

Paul and His Gospel II

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[0 : 00] This is a truly remarkable passage, and I dare say it could not be more clearly stated than what it is. Yet it is absolutely amazing that it has been so roundly ignored by so much of Christendom for so long.

Do you realize what Paul is saying in this passage? Among other things, he is telling us this. God had certain secrets that he kept entirely to himself without divulging them at all until this man, Saul of Tarsus, to become Paul the Apostle, came along.

And then God opened up the secret, which before was not known by anyone. He opened it up, and he revealed it to Paul.

I am absolutely amazed how many Christians have a real problem with that. It ought not to be a problem any more than God having certain secrets kept unto himself that he decided not to divulge to anyone until.

A man named Moses came along. And God revealed to Moses certain things that he had kept only to himself from time immemorial.

[1 : 45] And he chose to reveal them through Moses. Now, most people don't have a problem with that. That seems pretty obvious. And all I am saying is the same principle and the same kind of activity was taking place when God had other secrets that he had not revealed to Moses.

That he kept for himself until a strategic moment developed, which involved the arrival on the scene of Saul of Tarsus to become Paul the Apostle.

And through him, God revealed more of the secrets that he had not previously revealed before. And as I have said before, folks, this is not really difficult to grasp.

It is stated very plainly. And the fallout from this actually centers on the fact that the Pauline epistles constitute the latest revelation by which we should be functioning in the age and dispensation of grace.

And it started way back during the life and ministry of Paul the Apostle. None of this was due to Paul's brilliance or intelligence.

[3 : 09] And it certainly wasn't due to Paul's moral qualifications. He was a persecutor of believers. He was injurious. And he talks about having done it ignorantly and in unbelief.

But God singled him out. Now, and by the way, it also goes without saying that there were certain secret things that God had not yet revealed.

Didn't reveal them to Moses. He didn't reveal them to Paul. But he has revealed them to John. John, his servant, who was isolated and exiled on the Isle of Patmos as an old man.

God revealed to him a very unique revelation of Jesus Christ and the events that were going to transpire on the earth. And he instructed John to write them on a scroll.

And John did. And we have what John wrote. It's called the book of the revelation. And yet, God being the infinite God that he is, I'm sure there are still secret things that belong into the Lord that he has not revealed to John.

[4 : 28] Some of which will be known when we get the glory. And others will probably be unfolding throughout the time immemorial. Because God is an infinite God.

I believe it is really important for believers to pay principal attention to that which constitutes our marching orders.

And they fall under the content that God revealed to the Apostle Paul. This does not mean, oh, well, then the rest of the Bible is worthless.

That's nonsense. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. And it is all equally the word of God. But as you move from Genesis to Revelation, you find more and more of God revealing himself in ways that he had not before.

This is called the doctrine of progressive revelation. So that it is just piecemeal that as the centuries roll on and as the millennia roll on, God reveals more and more of himself.

[5 : 42] Granted, he could have just dumped everything in the present and just all from the get-go. But that would not address the human condition and the human problem that lives in time-space history.

Because that's what we're familiar with. We're a part of it. So you find an unfolding of the revelation of God as the ages unfold. And to me, that seems very logical.

I wish that it were the case for everyone. And while we're still here in Ephesians 3, even though we have some unfinished business I want to attend to in Galatians 2, I do want to just emphasize a few things that have already been read to us.

And notice, Paul is making his case as he opens chapter 3 and he says, This is why. For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

And it goes without saying that Paul was a bondservant of Christ. And that means he was a willing servant. That means he considered himself a love slave to Christ.

[6 : 51] And he did not consider it a drudgery. He considered it an honor. But he also says why he was raised up. And it was for the Gentiles.

You see, God had earlier addressed the Jewish people with the responsibility that they were to be a light to the Gentiles.

They were to show the Gentiles the way. Frankly, they weren't all that interested. Because for the most part, they had absolute contempt for the Gentiles.

And this is witnessed very obviously when God raised up Jonah to send to Nineveh, which was a Gentile pagan city.

