Introduction
Let me begin this morning by reminding us of where we left off in the book of Galatians. The Apostle Paul is writing to the churches in southern Galatia to remind them that there is only one Gospel. And when you add or take away anything from it, it ceases to be the Gospel. He is writing this out of necessity, you see, the Gospel is under attack in the early church. And much like today, we must be careful that we do not preach a perverted or watered-down Gospel. We must always begin with the problem – you and I are sinners bound for Hell, and there is nothing we can do to rescue ourselves, because that very sin that condemns us courses through our veins from birth. We need to be rescued desperately. That’s when God steps in – God in His infinite love for us sent a Savior, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross in our place taking on the penalty and wrath of God that we deserve for our sinfulness – He went to Hell for us. And if you confess your sins and believe in His death and resurrection you can be rescued. It’s as simple as that, therefore your role in rescuing yourself is passive; salvation is a work done by Christ alone at the will of the Father. That is the Gospel that Paul is preaching, and yet the Devil has been seeking to pervert it from the beginning. In Paul’s letter here he addresses two ways in which the Gospel was under attack. First, people hear the good news of Jesus Christ and they say, “That’s it? Just faith in Christ? That’s just a little too easy, so let me help Jesus out.” Therefore, they fill their lives with lists of morality and religious tasks they must complete – the Gospel then becomes a quick 7-step process prior to salvation, in hopes to justify themselves before God – they are once again trying to earn their own salvation. When that happens, you have already departed from the Gospel. So that’s one perversion of the Gospel, and it’s called legalism. The other perversion that Paul will discuss later on is called lawlessness. It is when people hear the Gospel message and say, “That’s awesome news. You’re telling me Jesus will forgive me for anything I do, so I can do whatever I want?” These people see their salvation more like ‘fire insurance’ – they haven’t been impacted by the Gospel message, it hasn’t changed their lives at all, they only identify themselves as Christians in hopes that it will keep them from Hell, because that sounds like a terrible place. It looks something like this… “Yeah I trust in Christ, but I am who I am, and I will not change - #sorry, not sorry.” I run in to these people all the time. They would fight you until they’re blue in the face trying to convince you that they believe in Jesus, but they’re lives do not look like Christ at all. They have (whether they realize it or not) simply chosen a religion and have not entered in to a life changing relationship with Jesus Christ. Again, to those who misunderstood the Gospel in this way, there is no life altering change, no submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, just a list of things to do. Ultimately these two perversions of the Gospel, whether adding something to it, or not allowing it to impact your life at all, are what make them false. And Paul will contend in this letter that if you are in either one of these camps than you are outside the lines of the Gospel – you are believing something that isn’t from God centered on Christ for salvation, and therefore you are not saved.
But how do we know that Paul’s message is really from God and not concocted for his own personal gain? This is where we left off in Chapter 1. Paul has spent quite some times, several verses, in order to testify to the authenticity of his message and in him as a genuine apostle of Jesus Christ. He does this by sharing with us his testimony. “He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy.” (v. 23). This must be an authentic Gospel because it changed Paul’s life drastically – and it can change yours as well – your sinfulness is not greater than God’s grace and through belief in Jesus Christ, you too can look at the sinfulness of your past as a ‘former life’.

Now as we roll into chapter 2 we will continue to walk along the path the Paul’s testimony as he seeks to defend the Gospel. Open your Bibles to Galatians 2:1-10, read with me verses 1-10.

Open in Prayer.

