

1 For Freedom **Galatians 5: 1-6**

Review

We are in a series of messages called *Grace is Everything*. For 4 chapters Paul has argued that there are only two options for us—to try and earn a place at God’s table by religion, ritual, and race or realize just how broken we are and in your helplessness run out to Jesus and his grace alone. The climax of his argument was last week where he employee’s allegory and typology to say you are either a child of the flesh—stiving, working, doing—to justify yourself or a child of grace and are justified by God. This to a group of believers who started well verse 7 says, but the Judaizes came along and tried to take away their freedom in Christ and take them back into bondage. Now he will start applying this in practical ways.

Paul is never an armchair academic, but a practical theological. He gives you truth and then says this true will set you free and this is how. So let’s look at our text this morning.

2 Galatians 5: 1-6

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

² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^a by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

Introduction

Nothing is more talked about in the postmodern world than freedom. And by freedom we primarily mean personal choice. Freedom is no one telling me what to do. **But is that freedom?** Commenting on this ideal Alan Ehrenhalt in his book, “*The Lost City*,” says this, **3** “*Most of us in America believe a few simple propositions that seem so clear and self-evident they scarcely need to be said.*

Choice is a good thing in life, and the more of it we have, the happier we are. Authority is inherently suspect; nobody should have the right to tell others what to think or how to behave. Sin isn’t personal, it’s social; individual human beings are creatures of the society they live in.

Those ideas could stand as the manifesto of an entire generation in America, the generation born in the baby-boom years and now in its thirties and forties. They are powerful ideas. They all have the ring of truth. But in the past quarter-century, taken to excess, they have caused a great deal of trouble.

*The worship of choice (as real freedom) has brought us a world of restless dissatisfaction, in which nothing we choose seems good enough to be permanent and we are unable to resist the endless pursuit of new selections — in work, in marriage, in front of the television set. The suspicion of authority has meant the erosion of standards of conduct and civility, visible most clearly in schools where teachers who dare to discipline pupils risk a profane response. The repudiation of sin has given us a collection of wrongdoers who insist that they are not responsible for their actions because they have been dealt bad cards in life. When we declare that there are no sinners, we are a step away from deciding that there is no such thing as right and wrong. (Alan Eherhalt, *The Lost City*) That was written in the 1990’s we are way past that in our modern understanding of freedom now.*

Ironically, Paul says, we are saved for freedom! What? Christianity is actually an emancipation, a liberation. C. S. Lewis was getting at this in *Mere Christianity* when he said, **4** “*God became man to turn creatures into sons: not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man.* (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*) What kind? A free man or woman. For freedom Christ has set us free, what does he mean by that. It is here in the text. Let’s look at it like this. For Freedom, Fight for Freedom, Fruit of Freedom

5 For Freedom

For freedom Christ has set us free, (Galatians 5:1)

What Jesus did is for our freedom, to make us free. Jesus in his atoning death on the cross freed us so we can live in freedom. That is clear in the text, *Christ has set us free* is in the aorist tense, which refers to a single act in the past completed.

To understand this, you have to understand freedom can only be understood in terms of teleology or purpose. In other words, freedom is never understood by itself, Freedom to what? Freedom that does not asked what our design or purpose is will only end up in frustration or addiction. That is why freedom can never merely be person choice, it ignores what it means to be human or that humans have a nature and that there is a path or way toward the perfecting of our nature. That is why Jesus said, “*truth sets us free.*” In other words, the more we live into the “givens” of our nature and the “givens” of the world the more we know something like joy, satisfaction. So, what does Paul mean when he says, *For freedom Christ has set us free.* I mean if freedom is the matra of our culture, it would be helpful for us a *bringers* to real freedom to know. So here is what it means.

The Catechism question for this past week and we just read might be a good place to start. It asks this question. **6** *Did God create us unable to keep his law? No, but because of our first parents, Adam and Eve, all of creation is fallen; we are born in sin and guilt, corrupt in our nature and unable to keep God’s law.* So, the bible tells us something about our nature and why we can’t get to freedom apart from Christ.

Let me illustrate it like this. **7** St. Augustine said there were four states of mankind in relation to sin. It sheds light on the catechism question and this text so bear with me.

