness of God, our healing made available to us in Christ, it leads us to repentance. We want to line ourselves up with God, the Law, and how God created us to function, because that is all the Law is.

The Law is this diagnostic tool that shows you your need for a Savior, and then once you have that Savior, once you have that healing, the diagnostic switches and becomes a path for the fullness of life. When the Law says this is how marriage should work, he's not trying to take from you. He's trying to give to you. That is how he created it to be. Walk in this. There is more joy walking in it this way than your way, so the gospel will never lead to licentiousness. If you can walk in licentiousness, then you don't believe the gospel.

Let's keep going. By the way, just to make note, I don't know if you noticed it in the text, but he said if you believe either one of these, you're going to be a slave to them. If you believe the Law has saved... Even right now you're kind of going, *I kind of get it, but surely there are some things I have to do, Matt. Surely, I can't just keep doing whatever I want. It's not as simple as knowing Jesus and loving him. Surely, there are some things I have to do.* I'm telling you straight.

No, you press into Jesus and, in your relationship with Jesus, let him change your tastes. Let him change your values. Let him change your heart. You can't change your heart. You can modify your behavior, and it's been my experience most of you can't modify it for long. Those of you who can modify it for a long time tend to become self-righteous, and self-righteous people are not free. They are angry, bitter people who have a tendency to judge their own greatness by the shortcomings of others, completely unaware of their own shortcomings.

Okay. Let's keep going. Let's look at verse 5 again. **"To them [these false brothers] we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you."** I love this line. Paul is not going to give ground. This is not a compromise. This is not, "I'll tell you what. Why don't we give you guys pork, and we'll keep circumcision off the table? Because here is the deal, guys. Here is the deal, apostles. I feel like I can convince the Greeks to put down the pork, but I don't know I could convince them as grown men to be circumcised, so why don't we just make a compromise here."

That is not what he is doing. He said, "I was unrelenting. I'm not giving ground here at all because the gospel itself is at stake, and I love this people, and I love this gospel way too much to give ground on this issue." Now look where he goes next. Verse 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."** Now can we talk straight? He kind of sounds like a jerk there, doesn't he?

I mean, it seems like this thing is going so well. Why did he have to dial it up like that? It seems like they're not making Titus be circumcised. You're gaining ground with the apostles. There is unity being formed, and then did you hear what he just said? "I mean, I try to explain this to those who are influential, not that they are influential to me. I mean, God doesn't show any partiality. I don't. Ultimately, what they say is of no accord to me. I'm serving Christ, right?" It's like, why do you even have to say that? Why can't you just let it go, man? We're making good strides here.

Do you have a friend like that who is just always going to be the one, and you're like, *Why? Why would you do that? Just be quiet. We just came together. Why are you doing this?* I think Paul has just tapped into something that would be really healthy for us to tap into. When Paul says, "I shared the gospel with those who seemed influential, but what they are means nothing to me," he's not trying to disrespect the apostles. He's just more saying, "Hey, there is someone bigger than the apostles, so I'm not trying to disrespect them, but I'm telling you, you don't applaud the servants when the master is there. You don't make much of the servants when the king is there."

He's not trying to be disrespectful. He's just saying, "Hey, these guys are powerful men of God. I'm not taking away from their ministry and who they are, but I'm telling you there is someone greater than these men, and the ultimate authority belongs to Jesus Christ." Now hasn't Paul already in Galatians 1 lumped himself in with these guys with this whole idea when he said, "If I were even an angel preaching a gospel different than this one, let him be accursed"?

Doesn't Paul lump himself in this same little vein right here where is saying, "Hey, what these men are, they didn't add anything to me. I got the gospel from Jesus Christ. I've preached the gospel given to me by Jesus Christ. These guys haven't added anything to my ministry even though they are influential. That doesn't mean anything to me. I'm trying to please God and God is ultimately who..."

Just a side note. If there is someone in your life who really encourages you in the Lord, and when you see them and when you're around them you find yourself really grateful for what God has done in them and how he encourages you in them, make sure the glory and praise due that goes to God and not to the person. We are all jars of clay, all of us. So the glory that is due in life transformation, regardless of whose

life it is, belongs ultimately to Jesus and not to the person. All right? Okay. Let's finish this now. (Almost finish it. Sorry.)

