



It was early in the 16th century. A man in his twenties was burdened and heavy, wrestling with God. He was so restless. This young monk tried everything, he tried so hard to be a good Christian.

He prayed and prayed. He discovered and dissected all the sin in his heart and confessed it to God. Sometimes he would confess for hours. He read his Bible. He was always striving. He worked harder than any other monk in Germany. His burden was so heavy. He was...Exhausted. Enslaved. Insecure. Anxious.

Martin Luther thought he'd never be good enough for God.

Then his breakthrough came! It had been right there all along. Martin Luther's breakthrough was found in Galatians—6 chapters, 149 verses of dynamite!

It was especially chapter 2 of Galatians, this news of justification by faith alone, that forever transformed Martin Luther. Against the black and terrible backdrop of God's wrath toward sinners and seeing his inability to earn righteousness before God and appease God's wrath, the message of Galatians hit Martin Luther like dynamite, blowing up his false ideas about God and clearing the way for the new, for the truth.

The fireworks of July 4th are nothing next to the freedom that bursts from the pages of Galatians. Paul's epistle to the Galatians has had an uncommonly powerful effect on people throughout church history. Martin Luther said: "The epistle to the Galatians is my epistle; I have betrothed myself to it; it is my Katie." John Bunyan said that Galatians broke his depression.

A great revival movement swept through England in the 18th century. Many trace the beginning of this revival to a layman named William Holland who in 1738 read the preface of Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians (a preface that summed up the gospel message of Galatians): "There came such a power over me as I cannot well describe. My great burden fell off in an instant, my heart was so filled with peace and love that I burst into tears. I almost thought I saw our Savior. My companions seeing me so affected fell on their knees and prayed. And when I afterwards went into the street I could scarcely feel the ground I trod upon."

This was the turning point of William Holland's life. Every night he went about reading that preface out loud to anyone who would listen. John Wesley listened and spoke his famous line "My heart was strangely warmed." A revival began.

Has this happened to you? Has your heart been "strangely warmed" by the message of this book? Have you felt the dynamite? Why has this little book, 149 verses, had such liberating, breakthrough power? Because, perhaps like no other book of the Bible, Galatians sets loose the raw, untamed gospel and blows apart all forms of relating to God based on good works.

F.F. Bruce said: "When, from time to time, someone appeared who understood and proclaimed the genuine message of Galatians, he was liable to be denounced as a subversive character—as, indeed, Paul was in his own day. But the letter to the Galatians, with its trumpet call to Christian freedom, has time and again released the true gospel from the bonds in which well-meaning but misguided people have confined it so that it can once more exert its emancipating power in the life of mankind, empowering those who receive it to stand fast in the freedom with which Christ has set them free."

What happened to Martin Luther, what happened to William Holland, what might be happening to some of you right now in this room while I preach, is possible only because of what's recorded in Galatians 2—this pivotal meeting, a showdown of sorts, that took place between a group of six men 2,000 years ago.

Paul's Visit to Jerusalem

Last week we looked at the first half of Paul's biography, his conversion. This week we'll look at the second half of Paul's biography, his visit to Jerusalem, the most important business trip of Paul's life.

Remember the problem in Galatia? False teachers were challenging Paul's message and ministry to the Gentiles. So, Paul tells the Galatians a story of how he took a trip to where it all began: Jerusalem, where he met with the original apostles (the big guns) to verify the authenticity of his message and his mission.

Everything hinged on this meeting. The scene was intense. The questions were many. What would these Jerusalem apostles—these men who walked with Jesus—say about Paul's message and ministry to the Gentiles?

What was decided at this meeting should transform our lives.

"Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them (though privately before those who seemed

influential) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain. But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. 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. 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. 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. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do” (Galatians 2:1–10).

The Dynamite

We start with six men. On one side of the table there was Paul (a circumcised Jew), Barnabas (a circumcised Jew), and Titus (uncircumcised, Greek, Gentile).

Titus is a “test case” of Paul’s message and ministry. Titus couldn’t have been more different from the Jerusalem side of the table. He looks different, dresses different, sounds different, eats different. He’s not a Jew. He’s not circumcised. He doesn’t keep the ceremonial laws. But, Titus believes Jesus is the Messiah sent to rescue sinners and renew the world. Will this be enough, or will the Jerusalem apostles say that Titus must do a little bit more in order to really be considered one of God’s people, in order to really be saved?

On the other side of the table were James (a Jew, brother of Jesus), Cephas/Peter (a Jew and the most famous disciple of Jesus), and John (a Jew and the most loved disciple of Jesus).

If you accept the historical tradition that Peter is the one who gave Mark all of his information for the Gospel of Mark, at this meeting are all the writers of the New Testament, except for Matthew, Luke, and the author of Hebrews.

