



Season 8 Podcasts

The Excellence of the Gospel

By

Mark McGee

So far in my 8th Season Podcast series I've shared thoughts with you about:

- 8 Rules for Bible Study
- 40 Rules for Ministry
- The Heart of the Gospel
- Defending and Confirming the Gospel
- Your Fellowship in the Gospel
- The Completion of the Gospel
- The Affection of the Gospel
- The Discernment of the Gospel

The next aspect I'd like to share with you is the 'excellence' of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul continued his letter to the Christians in Philippi by writing:

“... that you may approve the things that are excellent ...” Philippians 1:10a

Just a quick reminder of four of the 8 Rules for Bible Study:

1. Text
2. Within context
3. From the original language
4. To the original reader

If this is the first podcast you've heard in Season 8, I invite you to go back to at least 'Defending and Confirming the Gospel' to get the context of what Paul was communicating to the Philippians. Knowing the context helps keep us 'rightly divide' the Word of God so we don't get off track and veer close to the edge of either wasting our time or possibly falling into the pit of error. 'Rightly dividing' means 'cutting a straight line.' If we don't 'rightly divide' God's Word, we will cut a 'crooked line' and find ourselves miles away from God's truth at some point in our lives .. if we're fortunate enough to realize our mistake before we die. Many Christians through the centuries have gotten 'off track' and never found their way back to the Truth of the Gospel. That is sad because every generation of Christians that follows the path of a previous generation that has veered away from the 'truth' will find themselves even further from the truth. Given enough generations of going in the wrong direction will lead to a place of ruin – which is where Christianity is quickly headed today across the world.

Many churches, denominations, universities, and seminaries that began with a desire to preach the truth of the Gospel are today in ruins. Many deny the most basic truths of the Bible. I dealt with some of those errors of the modern church in an earlier podcast entitled ‘The Heart of the Gospel.’ I recommend you read that and consider how far the ‘church’ has fallen. It reminds me of how far Israel fell from God’s commandments in the days of what we read in the Old Testament. Paul knew the same thing would happen to the Christian Church and warned that the time of ruin was approaching:

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” 2

Timothy 4:3-4

“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.” Acts 20:28-31

Back to our text in Philippians 1:10. The word ‘approve’ in the Greek is *dokimazo*. It’s a present tense verb that means ‘to test, examine, approve through the process of testing, show that something is acceptable through testing.’ Paul wanted the Philippians to ‘approve’ the ‘things’ that were ‘excellent.’ What things? That’s where the importance of ‘context’ comes into studying the Bible. Paul may have been referring to the ‘things’ he had already written, the ‘things’ he was going to write, or both. I think it’s probably both, but we’ll see as we continue with the series.

The word ‘excellent’ is *diapheró*. It is also a present tense verb. It means ‘to take all the way through, to bear through, distinguishing what differs, that which surpasses.’ The word *diapheró* is present tense and also a participle in the active voice. That means it’s a verbal adjective that indicates simultaneous, ongoing action.

Paul told the Philippians to approve (test, examine) things that are ‘excellent’ so that they could distinguish or compare one thing from another (in the sense of its value). That’s something churches, denominations, and seminaries desperately need to do today. Christians have struggled with that for almost two thousand years. That’s why Paul emphasized it early in his letter to the Philippians. He knew that his time on earth was limited (remember that Paul was a prisoner of Rome when he wrote this letter), so he wanted to be sure to address the issues of most importance to the churches – not just the churches that he existed at the time – but all the Christians and churches that would come into the world for many years to come.

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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