

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 23RD–24TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

SUBMISSION (GALATIANS 5:1–12)

“CHRIST SET US FREE...”

Verses 1 is the continuation of thought from Ch. 4:28–31. This statement summarizes Paul's arguments in Ch. 3 and 4.

- The freedom that is in Christ has given us liberation from having to submit ourselves to the law. Christ has come to complete and fulfill the law in its entirety.
- Paul says, “Stand firm and don't submit again.”

SUBMISSION

To surrender to the authority or will of another.

- We come under the subjection of a thing or person we are choosing to surrender to.
- Paul is trying to get the Galatians to see that if they surrender to the law, then they're just putting back on the chains and bondage that Christ freed them from.

CIRCUMCISION

This was a religious ritual and requirement for all male Jews as a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:9–14). This act was to show that they belonged to the chosen nation.

- Circumcision showed an outward expression of inward commitment to their spiritual reality.
- Just because they had this done to themselves didn't mean they were righteous or kept God's commands.
- Abraham is declared righteous by his faith. (Romans 4:12 and Galatians 3:9). Circumcision isn't a requirement for believers (1 Corinthians 7:18–19). We are called to have our hearts circumcised (Colossians 2:11–12)

“JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW...”

They were trying to prove their worthiness of righteousness by continuing to uphold the practices of the law, aka legalism (Jesus+).

- Legalism gets us wrapped up in thinking we didn't do enough or we have to earn God's favor.
- It puts the attention on what we can do rather than what Christ has done.

“A LITTLE LEAVEN...”

Leaven is the agent that causes bread to rise. Legalism causes things to rise in us (insecurity, self-righteousness, division).

- Legalism will cause hindrance in a Believer's spiritual growth and maturity. It has the power to even divide a church. Legalism makes a Believer operate out of obligation rather than dedication.

“OBLIGATED”

Paul knew, as a Pharisaic Jew, that you can't just do one law and stop. Once you do one, then you have to do all the others. The law is designed to be done completely.

- The law is a matter of obligation. If you do this then you have to do this. If you don't do this, this will happen. This is not what Christ or Paul teaches.

“WHY AM I STILL BEING PERSECUTED?”

If Paul was teaching people to still uphold the law, wouldn't those who hated him not have a problem with his teachings?

- The reason they hated him was because he was teaching against their legalism and how they rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

“YOU WERE RUNNING WELL...”

The Galatians were doing well before all of this legalism crept into their church. Paul reminds them how legalism isn't what Christ calls us to.

- Legalism makes Christ no benefit to anyone. It places a divide between us and Christ, which separates us from the gift of grace Christ gives us.

FAITH WORKING THROUGH LOVE

Our faith in Jesus is the only thing that matters. Jesus didn't allow the sin that was in our lives to keep Him from loving us. Why should our indifferences stop us from loving each other?

- We should demonstrate our faith by loving others the same way Christ has loved us as we await the coming righteousness.

“PAY THE PENALTY”

Paul desires that whoever is misleading the Galatians would mutilate themselves.

- This refers to the cult of Cybele, a pagan goddess, in Asia Minor, where the male worshippers would castrate themselves and the priests would be eunuchs.
- Paul hopes for God's judgment on them.

SPIRIT VS FLESH (GALATIANS 5:13–18)

“CALLED TO BE FREE...”

Paul reminds the Galatians a second time in this chapter of how Christ has called us to be free. This freedom is only a result of the work of Christ and what He has done on the cross.

- We should no longer see ourselves as slaves or in bondage but as free people. That is a gift, but every good gift must be stewarded.

“OPPORTUNITY FOR THE FLESH...”

This places a huge responsibility on the Believer. Don't abuse the gift of grace and your freedom just to go right back to slavery to your sin (Romans 6:1–2).

- Our freedom is an opportunity for us to serve one another through love and continue to carry out the Great Commission.

“THE WHOLE LAW IS FULFILLED...”

The legalism got so bad that they started to be divisive towards each other and started to treat each other poorly. Paul takes a jab at them and reminds them if they want to fulfill the law, they must love their neighbor as they love themselves (Leviticus 19:18).

