

TB – Life in the Spirit is Freedom

11/14/21

Galatians 5:1-26

Sunday AM

Did you hear about the Baptist pastor who snuck out to the horse track b/c he needed a little extra cash? Problem was, he'd never bet on anything, much less horses, so he wasn't sure where to put his money. But before one of the races, he was surprised to see a Catholic priest pronouncing a blessing on a horse – and thinking this was a sign from God, he bet all his money on that horse. As fate would have it, his horse was leading down the stretch when it suddenly, it dropped dead on the track. Of course, the upset pastor blamed the priest for his losses. He said, "I bet all my money on that horse b/c you blessed it." The priest said, "That's the problem w/ you Baptists. You can't tell the difference b/w a *blessing* and *last-rites*."

**You know** – being able to discern *truth* from *untruth* and *religion* from *relationship* can often be a problem.

Such was the case when Paul penned Galatians. After helping found these churches upon *God's redeeming grace*, false teachers, known as *Judaizers*, arose to begin teaching that the cross wasn't enough – and to get to heaven, a person had to obey Jewish law too. They were teaching a **Jesus-PLUS** theology.

You can imagine Paul's frustration once he heard this heresy. So, he wrote the Galatians to help them to see the truth of grace and avoid the pitfall of legalism.

If you're just joining us, we're in a series entitled, **Truth Bombs**, looking at some of the most explosive spiritual truths that when dropped, can change our *earthly* lives and *eternal* destinies. In week 1, we looked at the bomb **there's only one Gospel** – that is – Jesus is the only way to God – thus *Jesus + anything = nothing, while Jesus + nothing = everything*. Next, we learned that the Gospel is for *everyone, everywhere* – and it changes *everything*. Then last week, we learned legalism is for losers b/c it lures people away from the purpose of the Law and the person of Jesus.

Today, we're going to move into ch. 5 to discover the 4<sup>th</sup> truth bomb – *the Christian life hinges of grace*.

To get us started, I need to remind you of a critical teaching regarding the Christian life. (see LF diagram)

There are (2) kinds of people in the world – lost/found. What's distinguishes the (2) is salvation.

(2) kinds of **lost** people – the rebellious/the religious. Like in the Parable of the Prodigal Son – you have the younger brother in rebellion and the older religious brother at home – and both were far from the Father.

(2) kinds of **found** people – those who walk by flesh and those who walk in the Spirit. Yet only the man who walks in the Spirit is living the Christian life God intended – as evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit.

**Here in Galatians 5**, Paul addresses the necessity of living the Christian life in *God's power* and not in our own ability. And yet, although Jesus spoke to this truth in the Gospels, and Paul reiterates it thru-out his writings, this truth often evades the avg. person who thinks they have to live a certain way to please God.

**YET** – it's **impossible** (*not improbable*) to live the Christian life independently of God. No matter how hard we try, or how good we might be, the Christian life is only possible thru living in alignment and under the influence of the H.S. in an abiding life. Anything less, is less than the Christian life God desires.

But once when we begin to walk in sync w/ God, we will begin to experience the abundant life God has promised to His followers. (*Let's read*)

*It's for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery... You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."*

*If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So, I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict w/ each other, so cannot do as you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry, and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is God's love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh w/ its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step w/ the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Galatians 5:1, 13-26*

We see in this text the power/purpose of God's grace. Which raises the question – **what is grace?**

**Biblically** – **grace** is the gift of the kind goodwill and acceptance of God that is neither deserved nor earned. It's **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**.

*Grace is when the helpless poverty of man collides w/ the limitless kindness of God – and while undeserved, we become the beneficiary of God's love/favor.*

**Meaning** – grace is *God's love in action*. This is why everything in the Christian's life hinges on the initiative of God's grace – *for if righteousness could be obtained by keeping the Mosaic Law, then Jesus died for nothing – and we'd all be unredeemably lost.*

We learn in Galatians 5 the value/blessing of grace.

I Grace **EMANCIPATES** from Sin

*It's for freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery...*

The picture that comes to mind is of a man in shackles, chained to a wall in a dungeon prison cell. More than incarcerated – completely immobilized.

**That is, until grace sets him free.**

Like the story in **Acts 16** when Paul/Silas are miraculously released from their chains – when we receive Christ as Savior, God sends a faith-quake that shatters our sin-shackles, and once-and-for-all, opens the prison doors of sin setting us free into a relationship w/ Him. This is true FREEDOM!

**freedom** – to be unfettered or emancipated. Released.

In grace, God has released us from the power, pain, penalty, and punishment of sin **INTO** a forgiven, relationship w/ Him. B/c of His grace, sin no longer has power over us; nor do we have to give into or obey its invitations, b/c sin has been defeated – and we are now more than **conquerors** in Christ.

*There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, b/c thru Christ, the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do b/c it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so, he condemned sin in the flesh that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fully met in us, who do not live*

*according to the flesh but according to the Spirit... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors thru Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ. Rm. 8:1-4, 37-39*

Thru grace – nothing! Absolutely NOTHING! Can separate us from the love of God found in/thru Jesus.

