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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.

***“No Compromise”***

**September 29, 2013**

**Sermon Text:** Galatians 1-2

**Scripture Reading:** Acts 15

**Introduction-**

Verla and I spoke with a young wife and mother this week who said that she has been caught up in a false church that has added all kinds of works to the gospel. On her first visit there, for example, she was immediately challenged by the leaders who told her

that she would not be allowed to participate in the communion service that day because her husband was not with her. They insist that the husband/father must be the one to serve communion to his wife and children. So they have created a false priesthood of men, denying the priesthood of every Christian. The horrors she would experience at the hands of that so-called “church” were just beginning. We could see her still wrestling with the bondage these wicked men had brought her into.

One of our friends back on the east coast made a very interesting observation about this kind of patriarchal works-righteousness system, showing how it really is very similar in many points to LDS:

I keep harping on the similarities between these guys and the LDS, but the fact of the matter is that all of these "patriarchy cults" operate on the same un-Godly principles.

1. Your husband is your priest, and has an implied role in your salvation, whether this is stated outright (like in the LDS) or whether this is the natural logic that comes from replacing Jesus,

2. Marriage and child-bearing has some role in your salvation as well, because it is considered the woman's God-ordained "role" on this planet and to "fail" in this is to be shamed, or at the worst, damned.

3. An over-arching worldview that maintains isolation from the outside world and "keeping oneself pure" from outsiders, and by having lots of children taking over the world "for God"

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

This morning, I want us to consider further Paul's admonition that we must never compromise the gospel. Look at Gal 1:10 -

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. (Gal 1:10)

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.

The gospel does not *please* man. In fact, it is odious (hateful) to him as Thomas Grantham found in 16<sup>th</sup> century England – we will read about his experience this evening. 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.

One final note before we move on – If you grew up in a home that really lacked the love of Christ – and perhaps even more so if that same home claimed to be a Christian one – then the enemy will strike fear into you at that very point. Because what are you accustomed to? When you are hated, when someone is offended by you, *it is always your fault*. It is always wrong. When in fact Christ is telling us that being hated for His sake is right! Perhaps you had it drilled into you that you must always have everyone's approval to be worth anything. Some people grew up in homes where there was always a fear that mom or dad might just pack up and leave one day. So the children lived with this sense that they had to please at all costs. These are lies that must be overcome if we are to follow Christ.

Alright then, let's move ahead to our theme of “no compromise of the gospel.” Follow along as I read:

Galatians 1:11-24 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.

Now, we could spend weeks looking at the various nuances and theories about

what Paul says here, but it is the "big picture" and main point that in most important for us to get. It is this:

***The gospel Paul preached, which we have recorded for us here in Scripture, is not an invention of any human being. It is God's Word, God's message, revealed from heaven to Paul. Christ revealed it to him. Therefore, we must permit no compromise of this gospel. Not even if Paul himself had changed his mind later and started preaching a different gospel. Not even if an angel came down from heaven and appeared to us and contradicted this gospel.***

This is why Paul is going to great lengths here to review his past. A radical and inexplicable change had taken place in Saul of Tarsus. When it happened, he did not go meet with anyone, not even any of the apostles. He did not go to the church leaders in Jerusalem right away, but only 3 years later and then he only saw Peter and James, and rather briefly. Then he went away into the north. In fact, he was relatively unknown to the churches in Judea because he had not been there! They only knew what they had heard about Christ's radical work in him. And therefore, it is impossible that he received even part of his gospel from them. "He is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy."

And therefore:

Jude 1:3-4 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. (4) For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

We have to contend for the gospel. We have to reject perversions of it, whether they be legalistic perversions (adding works) or libertine perversions (antinomian), as Jude identifies.

Listen now as I read into chapter 2 and see if we can relate it to the historical background provided by Luke in Acts:

Galatians 2:1-10 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.

