



GETTING THE GOSPEL RIGHT (GTGR): (GAL 6:11-18)

The book of Galatians is about getting the gospel right. All six chapters have this as their theme. This also therefore was Paul's purpose for writing the letter : so that his original recipients (the churches in the Galatian region) - as well as those churches reading it in the future, would (indeed) GTGR. As such all the book's instruction; all the truths established by its inspired words, exist to elucidate and illuminate this main theme and purpose.

20. GTGR is why the church needs faithful pastors.

What stops the rapid spread of a false gospel message are faithful pastors. They represent Christianity's first line of defense (2Ti 1:14). As such, history proves that the health of Christianity (how often it is GTGR) is directly related to the number of faithful pastors in the pulpits/churches. By divine inspiration (then) this becomes the purpose of Paul's final words to the Galatians: to provide the profile of a faithful pastor:

20.1. He¹ is theologically competent/sound (11).

Today we don't usually hear the words "pastor" and "theologian" used to refer to the same person. Yet this is a part of what it means to be a faithful pastor. It means being a pastor-theologian. In other words, pastors who are theologically competent/sound. In verse 11, Paul reveals this to be true of himself.

20.2. He is an ecclesiastical whistleblower (12-13).

Being a faithful pastor entails more than just being theologically competent. It requires also a willingness to expose (even condemn) those Christian leaders/teachers who are hypocrites, heretics and hiding ill motives. And this was the Judaizers. Not only were they incompetent theologically (a pt. proven by their inability to refute Paul at Jerusalem Council - Act 15), but also hypocritical heretics and cowardly compromisers. It is here (then) that Paul "blows the whistle" in verses 12 -13.

20.3. He is not ashamed of the sound gospel message (14-15).

At the center of all a faithful pastor does in service to his people, is the sound gospel message. This is the focus of his preaching and practice. Persecution cannot muffle it. He will not be quiet, nor lax in his efforts to defend it (to GTGR!). Though he will see many pastors become soft over time - or sell out for popularity, he will remain the same. The reason for such commitment is straightforward, a faithful pastor is not ashamed of the gospel. It is instead his passion and pride, his "boast" in life. And this was the Apostle Paul according to verses 14-15. In contrast to the Judaizers who were desiring to take pride (or "boast") in a false gospel message, Paul found only one thing worthy of such glory - the sound gospel message of justification by faith alone in Christ alone.

20.4. He is willing to draw a line in the sand.

According to ancient history, this phrase was first used when a Roman Emperor threatened the king of Syria. The Emperor drew a line in the sand before of the king stating that if he stepped over that line prior to removing his troops from Egypt, the two would be at war. Though God calls all Christian to possess a peaceable spirit, a faithful pastor must also be willing to draw similar war-producing lines. IOW: He must make it clear to those in opposition to the sound gospel message, that unless they repent, they stand on the side of condemnation. This too was the Apostle Paul.

(16) "And as for all who walk by [are obedient to] this rule [A reference to what Paul established in the previous verses (14-15) re: the sound gospel message. He is now making it clear that he viewed the unashamed, bold preaching of that message as far from optional for those in ministry. It is a "rule" to be followed. This "rule" includes therefore speaking about those things the world finds cruel, undesirable or unpopular. Hence, Paul's sober charge to Timothy (2Ti 4:1-5).], **peace and mercy be upon them** [IOW: they are the ones who are receiving/will receive such things from God. They are people who have received His saving grace and pardon for Judgment Day. By these words Paul is now making a distinction (i.e. drawing a line in the sand) between himself (a faithful pastor - one willing to "walk by" the sound gospel "rule") and the Judaizers - or anyone not faithful/ashamed of the sound gospel message (not "willing to walk by this rule"). They were the enemy and theirs was the opposite of "peace and mercy" (i.e. wrath and condemnation).], **and the Israel of God** [BAD TRANSLATION. The καὶ ("and") is indicating NOT addition, but an appositional relationship between "them" ("peace and mercy be upon them") and "Israel" ("the Israel of God")². It should therefore be rendered silent (lit. "peace and mercy be upon them - the Israel of God").

¹ The gender distinction is deliberate. Though it should go without mention, today many professing Christians are either ignorant or insolent to the fact that the office of pastor is not only limited to men, but also carries damning consequences for those women who take such positions (1Ti 2:12-15).

² In grammar, an appositional relationship exists where two or more words or phrases are grammatically parallel and have the same referent (e.g. my friend Sue ; the first US president, George Washington).

As such, Paul is making it clear that all those embracing (not ashamed) of the sound gospel message, "all who walk by this rule", those receiving the "peace and mercy" from God, (they) are now the true Israel (the "Israel of God"). IOW: Israel is now the church! As a result, Paul is once more drawing a definitive line in the sand. This time however it cut right through the heart of the Judaizers' campaign (and Dispensionals!). For them, being a part of Israel still meant being a Jew (hence the need for the Gentiles to be circumcised) - the very opposite of Paul's declaration here! What else Paul therefore makes clear by his choice of words is their deliberate and dividing nature. Paul saw the causing of this kind of division as vital to faithful ministry (1Co 11:19)]."

