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## ***Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ***

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

***“Some Truths About the Gospel”***

**September 22, 2013**

**Sermon Text:** Galatians 1-2

**Scripture Reading:**

**Introduction-**

“How valuable is truth to you and how much do you really trust that God is COMPLETELY AND TOTALLY righteous, and not just conveniently so because YOU need an answer now? I address that question to those outside the situation: pastors, counselors,

friends, etc. Are you willing to wait for God to speak, like Habbakuk did, or are you going to put words in His mouth like the false prophets did? Are you going to wait until you see His righteousness IN TOTAL and not just try to cram the information into the little boxes you create for convenience? Are you going to seek God’s COMPREHENSIVE righteousness, remembering that He hates hands that shed innocent blood and all other forms of evil and oppression too?” (Quote received from a friend this week)

False gospels are manageable. They give us quick and easy answers that we can file away in an organized, rational fashion and then go to bed not having to worry or think about the issue anymore. But false gospels enslave and oppress, as we are seeing in our study of Galatians. Listen to still another friend who explained to me recently why her parents left a local church when she was a child:

When I was little my mother was faced with demands that she:

1. Send us to private Christian school,
2. Homeschool,
3. Sell Mary Kay (I won't get into how the multi-level marketing industry has invaded church with the Prosperity Gospel but it is huge),
4. Not wear make-up, (directly opposite selling Mary Kay – WUWT??)

...and at one point we were attending a church where the pastor preached an entire message on how "SANTA" is an anagram of "SATAN" and the implications of that. There is just too much of this works/tradition/garbage in the church. She could never find a church where she felt free in Jesus.”

Let's begin this morning by reading right through the first chapter of Galatians, and on into 2:1-10. And then I want us to consider answers to these questions that we find in Paul's words:

- What is the gospel?
- What is true about the gospel?
- What can we expect when we believe and share the gospel?

Gal 1:1-24 Paul, an apostle--not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the

dead-- (2) and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia: (3) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, (5) to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

(6) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel-- (7) not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. (8) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (9) As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.

(10) For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ.

(11) For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. (12) For I did not receive it

from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (13) For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. (14) And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

(15) But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, (16) was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; (17) nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. (18) Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. (19) But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. (20) (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) (21) Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (22) And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. (23) They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." (24)

And they glorified God because of me.  
Gal 2:1-21 Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. (2) 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. (3) But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.  
(4) 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-- (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.  
(6) 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. (7) 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 (8) (for he who worked through Peter for his

apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), (9) 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. (10) Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

### What is the Gospel?

Let's deal first of all with the question, "What is the gospel?" We discussed this briefly last Sunday evening you recall. It is of course a very vital question. It sounds simple, doesn't it? Like a kind of "no-brainer." But when we really begin to ask one another this question, it turns out that we don't know the answer nearly as well as we thing that we do.

As Paul frequently does, he gives a tidbit of his theme right in the opening, salutary verses of this epistle. His theme is the gospel, and in verses 3-5 he gives a statement of it-

Gal 1:3-5 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the

will of our God and Father, (5) to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The gospel is a message from God – a message of Good News from heaven to earth – that God is announcing grace and peace to mankind. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men." This good news is possible because the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, gave himself for our sins for the purpose of delivering us from this present fallen, cursed world. All of which was decreed by the will of God, for His glory forever and ever.

That is the gospel. And yet, we see that in these verses Paul makes no mention of Christ's resurrection, nor of faith, nor of many other vital doctrines that are necessary to the truth of the gospel. Paul is, apparently, emphasizing here certain pertinent aspects of the gospel that the Galatians needed to be reminded of. But it cannot be true that if someone adheres to the bare facts stated in these few verses, then there is no way that they can be a false teacher of a false gospel. Remember:

Jas 2:19 You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder!

If we are to be wise and not be duped by a false gospel, we must know what the gospel is, and what it is not. There is, as Paul says, no other gospel (heterodoxy). We must get it straight (orthodoxy).

