

Galatians 5:1-15

Freedom

Image Church // Galatians: Week 7

Introduction

Image Family! I hope you're doing well!

If you have your Bible, turn to Galatians 5...

- As you're turning there....

Build the tension:

- Freedom... Verse Licentiousness...
- How do we navigate this?
- We've talked a lot about the law, how do we view it now?

Galatians 5:1-15

1 For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm then and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery.

That first part sounds kinda interesting... But Paul's trying to make a point here... He's putting emphasis on the word **freedom**...

- He's kinda having a Yoda moment... you know how Yoda talks:
 - Much to learn, you have
 - Use your mind, you did not
 - Stink, you do... A shower, you take
 - *There was a Yoda talk generator I found online*

But what Paul's saying is that Christ has set you free for the sake of, or the purpose of, being free!

What have we been set free from?

- Set free from the law...
- Remember, I told you that the law is like a **mirror**...

- It shows you the state of our hearts...
 - The law shows us that we are **bound by the power of sin**...
 - The proof is in the fact that we don't have the ability to keep the law... We miss the mark over and over again...
 - **Enslaved and imprisoned by this reality**...

***The point of the law was never to be a means of salvation but to point to our need for salvation...**

Jesus came and provided the obedience that we denied giving God, and then He suffered the punishment for our sinful rebellion- God punished Jesus- not only did Jesus take on the horrific cross, but He experienced the wrath of God in our place for the sin we committed.¹

And then, Jesus would beat death- raising from the dead, showing that He was God and completing His saving work to **free us** from the sin that the law held us in!

Jesus' mission has always been about liberation... The question is, are you living in the liberation that Christ has offered you?

Listen, there are only two options, spiritually speaking: slavery or freedom... You either take the yoke that Jesus offers you and rest in what He's done, or you take on the yoke of slavery...

- **The yoke of spiritual slavery**...
 - A yoke is something that links two animals together...
- **Spiritual slavery** is when you are burdened by, subject to anything other than Jesus...

Here's the thing: **Spiritual slavery is seductive**...

- I know you're like *what???* How is slavery something that entices us away from gospel freedom???. Really **slavery**?!?

¹ Thabiti Anyabwile, sermon. *Christ sets us free*. Sept. 6, 2015

Illustration: There's something called **Stock-home syndrome**, where someone who's been kidnapped or taken hostage begins to eventually feel affection, love and trust for their captors...

This is a twisted reality that comes from a pattern of manipulation... And yet the same is true for us... We so easily turn back to slavery...

How?! What does this look like?

John Piper talks about something called the **Debtor's Ethic**, Where we accept God's grace and believe that He saved us, but we feel like we owe God, and we have to pay Him back by working off the debt to be worthy of the purchase price...²

When ***we work for God instead of embracing the work of God***, we look to legalism in order to evaluate how worthy we are...

- Legalism, by definition, is: dependence on moral law rather than on personal religious faith...

We turn to slavery every time we turn to the law as a means of salvation, **or**, listen, any time we go back to our old sinful ways... either way, you're enslaved...³

We're also pulled away by slavery when we go back to our old sinful ways...

- When all heck has broke loose, and you turn back to alcohol to drink it all away...
- Or when you turn to your computer late at night to find gratification and comfort through pornography...
- Or when you turn back to that anger as a release of all your frustrations...
- Or you go back to selfishness and pride because you've been overlooked or mistreated...

- Or you turn to money, success, and accomplishments to find your identity and fulfillment...
- What kind of parent you are...
- How people view you at work...

Anywhere you turn, and anything that you look to other than Jesus is you choosing slavery over freedom!

It's so easy to find ourselves there...

- It's what we've always known... but it won't lead to the freedom that you're ultimately looking for... it will only lead you down a miserable, frustrating path of slavery...

Do you understand that the burden of discouragement that you feel from your sin has been lifted by Christ???

Some of you are there right now, and you're enslaved, and you need to experience the freedom that Christ offers you!

And you need to do what **Paul** says and stand firm in that freedom...

- **Stand firm:** This is a military term with the idea of holding your ground, stay alert...
 - **Why?** Because our freedom will constantly be threatened by our culture and by our flesh...

Listen, we can't be lured away back to **slavery**...

- We have to remember the freedom that has been purchased for us by Christ... Jesus has set you free from **works-based salvation**, there is nothing that you can do or have to do to be worthy before God...

Jesus has set you free from the constraints of sin on your life. You have the ability to experience new life in him, leaving behind your old ways through the power of the Holy Spirit as you rest in the finished work of Jesus! And in Him, you will find freedom and joy...

² John Piper. *Is gratitude a bad motive for obeying God?* July 9, 2008.

³ Thoughts from Thabiti Anyabwile, sermon. *Christ sets us free.* Sept. 6, 2015

Verse 2:

2 Take note! I, Paul, am telling you that if you get yourselves circumcised, Christ will not benefit you at all.

If you look to circumcision as a means of, or even as part of, the salvation process, then Christ is no benefit to you at all... His death was pointless... **it is all or nothing, not both, and...** There is no middle ground!