Humanity before the fall	<i>able to sin, able not to sin</i>
Humanity after the fall	<i>not able not to sin</i>
Humanity after conversion	<i>able not to sin, able not to sin</i>
Humanity glorified	<i>unable to sin</i>

So Adam and Eve before the fall could feely chose what was good. But after the fall notice, at that point, the point where every man, woman, boy and girl finds themselves is that because of the fall we are bond in sin, we are not free. We are in bondage to the world the flesh and the devil. What Jesus does in the atonement is give us a new nature. He didn’t die to make us nice but new. In conversion He gave us the ability by his grace to be free. We can choice to freely obey him. But because of our sin we still chose to sin. So, when Paul says for freedom Christ has set us free, he is saying. *We are free from the bondage of sin and the guilt of sin.* For the first time we can are free to obey God. So notice we are free in two ways. **8**

- 1) **Our conscience is free**—because of Christ finished work counts for me I am free from guilt of my imperfect performance. I don’t live in the house of shame. When my conscience condemns me I look at Jesus more. God doesn’t love me because I am good. He loves me because I am his.
- 2) **Our motivation is free**—See only if you know your worth is measured in terms of what Jesus did and it was good enough do you get out of this performance mode. In other words, I don’t serve God in a servile fear, but out of the joy of loved child. The Judaizes can’t know this because they think in their performance, they are gaining God’s favor. See in this scheme you don’t have a father, but a boss, who is standing over your shoulder—demanding perfection.

That is why Paul says we are free. Christ set us free.

9 Fight for Freedom

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

To keep our freedom requires vigilance. *Stand firm* is a military word to keep alert be strong. It is true people are always wanting to take away the freedom we have in Jesus. From the Pharisees, to the Judaizes, to well-meaning people today.

One would think that if you are given freedom you would never go back to being a slave, but Paul says of the Galatians you must *stand firm*. or you will be pulled back into a yoke of slavery. See the Galatians stared out well, they were free in Jesus. Freedom of conscience, freedom of motive and yet now they move back into a performance-based salvation. What Jesus did on the cross was not enough. He calls that a yoke because of this. Any performance-based religion under the name of Christianity or in the world for that matter is always done out of fear—how do you ever know if you are good enough, done enough? How do you ever know that in God's eyes you are beautiful, if you are under the yoke of trying to earn his favor. He then goes on to show that to add anything to what Christ has done for salvation is to nullify his work all together. Kind of like we say in Paul and the resurrection. He says if it is not true—our worship is vain, we are liars and we are to be pitied. Here he says if you add in law keeping three things are true. **10**

1. ²*Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.*" In other words, the cross means nothing. It would be like this. I read about a gentleman who found an old baseball in his attic and heard it might be worth something so he decided to sell it. But the signature was faded and hard to make out. So, to make it clearer, he took the baseball and carefully traced over the letters with a sharpie, B-A-B-E R-U-T-H. You say, you fool, you idiot, your ship had come in you were rich and by adding to it, you not only devalued it, you ruined it. That is what you do, when you add anything to what Jesus has done for you.
2. ³*I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.* (Galatians 5: 3) If you say I have to add to what Jesus did, you have taken on more than you think. You have to keep the whole law! You have to be perfect. You see why he says stand fast? Talk about bondage, where is the freedom in that.
3. ⁴*You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^a by the law; you have fallen away from grace.* (Galatians 5:4) See you are in a dark place, you are severed from the power of Christ, which only flows through us when we come to God with our nothingness. It doesn't mean we loss our salvation we can't do that, but we are certainly in the far country and I would add our expression and posture of Christianity is not what is Christlike.

To summarize, Christ plus anything is a feeble attempt at Christianity, it is devoid of freedom and power. Archibald Alexander, the first professor at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1812- 1851, saw this same problem in his day and he was addressing why Christianity seemed so weak and paltry. And what he says is true of the paultry expression of God's kingdom breaking in today. **11**

There is a defect in our belief in the freeness of divine grace. To exercise unshaken confidence in the doctrine of gratuitous pardon is one of the most difficult things in the world; and to preach this doctrine fully without verging towards antinomianism is no easy task and is therefore seldom done. But Christians cannot but be lean and feeble when deprived of their proper nutriment. It is by faith that the spiritual life is made to grow; and the doctrine of free grace, without any mixture of human merit, is the only true object of faith...Here, I am persuaded, is the root of the evil; and until religious teachers inculcate clearly, fully, and practically, the grace of God, as manifest in the Gospel, we shall have no vigorous growth of piety among professing Christians. (Archibald Alexander, *Thoughts on Religious Experience*)

One other comment to what Alexander says. He brings up an objection we often face preaching only the merits of Jesus, you seem to be saying you are antinomian—against law. In other words, one of the reasons people keep adding to free Grace is they think we have to add some little law to restrain. In my first pastorate I stopped having Sunday night services. I was raised Baptist, so this was a little add on much like circumcision was. I was excited about that and back in Memphis and was in conversation with some old friends and mentioned it and a deep friend asked me, "What about Sunday night aren't you afraid of what your congregation might be doing? See she had in a subtle way added to Jesus work. Christians are saved

by grace, plus do this, do that, must favor this kind of worship, or bible study. No, Christ plus nothing, but that doesn't make us antinomian because Paul end with this.