These men think, talk, pray, study, listen to God, and eventually a decision is made. Dick Lucas, a well known pastor and scholar in England, says there’s no more important statement in Galatians than this decision, than the final few words of verse 6, they *“added nothing to me.”*

They “added nothing to me.” The idea here is that this impressive bunch of Bible-writing apostles in Jerusalem added nothing, not to Paul, but to Paul’s message.

The Judaizers/false teachers in Galatia said that in addition to Jesus you need circumcision—law keeping. The Jerusalem decision was no! The gospel/the message is Jesus plus nothing...no additions.

Dynamite! This message is dynamite. Do you know what dynamite is? Do you know what dynamite is for? Dynamite is powerful. Dynamite is an explosive used to blow up/destroy something that’s in the way—an obstacle, an old foundation—in order to make way for something new. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for everyone who believes...”* (Romans 1:16).

This dynamite power explodes all the false ways we try to relate to God and pursue happiness. The gospel message is dynamite because unlike all other messages, this messages frees you.

You’re not really a Christian until you see, until you feel, that you’ve been in slavery and you see that you need to be freed. All the religions, all the different beliefs and messages in our world, they make you a slave. They say you must perform and behave and do and earn and acquire in order to be okay, accepted, happy.

This was the problem in Galatia. There was an enslaving message going around in Galatia. People were saying in order to be saved and accepted, in order to achieve the happiness of knowing God, you need more than Jesus. In addition to Jesus you must obey some rules, get circumcised, do some religious activities, keep some laws. “Jesus isn’t enough. He didn’t fully rescue you from sin and death and condemnation. He didn’t completely make you a son or daughter of God, you’re still somewhat of an orphan and don’t yet have the Father’s full acceptance and attention. You can’t rest and be happy in your relationship with God until you add onto Jesus. Jesus isn’t enough, you must add to him.”

How do you add to Jesus? What are your additions? Sue Lutz said: “Anything you add to Jesus Christ as a requirement for being happy will become a slave master that will strangle you, will drive you into the ground, will hang you by the neck until dead.”

What have you added to Jesus? What is strangling you, driving you into the ground, hanging you by the neck because you think you have to have it? What says to you that Jesus isn’t enough, that you must have this addition in order to be okay?

In Galatia, the enslaving additions were good things, righteous additions. Circumcision was a mark of righteousness. The ceremonial laws were symbols of holiness and devotion to God. I’m sure your additions to Jesus are very righteous, too. You think for it to be well with your soul you also need to keep the high

standards you've set for yourself, you need to perform at the highest level at work, you must have godly kids, you must never let anyone down, your walk with God must be so vibrant that someone will publish a book about it after you've passed on.

Here in Galatians, do you know what this dynamite is for, do you know who it's for? Verse 6, they ***"added nothing to me"***—this gospel of Jesus plus nothing, this message that Jesus has done it all...this dynamite isn't meant to expose the unrighteousness in your life, this is dynamite designed to destroy the foundation of righteousness and good works that you've built your life upon.

Galatians is a book for church people. Galatians places dynamite at the base of the mountain of self-righteousness that has grown up over our hearts. The message that was confirmed and preserved at this meeting in Jerusalem, the message at the heart of this letter written to church people, is that your good works don't save you. Jesus plus nothing saves you. Your good works are actually keeping you from Jesus.

Nathan Cole was a semi-literate farmer in Connecticut in 1741. Upon hearing George Whitfield preach the gospel he said: "My hearing him preach gave me a heart wound. And by God's blessing my old foundation was broken and I saw that my righteousness could not save me."

Nathan Cole felt the dynamite. Have you? Do you understand that your righteousness cannot save you? Until you understand what was preserved at this meeting—Jesus plus nothing—until you understand this message to the bottom, until it explodes in your heart, you'll do good things in an attempt to earn favor with God...and you'll be a slave because you can never be sure that you're good enough.

Let this dynamite blow up your righteousness. Start repenting not just of your bad deeds, but of your righteousness. John Gerstner said: "There is nothing that separates us from God more than our damnable good works."

Repent of your good works because they're keeping you from God. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you that Jesus is a big enough Savior for you and as he does that you'll start to see where you've been like Nathan Cole, Martin Luther, the Galatians, me—thinking your righteous deeds could save you.

Here's what I've learned: wherever you feel the most elated and enslaved, that's probably where you need to repent. That's where you're basing your relationship with God on your own righteousness and works rather than Jesus. Even at our best, doing our best can never be sufficient to earn a place in heaven. This week, let the dynamite do its work. Detect what's enslaving you—your righteousness—and start repenting of it.

The Slave Masters

There's one reason why this big meeting took place in Jerusalem. Paul sums it up in verse 5, ***"so that the truth of the gospel might***

be preserved for you." Paul's ambition was to preserve, to protect, to pass on the truth of the gospel to this confused church in Galatia.

