

When To Give Way (and when not to)

Sunday 5th November 2023

Whatever you set your mind to do, you will always find obstacles – always! Whether it's to get caught up on your homework, get the washing up straight, live a healthy balanced lifestyle, achieve more in the sports arena, learn more than you did last year, strive towards that God given vision for your life. From the simplicity of a lie-in interrupted by maybe the Hoover or the neighbour's lawn mower to carrying the gospel around the world in the face of political opposition.

Paul and one of his missionary friends, Titus, faced some obstacles when they travelled to Jerusalem, obstacles that had the potential to de-rail the gospel and its movement around the world. Think about that for a moment, had the gospel not progressed as it did, would it have found you and brought life to your dead bones?

For this reason, I see there are two things we need to grasp today to ensure the gospel brings life to as many dead lives as possible.


And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.

Paul here teaches us how to **communicate the truth in such a way that the truth is preserved** – not your reputation or your comfort. (1) It is done face to face – he went up to Jerusalem, (2) he went by revelation – when God spoke, Paul went, and (3) he gave way to reputation – acknowledged that the influence of others had the power to undo his work in the gospel.


Paul mentions a challenge that was brought of the feet of Titus – to be circumcised just like all the other Jewish converts were. Remember when God instructed Abraham to be circumcised back in Genesis 17 it was said, 'it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.' There was a lingering belief that to enjoy a covenant relationship with God – an unbreakable relationship with God Himself – you needed to be circumcised. Paul continues in verse 3,


Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),

You see in Christ you are free to live as God has called and instructed you to live – not as you wish, according to the flesh and its desires. As it says in 1

 Peter 2:15-16,

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men— ¹⁶as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

 Let me be candid. Some of you have taken up the Christian faith and use the very freedom of the gospel as your daily excuse to do little. **It is literally become a cloak that covers various sins that have you in a vice-like grip.** And Satan has convinced you in the meantime, you are living in freedom. Let me tell you this – you are not living in freedom. I would even dare to question whether the gospel ever made you alive if your words and actions are so distant from the calling of Christ Jesus Himself.


 Let us move onto the pinnacle of Paul and Titus' experience and what drove their decision to give way or not to give way, in verse 5,

to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.


Titus did not people-please, he did not bend, he did not compromise – he did not give way. He did not give way to those who were spinning a lie. Not even for one hour! You live in a world that is equally full of obstacles and compromise, and some of those even call themselves Christians.


How was Titus able to stand on the truth and not give way? Was he born into a generation that more warmly embraced the Christian faith? No! Satan wants us to play the victim card – oh, but it's never been so hard to be a Christian. Oh, but the world has never cared to less for the gospel. Oh, but my circumstances means things are really difficult for me.

Here is where we win or lose as a Christian. At the centre of the gospel is a crucified Saviour; a Saviour who was resurrected on the third day by His Father in heaven. For those who have believed, that same resurrection power is not locked away in a cabinet in heaven waiting for some future emergency use.

NO! This same power is in you through His Spirit who lives in you as Paul  makes crystal clear in Romans 8:11,


But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

 **Titus did not give way because he was living in the power of the gospel that had made him alive in the first place.**

When your life is built on the gospel it takes both character and courage to  stay that course so you **maximise the influence of the gospel on the world and minimise the influence of the world on the gospel**. It's just like any sport where you try to maximise your influence over your opponent and minimise their influence over you – that's how you win.

But Satan's goal is to minimise the influence of the gospel on the world and maximise the influence of the world on the gospel. Because you are the carriers of the gospel, both heaven and hell have infinite interest in what you do.

In turn this means the stakes could not be higher. Satan will do anything to rob you of your marriage, your future, your job, your friendships, even your faith. But God has already blessed you with every spiritual blessing!

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1. Acknowledge influence and speak quietly to authority.
 2. Remind yourself daily of the power of this gospel that has resurrected you.
 3. Never think Satan has taken a holiday.
 4. Build a life on truth – not hidden sin.
 5. Trust the God of the gospel to protect you when you don't give way.
 6. You are always in a battle. And in Christ you have always won.
 7. Winning your battles is where it starts.