

**[1]**  
**Free to Give**  
**Galatians 2:1-10**  
**October 26th, 2014, Jeff Germo**

We are continuing on in our series on the epistle to the Galatians. Last week we observed that the Judaizers had been accusing Paul of twisting the Gospel of Jesus and that he had an incomplete message because, they said, he had an outdated gospel that he received from Jerusalem. Paul argued that, no, he in fact did not get his gospel from Jerusalem, or from the other apostles. He received it directly from Jesus himself. His gospel was unadulterated and undiluted. It was not a hand-me-down gospel. His gospel was pure and was not open to correction.

In order to establish his case he told his story, about how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus when he was still an enemy of the church. He was on his way to persecute more followers of Jesus when the risen Christ spoke to him from a blinding light. His whole world changed at that point and for the rest of his life he was dedicated to building up the church that he had once sought to destroy.

After meeting Jesus for the first time, he said that he spent three years in Arabia allowing the Spirit of Jesus to reorient his life.

In chapter two he continues with his story.

**[2]**

**Galatians 2:1–10 (ESV)**

***<sup>1</sup>Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me.***

So, just to recap, after Paul's conversion, he went to Arabia where he spent three years in isolation, reorienting his life. He then spent a couple weeks with Peter in Jerusalem, who, at that point, was likely seen as the lead apostle, which is quite amazing that the other apostles would trust him seeing he denied Jesus three times. After visiting and conferring with Peter he went on a journey to a couple other cities. And then fourteen years later he again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus.

Barnabas was a very well respected Christ-follower. He was known as a healer of relationships and an encourager. As a matter of fact, he is one of the first of the believers to trust Paul and accept him into the fellowship after Paul went from being an enemy of the church to a follower of Christ. Now, that would take an awful lot of grace, wouldn't it. Just think how hard it is for you to trust someone that has hurt you. I would think for most of the believers it would have taken a while for them to get to the place where they could trust him.

Titus, Paul's other companion, is not mentioned in Acts, but he was likely an early convert of Paul's. He was Greek, a Gentile, not a Jew, which is likely the reason that Paul wanted him along as we will see later. Paul refers to Titus very warmly in several letters and one of the letters in the New Testament is addressed to him.

**[3]**

***<sup>2</sup>I went up because of a revelation...***

The revelation this refers to is likely the found in Acts 11:27-30.

**[4]**

**Acts 11:27–30 (ESV)**

***<sup>27</sup>Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. <sup>28</sup>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). <sup>29</sup>So the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. <sup>30</sup>And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.***

In the early church Christians were much less individualistic than we are in twenty-first century Canada. If there were Christians suffering in another city, they would gather what resources they had and help out. They saw the big picture of the mission of Jesus. They didn't have walls of denomination separating the churches. There was one church, the Body of Christ, expressed differently in various cities all throughout the Middle East.

We have a difficult time with that in our world because we have been programmed from a very young age that if we are going to make it in life we need protect what is ours. And we have a tendency to hoard and make sure that nobody moves in on our territory. And really what we try to do is set up our lives so we don't need anybody. Our independence is very important to us, personally, and even as churches. I don't think that makes God very happy that his church is divided. That is one of the reasons we pray for the other churches in Campbell River. It's why we support our Fellowship of Churches. It's why we give to

missions. CRBC is not the only expression of the Body of Christ. We are a small part of something bigger that God is doing, not only in Campbell River, but around the world.

Remember in Acts 2 where it says that the first Christ-followers had “everything in common.”

[5]

**Acts 2:42–47 (ESV)**

***42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. 44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common.***

[6]

***45 And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.***

They had real, authentic community. If anyone had a need someone would sell something to meet the need of someone else. And it might even be another Christian that they had never personally met, in a different city. How many of us could live like that, where we live as though we are just one piece of a much bigger puzzle?

