



## DID PETER AND PAUL PREACH DIFFERENT GOSPELS?

Kevin Presley

Good morning and welcome. It's good to join you today for a brief study of the bible. The bible says the "gospel of Christ...is the power of God for salvation" (Romans 1:16), but which gospel? Is there more than one? If so, which one should you and I listen to and heed? Those may sound like strange questions to many people who will listen to this lesson, but there is an outspoken sect that contends there is more than one gospel. You may have encountered this doctrine along the way and if not, you likely will.

The proponents of what is sometimes called "Pauline Dispensationalism" appeal to various texts including the one I would like for us to look at as an introduction. It's found in Galatians 2, verses 7 through 9. Here the apostle Paul writes: ***"But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:) And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision."***

Is Paul saying that he preached a different message than the other twelve apostles, including Peter? Did Peter preach the message of salvation by works to the Jews and Paul preach salvation by grace to the Gentiles? Did Peter, for example, preach baptism and Paul did not? We'll look at several passages pertaining to the discussion today. "DID PETER AND PAUL PREACH DIFFERENT GOSPELS?" after a song.

In Galatians chapter 2, verses 7-9, which we read a few moments ago, Paul refers to he and his fellow apostle, Peter, saying that the gospel of the uncircumcision (the Gentiles) was given to him, Paul, and the gospel of the circumcision (the Jews) was given to Peter. This has led some to believe and preach that Paul and Peter taught two different gospels. They contend that Peter preached a gospel of works, including baptism, while Paul taught a gospel of grace alone. They dismiss passages such as Acts 2:38 when Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" by saying that this message was intended only for the Jews and that Paul's message to the Gentiles was different. Some go so far as to say that Peter preached the Lordship of Christ and the necessity of repentance to the first-century Jews, but Paul's message of salvation did not include those themes; that Paul preached salvation by grace alone, and since most of us are Gentiles, we are to listen to Paul and not Peter. They contend that Paul is our apostle and not Peter or the other eleven that Jesus first sent out. This teaching is sometimes called 'Pauline Dispensationalism'. Is that what Paul is saying in Galatians chapter 2, and in other places, or does he mean something else?

If we isolate such verses, we could build a compelling case for such an idea but does that conclusion harmonize with the whole of New Testament teaching, including Paul's? That's what we want to examine today in our study. What was Paul teaching when he spoke of the gospel of the circumcision as opposed to the gospel of the uncircumcision? They even make the case for at least three gospels. They say that Jesus taught 'the gospel of the kingdom'. They contend that Jesus did this to call disciples and prepare them for a physical Jewish kingdom, which the Jewish leaders refused. Since they rejected Christ's offer, He changed and dispatched Peter and the others to the Jewish nation to preach the 'gospel of the circumcision'. This gospel called them to repentance and demanded they submit to the Lordship of Jesus. This gospel, they say, was for the early Jews only and not us today. When Gentiles entered the picture nearly a decade later with the conversion of Cornelius, Paul then took a new gospel to the non-Jewish world, and he serves as the apostle to the Gentile church today. The result is, most of the teachings of Peter and even the teachings of Jesus during His ministry have little direct relevance to us today. Is all that true? If it is, it contradicts some other plainly stated passages in the New Testament. We'll show today, that while Paul WAS sent to preach to a primarily different AUDIENCE, he still preached the same gospel as the other apostles.