Verse 1 - “Then after an interval of 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also.” Paul is telling us that it has been 14 years since he met with Peter and James (spoken of in verse 18-19 in chapter 1) in Jerusalem. During that time Paul has been preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles, planting churches, training leaders and then moving on from one location to the next. But there arose a problem. You see, it would seem that in some of the locations Paul and Barnabas ministered in (such as Galatia), a small minority of Judaizers began to dirty up the Gospel. Their strategy was to slide in behind Paul, after he left, and teach that in order to be a ‘real Christian’ one must believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection, and be circumcised, and obey the dietary laws of the Law of Moses. And although they were a parasite to the Church, to be taken seriously, for 14 years Paul only addressed them in letters like this one. But then something changed. Acts 15:1-2 reads, “Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, ‘unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.” And so, in order to further defend the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ and not allow any perversion, Paul headed back to Jerusalem – the center of it all. Now it’s important to clear up something. Acts 15 says that the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. And so, in order to further defend the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ and not allow any perversion, Paul headed back to Jerusalem – the center of it all. Now it’s important to clear up something. Acts 15 says that the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem and Paul writes in Galatians 2:2 that it was because of a revelation that I went up. Which one was it, did he get summoned or did he go up due to a special revelation from God? I think it was both. You see I believe that Paul and Barnabas were asked to go up to Jerusalem because the problem was centered on them, but they did not see that as something they wanted to step in to. Then something happened - As Paul was continuing with his ministry at hand, God spoke to him and told him that he needs to go – and when God speaks you listen and obey (it would seem that Paul being so focused and driven always with the task at hand needed a special nudge from God once again). So Paul took with him Barnabas, his fellow Jewish brother in Christ, and Titus a Greek (Gentile) convert and ministry partner to Jerusalem in order to defend his ministry and message. He continues on in verse 2....
“And I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain.” (v. 2b) What Paul is saying here is that when he arrived in Jerusalem, he met with the apostles and church leaders privately in order to testify to the gospel that he had been preaching to the Gentiles. A Gospel that is centered on the cross and person of Jesus Christ and not perverted by any ‘false amendments’. He brought Barnabas along so that a fellow Jew and long-time friend of the Church in Jerusalem could ‘back up’ his testimony – he has heard the message Paul preaches time and time again and has seen the lives changed by the Holy Spirit. And Paul did this privately because he was afraid that if he made a big display of this whole thing then a schism (a conflict) could possibly arise between him and the other Apostles and would harm his ministry efforts past, present and future. And in case they did not believe the testimony of Barnabas and Paul, he brought Titus with him. Again, Titus is a Greek convert, a Gentile. And according to verse 3 (“not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled be circumcised.”) he was free to make the choice, but did not feel that he needed to be circumcised. They hear Barnabas’ and Titus’ testimony and they are convinced that they are truly believers. So these men are not the problem. The problem is what Paul points out in verse 4. “But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.” What Paul is doing here is he is pinpointing the root of the problem. The Gospel Paul preached was centered on the redeeming work of Jesus Christ and that justification is found in Him alone and not in the Law. Therefore, because we are in Christ we are free to live without the restraints of the law. Again, we come back to one of the perversions of the Gospel. It’s important you understand them, because it is still being used today to pervert the Gospel into something else entirely. Because of Christ we no longer bound by the Law of Moses – in fact, the Law has never been able to bring salvation to humanity, it has always been a measuring rod in place to point out our need for a Savior. However, after 2,000 years of teaching and trying to follow the Law of Moses perfectly some had trouble realizing that Christ fulfilled the Law and it was no longer needed to have a relationship with God the Father. Therefore, they tried to incorporate both in the Gospel – and in so doing they perverted the truth of the Gospel – making it out to be something else entirely. This still happens today. These false brethren, who look a lot like Christians, become a part of fellowships, and begin to preach their false gospel to the Church – not from the pulpit, but in small groups. They begin to tell you that in order to be truly saved you must speak in tongues. Or to be truly saved you must dress a certain way. Or they tell you that in order to be truly saved you must keep all of the 10 commandments, never breaking one! This is not the Gospel. You have been freed from the Law and are able to now walk in liberty because Christ fulfilled the law. Matthew 5:17 “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.” The Law is still important because it teaches us how to live holy and righteous lives, but it never has and most certainly never will bring salvation. It only diagnoses our sinfulness. And so Paul with the conviction of the Holy Spirit says that he will never budge an inch on this crucial doctrinal truth. “But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.” (v. 5) He is letting his fellow apostles know that he was not swayed away from the truth of the Gospel. Who knows what the Apostles had heard about
Paul’s ministry from those seeking to undermine it, but Paul takes away any doubt up to this point and now reveals to them the unity he has with the other Apostles.

**Verse 6** - “But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.” What is Paul saying in this verse? Paul again, is reminding his Galatian audience that the Gospel he preached to them was not man-made but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ (c.f. 1:12) – the fact that they contributed nothing to me means that the other Apostles after hearing the Gospel Paul was preaching had nothing else to add to it – further confirming his message.

**Verses 7-9** show the unity that Paul walked away with from this meeting in Jerusalem. “And recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised” (v. 9). Paul had not run in vain. The Judaizers do not represent the Jerusalem apostles. And the Church remained united behind the true Gospel of Jesus Christ led by the same Spirit of God (v. 8). This was important not only for Paul and Barnabas, and the others who ministered alongside of them, but it was so important for the Churches in Galatia to see the united front of the Church behind Paul and the Gospel he proclaimed.

**Verse 10** – “They only asked us to remember the poor – the very thing I also was eager to do.” There was nothing more they had to add to the Gospel Paul proclaimed. There was no confrontation or debate that took place concerning the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It was and is always simply a gift of God centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus. All they reminded Paul and Barnabas was to continue doing what they were already engaged in – allowing their actions to promote the Gospel even more so. If you preach the correct Gospel and yet do not live it out loud with your life, you are sabotaging your own efforts. And the Apostles were very much aware of this. Your message is right on Paul – make sure you continue to back it up with your life. That’s a great challenge for us as well!

**Conclusion**

In conclusion I would like to close with a few questions in order to challenge us toward application. Have you embraced the truth of Jesus’ death and resurrection? Have you placed your trust in Him alone to rescue you from the eternal penalty of your sinfulness? If so, how are you living? Does your life proclaim the correct Gospel? Is there a change in your life since believing in Christ? How are you seeking to lead others to Christ? Like Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, we have been placed in a very specific position to proclaim the Gospel with our mouth and our lives. Perhaps it’s time we got busy doing that.

Let’s pray.