The sin of Nineveh had come up before God and he was just about to bring the curtain down on them. And he called a Jewish prophet by the name of Jonah to go and warn the Ninevites that in 40 days, in 40 days, the curtain's coming down.

[8 : 02] God has had it with Nineveh. No doubt the city was steeped in such debauchery and violence and immorality that God was just going to bring it into it.

And yet, God always delights in extending forgiveness where there is repentance.

But in order for people to repent, in order for them to change their mind, they have to have a message that justifies that. They have to have a reason for changing their mind.

And God said, Jonah, you're going to give them that reason. I want you to go down through the main streets of Nineveh and preach to the top of your voice. Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be destroyed.

And lo and behold, Jonah didn't want to do it. He caught a ship and went in the opposite direction. He wasn't going to these Gentile dogs. He wasn't going to give them the message.

[9 : 04] And we all know the story of how God convinced Jonah that there were certain benefits to obedience and certain consequences to disobedience, a la the great fish and all the rest of it.

But lo and behold, the people repented and they believed Jonah's message. And as a result, God spared the city because God always responds favorably when repentance is at hand.

That's an acknowledgement of wrong and a remorse and a regret over wrong. God delights in that. And his arms of forgiveness are always extended to those who repent and acknowledge the error of their way.

And Nineveh did. And then Jonah was sore that the city was spared. Can you imagine that? Now, this is much reflective of the kind of attitude that many of the Jews had to the Gentiles.

They just held them in contempt. So when Jesus talked in Luke chapter 4 about the widow of Zarephath and the fact that Elijah went to her and she was a Gentile and that Elijah healed Naaman, the Syrian commanding officer who was a Gentile, it just enraged the people.

[10 : 32] And we looked at that earlier. So, even though God had raised them up to be a light to the Gentiles, they weren't doing it. And later, when God called Peter through the sheet let down from heaven and told him three times to go to the house of Cornelius, who was a God-fearer, Peter didn't want to go.

He refused to go. Can you imagine somebody actually refusing a call from God? But the call from God seemed to Peter to contradict what God had already said in his word.

And God had already said in his word that the Jews, while they were to be a light to the Gentiles, they were also supposed to be a peculiar people separate from the Gentiles.

Not engaging in their activities, in their immorality, in their idolatry, but to be a peculiar people unto the Lord. And when God called Peter to go to Cornelius, Peter said, nothing doing.

I'm not going to go. And finally, he got the message after God told him the third time. This is all in Acts chapter 10 and chapter 11. He got the message and he went very reluctantly and unwillingly.

[11 : 56] He went. And when he got there, arrived at the house of Cornelius. Cornelius is there eagerly awaiting Peter because he was told that Peter would come.

And when Peter comes, he will tell you what you really need to know. Cornelius was a God-fearer. He was already sympathetic to Israel and Israel's God.

And when Peter arrives there with the men who were escorting him, lo and behold, he walks into Cornelius' house very uncomfortably and ill at ease. And what does he see?

The whole house is lined wall to wall with Gentiles. Goyim. And Peter clears his throat and says, You know how that it is unlawful for a man who is a Jew to be here with all of you Gentiles.

So, why am I here? What's a nice Jewish boy like you doing in a setting like this? And he tells them about the sheet let down from heaven and the vision from God and everything.

[13 : 17] And he says, I don't know what God's up to. I don't know what this is all about. But I'm just following orders. And here I am. And I want you to know I'm really out of my comfort zone.

And then he went ahead and began telling them about Jesus, the Messiah. And it clicked with Cornelius.

He said, This is what I wanted to know. This is the message. This is the truth. This is what I've been waiting to hear. This is what was told me would be provided.

And Cornelius believed. And those household members who were there with him believed. And to show that God was definitely involved in that, he dispensed the Spirit of God to come upon them.

Gentiles, if you can believe it. Gentiles. In the same way it had come upon the Jews on the day of Pentecost. And Peter is dumbstruck.

[14 : 23] He couldn't get over it. What is this? What is this? And God was doing something with the Gentiles.