- Love is a choice. It is a choice of choosing someone other than yourself.

WALK BY THE SPIRIT

Paul commands the Galatians to walk by the Spirit. This command urges them to depend on the Holy Spirit. We are to be led by the Spirit, listen to His word, and follow His guidance.

- This is not a deeper or higher life but setting up normal behavior and lifestyles for the Christian life.
- When we are walking by the Spirit, we are walking in communion with God. His voice is more distinct and clear. His presence feels closer. We are more of the person God intended for us to be.
- The power of the Spirit gives us the victory over our addictions, sins, and desires we so easily fall for.

THE FLESH

Our flesh isn't our skin and bones but our natural sinful nature. The flesh opposes the Spirit. A Believer can't walk in the flesh and please God. To walk in the flesh means we are choosing to make a habit out of sinning and not seeing anything wrong with it.

- We have a choice to surrender to the Spirit or the flesh, but can't do both.

WORKS VS FRUIT (GALATIANS 5:19–26)

WORKS OF THE FLESH

Paul lists off some examples of the works of the flesh. This list isn't complete, but it can be grouped into three categories: sex, religion, and human relationships.

- These are only made obvious when you're walking in the Spirit. To our world, most of these sins are “normal.”

SEXUAL SINS

- Sexual immorality: sex before marriage, adultery, and homosexuality.
- Moral impurity: thoughts, words, or actions
- Promiscuity: desensitized through sexual exploits; loss of modesty.
- These sins go against the covenant of marriage or the design and function wherein God intended for sex to be explored.

RELIGIOUS SINS

- Idolatry: worshipping anything or anyone that is not God (money, false gods, politicians, etc.)
- Sorcery: magic/witchcraft. Pharmakia is the Greek word we get pharmacy from. Many occultic practices use drugs and make those who participate think that they're communicating with gods/deities.

RELATIONAL SINS

- Hatred and strife: most likely result in conflict.
- Jealousy and outbursts of anger: deal with attitude or motive and then action.
- Selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, and envy: these often fester and rise after a conflict.
- Drunkenness and carousing: rowdy

“THOSE WHO PRACTICE...”

This statement is the key for this section. Practice means to do something regularly. There's a difference between falling to temptation vs completely giving over to temptation.

- Every Believer may not struggle with all the things listed, but we all have something that pulls us away from God.
- There's some temptation or sin that we can naturally/easily fall right back into. When falling to sin it always starts as a drift. We never drift toward but always away from God.
- Doing something once doesn't make it a practice. But those who have a practice of sin won't inherit the Kingdom of God.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

These nine characteristics make up the evidence of the Holy Spirit in a Believer's life. God desires for a Believer to display His fruit. It makes up the essence of Jesus.

- The fruit of the Spirit is in harmony with the law but not produced by the law. The fruit of the Spirit is produced by the Spirit working through the Believer's faith in Christ.

THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST JESUS

If we say we are a Believer in Jesus, that doesn't mean we will no longer struggle with sin or legalism.

There's a battle we must fight daily between the Spirit and the flesh.

- Through our faith, we leave behind the old ways of living and embrace our participation in Christ's death and resurrection and our new life.

“LET US ALSO KEEP IN STEP...”

The Galatian's role now is to put aside their legalistic views and live in harmony. But only if they are walking with the Spirit.

- It is simply not enough for us to claim to have a new life in Christ. We have to continually follow the Spirit's guidance in the way we live publicly and privately. We can't talk about it but must be about it.

THE FLESH

- The flesh is full of temptation (sin or legalism).
- Temptation in its purest form is a lie disguised as a promise of fulfillment to be satisfied.
- The “freedom” our flesh promises us is just a license for us to be enslaved to sin or habitual work we must maintain.

THE SPIRIT

- If we want true freedom, then we have to allow the Spirit to crucify our flesh.
- He's the guiding hand that allows us to walk closely with God and away from our flesh.
- He gives us more opportunities to bear the fruit of the Spirit.

FREEDOM

- God has given all of us freedom, whether it's free will or freedom in Christ.
- Insight is easy, but change is hard. If Sundays are the insight, then the rest of the week is the invite to change.
- How do we want to use our freedom?