

Galatians 5

Good evening and thank you for joining us. Would you please turn in your Bibles to Galatians 5? We're closing in on the finish line of this incredible book, and once we finish Galatians, we'll go back to the OT and study 1 Chronicles.

Tonight, we're only going to study verses 1-15, and we'll also be participating in communion together. The title of tonight's message is What's love got to do with it?

Let's pray

SHOW PIC Perched atop our nation's Capitol in Washington DC is a twenty foot statue known as the "Freedom Lady." She was sculpted in Rome, and imported to America. But during the delivery, the ship encountered howling winds and huge waves - an intense storm. The seas were so severe the captain feared the boat might capsize so he ordered the cargo thrown overboard.

Yet when the crew went to toss over the "Freedom Lady" the skipper stopped them. He shouted over the noise of the storm, "No, never! We'll flounder before we throw away "Freedom."

CLOSE PIC

And this is Paul's exhortation in Galatians 5, We're to never throw away our freedom!

And yet many Christians do. They allow a subtle, yet seductive legalism to inflate their pride and cause them to think they deserve God's blessing. That somehow because of what they do or don't do God now owes them. Whether these supposed rules are of their own making or part of a tradition, they believe their

work proves their worthiness. And when that happens they throw overboard the grace-based freedom God intended for them to enjoy.

Yet true Christianity teaches just the opposite. There is nothing we can do to earn God's favor. Even the most obedient among us is still unworthy. But God has extended His grace.

On the cross Jesus did all that needed to be done to pay our debt of sin, and earn for us God's pardon and blessing. Now our job is to humble ourselves and put our faith in His merits alone.

And yet sometimes legalism pries it's way back into our lives. A friend, or preacher, or even our own misinformed conscience tells us we should be doing more to earn God's favor! And we then begin to doubt the sufficiency of Christ -so we add a few good deeds to be on the safe side.

But trying to be on the safe side can put us on the wrong side. When we lean toward legalism we diminish the cross of Christ and drift from God's grace. In essence, we throw away our freedom!

Now the rest of Galatians is all about the practical application of how we make sure we don't fall victim to legalism.

1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free,[fn] and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.The fact is that Jesus has made us free. If we live in bondage to a legal relationship with God, it's not because God wants it that way. God's desire is that we walk in the freedom of

Christ and enjoy the liberty He's given us and to avoid the yoke of bondage.

Freedom is a gift of Jesus, given to us and received by faith. The liberty is our freedom from the tyranny of having to earn our own way to God.

Notice it says stand fast. Stand fast means that it takes effort to stay in this place of liberty. We're to stand against anything that will overtake our liberty in Christ.

Because the fact is that someone who is legally made free in Jesus can still live in bondage; they can be deceived into placing themselves back into slavery.

Aren't you so glad Jesus sets us free from the treadmill of performance-based religion! It's no longer about our striving, and never measuring up. We live by faith in the work that Jesus did.

In Acts 15, Peter told the Jerusalem Church not to expect Gentile believers to conform to the Jewish Law. He said in verse 10, **"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"**

Later on in 1 Peter referred to the demands of the Law as a yoke - and a yoke is no joke. It's a harness that chokes off the joy and life of God...

Anytime Christians stop living by faith in Jesus, and rely on their own efforts they take on the yoke.

And this takes all sorts of appearances. We GOTTA go to church. We GOTTA go serve. We GOTTA tithe.

This is what the false teachers had done to the Galatians. Rather than teach them to live by grace and faith, they had turned up the treadmill. They demanded that the Christians in Galatia live by a concoction of laws and traditions. It was a lethal self righteousness.

And here's how it happens... The legalist appears so pious, so disciplined, so sincere - a new believer, even an experienced believer gets intimidated. Who am I to buck such a spiritual person?

Some religious-folk throw their weight around by enforcing their rules so they can control others - or make themselves look good - or create a pecking order. And the new believer gets sucked in. Because of their ignorance, or fear, or uncertainty, they become saddled with unnecessary baggage. A person who Jesus died to set free, ends up living under "a yoke of bondage."

To be clear, standards and rules are very important and necessary, even in ministry. Here's a good standard-we don't just let anyone fill the pulpit. Why? Well the bible gives qualifications right for being a pastor. What about Acts 6-pick 7 men of good reputation-it takes time to develop a good reputation right?