And Peter didn't understand it. Didn't understand it at all. And neither did Saul of Tarsus. Here are these people who are Jews, who claim to believe that Jesus was the Messiah.

And what are you supposed to do about those people? Well, you stamp them out. Because they are a cancer growing on Judaism. Stamp them out.

Eliminate them. And that's what Saul of Tarsus set out to do. He wasn't interested in being a light any more than Peter was. Or any more than Jonah was. But God, through miraculous conversion on the Damascus road, completely turned Saul of Tarsus around.

And he says, Now, Paul, I'm going to raise you up as a singular apostle. In contrast to the twelve apostles, whom I raised up to go to Israel, I'm raising you up to go to the Gentiles.

[15 : 45] Now, look at Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 1. For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles.

In other words, that's why I'm here, Paul says. That's why I have a ministry. It's all because of you Gentiles, who haven't heard and don't know. And my Jewish countrymen haven't been all that interested in telling you.

And frankly, before my conversion and coming to faith in Jesus Christ, I wasn't interested in telling you either. In fact, I didn't even believe the message myself. Much less give it to you.

Indeed, you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to me for you. Stewardship is something that God gives that is entrusted to the recipient.

You are a custodian of it. You are responsible for its care, its safety, its propagation. That's what being a good steward means. It means you behave responsibly with that which is entrusted to you.

[16 : 53] If you are given a sound body and you are given to athleticism, you have a peculiar stewardship of your body.

And that means you are to care for it. You are to provide for it. You are to exercise it. You are to feed it. You are to maintain that which was given to you in this bodily form.

You are to maintain it in a responsible way. You are not permitted to abuse your body with substances, drugs, etc.

Things that would be harmful to you. You have a stewardship entrusted to you. Your body. It may be stewardship entrusted to you with somebody's money or finances that you're responsible for dispensing.

That's all what a stewardship is about. And Paul says, you know, I have a stewardship. God has committed to me this incredible treasure called the grace of God.

[18 : 07] God. And I am responsible for proclaiming it and protecting it and nurturing it and giving it out. The stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you.

Now, Paul was saying, it wasn't given to me to reside in me. It was given to me to flow through me. I am a conduit.

I am a vehicle. God's grace comes to me in order that I might give it out to others. Dispense it out to others. And it was by revelation there was made known to me the mystery.

What is a mystery? A mystery is, a biblical mystery is not something that can't be known. A biblical mystery is something that can't be known unless it is revealed.

It is like a secret. A person can have a secret that nobody else knows about. But the minute they tell somebody else, the secret's out.

[19 : 26] As long as you keep it to yourself, it's a secret. God had this secret information about what he was going to do, not only for the Jew, but for the Gentile.

But he hadn't revealed it. He kept it all bottled up in his own divine person, waiting for just the right time to reveal it.

And this is precisely what he is talking about. There was made known to me the mystery as I wrote before in brief. If you want a synonym for the word mystery, it would be the word secret.

That's better than any other that I can think of. It's a secret. It's kind of like something being available, but it's in code.

And you'll never figure it out. But if you can crack the code, if you can learn the key so you can break the code, then it's all open and above board.

[20 : 35] Then you can just read it at will, and it makes perfect sense because you've broken the code. The secret, the mystery, is kind of like a code, not revealed before. And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight, what is he saying there?

He is saying that he has a special handle on this information. When he says my insight, it means my ability to look into this thing and understand it.

Where did he get that? that too is part of revelation. Please understand, this mystery isn't something that couldn't be figured out until Paul came along and he was so smart, he cracked the code and understood it.

No, no, no, no. That is not the idea at all. Paul wouldn't have understood it any better than anybody else. But God revealed to Paul what this was all about.

And, let me make a very clear statement. if God revealed this to anyone other than Paul, before Paul, there is absolutely no record of it.

[22 : 00] There is no indication of it. We have every reason to believe that Paul was not only on the cutting edge of this information, he alone was privy to this information.

God revealed it to him exclusively. Not that it might stay with him, but that it might go from him to everyone.