Freedom is not easily gained, and once gained it can be easily lost. This world is always trying to bring you into slavery. The bane of Paul's life was false teachers who snuck into a church after he left in order to diffuse the dynamite. False teachers were always trying to water down Paul's gospel message and steal the freedom people found in Jesus.

This happened at the meeting in Jerusalem. ***"...false brothers secretly brought in—...slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery"*** (v.4). Paul calls these dangerous people "false brothers." This should scare us. These are pretend Christians, people who hang out with Christians, who are part of the church, but who are completely false because they proclaim a different message.

Paul goes even further. He says that these false brothers are slave masters—they steal people's freedom in Christ and make people slaves. Instead of passing out life-changing dynamite, these pretend Christians pass out chains.

Do we have false brothers, slave masters in our church? Are there slave masters in your life? Or maybe it's just slave master voices in your head that say: "you're not free yet, Jesus isn't enough—he's not a big enough, good enough, powerful enough Savior to atone for all of your sin, present you righteous before God, and set you free to live a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit—in addition to Jesus you need to reform a few areas of your life and then you'll really be a son, a daughter of God"?

Edward Mote's old hymn says, our "hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness." Our hope is also built on nothing more. If you have Jesus, you have everything.

In chapter 1 of Galatians Paul said accept no alternatives to the gospel. Here in chapter 2 he says, accept no additives to the gospel. Jesus is enough! In Jesus you are perfectly free. In Jesus alone you have it all. In Jesus alone you have salvation, a new life, a new identity, freedom, hope, and you have God! That's the gospel.

John Calvin wrote: "If one had to contribute even only a pebble to one's own salvation, one would live in lifelong fear that one's pebble was just not big enough." The false brothers, the slave masters, the voices in your head say you must add a few pebbles to the pile. As soon as you start adding even only one pebble to your salvation, to your relationship with God, you become a slave because you'll never be sure if your pebble is good enough.

How do we respond to the slave masters, the pebble pushers? Respond like Paul in verse 5, ***"to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be***

preserved for you." Paul didn't, Titus didn't, Barnabas didn't give an inch to the slave masters and neither should you.

This week, don't give an inch, don't give a single pebble to the slave masters. If you give them an inch, they'll take a mile; if you give them a pebble, they'll ask you for a boulder. When you hear the voice of the slave master asking you to add to Jesus, don't give up an inch. Stand your ground on Christ alone. Your hope is built on nothing less and nothing more than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Be stubborn about this, be violent about this, be immediate about this. Don't give up an inch. This will give God glory, this will preserve the gospel for you, and this will preserve the gospel for other people.

The Mission

What was confirmed at this big meeting in Jerusalem was not only the dynamite nature of the gospel message, not only that slave masters will always try to diffuse this dynamite, but also that this dynamite must be passed on to other people and other cultures. *"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"* (v.7). In verse 9, we see the decision, *"that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."*

What we see here is that there's one message, but two different missions. There's one brand of dynamite—there's only one gospel, but there's two different regions, two different groups of people, two different cultures that need the dynamite.

Christianity is multicultural. Our message never flexes. But there's tremendous flexibility to our mission, to how this unchanging message takes shape among different people and different cultures. This text reminds us to always evaluate a ministry, a church, a fellow brother or sister in Christ on their message/gospel/doctrine, not on a cultural distinctive or difference in style.

Don't budge on the gospel, but budge all over the place when it comes to cultural preferences. We need Peters and we need Pauls, and we need many different types of churches if we're going to accomplish the Great Commission.

So far this text has asked us to do two things: 1) let the dynamite blow up our righteousness (repent of our righteousness);

2) stand our ground and not give an inch, a single pebble, to the slave masters. Now, the third application of this text: pass on this dynamite to your context and culture.

Paul passed the dynamite to the Gentiles—the irreligious, liberal people. Peter passed the dynamite to the Jews—the religious, conservative people.

What mission has God given you? Where are you called, who are you called to pass the dynamite on to? God has made only one apostle Paul, only one Peter, and he's made only one you, and God has uniquely placed and positioned you to pass this dynamite on to the people around you.

Where has God put you? Someday God might move you, but right now be faithful and obedient to pass the dynamite where you are, just as Paul and Peter were.

Our message is dynamite. There's no other message like it. This dynamite can break through the hardest heart, it can set people free, and I believe this message can transform the Bay Area.

The dynamite that set Martin Luther free, the dynamite that set you free, that's still setting you free, will set others free. You can have great faith in the dynamite. You don't have to be the dynamite, you're simply called to pass on this explosive message. And you don't have to be Martin Luther or some big personality, you be you. Be you where God has placed you right now. Pass on the dynamite where God has placed you, and you will change the world.

George Eliot, using the pen name Mary Ann Evans, wrote in *Middlemarch*: "For the good of the world is partly dependent on unhistorical acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

Live faithfully a hidden life where God has placed you. Repent of your righteousness. Don't give an inch to any other message. Pass on the dynamite. And God will use you to change the world.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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