So it's not that having standards is unnecessary or legalistic. The standards become legalistic when those standards are manipulated to try and improve a person's righteousness.

2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. Real faith is unseen isn't it—it's in the heart. Religion relies on external badges, not faith. And even today some churches still emphasize outward badges like church membership, or baptism, or daily devotions, or home schooling your kids, or speaking in tongues, or tithing, or keeping a holy day. All those activities are good and serve a purpose, but when they're made mandatory for pleasing God - we insult God's grace and diminish the work of Jesus.

It's faith in Jesus alone that makes us right with God!

And notice Paul's strong warning in verse 2. Faith in Christ is an all or nothing proposition. Add anything to personal trust in Jesus - become confident in your own works, or rely on some tradition just in case - and you'll forego the saving merits of Jesus!

See something happens when we try to embrace the law as our rule of walking with God. When we hold onto the law, we must let go of Jesus. Jesus is no longer our righteousness; we attempt to earn it ourselves.

For the Galatians in this context, to receive circumcision — the ritual that testified that a Gentile was coming under the law — meant that he no longer trusted in Jesus as His righteousness, but trusted in himself instead.

The legalists among the Galatians wanted them to think that they could have both Jesus and a law-relationship with God. Paul tells

them that this is not possible — the system of grace and the system of law are incompatible.

I know the Mormons are sincere. I see the zeal of the Jehovah's Witnesses. But their doctrines very clearly state that, although the Cross is a good starting point, it's not enough in and of itself to save from hell. Therefore, they're lost. The Word says if anyone adds anything to the Cross, Christ profits them nothing.

3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. When we embrace the law as our rule of walking with God, we must embrace the whole law. We become debtors to keep the whole law, and that is a heavy debt.

Again, the legalists among the Galatians wanted them to think they could observe some aspects of the law without coming under the entire law. But when we choose to walk by law, we must walk by the whole law.

Think about it this way. Suppose while driving on the 275 you passed a slow poke and got up to 78 mph. Then you see the flashing red light in your rearview mirror. You pulled over, and the policeman said, "I clocked you at 78 miles an hour. You broke the law."

Imagine saying, "Oh, come on now, Officer. Lighten up. I never robbed a bank. I never shot a person. I'm not involved in selling drugs. So don't give me this ticket," What would the cop say? He would say, "I don't care how many other laws you haven't broken, you did break this one. You're guilty."

The same is true of God's law. If you're seeking justification by keeping the law rather than by accepting grace, breaking the law in even one point means you're guilty—regardless of how many “good things” you've done in other areas.

Now at this point its a good time to take a momentary detour. Martin Luther pointed out two ways that people devalue the cross of Christ and make His atonement of no benefit: (1) trusting in their own works, merit, inherent goodness, or religion; and (2) doubting Christ's power to deal with their sin.

Doubting the forgiveness of God usually occurs when Satan uses memories of our past sins and accuses us. Satan continually points out our shortcomings until our conscience condemns us.

Jesus' life, death, and resurrection invites us to freedom. His words encourage us when our conscience condemns us:

Matthew 9:13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'^[fn] For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."^[fn]

Matthew 11:28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."^[fn]

Luke 19:10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will^[fn] have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,^[fn] who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

Don't let Satan bully you into thinking God is mad at you or is withholding forgiveness.

4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. When we embrace the law as our rule of walking with God, we depart from Jesus and His grace. We are then estranged from Christ, separated from Him and His saving grace.

Most people think of “falling away” in terms of immoral conduct, but remember, we are not saved by our conduct. Someone may fall from grace without ever falling into grossly immoral conduct.

Now this phrase doesn't mean that if a Christian sins, he falls from grace and thereby loses his salvation. There is a sense in which as believers to sin is to fall into grace, if one is repentant. But to fall from grace, as seen in this context, is to fall into legalism... Or to put it another way, to choose legalism is to relinquish grace as the way a person tries to relate to God.

5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Those walking in the Spirit wait for

righteousness by faith; they aren't trying to earn it by performing good works.