We do not know with certainty if this visit of Paul to Jerusalem was the same

that is described in Acts 15. Before we consider some of the details, let's be sure we get the main point! Listen to Hendriksen:

*“The apostle has shown that he had received his gospel directly from Christ, not from men nor through this or that man. He now proceeds to show that, because of this very fact, this gospel which he proclaims is independent of men's evaluation. A God-given gospel does not need human validation. It can ‘stand on its own feet.’ And for this very reason, as soon as Jerusalem's ‘pillars’ see that Paul and Barnabas had been thus divinely entrusted with the gospel, they extend to them the right hand of fellowship and agree to divide the work. James, Cephas, and John recognize God's hand when they see it!”* [New Testament Commentary]

If Paul was converted on the Damascus road in about 34 – 36 AD, then this trip to Jerusalem occurred approximately 48 – 50 AD.

Now some students of Scripture believe that this second trip to Jerusalem that Paul is speaking of here in Galatians 2 is not the one described in Acts 15 (the Jerusalem Council), but the one mentioned in Acts 11-

Jerusalem to Antioch. (28) And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). (29) So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. (30) And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

But we are going to go with Hendriksen's view that the Galatians 2 trip is indeed the Acts 15 trip, primarily because the purpose of the trip to Jerusalem for the Council is the same as the issue facing these Galatians churches Paul is writing to: Judaizers were perverting the gospel by demanding circumcision. It makes sense that Paul would emphasize that subject and that trip, and not the earlier trip to Jerusalem, the purpose of which was to deliver a gift for the needy.

The question facing the Galatians was the same as that faced at the Jerusalem Council then and we state it here:

**Is Christ sufficient unto salvation? Phrased differently, this question may be expressed in these words, ‘Is it necessary to require of the Gentiles who have embraced Christ by a living faith that, for the sake of their salvation, they, in addition,**

Acts 11:27-30 Now in these days prophets came down from

**observe the Mosaic ordinances?’ Specifically, is it necessary that they should be circumcised? [Hendriksen]**

Let’s take a closer look at verse 2-

Galatians 2:2 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.

On first reading it sounds like Paul had doubts about his gospel and had to go talk to the apostles in Jerusalem to see if he was right or not! But that simply cannot be. He has just been explaining that his gospel was true, that it was from God, and that he received it from Jesus Christ. So what does he mean?

His concern was that if the apostles and leaders in the Jerusalem church were teaching that circumcision was required for salvation, then Paul’s own missions work would be neutralized or at least very negatively effected. So he had to find out if he needed to set THEM straight. As it turned out, he need not have feared. They all belonged to Christ and they all recognized His voice! Therefore, the Galatians could know that the gospel Paul gave them is the same gospel preached by the apostles at Jerusalem. These false teachers who were

troubling them could be confidently rejected. The church leaders at Jerusalem had not even required that the Greek born Titus be circumcised!

And what was the cause of the whole trouble and controversy? Well, it’s always the same old story isn’t it? –

Galatians 2:4-5 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.

### **Paul Confronts Peter**

Now, we come to a very hands-on practical example of Paul’s “no compromise” position when it comes to the truth of the gospel. No matter WHO is perverting the gospel – even if it is Peter! – it is not to be tolerated.

Galatians 2:11-21 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (12) For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. (13) And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically

along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

(14) But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?" (15) We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; (16) yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. (17) But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! (18) For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. (19) For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the

law, then Christ died for no purpose.

Let's walk through Paul's argument here and then make some applications as well:

1. Paul opposed Peter publicly and to his face. It did not matter that Peter was one of the Jerusalem church's "pillars."
2. This episode took place at Antioch and Hendriksen suggests that it was after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and the beginning of the first missionary journey (15:40ff).
3. Peter mixed it up with the Gentile believers there at the fellowship meals (at the conclusion of which the Lord's Table was normally conducted). Paul addressed abuses of the Lord's Table at Corinth where the dividing lines were rich vs poor (see 1 Cor 11). Here at Antioch it was becoming Jew/Gentile.
4. Of course in Jewish culture of that day, Jews were not to eat with Gentiles. The Old Covenant contained dietary regulations. But Peter, through a heavenly vision, had been corrected on this (see Acts 10). Apparently here at Antioch he is regressing. The Jerusalem Council had made a

determination that as long as the Gentile believers abstained from a few things that would be unnecessary stumbling blocks to Jewish Christians (idol meat, blood, strangled meat) that was all that was required of them, and even that was not for earning righteousness with the Lord.