Peter and the other original apostles were there from the beginning of the Lord's ministry. They spent three years being prepared for their mission by Christ personally and when Jesus finished His work on earth, ascended back to the Father in heaven, these men were endued with and empowered by the Holy Spirit and set about their work of spreading the good news of Christ's present reign as King. This message was first presented to the Jews who had been prepared by their long history as God's covenant people to receive this truth and accept God's anointed One. Yes, the corrupt Jewish leadership rejected the church and the apostles' message. Still, everyday Jews by the multiplied thousands accepted the truth, obeyed it, and were added to the church of Christ. We read about the beginning of that movement in Acts 2 describing the Day of Pentecost, where Peter and the others preached to more than 3,000 in a single day. When Peter convicted them of the shocking truth that they had murdered God's Son and His anointed, they

were filled with remorse and realized Jesus was indeed the Christ. They asked Peter in verse 37 what they had to do, and Peter says in verse 38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Verse 41 says that those who gladly received Peter's instruction were baptized and according to that verse, along with verse 47, they and everyone else who did so were added to the Lord's church. And from there the gospel spread throughout Jerusalem and eventually throughout Judea and Samaria and finally into the other nations of the world.

So, who was Paul, and what was HIS ministry? Was it different from that of Peter's? In his letter to the church at Galatia, Paul defends his apostleship by recounting his first days as a follower of Christ. He had been a zealous Pharisee defending the Jewish establishment in Jerusalem and jealously protecting its interests from this rapidly spreading new faith called the church. All of that changed when he met Christ on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 and he was subsequently baptized into Christ and the church. Christ, in an unusual event, personally appeared to Paul, primarily because He was going to make Paul an apostle after his conversion. Seeing the resurrected Christ was a qualification for being an apostle, according to Acts 1:21-22. So, Christ appeared to Paul, setting the stage for what Paul would soon become, a chosen ambassador of King Jesus to carry His message to the many nations of the world. He says in Galatians 1:15-18 "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles," Notice, that God's purpose in adding Paul to the apostolic office was to preach Christ to the non-Jewish nations. Did Peter preach Christ? Did the other apostles preach Christ? Of course! What else was Peter doing when we preached in Acts 2:36, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." He preached the Christ to Jews beginning that day and Paul says he was later sent to preach Christ to the other nations. The difference was not Who and what they preached but who they primarily preached it to!

Paul continues now in Galatians 1: "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days." After his conversion, he did not join the apostles for three more years. Paul doesn't specifically tell us what was happening in those three years, but it's likely that Paul was spending that time in training by Christ, receiving revelation, preparing him for his ministry, just as Christ spent approximately that same length of time with the other apostles preparing them for THEIR work. After those three years, he met Peter and James and then launched out into other regions preaching the faith. What faith was he preaching? Well, look down in verses 22 and 23: "And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." What faith was Paul preaching? The word faith, especially when preceded by the definite article "the" refers to the gospel, the content of the Christian message, which Jude said in Jude verse 3 was delivered once and for all time to the saints. Was this faith Paul preached a different one than Peter? No. Look again. It says Paul was preaching the faith he had AT ONE TIME TRIED TO DESTROY. What faith did he so despise that he tried to wipe it out? The one Peter and the others were preaching in Jerusalem. Where is Paul now preaching it? In Syria and

Cilicia. Verse 24 then says, “And they (the churches in Judea) glorified God in me.” Paul is not distinguishing his gospel from that of the other apostles. He is showing unity between them, not disparity! The difference was the audience and not the message.

The premise of Paul going through all of that with Galatians in his letter was his concern about false teachers trying to carry his converts not to “Peter’s gospel” but back to keeping the Old Testament law. The basis of his rebuking letter is what he said in Galatians 1:6-9. “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” Paul would be the first in line to adamantly deny this heresy that he was preaching a different gospel than the other apostles of Christ. So, what DID he mean in chapter 2:7-8 when we said: “But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter. (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles),”?