See it doesn't matter whether you're circumcised or uncircumcised, whether you worship on Saturday or on Sunday, whether you eat meat or live on veggies. As far as your relationship with the Father goes, that stuff is irrelevant.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. This verse also tells us what does matter: faith working through love. You have faith? Wonderful; but it must be faith working through love.

If your faith doesn't work, it isn't real faith. If it doesn't work through love, it isn't real faith. But love alone isn't enough; your love must also have faith: an abiding trust in Jesus and what He did for us.

Faith must work through love. Herod had faith that John the Baptist was a true prophet, but there was no faith working through love, and he had John the Baptist murdered. What is it that legalists are missing-it's love!

7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? Paul reminded the Galatians of their good start in the faith, but he also knows that it isn't enough to start well.

Paul is referring to an Olympic race, saying, "You were running well, but someone cut into your lane and caused you to stumble."

SHOW PIC One of the major showdowns in Olympic history was in the 1500 meters, as Mary Decker Slaney took on archrival Zola Budd from South Africa. Although Slaney held every record on the books, she had not yet won Olympic gold. In the middle of the race, Budd crossed into Slaney's lane, sending Slaney sprawling. The image of the American Olympian watching the rest of the pack run by is etched on our collective memory. **CLOSE PIC** So, too, allowing legalists to cut in front of them and obstruct their freedom in Christ, the Galatians had set themselves up for a fall.

8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. At the root of it all, the Galatians were leaving Jesus to pursue the false and empty teachings of man, in this case legalism.

When cultists knock on your door, try to sell you their magazine, or lay their trip on you. When that happens, on the basis of this verse, say, "Where did you get that idea? You didn't get it from the Bible, did you?"

"Well, not really," they'll say. "It's from The Pearl of Great Price," or, "from our magazine," or, "from a pamphlet."

We who are believers in Jesus Christ, on the other hand, can truly say, "Just read your Bible. It's all you need. You don't need special literature. You don't need something some man has written to reveal the keys of spirituality to you. If you really want to know the truth, just read the Word."

This is why I always encourage people to read their Bibles because I know that if they do, they'll be on solid, secure footing. They won't fall prey to some new idea or philosophy. **Acts**

17:11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Because here's the danger...

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. The warning is driven home — the corrupting influence of legalism and other doctrines that diminish Jesus are like leaven in a lump of dough. A little bit will soon corrupt the whole lump.

10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. In spite of his obvious concern over the Galatian believers and the dangerous situation they faced, Paul believed that they would come to their senses.

Paul knew that as long as the Galatians remained in the Lord, he could be confident about the outcome of this difficult situation.

Paul also was confident that those causing all this confusion among the Galatian believers would receive their due punishment. Those who were causing them to get entangled in legalism will bear the responsibility for what they were doing.

James would echo the same warning. James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

This is why it's so important for teachers to approach our calling soberly and prayerfully. 2 Timothy 2:15 Be diligent to present

yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Remember Jesus' solemn warning against anyone who would lead a little one astray **Matthew 18:6** "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. 7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. Paul makes it clear that he no longer preaches the necessity of circumcision. The fact that he is persecuted by the legalists is evidence enough of this. Instead, Paul proudly bears the offense of the cross.

Someone might accuse Paul of preaching circumcision because he asked Timothy to be circumcised back in Acts 16. But as we discussed last week Paul didn't have Timothy circumcised so Timothy could be saved or "more saved." He did it so Timothy could more freely evangelize among unsaved Jewish people.

12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! What's Paul talking about here? Paul wishes that the Judaizers who were so keen on circumcision would go one step further and even castrate themselves. Remember what Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:2** **Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!**

Now we know that Paul urged his readers to live free from the Law of Moses. But now he's going to warn them against using their liberty as a license to sin. We're gonna break verse 13 down bit by bit

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; Pause here.

Paul has made the point over and over again — the Christian life is a life of liberty. Jesus came to set the captives free, not to keep them in bondage or put them in bondage all over again.

Here's a good question for us to ask ourselves tonight. Do people see us as individual Christians as people of freedom and liberty, or as folks who are bound up and more hung up than anyone else is?

...13 only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh,

Clearly, we can choose to use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. That option — that danger — is open to us. We can take the glorious freedom Jesus has given us, spin it, and use it as a way to please ourselves at the expense of others. We should never use our freedom in Christ as a way of tripping or trampling others.