5. Antioch was a Gentile church, soon to be a missionary church. There was good unity and fellowship there, until here came "certain men from James." But before that, Peter had been fine eating with the Gentiles.

6. These Jews from Jerusalem professed Christ but taught-

Acts 15:1 But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

7. So Peter was afraid. Of persecution? Losing reputation at Jerusalem? He began to withdraw. And the contagion spread (vs 13). Peter was being a hypocrite. This is why hypocrisy simply cannot be tolerated in the body of Christ. It is the leaven Jesus warned us to beware of. Hypocrisy divides Christ's people.

8. We can deny Christ and the gospel by our actions alone, as well as with our words. That is what a hypocrite does. Draws near to God with their mouth, but their heart is far from Him.

9. Now Paul confronts Peter.

a. It is not in step with the gospel of Christ to force Gentiles to live and behave like Jews. You yourself have been living like a Gentile, and correctly so.

b. Note carefully that Paul confronts Peter "before them all." This is very important to understand. Sin must be exposed, especially when it affects the truth of the gospel. Notice that evil, in the person of wicked individuals, thrives on secrecy, deception, and darkness. (see 2:4 for example) Over and over again I have heard wicked people cry "gossip and slander" when their evil was being exposed. Don't be duped by this ploy. If Peter had complained that his reputation was harmed by Paul's public rebuke, it would have just shown that he was unrepentant. Listen to Hendriksen as he quotes Calvin:

"On this matter of publicly rebuking those who have erred

publicly, worthy of consideration is John Calvin's comment in this verse:

“This example instructs us that those who have sinned publicly must be publicly chastised, as far as the church is concerned. The purpose is so that their sin may not, by remaining unpunished, form a dangerous example; and elsewhere (1 Tim 5:20) Paul lays down this rule expressly, to be observed in the case of elders, ‘Those who do wrong you must rebuke in the presence of all, so that also the others may have fear,’ because the position which they occupy renders their example more pernicious. It was particularly advantageous that the good cause in which all had an interest should be openly defended in the presence of the people, that Paul might have the better opportunity of showing that he did not shrink from the broad light of day.”

c. Now, the argument in vss 15-17 gets a bit intricate and verse 17 is the most difficult:

Galatians 2:15-17 We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners;

(16) yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law

but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.

(17) But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not!

Let me just give you Hendriksen's interpretation:

“Peter and all of you who have followed Peter's example, consider what you are doing! By your action you are really saying that Christ was wrong when he taught you:

Matthew 15:10-20 And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand: (11) it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person." (12) Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (13) He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. (14) Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit." (15) But Peter said to him, "Explain the

parable to us." (16) And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? (17) Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? (18) But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. (19) For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. (20) These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

...and when He taught you that men are saved by simply coming to Him and trusting in Him. Is it really true then that Christ is a sin-promoter, that is, that he – by His teaching and example and death on the cross – *makes you a greater sinner than you were already?*"

A thousand times NO! You do not sin by tearing down the ceremonial law and believing in salvation solely by grace, as you, Peter, started out to do. But you very definitely prove yourselves transgressors by doing the very opposite, namely, rebuilding the very things which you have torn down.

Therefore, if I start to rebuild, I am guilty. I prove and demonstrate myself a transgressor, because I know very well that what I am doing now – in

rebuilding the doctrine of salvation by law-works, a) clashes with my deepest convictions based on past experience and b) cancels the significance of Christ's death on the cross."

Paul closes with these wonderful words of truth, which we will take a closer look at next time:

Galatians 2:19-21 (19) For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. (20) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (21) I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.

No communion for me because there is no husband here to serve it? So you say? Well, Christ says differently! I will not be subject to your yoke.

And we can give such a rebuke in the presence of all!