Let me list for you some facts about the gospel derived from a search of the New Testament for that very word:

1. It is a gospel, a message, about **the kingdom of God**. A present and coming kingdom that is growing and that is going to replace for all time every earthly kingdom.

Mar 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Act 20:24-25 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (25) And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.

2. It is a message about how to enter the kingdom of God.

Mar 1:15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

3. It is a message about life – eternal life:

Mar 10:29-30 Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, (30) who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

4. It is a message about the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah and seed of David, risen from the dead, and a call to man to the obedience of faith.

Rom 1:1-5 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, (2) which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, (3) concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh (4) and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,

(5) through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,

5. It is a message through which God powerfully saves sinners from His wrath, showing all who believe a righteousness which is from God through faith.

Rom 1:15-17 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (16) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (17) For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

6. It is a message that announces a coming day of God's judgment.

Rom 2:15-16 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them (16) on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

2Th 1:5-10 This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that

you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering-- (6) since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, (7) and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels (8) in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (9) They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, (10) when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

7. It is a message empowered by God to enable lost sinners to overcome the spiritual blindness and deafness they are enslaved to.

Rom 15:19-21 by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God--so that from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum I have fulfilled the ministry of the gospel of Christ; (20) and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone

else's foundation, (21) but as it is written, "Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand."

8. It is a message about the cross of Christ:

1Co 1:17-18 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (18) For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

9. It is a message about the literal death, burial, and resurrection of Christ:

1Co 15:1-6 Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, (2) and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, (4) that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, (5)

and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. (6) Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.

10. It is a message that teaches us to deny ungodliness and sin, making proper use of the law of God:

1Ti 1:8-11 Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, (9) understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, (10) the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, (11) in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

11. The gospel is a message about a righteousness from God which is received by us by faith alone apart from works:

Php 3:7-9 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. (8) Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ

Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ (9) and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--

Now, certainly this is not all that could be said about what the gospel is, but it is enough that we should be able to understand that the gospel includes much more than a bare message that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and if I believe in Him I will go to heaven.

Why is this important? Because, at least for one reason, *we cannot be on guard against false gospels if we do not realize that the real gospel of Christ includes and announces many truths. And that denial of any one of those truths is a false gospel that cannot save.*

For instance, this week I was reading Calvin's Institutes in the section where he discusses the Trinity. As far as I know, people like Arius and Sabellus did not deny that Christ was the Savior in whom we must believe. But they did deny His deity because they insisted that there was only one God, and that meant that the Son could not be God.

They were heretics. They announced a false gospel. They were anathema.

It can really be said that the entire New Testament is the gospel. And in fact, the entire Bible, including the Old Testament. Listen to Christ on this:

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luk 24:44-47)

Here is another example of an aspect of the gospel –

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify

for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you. (Tit 2:11-15)

See it? The gospel (the grace of God that has appeared, Christ) trains us to renounced ungodliness and to live godly lives. To deny that is to embrace a false gospel. That is to say, a person who does not renounced ungodliness and who lives in wordly passions as a course of their life, is not and cannot be a Christian. A Christian is one who is zealous for good works because he or she has been redeemed by Christ from all lawlessness.

And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son

of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. (1Jn 3:3-8)

So let's all be wise in this regard. Someone can rattle off certain basics of the gospel yet not belong to Christ at all.

### **What is True About the Gospel?**

Alright then, let's look at still more that the Apostle has to say to us about the gospel.