That was the game plan. In verse 5, which in other generations, and that can only mean past generations, of course, they were the only ones in existence then, but he could have referred to.

In past generations, was not made known to the sons of men. They didn't know about this. They didn't know that God had special plans for the Gentiles, because even though those plans were in the mind and heart of God from eternity past, God never divulged it.

And the reason he never divulged it is because it was not in accordance with his plan to divulge it. God keeps secret to himself everything that he wants to, everything that he feels he needs to, and he reveals what he chooses to reveal at the strategic moment he chooses to reveal it.

[23 : 20] That's all part of his job description. So we've got some dynamic revelations all the way from Moses to Jonah to John the Baptist, and it is progressing, it is moving and moving and moving.

And the revelations seem to have stopped with where our Bible ends. That's the revelations given to John in the book of the Revelation.

So he says it was not made known to the sons of men as it has now, as of the time Paul was writing this, now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.

And here's what I'm talking about. To be specific, that the Gentiles, the Goyim, the uncircumcised, the dogs, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, that means equal heirs, fellow heirs, and fellow members of the body.

The body is the spiritual body of Christ, which is comprised of all people who have faith in Christ, regardless of whether they're in church or not, whether they speak the language or not, whatever their color is immaterial, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace.

[25 : 01] You think I earned this? you think I deserve this position? Why, no way in the world. I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of his power.

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of the Messiah, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery, or the dispensation of the mystery, or the doling out of the ministry, or the administering of the ministry, the giving it out of this mystery, which for ages, and here he emphasizes this again, which for ages has been hidden in God, and let me tell you something, if something is hidden in God, you're not going to figure it out, no way in the world, that any mortal is going to figure out anything that is hidden in God, and the only way we know it is that God is pleased to reveal it, to open up himself, and let out some information that he had not let out before.

Is this difficult? Is this hard to understand? I think not. This ought to be standard operating procedure, but I want to tell you, what you are getting right now, as ordinary as it ought to be considered, is rarely understood in much of Christendom.

And I say that to our shame. This truth has been around for 2,000 years, and you would be amazed how many people who name the name of Christ don't know it, don't know anything about it.

and I try to tell some of my colleagues about this fellow clergyman. One response was, one response was, so what you were preaching now, and you were saying that the Pauline message, and the letters that Paul wrote to the churches, and the content in them, that's supposed to be the burden of our preaching and teaching today, and our methodology, and that's our game plan, that's what we're supposed to be following?

[27 : 30] Yes. Well, you realize that it hasn't been this way. Through all of church history, it hasn't been this way.

And where has most of the emphasis been? It's been on the Gospels. And for a greater reason than any other, it's been on the Gospels sentimentally, because that's where you find Jesus.

He's in the Gospel. Let me tell you something. You find Jesus in Romans, and Corinthians, and Ephesians, and Philipians.

Christ is in all of those, but he is an updated Christ compared to the Gospels, because the Gospels reveal a Christ prior to the cross. It is after the cross that we have a Christ who is ascended, risen, glorified, and dispatching more up-to-date information through Paul than what he gave to the twelve when he was here on earth.

That is not difficult to understand, but I must confess, and I do not do this with any degree of pride at all. I do it with a sense of shame. I didn't know this and didn't realize it for 15 years after I had been a believer and was a deacon in one of our local churches and a graduate from Baptist College, Cedarville, down the road.

[29 : 02] Never heard this there. Oh, they were clear enough about Paul, but not about the updated information, not about the mystery revealed, not, no, no. And some say, are you saying then that this thing that you're preaching and this what dispensationalists have been preaching for the last hundred years, and they associate a lot of it with John Nelson Darby and Schofield and the Schofield Reference Bible, and you're saying that this stuff that just came on the scene in the last hundred years is what we're supposed to be doing, and that all the believers for centuries before that were just completely out of it, but now you have the truth and this is the way it's supposed to be.

I can't believe that this is the way it's supposed to be and that this has been lost, to the church for all these years, and that sounds kind of right, but then I thought, well, wait a minute, there's a whole lot of information that has been lost to the church for a whole long time in other areas too.