"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 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."

Again, I'll stop there, and we'll try to unpack this text. The fight is now over. The idea that Paul is preaching a gospel different than the gospel of the apostles has just been revealed by the apostles to be a false argument, a false dichotomy. They extend the right hand of fellowship to Paul and say, "You are a brother, an apostle, and a proclaimer of the gospel message," but did you see there were contextual issues here? Just as Peter was called to the Jews, Paul was called to the Gentiles.

Now let me try to explain what this means. It simply means the message is the same, but the contexts are different. Does that make sense? I have a very good friend, JR Vassar, who is a pastor of Apostles Church in the upper east side of Manhattan. He is a good friend and one of my favorite preachers. In fact, if you listen to sermons when you run or at your desk, man, he would be a great guy to podcast. I'm a huge fan. Lauren and I have been up to see Apostles and to see what Vassar does.

I'll just be really straight. The upper east side of Manhattan is a bit different than here. Now the message doesn't change, but the people you're preaching to can. The need is still the same. The cure is still the same. The diagnostic and the treatment are still the same, but the context in which it plays out is different. There are going to be things Vassar does that we never do. There are going to be things Apostles New York does that we're not going to do as a church in DFW. We are also strong partners with Epiphany Fellowship in inner-city Philadelphia, a predominantly African-American church in an extremely poor area of Philly that is predominantly Black Muslim.

Eric Mason is a ferocious man of God and a gifted preacher of the Word, but there are times he shifts into urban lingo and I have no idea what he is talking about. If I were to talk like that here, most of you would be completely lost, all right? I think the last time he was here, he said something like, "I'm gonna break that bread with the oil on it, huh?" "*Break the bread?*" Okay. *He's going to open up the Word. "With the oil on it?" Oh, with the power of the Holy Spirit.* All right, right? He kind of talks in a way and they do ministry in a way that is very different than we would do maybe in our areas of the metroplex, but it's the same message.

It's the same diagnostic and the same cure in a different context. That is what you just read. Now let me finish this up with this last verse. Verse 10: **"Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was..."** What? You guys don't have your Bibles? Let's do that again just because you made me feel very lonely there. **"Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do."** So it wasn't like Paul was like, "Oh, you want my cash." That's not what happened. Basically, at this period of time, there is a massive famine in the first century world, coupled with some wars that have really taken a toll on the churches in Jerusalem and Judea.

What has happened here in this plea from the apostles is that Paul is meeting with eager, "Yes, we're in..." There is this idea that there can't be Jewish Christian churches and Gentile Christian churches, but there must be a view of *the* church that is bigger than any local expression of the church. Do you understand what I meant by that? I love The Village Church. I really do. Lord, I plan on spending all the days of my life serving you and encouraging this body and trying to see what all God might accomplish here, but I want to be really, really straight with you.

If, when I'm dead and gone, this organization ceases to exist, I will not roll over in my grave. I will not be in heaven going, "You guys destroyed what I spent so much time working on." That's not going to be where I am. Really, God has done a spectacular work here, and our role is to steward that for the greater kingdom. So if something happens and you disperse all over to other churches that are gospel-centered and Christ-exalting, all we did was strengthen the kingdom. Nobody is singing songs about The Village in heaven!

Do you think Peter is going to be on the mike going, "Matt, your turn. Tell us about The Village"? There is one name that gets gloried in, one name that gets exalted, one name that gets to make much of, so in one sense, I am responsible as an elder to steward well this flock and to make sure we're growing and maturing in our understanding of who Jesus Christ is, but in the same vein, I've also been charged as a leader under the gospel of Jesus Christ to take the abundance God has given us and not continue to be just about us, but to look out and say, "How can we make the gospel push out even farther?"

The video we watched to begin service today is a great example. You did that. You did that. There were members of The Village Church and money from The Village Church that went out to CityView, that went out to Paradox, that has gone out to hundreds of plants all over the world. You have built playgrounds for churches in inner-city locations. You've paid for air-conditioning units to be put into buildings that had no air-conditioning units. You have planted churches in Asia. You have planted churches in Africa, and you've done it all, because in a time where the economy has tanked, we were able to pay off our debt of five years in just two.