Here’s what Timothy Keller writes in his book, *Counterfeit Gods*:

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***Some years ago I was doing a seven-part series of talks on the Seven Deadly Sins at a men's breakfast. My wife, Kathy, told me, "I'll bet that the week you deal with greed will be the lowest attendance." She was right. People packed it out for "Lust" and "Wrath" and even for "Pride." But nobody thinks they are greedy.***

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***As a pastor I've had people come to me and confess that they struggle with almost every kind of sin. Almost. I cannot recall anyone ever coming to me and saying, "I spend too much money on myself. I think my greedy lust for money is harming my family, my soul, and people around me." Greed hides itself from the victim. The money god's modus operandi includes blindness to your own heart.***

God wants to change our hearts so that we become a generous people who get more from giving than getting. And to tell you the truth, there are actually many recent studies that prove just that, that it is better to give than receive. Here is an excerpt from an article on one such study from a few years ago.

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**The researchers' work is published today in the journal *Science*. Norton and his colleagues questioned 632 Americans about how much they earned and how they spent their cash. They also asked them to rate their own happiness. Regardless of income level, those people who spent money on others reported greater happiness, while those who spent more on themselves did not.**

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**In a second study, the team questioned 16 employees in line for a company bonus of \$3,000-\$8,000. The team asked the subjects about their happiness before and six to eight weeks after the bonus, and how they spent the money. The size of the bonus did not determine how much happiness grew. Instead, the amount spent on others or given to charity was correlated with how much individuals' happiness levels had risen.<sup>1</sup>**

In Acts 20:35, Paul said that Jesus said that very thing about two thousand years before any of these studies were done.

[11]

**Acts 20:35 (ESV)**

***35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'*** ”

How many of you have experienced that? When we give to meet a real need we receive tremendous joy. It’s how God made us.

We have some friends like that. They see the possessions that God has entrusted to them, whether it’s their car or their house, or their money as God’s, not theirs. And they don’t think twice about lending them or even giving them away when necessary. We should be asking God to change our hearts so that we live like this. If we did I think we would see the same results as they did in Acts 2.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/science/2008/mar/21/medicalresearch.usa>

***And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.***

So, to continue Paul's story, he says that he went to Jerusalem this time because of this revelation. He collected some money and perhaps some other non-perishables like Kraft Dinner, or Hamburger Helper to take to the Christian brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who were having a tough time financially.

**[13]**

***<sup>2</sup>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.***

So, while Paul was in Jerusalem he presented the gospel message that he had been preaching to the Gentiles to make sure that he's got it right. He wanted to be sure that he wasn't preaching something that wasn't true, so he sat down with the Apostles.

Now, remember what the message was. Paul's gospel said that salvation comes from faith in Jesus's finished work on the cross – period. There was nothing added. The good news was not Jesus plus any other law or rule. It was Jesus and Jesus alone, which meant that the Gospel was for the non-Jew as well as the Jew.

And so, in humility, he presents what he had been preaching in front of ***“those who seemed influential...”***

Paul uses this same phrase three times (once in verse 2, and twice in 6). And then in verse 9 he reveals who some of these influential people were. ***“...James, and Cephas [Peter], and John, who seemed to be pillars.”*** These were, Paul said, the pillars of the church. James, of course, was Jesus' brother, and at the beginning of Jesus' ministry James thought his older brother was crazy, and then he became a believer, which is quite phenomenal when you think of it, that Jesus' brother would follow him. Just think of the shift in thinking James would have had to have in order to go from thinking Jesus was a madman to believing that he really was the Messiah.

**[14]**

***<sup>3</sup>But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek.***

So, remember now, Paul is writing to the Galatians to show them that the Gospel of freedom in Christ that he has presented is the true Gospel and that the so-called “gospel” of the Judaizers is a counterfeit and only leads to slavery. We see here in verse three the reason that Paul brought Titus with him. Titus was a Gentile, a non-Jew. He was Paul's “test case”. If God was using Titus, even though he was an uncircumcised Gentile then the believers in Jerusalem would have to believe that circumcision and the other laws that the Judaizers saw as important were not necessary for salvation. And as Paul said, those influential people, James, Peter, and John did not force him to be circumcised. So, if the pillars of the church didn't force the law on a new believer we can assume that the law is not necessary for salvation.

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***<sup>4</sup>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—<sup>5</sup> 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 says that even though they were being pressured to give in to the law, they stood firm. They didn't give in to peer pressure — not even for a minute, Paul says. Their motivation was the new Gentile Christians. Paul wanted to make sure that they had the pure unadulterated Gospel with nothing added to it. He wanted to make sure that they had the real deal. New believers were coming to faith in Christ and he was very protective of them. He didn't want the legalists gathering these vulnerable people and enslaving them to the law, and giving them false hope.