Verse 3: Again I testify to every man who gets himself circumcised that he is obligated to do the entire law. **4** You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace.

If you decide to go forward with this circumcision thing as part of salvation, then you're obligated to keep the entire law...

- *Good luck with that! We already know from history that's not possible!*

When you try to justify yourself in your own efforts, you're alienating yourself from Christ, you're severed from Christ, because your efforts are **incompatible** with that of Christs... Which means that don't have access to the grace that He offers you!

Verse 5: Paul turns from talking to them, to making a confession that he's inviting them to join him in believing... *watch:*

5 For **we** eagerly await through the **Spirit**, by faith, the hope of righteousness. **6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything; **what matters is faith working through love.**

This is the climax of Paul's argument in his letter... Brings everything together...

- righteousness, faith, and the Spirit as the means by which that righteousness is attained and maintained, and **love** as the **expression** and **embodiment** of faith.⁴
- Gospel connection...

⁴ Moo, D. J. (2013). *Galatians* (p. 327). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

And then Paul says to them in verse 7:

7 You were running well. Who prevented you from being persuaded regarding the truth? **8** This persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **9** A little leaven leavens the whole batch of dough. **10** I myself am persuaded in the Lord you will not accept any other view. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. You were running well, what happened?

A-phorism: short pity statement: *If it ain't broke, don't fix it...*

Point: *the extensive effects that something small can have...*

Illustration: *Cull buck*

What are the areas of your life that you need to cull?

- *What are the small places where things counter to the gospel are creeping into you life?*
- *Who are you listening to?*
- *Who are you following?*

There is a danger to drift... This is why Paul is writing this letter a region of churches has drifted...

Verse 11:

11 Now brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

Paul addresses a false claim being made by the Judiazers...

- He's saying, if I am **preaching circumcision**, then why am I being persecuted?? If I were teaching circumcision, then the offense of the cross wouldn't exist...

The offense of the cross is the idea that people have to give up on their efforts to be in right standing before God- there is nothing that you can do. You are wicked... that's offensive...⁵

⁵ Ibid (p. 337)..

And Paul says the unthinkable... Verse 12:

12 I wish those who are disturbing you might also let themselves be mutilated!

I hope that you're tracking with him, but in case you're not...

- **Martin Luther's** translation of this is: *Tell those who are disturbing you I would like to see the knife slip [when you're in the midst of circumcision]...*

Here's the thing as *weird* and as *gruesome* as this statement is you have to see how seriously Paul is coming against the idea of **works as a means of salvation!**

- Because freedom is at stake here- the truth of the gospel is at stake here...

What Paul is doing is opposing false teaching...

Sounds teaching is so important- you need to be at church that teaches Gods the world for what it is- you should be able to see the truths that me or any other pastor is pulling out of the text... You don't need opinions or motivational speeches, you need to hear from God...

It's so easy to get captivated by teaching that sounds good versus teaching that's Biblical...

One of the things that we say here is that ***our goal isn't a great sermon, the goal is to point to a great Savior!***

The church isn't an event, it isn't a show- its about pointing people to Gods word showing them how to know an love God! When it comes to this idea of **freedom**, people always want to know what it means, how far can I go, can I do what I want, if I am free then why does Jesus lay out so many things in the NT??

We began the answer to question a few weeks ago and what we're going to see is that Paul keeps building on it here... And then he's going to lay it all out next week...

And then Paul makes a shift in **verse 13** as he explains what it looks like to live in the freedom Christ offers...

13 For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself. 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.

Now, Paul is going to start connecting everything together...

- Freedom and the law...
- Law bad? Law negated?

Paul knows that it's easy to assume that this freedom he's talking about means that you can do whatever you want... But that's not the case...

The freedom that Christ has won for us is a freedom to be what God originally made us to be before we rebelled against Him, and it's all rooted in love.⁶

*What you have to see is that this **freedom** that Paul's talking about, the freedom that Christ offers us, **isn't** a license to do what you want, going after the sinful desires of your heart... That wouldn't be living in freedom. That would be going back to slavery of sin...

Paul says it like this in **Romans 6:15**: **What then? Should we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Absolutely not!** What Paul's showing us is that the freedom that Christ has won for us (*that he talks about in v. 1*) and the freedom to which we have been called to by God (*here in v. 13*) is the freedom to be what God originally made us to be.⁷

⁶ Ibid (p. 343).

⁷ Moo, D. J. (2013). *Galatians* (p. 343). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Which is why Paul goes on to say that **the whole law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself.**

Now, what you have to see in this is that Paul is *not saying that you need to fulfill the law, or that you fulfilling the law when you love your neighbor as yourself...*

He's saying the law is **fulfilled** in one statement... And in that, he's pointing to the finished work of Jesus... Jesus fulfilled the law perfectly in our place, and then in the greatest display of sacrificial love, He went to the cross for us...

Jesus Himself singled out this same command in the gospels when He was asked about the *greatest commandment*... And not only that, but it was a major theme woven throughout His teachings when He was on earth...