Do you realize that the great and magnificent doctrine of justification by faith had been lost to the church for over a thousand years?

From the time that justification by faith was proclaimed by Paul and those early followers of his, years, until the time that Martin Luther resurfaced the doctrine of justification by faith and was pronounced a heretic for doing it, it had already justification by faith, which is the backbone of Christianity, had been lost to it for all practical purposes for over a thousand years.

and it was Luther who brought it back to life in the midst of great conflict and a tremendous price that was paid. So it ought not to come as any surprise to us that there are other truths including this one.

[31 : 23] The progression of doctrine is so often lost, misunderstood, or even denied in Christian circles. to bring to light verse 9 what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things.

And here's why I did it. In order that the manifold wisdom of God, that's the variegated wisdom of God, that is wisdom that comes at you from every angle imaginable, might now be made known through the church that is the body of Christ to the rulers and the authorities and the heavenly places.

And I take it that these are angelic beings. And some feel that God created man in order to resolve the angelic conflict, and that's entirely possible.

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which he carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord. Wow. Now, this gospel that he is proclaiming, and we still have some unfinished business I mentioned in Galatians 2, so if you'll turn back there for just a moment.

Galatians 2, this is what Paul is preaching as he goes out among the Gentiles. He is preaching justification by faith.

[32 : 52] That is, you become rightly related to God simply on the basis of acknowledging, agreeing with God as to your sin and your unworthiness before God and the transferring of any confidence or trust that you may have in yourself or an institution, whether it's a church, a lodge, or good works, or whatever, you transfer as an act of your will, you transfer your confidence, your trust, in whatever, and you put it solely on Jesus Christ.

And God will declare you righteous and accepted to Him on the basis of your faith in Jesus Christ.

Well, where is circumcision? Now, if you're a Jew, that's the first question you ask. They had a knock-down, drag-out fight about circumcision.

If you were a Jew, there's no question you'd be circumcised. But, if a non-Jew puts his faith in Jesus as the Messiah, doesn't he have to be circumcised?

No. Isn't the gospel, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be circumcised and thou shalt be saved? No! No! Isn't it believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and keep the Sabbath?

[34 : 33] No! It's just by grace, through faith, plus nothing. Well, don't you have to be baptized? Isn't it believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized?

That's what Acts 2.38 says. Believe and be baptized. baptized? No. Justification by faith is by grace, through faith, plus nothing.

God Now, how is that going to sit with my Jewish brethren, who are also believers, when they find out what I have been preaching and teaching among the Gentiles?

What are my Jewish believing friends going to think about that? And that's why Paul went to Jerusalem to convey the gospel that he proclaims among the Gentiles.

Look at this, if you will, in Galatians 2. We've already studied it a little bit, but I just want to read it to you. Paul says in verse 2 of Galatians 2, it was because of a revelation that I went up and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.

[35 : 52] Why would he do that if he was preaching to the Gentiles the same thing they were preaching to the Jews? Why would it be necessary for him to run it by them?

Well, it wouldn't be. He would say, well, we're all preaching the very same thing. Message is not different. But he wasn't preaching the same thing. He was preaching the gospel of Christ with an emphasis on justification by faith through Christ to Gentiles.

And he didn't know how that was going to sit with the Jews. Because here we have this great conflict. And it's nothing else but a conflict. It is a huge item of confusion.

We are talking about a transitional period that took place over several decades where it is all Jew and Jew alone.

This is why Christ said, don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the Samaritans, confine your ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. That's when he called the twelve.

[37 : 02] Back in Matthew's gospel chapter ten. That's very clear. He even specifically tells them, don't go to the Gentiles. Don't go to the Samaritans. Go strictly to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Gentiles. And now, what's Paul's title? The apostle to the Gentiles. What is this?

You know, it is this kind of misunderstanding that causes some people to say, well, you know, the Bible is contradicting itself. The Bible is full of contradictions. Here, Jesus said that they're not supposed to go to the Gentiles.