I have, in the past, purchased several things through E-Bay over the years. I am very tempted to by the thought of getting something for a greatly reduced price because I am very cheap. Sometimes I got good deals, and sometimes – not so much. The first thing I purchased was a light meter for my camera in 2001. I bought it from a guy in France. We were on our way to Europe to do a little trip so I had him ship it to Sweden where we would be staying at Capernwray Bible School. It was waiting for us when we arrived and I excitedly opened it up and tried it out only to find out it didn't work. I felt like extending our trip and flying to France to visit the guy.

A few years later I ordered a memory card for my camera. Good, professional, memory cards are expensive. I found a killer deal on a brand new, in the box card for about a third of the price from stores in Canada. I ordered it. It came from Hong Kong. It arrived a few weeks later. I opened the box, which looked legit and removed the card, which also looked genuine. And then installed it in my camera, and you guessed it. It didn't work. I did some research and found that I had likely bought a very expensive piece of plastic that looked like the genuine article, but it was a counterfeit. From that point on I have made it a policy to only buy the genuine article when it comes to memory cards. No matter how good a deal one gets with a counterfeit, if it doesn't work, it's useless.

The same goes for the Gospel. Paul wanted to make sure that the Gospel he was presenting was the “real deal”, not something that was void of any real power.

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***<sup>6</sup>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.***

So, Paul presented the Gospel message that he had been sharing with the Gentiles to the apostles in Jerusalem to make sure that his theology was correct. They gave him two thumbs up. And he said they saw no need to add to it, meaning it was complete and lacked nothing.

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***<sup>7</sup>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 <sup>8</sup>(for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles), <sup>9</sup>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.***

Not only did they give him two thumbs up for his message, but they saw that God had very obviously been powerfully using him to work among the Gentiles so they officially commissioned him to that work. Paul’s ministry would be focused on the Gentiles and Peter’s on the Jews.

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This is a good lesson for us to learn. In Henry Blackaby’s book *Experiencing God* he basically says the same thing. Blackaby says that there are seven realities that we need to know when doing God’s work.

- 1. God is always at work around you. [18a]**
- 2. God pursues a continuing love relationship with you that is real and personal. [18b]**
- 3. God invites you to become involved with Him in His work. [18c]**
- 4. God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes and His ways. [18d]**
- 5. God’s invitation for you to work with Him always leads you to a crisis of belief that requires faith and action. [18e]**
- 6. You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing. [18f]**
- 7. You come to know God by experience as you obey Him and He accomplishes His work through you. [18g]**

In short, what Blackaby says is that since God is already at work around us we should watch what he is doing and join him. That’s what the apostles did here. Paul demonstrated to them that God was working in and through the Gentiles. It was undeniable, so they commissioned Paul officially continue to work among them.

We should do the same thing. Where do you see God working around you? Where do you see him working in the church? Where do you see him working in your neighbours? We need to keep our eyes open and invest our time, energy and finances in the things that God is doing. Where are we seeing lives changed? Where are we seeing the Gospel bear fruit? Those are the things we need to invest in.

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I see God working in so many ways at CRBC, from the children’s ministry to the senior’s, God is at work. People are breaking free from addictions, and bondage to the law. We have people coming to Christ, getting baptized, growing in their faith in Growth Groups, and using their gifts in various ways to reach out to their neighbours and to build the church. We have a very high percentage of our congregation involved in serving in various ways. It’s very exciting.

Leora has over one hundred people volunteering for children’s ministry. Steve has about 40 volunteers for youth. June has a whole bunch of people serving in hospitality, women’s ministry and several other ministries. Bob has several people helping out in Freedom Session and in the facilities and maintenance. Adrian has teams of Growth Group leaders, ushers and greeters and people serving in outreach in lots of different ministries. We have about 40 or 50 people serving on our worship teams between the Traditional and the Contemporary services. We also have our church board that faithfully serves Jesus at CRBC. I’m sure I have missed quite a few areas of ministry. The point is that God is at work. Lives are being changed by the Gospel of Jesus every day.

Where else do we see God at work? We should sacrifice everything so that the Gospel can be clearly presented where God is at work. Why would we want to do anything else?

