

1 Paradigms & Paradoxes

- Part 1

2 Introduction

- By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you — I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “k
- I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by

3 Introduction

- The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish stron
- We demolish arguments and every pretension (claim) that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take cap

4 Introduction

- The weapons the Apostle Paul was talking about was his use of apostolic authority. as he says.
 - I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is love and with a gentle spirit? (1 Cor 4:19–21 NIV)
- The sole purpose of this authority though was not to unduly scare everyone. but to tear down strongholds.
- However. the strongholds he was talking about were not addictions. bad habits. or sin.
- They were instead false teachings (doctrines of demons) that were causing the saints to compromise their faith and wa

5 Introduction

- This is real important because as we walk by faith in obedience to God’s word, we grow in our ability to discern right fro
- With this spiritual knowledge, we are able to flow in the abundance of God’s faithfulness and grace, but without it we a
 - tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and cr
- So tonight, I want to speak on the subject of how not to let ourselves be deceived by false ideas and teachings that kee

6 Introduction

- According to the Webster Dictionary, a paradox is a statement or proposition that despite sound reasoning from accep

- In other words, a paradox is the coming together of two truths that seem to contradict each other.

7 **Examples of paradoxes**

- Nobody goes to that restaurant anymore, it's too crowded.
- Don't go near the water until you've learned to swim.
- The man who wrote such a stupid sentence cannot write at all.
- If you get this message, call me; if you don't, then don't worry about it.
- I can't come to the meeting today, but if you want me to I will.

8 **Theological paradoxes**

- In my humble opinion, nowhere are there more problems with paradoxes than in the area of theology.
 - Can a man drown in the fountain of eternal life?
 - Can God Almighty create a stone, which he is not capable of lifting?
 - If God is one, then why does He exist in three persons?
 - If we're saved by grace, why must we work out our salvation with fear and trembling?

9 **The Problem**

- The problem with paradoxes is that they often create confusion, bewilderment, and doubt, where we push the mystery.
- In fact, if we don't have a mechanism (or paradigm) in place that can help us to understand possible contradictions in the world, we are lost.
- In other words, if we don't have a good paradigm to understand God and His will, paradoxes will always frustrate us and lead us to despair.
- So then, what is a paradigm?

10 **What is a Paradigm**

- A paradigm is simply a theory, pattern, or model of understanding that we use to make sense of the world we live in.
- Examples of paradigms . . .
 - A penny saved is a penny earned.
 - What goes up must come down.
 - All conservatives are racists.
 - Man evolved from monkeys.
 - God created all things.
 - Everything that comes out of Pastor McCowan's mouth is Gospel Truth.

11 **Paradigm Shifts**

- Sometimes our paradigms will need to be challenged and changed—this is called a paradigm shift.
- It happens when we're exposed to new information or to new ways of thinking that cause us to modify or change the way we see the world.
- This doesn't mean we change the way we see the world or understand our existence every time we come across new information.
- Why? Because we are on a journey and a wise person always considers their ways and how they can do things better and more effectively.

12 **My Journey**

- When Sally and I got saved, we were radically saved.
- We were in Church three times a week, hosted and led a small group, and did Evangelism Explosion together.
- However, I noticed that quite often in our conversations with other Christians, there was a lot of ambiguity in how grace was understood.
- In fact, I noticed that many times when you would exhort a Christian toward the need of moral and spiritual excellence in their lives, they would respond with a question like, "What do you mean?"
- Not knowing how to respond, I usually was at a loss for words.

13 **New Perspective on Paul**

- When I attended seminary, I made it a point to try to reconcile this paradox and did find help through the writings of Dr. James Dunn.
- James Dunn is the Professor of Divinity, Department of Theology, University of Durham in Durham, England.
- He along with N.T. (Tom) Wright and E.P. Sanders are credited with what is called the New Perspective on Paul.

14 **New Perspective on Paul**

- The essence of the NP on Paul is that when the Apostle Paul refers to the "works of the law" he is not referring to what the Jewish understanding of what fulfills the Torah.
- This included things like circumcision, food laws, sabbaths, and those rituals and observances that distantly set the Jews apart from the Gentiles.

15 **Galatians**

- How this helps us in our understanding of Galatians is that the problem wasn't the church trying to merit God's grace by observing the law.
- But that the Galatians were reverting to a form of Rabbinical Judaism that required all Gentiles be circumcised, observe

- In other words, the church at Galatia was turning from following the commandments of Christ to following the commands of the law.

16 Galatians

- We see this in the following verses . . .
 - For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing love to one another.
 - You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love, just as Christ loved the church and himself, giving himself up for her to cleanse her by the word of water with the word, so that he might present her to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—so that she will be holy and blameless. (Gal 5:13–14 NIV)
- In other words freedom is freedom from the laborious Mosaic Law. But this doesn't mean we have no obligations. Rather, we have the obligation to love one another.

17 Galatians

- This misunderstanding in Galatians is an excellent example of a paradigm that has created a paradox.
- If the sin of the Galatians was attempting to merit God's grace by following moral rules and regulations then why does Paul say that we are not under the law?
- The answer is that obeying God's commands is important!
- However, the commandments that God wants us to follow are those that are connected to following Christ.
- If we follow, honor, and obey Jesus, we please God.
- As the Gospel of Mark says, Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mark 9:7)

18 Implications

- Again why is this important?
- Because God's promises are conditional!
- Let us look at the following verse in Galatians and see how our new paradigm helps us in our understanding of what the law is for.
- Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?
- Or to put it another way, "Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you follow the practices of Judaism or because you believe and obey the teachings of Christ?"

19 Implications

- So then, Paul is making a powerful point.

- God honors the faith of those who honor the teachings of His Son Jesus Christ.
- He does this by answering our prayers and performing signs, wonders, and miracles in our midst.
- So then, as we follow Christ we should expect and believe God's Kingdom to be manifested.
- If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory,... [you] showing yourselves to be my disciples. (John 15:7–8)

20 Summary

- When Paul talks about the "works of the Law," he is referring to 1st Century Rabbinic Judaism.
- Jews believed that the "works of the Law" fulfilled the Mosaic Law, which it didn't.
- As according to Jesus, "It neglected the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness." (Matthew 23:23)
- If fact, it brought a curse not a blessing.
- As the Apostle Paul says, All who rely on observing the law (or the works of the law) are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law [Torah]." (Galatians 3:10)

21 Conclusion

- What really matters is for us motivated by faith and trust, follow the teachings and commands of Jesus Christ.
- However, it is not always easy.
 - The spirit that is in the world tells us "if it feels good do it."
 - Even our own "appetites and desires" are not to be trusted as they will often try to seduce us to follow our feelings and wants, instead of obeying God's Word.
 - On top of all of this, we are surrounded by all kinds of false teachers, prophets, and apostles who purposely mishandle the Word of God—lowering or changing moral standards so that we follow them—not Christ.
- So then, who can we trust? His name is Jesus!

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- Therefore, as we partake of Communion tonight, let us set aside Christ as Lord in our minds, hearts, and actions—becoming His Disciples.
- As we do, we will grow in our knowledge of God and not only that; we'll see answered prayer, and spiritual fruitfulness in our lives.
- And as we carry our cross daily, Christ will be exalted and glorified in our life, family, and church.
- As Jesus has said, "Blessed ... are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:28)