What this looks like for faithful pastors today = Not "agreeing to disagree" over the gospel (and continue as though we are both bros. in Christ), but rather treating those as enemies who are ashamed or do not adhere to the sound gospel message.

20.5. He will be ill-treated by the religious establishment of his day .

Due to our fallen human nature, we tend to trust the suspicious and be suspicious of the trustworthy. This is true also within the Christian Faith. Those pastors who are the most trustworthy are often the most marginalized and mistreated. Aware of this, Paul in v17 attempts to use such thinking to his advantage; as yet another identifying mark of the faithful pastor.

(17) "From now on let no one cause me trouble [Imperative mood, stronger in force than ESV translation, lit. "From now on there MUST be no one (who) causes me trouble". The kind of "trouble" Paul is speaking of, is the kind afforded to those who embrace the sound gospel message he has preached throughout the book - i.e. who promote gaining justification by faith alone *as well as* maintaining that justification by faithfulness to all of God's Law (e.g. 5:11-12, 13-15 w/6:13 w/Rom 2:23³). And though Paul was acutely aware of such persecution (tbd), that is *not* the purpose behind his present instruction. IOW: he is not pleading for people to stop picking on him! Instead Paul is (by such instruction) suggesting yet another reason the Galatians should accept him and his message as the truth. That reason is then revealed in what he says next), **for** [or "b/c"] **I bear on my body the marks of Jesus** [Like Jesus, Paul's ministry was already filled w/ high levels of both psychological and physical injustice for his proclamation/defense of the sound gospel message. And like Jesus, such persecution came (and would continue to come) from the religious establishment of his day -i.e. the Jews/Judaizers (e.g. Act 14:1-2, 19). As such, what Paul (or the Holy Spirit) is communicating through these words is shocking yet clear: any pastor faithful to his office - and more importantly, the gospel message, can be identified by the similarity his ministry will share w/that of Jesus : opposition from the religious establishment of his day (Luk 2:34)]."

This too then is a part of the faithful pastor's profile - he will bear the "marks of Jesus on his body" - i.e. he will be ill-treated by the majority of his religious contemporaries. They will be his gospel opponents and greatest persecutors (e.g. Evangelicalism). In this light, consider Paul's words to pastor Timothy (2Ti 3:1,5-12, again 4:1-5). Consider also Jesus' words to ministers (Luk 6:26; Mat 10:16-28)].

20.6. He is tough on his people because he loves his people.

"Tough love" is the term often used when describing the treatment received by wayward juveniles assigned to military-like correctional programs. The same term however could be used to describe the faithful pastor as revealed through Paul's final words to the Galatians.

(18) "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ [God's merciful offer of justification through faith alone in Jesus Christ to not only Jews - but also Gentiles (those who were once w/o any salvific hope - Eph 2:11-12). Various renderings of this phrase are common in the NT and to Paul - especially when defending this aspect of the gospel against the "works of the law" (i.e. faith plus observance of the OC clean laws = justification) message of the Judaizers (e.g. Gal 1:6; Act 15:11). The word "grace" is also used this way in the OT (Zec 4:7 w/8:20-22).] **be with your spirit** [continue to benefit you spiritually. IOW: "May the justification you gained through Christ alone continue to be maintained."], **brothers** [A term of endearment directed toward those in the Galatian churches. Paul viewed them as existing in the closest relationship that can exist between two unmarried human beings - the sibling relationship.⁴ Paul did not view them as 2nd class Christians (the "best" position Peter and the Judaizers would give them - 2:12)]. **Amen** [lit. it is true (e.g. Deu 27:26; 1Co 14:16) . Paul wants the Galatians to know that what he has just said was not something he simply tacked on the end of all his letters as his customary way of signing off (e.g. "Sincerely", "In Christ", etc). Rather he meant what was said. His closing words reflected his heart's desire. He truly cared about their spiritual welfare] ."

Considering these words in light of how often Paul uses tough language in the previous portions of this letter (e.g. 1:6-9, 3:1, 4:11, 5:10, 6:5), leads one to the following conclusion: Paul wants the Galatians to now know that it was out of genuine love for them that he was indeed so tough. This too is what makes a faithful pastor hard for the outside world to identify. A tough disposition toward those under your care is completely counter-intuitive to how we as fallen human beings feel/think (i.e. we confuse toughness w/hate or dislike).

What then we should expect from the faithful pastors GTGR = They will not only preach the truth but also exercise the "tough love" of personally warning, rebuking and seeing to it that those under their care are practicing it. One the worst compliments a pastor could receive is, "He is a master at loading the gun, but knows nothing about pulling the trigger.

³ Based on the larger context of Romans, it is clear that who Paul is specifically referring to in chapter 2 are also the Judaizers. IOW: The Judaizers also fell woefully short in their practice of the moral commands.

⁴ Contrary to modern thinking, the ancient world of the Apostle Paul - and God Himself, view the sibling relationship as second only to the spousal relationship. For more on this subject see "When the Church Was a Family" by Joseph Hellerman.