Here, Paul is supposed to go to the Gentiles. What is this? Well, it is a progression of doctrine. It is something that's changing. It is something that's unfolding that wasn't known before, but it's known now.

So, get with the program, and you don't see contradictions. Ignore the program and the change in the program, and you've got contradictions coming out your eyeballs that you cannot resolve.

[38 : 04] This ministry given to Paul was contrary to what they were proclaiming among the Jews. Because, listen, the Jews, there was only one really valid burning question that occupied the mind of every Jew when Jesus was here on the earth for those three years.

And the one question was this, who is he? Peter's answer was thou art the Christ.

You are the Messiah, the Son of God. And Jesus commended Peter for his understanding of that. Now, if you were a Jew, and you heard and understood that, that settled it for you.

Because, if you believe Jesus to be the Messiah, then anything and everything that he requires of you, you just automatically do and comply with because it is God in the flesh speaking.

But if you reject that, and you do not believe that he is the Messiah, then of course, you don't follow anything that he says. And that was true of the religious establishment.

[39 : 33] The religious establishment says this man is not of God. And it's true that he does miracles, or at least things that look like miracles, but the only reason he's able to do it is because he's in cahoots with Satan himself.

And they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, not being baptized by John. So that was the issue, the defining issue among the Jew.

Well, what's the defining issue among the Gentiles? Christians who had no concept of a Jewish Messiah coming to do whatever the Jewish Messiah was going to do.

And by the way, no Jew thought that, you know why the Jewish Messiah is promised, you know why he's coming, don't you? He's coming so he can die for the sins of the world. Never entered their mind.

Of course not. That wasn't why. He's coming so that he can deliver Israel from all her enemies and reign and pomp and circumstance and splendor. and establish his kingdom and defeat all of the enemies of Israel.

[40 : 35] That's why the Messiah is coming. That's all they could think about. And here we have a Messiah who is coming to be crucified. Now how is this going to settle with the Gentiles?

This Jewish Messiah is going to be presented to Gentiles, non-Jews, as the Savior of the whole world. And that includes all Gentiles.

And you can become rightly related to God by putting your faith and trust in this one who died on that cross for your sins.

And Paul is saying, that's the extent of my message. That's the whole nine yards. That's all the grace of God. I delivered unto you that which first of all I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that he was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

That's my message to the Gentiles. That's the whole of it. That's the whole nine yards. That's everything. And as he runs that by, these Jewish brethren who are still steeped in the law of Moses, even though they have embraced Jesus as the Messiah, they have not rejected the law.

[42 : 00] They are still keeping the Sabbath. They are still refusing ham sandwiches. They are still doing everything Jewish, even though they have trusted Christ as their Savior.

And Paul is telling them here in Galatians 2, Peter, James, John, this is what I'm preaching to the Gentiles. This is it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

What do you think of that? How is this going to sit with them? Are they going to say, well, Paul, that's all well and good to believe in Jesus as your Savior.

That's great, but don't you really think that they ought to be circumcised too? Paul said, no. No. He took Titus with him, and Titus was a Gentile, but they didn't require him to be circumcised.

This is breakthrough stuff. And it is so frequently misunderstood by today's Christians. This is verse 3, even Titus, who was with me, though was a Greek, was not compelled to be circumcised.

[43 : 12] He said, I preached to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation. He's talking about the big shots, the shakers and the movers. He's talking about the twelve.

For fear I might be running or had run in vain. And we related to you how that Paul was concerned that even though he got his message of the grace of God directly from the risen Christ, and he had no reluctance in proclaiming it to the Gentiles, he still knew that's not what the twelve were preaching.

What are they going to think when they hear what I have been preaching to the Gentiles? Are they going to discount me? Are they going to deny my apostleship?

Are they going to say, well, you realize of course that Paul is not actually an apostle. I mean, not an apostle like we are.

We were with Jesus for three years. We walked the dusty roads of Galilee with him. We saw his miracles. Paul wasn't in on any of that.