II Grace **EMBODIES** the Love of God

**That is** – God’s grace received enables us to love and care for other people the way God cares for us.

*You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire Law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

In these verses, God calls us to live **responsibly** and **humbly** thru His grace.

A Living **RESPONSIBLY**

**This is important.** While *our calling is to be free*, w/ this new-found freedom comes great **responsibility**. God wants us to live in liberty and not in *legalism* or *liberalism*. So, Paul was quick to clarify that our freedom is **NOT** a rule to follow or a license to **SIN** but an invitation to **SERVE**. (Notice 2 words)

**opportunity** (*aphorme*) military term referring to having a base of operations to launch an attack.

**flesh** (*sarx*) refers to our fallen flesh that only craves the desires/ambitions of this world.

Paul is warning us that although we’ve been set free thru salvation, until Christ’s return, we still have to deal w/ our fallen flesh – which serves as a base of operations w/in us that’s prone to being tricked into thinking that since we’re forgiven, we can now live in the extreme of either legalism/liberalism. That is, our flesh can seek to be satisfied by keeping all the rules or by disregarding them – w/out any concern for the consequences. **Yet God has a better way.**

Swindoll explains: **Legalism** | **Liberty** | **License**. **Legalism** is the extreme of keeping the rules while **license** is the abandoning of all the rules. To live responsibly is to never abuse our **liberty** in either direction – but to live free on the narrow road under the leading of the H.S.

I think this is the point of Romans 6 – *What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who’ve died to sin; how can we live in it any longer...? In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ. Thus, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you obey its evil desires. Don’t offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who’ve been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. For sin shall no longer be your master, b/c you are not under the law, but under grace.* Romans 6:1, 11-14

**LWF** – our freedom in Christ is an opportunity to live free from sin in intimacy w/ God. To do this, we must live humbly in the grace God humbly gave to us.

## B Living HUMBLY

**This is a simple idea** – *we must never think more highly or lowly, but rightly of ourselves.* Not one person here is *all that*, but neither are we pond scum. Rather, we have been fearfully/wonderfully made by God, just like everyone else – so, we are no more, and no less, precious to God than anyone else.

As recipients of God's grace, we should be so humbled by His love for us that it creates a right perspective of ourselves and others, allowing us to put others before ourselves – and in so doing, we point them to Jesus.

## III Grace EMPOWERS to Walk in the Spirit

*So, I say, walk in the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh.*

To **walk in the Spirit** is to abide in Christ. It's to live in God's authority, plugged into His Word, and under the influence of the H.S. – w/ eyes fixed on Jesus.

But this isn't *passive* surrender, but *active* dependence. Moment-by-moment we are trusting in/leaning on God for His direction, support, and power.

**This is the wonderful blessing of grace** – we now have the ability to walk in stride/intimacy w/ God thru the H.S. No longer do we have to be victimized by sin/flesh, but now, b/c we've been indwelt/filled by the H.S., we're empowered for victory.

**There's also wonderful clarity.** The flesh and the H.S. are juxtaposed in their desires/ambitions. The flesh, even good flesh, is only concerned for itself; whereas, the H.S. is concerned only for the will/heart of God.

Thus, our calling is to walk each day in the footsteps of Jesus' example, in God's Word, and in the leading of the H.S. – and the evidence of such a life is the fruit of the Spirit, which are the qualities of God.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is God's love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Galatians 5:22-23*

**Don't Miss** – such fruit cannot be manufactured by human effort, nor are we called to attempt to produce it – we're called to abide. These qualities can only be present as a result on the H.S. in us living thru us – otherwise, they'd be little more than waxed fruit.

Yet this is where so many believers miss the truth. Instead of realizing the Christian life is living in the Spirit who produces God's grace in us, we buy into the lies of our flesh, the influences of the world, and the tempting's of the demonic – thinking we have to generate these qualities thru our own abilities – but we cannot. True spiritual fruit only comes from Jesus in us being allowed thru surrender to live thru us.

**Let me close w/ an object lesson** (2 apples). Who here would like an apple? Which one would you like? Now there's a big difference b/w these apples – as one is fake, while the other is real! The only way to determine the real one from the fake one is to take a bite to taste/see which one came from a tree and which one came from Hobby Lobby.

The same is true for me/you. We can continue to try to live the Christian life in our good flesh – producing only fake fruit, or we can surrender to God and begin living the Christian life walk in/under the H.S.

## **TAKEAWAYS**

Grace is neither a rule to obey nor a license to indulge – but a blessing of liberty to be cherished and nurtured.

The Christian life is not something I can do in my ability or ingenuity, but only by living surrendered and under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The evidence that I am living in alignment and under the influence of the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Spend time this week in your quiet time or with another person discussing these GROW questions.

**G** – What is grace and why is it so essential to walking with God? How is grace obtained and lived?

**R** – Read **Romans 8:1-39**. In light of God's grace, what does it mean that we are more than conquerors?

**O** – Read **Colossians 3:1-17**. How does a person walk in the Spirit instead of in the flesh?

**W** – Take times this week to reflect on the Lost and Found Chart and then discuss it with another friend or family member.