So we want to steward well the resources God has given us and not make things more comfy here. Like your building teaches. It's why we're stripped down. That's why you can't get a latte here. I don't think there is anything wrong with having a coffee shop in your joint. If you want to do that, do it. Some people even do it to actually raise money to give away, but ultimately we want to be stripped down and simple and we want to manage well the resources God has given us in order to push out the gospel as far as the Lord will let us play in our 40 years together.

Now let me bring us back on point and close us out for the day. Really, the entire book of Galatians becomes about whether or not you believe the one, true gospel or whether or not you are landing in places of salvation that are no salvation at all. Really, what I want to bring you back to is...*Are you living and walking in accordance with the diagnostic or with the cure?* If you grew up in church, maybe you've heard this phrase: There is a hole in the heart of man that only God can fill. Does anybody with church background remember that?

Yeah. Really, I think that idea gets pulled from Ecclesiastes 3:11. In Ecclesiastes 3:11, the Bible tells us that God has put eternity into the heart of man, which means woven into the fabric of your soul there is an element of eternity. Surely, this should register somewhere in your heart of why we can never really feel fully satisfied, because everything we're chasing is, if we're straight with one another, fleeting. I mean, you're not taking your money with you. *Well, I can leave a legacy for my kids.* But what if your kid is an idiot?

Are we saying that is not possible? You're not taking your stuff with you. It's going to be divvied up. Those clothes you like so much, those toys and trinkets, your computers, and your house, that's gone. That is gone, and for some of you it's going to be gone a lot sooner than you think it is, because I woke up on Thanksgiving at 35 feeling like I was going to make it 70 and was told that was more than likely not going to occur. Nobody thinks they're going out early, but we did a funeral for an 18-year-old this week. Nobody thinks. Everybody knows they can get sick. You just don't think it is going to be you.

Everybody knows you can die in an accident. Just nobody thinks it is going to be them. Right? This is where we are: on the cusp of eternity, completely unaware that we are, and today we'll busy ourselves gathering what will never fill that gap. No matter how hard you work at your body or how much stuff you try to accumulate, it's never going to satisfy the deepest longing of your heart, because that is eternal, and only what is eternal can fill the gap of eternity. The offer is still on the table for you to leave here today with a former life, a life now in glad submission to Jesus Christ.

I know you don't think you're good enough, or you don't think this is real, or you don't think... But the offer is on the table. I'm just going to contend, through this whole series, that you being here today has some

eternal significance. For those of you who don't think this is for you, then explain to me why you are here. *Well, my friend just pestered me until I came.* Okay, but he's been pestering you a long time. Why are you here today? Why was today the day? I'm going to throw at you that I think God is wooing. God is doing something here. Surely, you have to consider that.

I just earnestly believe some of you are stuck over here trying to earn favor that only comes freely in Jesus Christ, and others of you are here and you are functional atheists. You don't know anything of the joy available to you in Jesus Christ, and I just want to plead with you to consider this unreal offer of an intimate relationship with God that can transform your external life. It's not that you transform your external life so you might know him. It's that you know him, and then that begins to take place. If you get those backwards, you're going to be a slave. It's my hope you would hear clearly, the Holy Spirit would open up eyes and hearts, and you would see for all your morality you're not healed. Let's pray.

Jesus, I thank you for a time to just get together corporately and make much of you, to look at how you reveal yourself to us in the Word, and to let the Bible bear some weight on us for our own good and for our own joy, so I pray you would bring clarity to our hearts and minds. For those of us who, God, ultimately have made one of the great errors when it comes to the gospel, I pray you would dial our hearts in and our minds in and we might have our spirits opened up to the goodness and grace afforded to us in Jesus.

I pray when we're done worshipping you in song, we would be quick to come and grab a hand and to speak with one of the men and women up front about where we are and what it means to know you and follow you and what it looks like to put our trust in you. I pray you would be mighty to save today and trust you are able. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

I love you guys.