So, the apostles see that God is at work in Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles and they give him the “right hand of fellowship” but with one caveat.

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***<sup>10</sup>Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.***

To Paul, as to Jesus, the Gospel, if it did not touch people in every area of their lives, was incomplete. It's empty, just like that memory card that I bought. The true, undiluted Gospel of Jesus expresses itself in every area of our lives. Nothing should be untouched by the Gospel of Jesus. The Gospel works itself out by caring for those who may not be able to care for themselves. If the Gospel has truly gotten hold of us we will lose our rigid individuality and be more concerned with the greater body.

Just to be clear, doing those good works does not save us. We don't do them in order to gain favour with God. God does not love us or accept us more because we do them. We do them because God has saved us. They are a natural outworking of the Gospel. The Bible teaches us that very clearly.

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#### **Ephesians 2:8–10 (ESV)**

***<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.***

So, we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus. We can add nothing to our salvation. But, Paul says, we have been saved **for** good works. We've saved **by** grace **for** good works. So, if you are doing good works to earn God's favour you have missed the point, and you need to repent of that. On the other hand, if you are not doing good works then there is something wrong as well because the gospel has obviously not taken root in your heart because that is why God saved you, for good works.

The Gospel is holistic. It touches people in every area of their lives. That's why each of our ministries, from our children, to our youth, to our Growth Groups and even our Worship Ministries have to have as part of their focus a reaching out to those people outside our walls. It is why we take up our benevolent offering every communion Sunday, to care for the needs of those in our community and church who are struggling so that they would see Jesus in us. That is why the church exists. The more we do that, the more that God will add to our number those who are being saved. That's what he did in the first century and that is what he will do now if we let him.

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We have been freed from the bondage of sin and the law to give and be generous like God is generous. That is where we will experience real joy when our lives become about something more than making sure our needs are taken care of.

[23]

#### **Isaiah 41:17–20 (ESV)**

***<sup>17</sup> When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them; I the God of Israel will not forsake them. <sup>18</sup> I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. <sup>19</sup> I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive. I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, <sup>20</sup> that they may see and know, may consider and understand together, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.***



**Galatians: Learning to Live in the Freedom of Christ**  
**Free to Give**  
**Galatians 2:1-10**  
**Week of October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

**Objective of this study:** To have God open our eyes to what he is doing around us and become purposeful in joining him.

**Worship** (5 – 10 minutes)

1. Spend five minutes in silent prayer asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
2. After the five minutes of silence have someone interrupt the silence and read **Isaiah 41:17-20** meditatively to the group. (After each phrase, or paragraph if it's a long passage, pause and let the Lord speak to you before reading the next.)
3. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.

**Welcome** (5 – 10 minutes)

Tell about something that surprised you (birthday party etc.).

**Word** (20 - 30 minutes)

1. What stood out from the sermon?
2. Re-read Isaiah 41:20 in a translation other than the NLT. What four synonyms are used? What do you suppose is the purpose of that? What does the second half of the verse tell us is important to notice?
3. In today's passages various people or groups are noticing, seeing, and recognizing various things. Read Acts 11:19-30 and Galatians 2:1-10 looking for answers to these questions:
  1. Who saw/recognized what?
  2. With what results?
4. Pastor Jeff has often reminded us that God is the main character. Go through these two passages again and take note of (see, notice, recognize, consider) everything God did.

**Work** (30 - 40 minutes)

1. From the sermon: As the Gospel takes root in our hearts it touches us in every area of our lives. Read Luke 7:36-50. When we recognize how much we've been forgiven we want to share God's love with others in practical ways.
  1. Have you seen this in your own life, that as you recognize God's grace towards you, your love and desire to give and share increases?
  2. Do we see/notice the poor around us? Who are the poor that we tend not to notice?
  3. Where do you see, notice, recognize God working around you? What have you noticed?
  4. Where would you like to join him as an individual, family, or Growth Group?

**PRAYER TIME/HOMEWORK**

1. Spend time worshipping God for his amazing grace to us through Jesus.
2. Read Galatians again this week at least once more in one sitting.
3. Meditate on verses that God uses to speak powerfully to you, perhaps Luke 7:36-50, passages from Galatians, or other verses used in the sermon.
4. Journal about what God is showing you.