This is common in seeker friendly churches, where pastors will drink from the pulpit, or curse in their sermons, saying 'hey man I'm forgiven, it's God's grace'. They take the other extreme end, but here Paul says don't use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. And how do we do that?

...13 but through love serve one another. This is the antidote for using liberty as an occasion for the flesh. Our flesh expects others to conform to us doesn't it?

But when we, through love, serve one another, we conquer the flesh. Notice please-it isn't through an obsessive contemplative attitude or even self criticism that we overcome the flesh, but by getting out and serving others through love.

This is exactly the pattern set by Jesus. He had more liberty than anyone who ever walked this earth did. Yet He used His liberty to through love serve others.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."^[fn] This attitude of service towards one another fulfills the great commandment (You shall love your neighbor as yourself), and it keeps us from destroying ourselves through strife (beware lest you be consumed by one another!).

15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! Apparently the believers who advocated grace and the believers who advocated law bitterly opposed one another in the Galatian churches. Paul cautioned both sides to love one another, or else they would be consumed by each other. That would not be a good example of Christian love.

DISCUSS COMMUNION SETUP

After His illegal arrest, Jesus was beaten mercilessly. The book of Isaiah tells us His beard was ripped away. His face was swollen and disfigured so you couldn't even recognize Him as a man.

His back was torn to shreds from the scourging!

isa 53:5-6 He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...6 and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

The punishment that we deserve for our sins was being put upon the innocent Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world.

After they beat Jesus they next took a crown of thorns-these thorns would be about an inch long. And thrust it into His scalp. Can you imagine the blood flowing into His Eyes?

I was thinking about the thorns. (spiny, prickly, sharp, stinging)

Reminds me of the consequence of sin!

The consequence of sin is also thorny and painful! Each of us here can declare the consequence of sin is painful too can't we?

Yet, Jesus had never been cut by the thorn of sin.. Jesus never felt the pain of sin ...(until that day)

(later on the cross He would cry out)

"my God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"

That day... my sins (yours too) were placed upon Him

That's what makes Jesus so amazing & wonderful!

By now a whole garrison of Roman troops had gathered around Jesus.

Taunting and mocking him! (hail king of the jews)
Slapping Him, pushing Him, beating Him!

Surrounded by all those soldiers Jesus may have looked like a helpless victim...

Yet in reality.... He wasn't was He?

HE WAS A DETERMINED SAVIOR!

In the garden of Gethsemane He had prayed.

**"Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me,
Nevertheless not my will be done.... But yours"**

And without a struggle Jesus was led away!

Beaten, bleeding, carrying a cross!

Arriving at Golgotha-the place of the skull Jesus was shoved to the ground!

His feet pressed together, And a spike was driven through them both.

Then the soldiers stretched out his arms against the cross beams.
And with spike in hand the soldier was ready!

I wonder, did Jesus turn his face toward the nail just as the soldier lifts the mallet ready to strike?

The mallet slams down!

The sound rings out through the silenced crowd

His flesh rips, the blood begins to gush.

His hands viciously pierced!

And these.... No ordinary hands!
These were the hands of God!
All through the Bible we see that the hand of God is a mighty hand!

But why didn't He resist? Because He loves us!

The force behind the mallet was not
That of a vicious soldier!

The spike that was held in place....
was not secured by the wood of the cross!

The death sentence was not decided
By a petty group of jealous Jews or even a corrupt governor.

Jesus himself chose the cross and the nails!

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Had the soldier hesitated to swing the mallet...I think Jesus Himself would have shouted the command to drive the nail into his flesh!

(that's why we worship Him)

As the hands of Jesus opened to receive the nails
The doors of heaven opened to receive you and me and countless millions of people. This is..... The salvation of the Lord!

And this... is what we Christians remember with communion!

John 3:16 God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes in Him will never perish But inherit eternal life!

From the whipping post to the cross.
Even to the spear in his side!

It was all done for you!
His blood was shed for the forgiveness of all of your sins.

This evening, as we take communion

We remember that day! We remember Jesus!

We remember his death, the cross and the blood.

John 15 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.