[44 : 35] Paul's apostleship is really quite suspect. Do you know what I mean? Maybe just not up to par. Maybe he's not as bona fide, as legitimate, as we are.

None of that. None of that. Nor was Paul an add-on to the twelve. He was completely different, with a whole different message for a whole different clientele.

And that's what he wanted to talk to the twelve about. Are these guys going to endorse me? Are they going to support me? Are they going to reject me?

Are they going to tell people to put no confidence in what I'm saying to the Gentiles because it's different from what they're saying? You see, it is this difference that constitutes so much of the confusion that exists in the book of Acts, which encompasses a period of thirty years in the making.

The Acts of the Apostles, thirty years. And we have this progression unfolding in Acts, where it is doctrine on the move. It's changing. And that's what's confusing.

[45 : 49] And if you settle in on Acts 2, like our Pentecostal friends do, you get your marching orders from the church there in Acts 2, because that's where the Spirit of God was manifested and they were speaking in tongues and doing miracles.

And their conclusion is, that's what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to speak in tongues. We're supposed to produce miracles. We're supposed to do those things. And if we had as much faith as they had back in Acts 2, we could do it too.

And the only reason we don't is because we don't have the faith. That's nonsense. This was the way it was supposed to be then. But it's changed.

We've got to get with the program. The program is on the move. It's an updated thing. And if you're trying to fight, if you're trying to fight World War III with World War I or World War II weapons, you're going to get your clock cleaned.

Because that's not where it's at. And that's exactly what the church is doing today. And this is one of the reasons why there is so much anemia and ineffectiveness in the church.

[47 : 06] We don't even have the right message. Oh, Christ is the center of it. He was the center of the gospel of the kingdom. He's the center of the gospel of the grace of God. But it is so muddled and so confused and so confounded that we are not proclaiming a clear gospel of the grace of God message to the world.

Little wonder they're not paying much attention. And they're not. The end result. I love this. Verse 7.

On the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, which before would have been unthinkable, just as Peter had been to the circumcised, which was to the Jew, for he, God, who effectually worked for Peter and his apostleship to the Jew, effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles, and recognizing, acknowledging, understanding, appreciating the grace that had been given to me, Paul, James and Peter and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship.

shook hands with these guys and said, hey, the Lord bless you. We affirm your message to the Gentiles. Go get them.

They were behind them. The only thing they asked us to remember was the poor. Well, we've been doing that anyway, and that was not a problem.

[48 : 53] This is such a terribly critical, important issue. Do I mean to say that the church, which is the body of Christ today, preaches an inadequate, confused message?

I sure do, and it breaks my heart. We have got a clear, clarion call of the gospel of the grace of God, and it is so often obfuscated, added to, junked up, replaced with, all kinds of stuff, and the world doesn't get the message because we're not really proclaiming it.

Wow. It's kind of like reformation all over again. when Martin Luther began preaching justification by faith, people said it was too good to be true.

It is good news, and today we have a gospel of the grace of God, justification by faith, by grace, through faith, plus nothing, and it is so confounded, and so misunderstood, often by those who are supposed to be proclaiming it.

Little wonder, it makes you feel sorry for those on the listening end, doesn't it? What can we do about it? Well, we can start by doing what we're doing right now, and as you have opportunity to distribute literature and tapes, and I guess nobody distributes tapes anymore, CDs or whatever, let's just saturate our area with this truth because it is God's truth, and we do not have the right to withhold it.

[50 : 52] Pray with me, please. Father, there's so very much that needs to be done, and so little with which to do it, but yet there is adequate for what needs to be done because you have not left the church in a way that the mission cannot be accomplished.

You have not shortened us in any way. We have everything we need. We just need to re-examine our priorities along with our methodology and begin or continue proclaiming this message with boldness and with authority because that's the way you gave it.

We have no right to do anything else. thank you for these folk who are here today and for we trust the truth that is deposited in each of them.

We pray the spirit of God will instill within each mind and heart how best we might be responsible with the information we have. We pray in Christ's name.

Amen.