12 Fruit of Freedom

⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (Galatians 5: 5-6)

So, we have seen the argument of Paul this whole book is we are justified by faith alone, but now he is showing us that faith is never alone. **13** *"The faith that alone justifies is never alone, however. True faith is always a working faith, a faith that works. it is an expressive faith, a faith that expresses itself in love to God and to others.* (Philip Ryken, *Galatians*) Or to put it in St. Patrick's terms--Loving God, loving people and loving life. We are not justified because we love God, love people and love life. We love God, love people and love life, because we are justified.

When he says we *eagerly wait in hope of righteousness* it is not a wish, hope is the bible is the absolute certainty of a future. We are not striving for it; it is not a servile wishing for. We don't work for it, we wait for it. Righteousness. Our future is righteousness. That is not a goody goody two shoes kind of thing, it means rightly related. Our future is not seeing through a glass darkly anymore but beholding the face of God. Of not being able to sin anymore. A hope so certain, so sure that we can see ourselves without spot or wrinkle in glory and we know that we are just as loved and honored by God now as we will be. And because the more we realize that, the more verse 6 becomes true for us.

Here is the goal, the fruit of the freedom God has for us in the gospel—*faith working itself out in love. You are both freed by God's love and freed to love.* Nothing—circumcision or non-circumcision have any value to change you—only faith working itself out in love. See the law has a tendency to only give an outward conformity but love. Plus, it can only operate in servile fear—is it enough? will God love me now. This passage only makes sense if we in faith we have seen and felt God's love for us first.

In the Soul Room on Friday Paul says this, **14** ¹⁷ *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* ¹⁸ *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.* II Corinthians 3: 17-18) See it as we behold something in faith that there is freedom. We behold what God has done for us at the cross. In other words, the transforming vision is when we see him loving us with a dying love and it frees us. We stop performing.

I was reading a book to our children on Friday called, *"Because you are mine."* It is by Sally Llyod Jones, she who wrote *The Children's Story Book Bible*. It is about a little red squirrel and his father tells him he loves him, and he can't quite process that. He like all of us think we have to do something to earn or prove our worth.

- So he runs fast. Daddy do you love me because I am fast? No.
- Then he does herculean efforts of bravery jumping from limb to limb. Do you love me because I am brave? No.
- Then he puts up his beautiful bush tail and says, it must be because I am handsome. No.
- Then he comes back and says, it must be because you are kind.

Finally the little squirrel is tired and his daddy is holding him and tells him. You my little squirrel are indeed fast, and brave. You are handsome and kind but that is not why I love you. *I love you because you are mine.*

When you lay hold in faith of God saying that of you—that kind of love—then you are free to love. See if you are working for salvation you are only asking the question, *"have I done enough."* However, if you are looking at God loving you completely, unconditionally, good days and bad days? You start asking a different question, *"How do I love others like Christ loved me?"* Game changer See one lives out of a negation, one is self-centered—it is about me, have I done enough? Even your good deeds are from a self-centered motive. Now God will love me. The other is outgoing, joyful, delightful, because when you have been loved like that it changes you. Your good deeds are really good. And unlike when you are performing

You realize love is shaped like a cross—it is a giving away of yourself, your money, you life. And you experience it as joy. Isn't that true. It is my joy to lay down my life to make my wife and family more beautiful. It is love like Jesus, leveraging your power for the least of these and not with bitterness, but joy unspeakable and full of glory. Let me close with this illustration. It is from Spurgeon. I have told it before but is worth the telling.

“Once upon a time there was a king who ruled over everything in a land. One day there was a gardener who grew an enormous carrot. He took it to his king and said, “My lord, this is the greatest carrot I’ve ever grown or ever will grow; therefore, I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you.” The king was touched and discerned the man’s heart, so as he turned to go, the king said, “Wait! You are clearly a good steward of the earth. I want to give a plot of land to you freely as a gift, so you can garden it all.” The gardener was amazed and delighted and went home rejoicing.

But there was a nobleman at the king’s court who overheard all this, and he said, “My! If that is what you get for a carrot, what if you gave the king something better?” The next day the nobleman came before the king, and he was leading a handsome black stallion. He bowed low and said, “My lord, I breed horses, and this is the greatest horse I’ve ever bred or ever will; therefore, I want to present it to you as a token of my love and respect for you.” But the king discerned his heart and said, “Thank you,” and took the horse and simply dismissed him.

The nobleman was perplexed, so the king said, “Let me explain. That gardener was giving me the carrot, but you were giving yourself the horse.”

That is how faith working itself out in love works—one comes out a heart filled with wonder at God’s grace, the other is giving your righteousness to yourself. One draws people, the other is ash.

Let’s come to the table now-- No fear, faith working itself out in love. This is what we have at this table. As you are invited to this table, you come as a son or daughter, because he loves you. **This is not a business lunch**, this is table fellowship—**at his expense**, from his heart of love for you. This is the gospel offered to sinful, fearful, sinners, who because of Jesus are so dear to the heart of God, it cost God everything to bring you this meal. Listen come to him, not because you are faithful, but because he is faithful!