For am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. (Gal 1:10)

The gospel does not *please* man. In fact, it is odious (hateful) to him. Therefore if we are going to serve Christ, we must realize right up front that human beings are not going to be pleased with us nor with what we have to say. The thing is stated repeatedly in Scripture for us. As you hear these verses now, I ask you to seriously question yourself – have you really come to terms with the fact that you will be hated if you stand for Christ? In fact, ask yourself if you have ever been hated because you stood for Christ and the truth of His Word—

But though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had boldness in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the midst of much conflict. For our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. (1Th 2:2-4)

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? (2Co 2:14-16)

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1Co 1:17-18)

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. (Joh 15:18-21)

Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. (1Jn 3:13)

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (Mat 5:11)

"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! (Luk 6:22)

Let's think about this in more detail. The reason the world and worldlings (all who belong to it) hate the Christian is because the Light of Christ in us and in the gospel message, exposes the worldling's evil –

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. (Joh 3:19-20)

See it? There is something about sin that requires darkness. Sin knows it is evil, and it wants to operate in a realm that is entirely empty of God's presence – the light. Christ's light, Christ's truth, exposes evil as being evil. And so evil does hate Christ and hate Christ's people in whom Christ dwells.

Now, let me ask you to ask yourself: have you ever been hated for the sake of Christ? Are you hated? Has your profession of faith in Christ ever cost you anything? Because Christ states this as a fact – WHEN the world hates you. The world WILL hate you.

And if you can say, “yes, in fact, I have been rather downcast and I have doubts about myself, and I wonder if something is wrong with me...people seem to hate me...” – then you can take courage here. It isn't you. It is Christ in you. Listen again:

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all

kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Mat 5:11-12)

Rejoice and be glad! It is assurance that you belong to Christ and that He is pleased with you. Who should be worried? Those people who profess to be Christians, but who seem to just always remain popular with everyone.

Do you want to be popular? Do you want to please people? Well, if that is the driving force of your life, then Christ is not for you. We must resolve to please God, not man. Listen to how Paul closes this letter to the Galatians:

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And as for all who walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus. (Gal 6:14-17)

If you are a Christian, then you are dead to the world. You are a new creation that belongs to the New World. And while you still linger in this present world, you are going to

receive some of those “marks of Jesus” in your body. Scars. Physical. Emotional. Do you have any? Have you ever been wounded for Christ?

Let’s not fall for the lie of the enemy that if we are hated, then we surely have done something wrong. Paul pointed to his wounds as the “marks of Jesus.” Look to Christ. He was beaten and whipped, and derided and mocked and rejected. Was he at fault? Had He done something wrong because He made enemies? Of course not.

Thomas Grantham was a General Baptist minister in England in the mid-1600’s, and endured much persecution, mostly at the hands of other professing Christians:

“As a leader among the General Baptists, Grantham was arrested without charges, lodged in a public inn where he endured the cursing and swearing of the soldiers, and suffered an imprisonment of 15 months. Even when tucked away in a jail, prohibited from public ministry, Grantham could not escape defamation. When the Conventicle Act of 1664 brought renewed persecution, soldiers forced Grantham to run alongside a horse from town to town until they eventually put him in a house of correction, closely tied to several other prisoners and surrounded by vile men

constantly uttering profanities.” [The Baptists, by Tom Nettles, Vol 1]

These are the things that the Apostle Paul brought back to the attention of the Christians in Galatia. They had to be reminded that if they were to follow Christ, then they must reject the false gospel tempting them with popularity and a cessation of any persecution. If popularity with people is what they were after, Paul reminded them that they could not have Christ too.

While in prison, accused falsely by Anglican clergymen, Grantham wrote a long poem entitled, The Prisoner Against the Prelate; or, Dialogue Between the Common Jail and Cathedral of London. Here is one verse of it:

*Adieu, Cathedral: go take thy fill  
Of organ music. And since ‘tis God’s  
will,  
I’ll back to that unpleasant cell of  
mine;  
Where some truth’s known, which else  
would never shine  
In its brighter splendour; also there  
our God  
Doth show himself a Father by his rod.*

That is the gospel. These are some things that are true about the gospel. These are some things we can expect when we believe the gospel, live for Christ, and die to ourselves.

**Every person dear to you might leave you. Father, mother, sister, brother, children, spouse, friends may abandon you when you resolve to follow Jesus. But never fear. He will not leave you. And if He is with you, you are never, never alone.**

Heb 13:5-6 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"