And in **John 13:34-35**... He would say this: a new command I give to you... that you love one another, just as I have loved you...

Following Jesus means **embracing His love for you** and then loving others in light of the love that He's had for you...

We have to understand that new life in Christ does provide us with direction, it's not reckless autonomy... And the direction it points us in is love, that's possible through the Spirit that comes through faith in the finished work of Jesus!

One commentator says it like this:

It's only with the coming of Christ and the gift of his Spirit that true "*completion*" of the law has become possible. But that completion does not take the form of obedience to the many commands of the law. Rather, it happens as Christians love others—with a love possible only for those who are in Christ and walk according to the Spirit.⁸

Love is the *expression* and *embodiment* of faith in Jesus because it embraces the very thing that He's done for us...

See, it all comes back to faith... When we **rest in the freedom that Christ has offered us**, the righteousness that He has given us, we are allowing the **Spirit** to transform us, creating a heart of love...

Apply:

Let me ask you: do you have a heart of love for others? If not, chances are you may not be a Christian, or you're a Christian who's lost sight of the gospel... The evidence of this will be in your life...

- When is the last time that you've served someone?
- Take a step back, is your primary focus you, or is it others?

Here's the thing when it comes to love, we also have to see love as a discipline... It's not a means of salvation but it is a discipline for those that are saved... A discipline that reminds us of the gospel...

- Flesh this out... I don't want to serve them, it's inconvenient... But I am choosing to do it anyway as I remember what Christ has done for me...

We live out our faith when we love and serve others...

You want to teach your kids about Jesus; show them Jesus in the way that you serve and love others...

***The question is, is there even any space in your life to serve others? Or is life all about you...**

Appeal: Loving your neighbor in here...

There are 59 one-one-other commands in the NT... these are not things that you do to save yourself, these are disciplines that you practice in light of the salvation that you have been given... not to pay God back, but to remind yourself of the goodness of God...

⁸ Moo, D. J. (2013). *Galatians* (p. 348). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Every time you love and serve others it should activate your mind and heart to remember the gospel and the way that you have been served...

Appeal: Loving your neighbor out there...

- You can't do out there what you're not willing to do in here...

Conclusion [VAMP]

Call to respond

- Be free

Pray

Outtakes:

There is a movie that was released in 2013 that is a historical drama based on the true story called **12 Years a Slave**.

- It's based on the autobiography of **Solomon Northup**...
- Solomon was a free African-American man in **1841** who lived in **New York**...
- He had a beautiful family and was incredibly gifted at playing the violin...
- He's approached by 2 men and offered a job in *Washington DC* as a musician...
- But when he arrives, he's drugged, kidnapped, and taken to New Orleans, where he's renamed **Platt** and sold into slavery...
- Where he endures **twelve years** of brutal treatment...
- Despite the hardship, Solomon maintains hope. His fate changes when he confides in a Canadian carpenter...
- This Canadian carpenter helps send letters to Solomon's friends in the North.
- Eventually, Solomon's free status is proven, and he is rescued and reunited with his family...

In Solomon's story, we get a shocking glimpse into what it looks like for a man to lose his freedom based on a horrific ideology that runs counter to what the bible teaches...

We all love the **idea** of **freedom**, but if we miss the depths of what it really means and the implications that it has on our lives then we will never really understand the freedom that Paul's talking about...

That sounds good, but what does it mean? I know that you might think you know what it means, but do you really understand the implications this has on your life??

This freedom Paul's talking about is related to the law that was given to **Moses on Mt. Sinai**... Remember, the purpose of the law was to reveal the **sinful state** of the human heart...

- It's design was never to provide salvation, but to show that we needed it!

I've told you to think about it like this: *If someone blindfolded you and took you somewhere and took it off... And immediately you said, I'm in prison...*

- *How would you have known that you're there?*
- **The bars around you**... If the bars weren't there you wouldn't know that you're in prison...

We are imprisoned by the law... **IOW:** each bar represents a law that's been broken...

The law is like those prison bars, showing you that you're imprisoned because of your sin...

And when you step back and look at your imprisonment, you realize that there's no way out... You're locked up and **enslaved by the law because you don't have the ability to obey it**...

And there's no way out of the imprisonment because no human can overcome sin, or be freed of its consequences... God could have left it that way...

But listen, in the midst of humanities imprisonment by the law because of sin... God sent His Son to do something incredible...

Jesus came and provided the obedience the we denied giving God, and then He suffered the punishment for our sinful rebellion- God punished Jesus- not only did Jesus take on the horrific cross, but He experienced the wrath of God in our place for the sin we committed.⁹

⁹ Thabiti Anyabwile, sermon. *Christ sets us free*. Sept. 6, 2015

And then, Jesus would beat death- raising from the grave showing that He was God and completing His saving work to **free us** from the sin that the law held us in!

Do you see the freedom that God has offered you?!? Do you understand that this means no matter what you've done, no matter how bad you think you are, no matter how bad the things you've done are, that God offers you freedom and forgiveness through the finished work of Jesus!