The problem lies in what words some emphasize when they read the text. He doesn’t say ‘A gospel for the uncircumcised’ and ‘A gospel for the circumcised’. Rather, he says, “THE gospel for the uncircumcised (gentiles)” and “THE gospel for the circumcised (the Jews)”. There’s one gospel, my friend, but two audiences. It was a matter of where the apostles were primarily sent, not WHAT they were sent with. Paul says in verse 9: “and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that WE SHOULD GO to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”

You might ask, why was Paul sent to one group and Peter to another? That’s a good question. God’s revelation of the gospel, like all His revelation through time, was progressive. It didn’t all come at one time. God had to prepare the hearts and minds of people to receive the fullness of the truth. This gospel proclamation of the reign of Christ began with the Jews because they were the people God chose in Abraham for service in bringing His plan for the WHOLE human family to pass. Isaiah 49:6 says, “...It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. ” Peter and the other apostles were Jews and with the Lord from near the beginning and so it is logical that He would send them first to ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ to bring them into the fold of Christ. Yes, Paul was also a Jew, but he was a Jew of a different background and caliber. While many of the others were unlearned men who knew little outside of their homeland, Paul was highly educated and well-versed in the Roman world and was able to more easily navigate and gain access to the ears and hearts of people in those cultures. Thus, Christ chose the other apostles to carry the gospel to their own people, and He chose Paul to introduce it to places beyond. Peter and the others focused, in the early days of the church, on Jerusalem, whose leaders ultimately rejected their message leading to their destruction in AD 70 while Paul was

establishing the faith (remember that he was preaching the same one he had tried to destroy) in places beyond Israel. He thus says in Romans 11:13, "For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry," Apostle means one who is sent and that is what Paul is saying: he was SENT to the Gentiles. He was preaching the same gospel but primarily to another audience.

We should note that Paul didn't ONLY preach to Gentiles, nor did Peter ONLY preach to Jews. They focused their efforts on each one respectively, but both apostles preached to both people. There were Jews of the dispersion living in Roman cities throughout the empire where Paul went. But we also read of Peter being expressly sent to Caesarea in Acts chapter 10 to preach to the house of Cornelius, a Gentile. And what did Peter preach to Cornelius? Jesus. And the events that took place there were strikingly parallel to the events that took place on Pentecost when the gospel was preached to the Jews. Acts 10:34-35 says: "Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:" He goes on to preach Jesus, the King, and the result was the same that day as it was Peter preached that same message to the Jews on Pentecost. When God confirmed by the Holy Spirit that Gentiles should be received into the kingdom, Peter said in verses 47-48: "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord..." Who did Peter command to be baptized by the authority of the Lord Jesus? Gentiles.

Friend, that's the pattern over and over throughout the book of Acts. Christ is preached as Savior and Lord, people believed the preaching of that good news, they turned from sin and obeyed the apostles' command to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. The "mystery" that Paul preached was not some new gospel for the church as opposed to a gospel for the Jews as Pauline dispensationalists affirm, but the mystery was that Gentiles could partake of the same thing first offered to the Jews and the result is they ALL become one in Christ. Thus, Paul wrote in Galatians 3:26-29, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." The idea that Peter preached repentance, baptism, and submitting to the Lordship of Jesus to the Jews only and in contradistinction, Paul preached a gospel of free grace to Gentiles is simply a false doctrine. Paul preached repentance, and he preached it to Gentiles on Mars Hill in Acts 17:30. Paul preached baptism in Acts 19, Romans 6:3-5, Galatians 3:27. Paul preached that one must submit to the Lordship of Jesus, telling the Romans in Romans 10:9 that one must confess with the mouth THE LORD JESUS to be saved. And at the same time, Peter preached the grace of God and the necessity of faith in Christ. (1 Peter 1:10, 2 Peter 1:1, Acts 3:16).

Friend, be careful not to confuse the cultural accommodations the Lord made in the first century for Jews AND Gentiles so that He might peacefully bring them together into one body

with the notion that God gave Paul a different gospel to preach; one that does not require repentance and obedience to the gospel. For Paul himself declared in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 that when Jesus returns, he will punish all of those who do not 'obey the gospel of Christ.' Have you obeyed the gospel? There's only one. Are you a member of the church Jesus built? There's only one of them too and it's made up of Jews AND Gentiles who have obediently placed their faith in the One Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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