

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 24TH, 2024 // GALATIANS

FREEDOM (GALATIANS 5:1-6)

“FOR FREEDOM, CHRIST SET US FREE”

Paul begins this chapter with a definitive statement to continue the ongoing conversation about freedom.

- This was about experiencing freedom and justification through Jesus instead of the law. Just as the Israelites did after exiting slavery in Egypt, **we must not yearn for the slavery from which we have been freed!**

“A YOKE OF SLAVERY”

Our burden of flawless adherence to the law was lifted by the grace of God through the gift of Jesus. Peter says in Acts 15:10, “...why are you testing God by putting a yoke on the disciples’ necks that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear?”

- The Judaizers had presented a yoke of slavery to the law that was impossible to carry.

OBLIGATION TO THE LAW PROVOKES ALIENATION

These Judaizers were encouraging legalism by standardizing circumcision for all Gentiles. If the Galatians were to be circumcised, they would be **“obligated to do the entire law.”**

- **When we cling to the law and our righteousness, Christ’s sacrifice is worthless.** “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10).

FALLING FROM GRACE

When we are self-righteous and dependent on our works for salvation, we begin to fall from grace.

- Some may think of falling from grace as committing immoral conduct, but we are not saved by conduct. If we are saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), **we must remember that we may fall from grace without ever committing immoral conduct!**
- This does not mean that an act of sin in a Christian’s life extinguishes their salvation, but more of an attachment to legalism. Instead of being worried about what to do, or not to do, **we need to focus singularly on abiding in Him** (John 15:4).
- Faith working through love is the key! Love makes faith simple, and faith encourages love. **To fall from grace is to fall from love.**

LEGALISM

Paul’s intention when mentioning circumcision was never even about physical circumcision. **This was all about theological circumcision.** Faith and love are both absent in the legalist.

- As believers, we must never get wrapped up in personal convictions such that we begin to push them on one another. **Biblical convictions are absolute, but personal convictions are individual.**

CONSEQUENCES (GALATIANS 5:7-15)

ENDURANCE IS NECESSARY

The Galatian’s spiritual growth was something with which Paul was clearly concerned. He initially acknowledged some things were going well, but immediately turned to the cause of their spiritual hindrances.

- **There will always be an opportunity for obstructions to our faith. In response, we must distinguish truth from delusion.**

BE CAREFUL IN THE ALLOWANCE OF LEADERSHIP

“Who prevented you from being persuaded regarding the truth?” **As believers, we must be mindful of whom we authorize to have the privilege of leadership in our lives.**

- “...whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away—it would be better for him if a heavy millstone were hung around his neck and he were drowned...” (Matthew 18:6).

“A LITTLE LEAVEN...”

Paul used a simple analogy involving the small amount of yeast to allow a batch of dough to rise. In Jewish culture, leaven usually stood for evil influence (Matthew 16:11-12, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

- The Galatians needed to be mindful of the legalism that was corrupting their spiritual maturity. This contamination can spread from Believer, to the church, to the community.

“IF I STILL PREACH CIRCUMCISION...”

Earlier in Paul’s life, as a Pharisee, he preached circumcision. In this letter to Galatia, and in his defense of not holding onto legalism per the ways of circumcision, he asks the question: “Why am I still persecuted?”

- **Legalism, and a fallen world, will always be offended by the cross.** The whole point of Jesus is we can’t, but He can.

AUTHENTIC LIBERATION

Not only is freedom a misunderstood term in the world, but if we’re honest, at some point in our faith we have viewed our relationship with God as a list of dos and don’ts that limited our “freedoms.”

- **Jesus came to liberate us from our sin, and if we are not careful, we can consequently discount that sacrifice.**

HOW ARE WE USING OUR FREEDOM?

Instead of using our freedoms for selfish reasons, we are commissioned to “love [our] neighbor as [ourselves]” (Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39).

- “For when you were **slaves of sin**, you were **free with regard to righteousness**. So what fruit was produced then...? But now, since you have been **set free from sin** and have become **enslaved to God**, you have your fruit...” (Romans 6:21-22).

SELFISHNESS CONSUMES ITSELF

Getting lost in pride, legalism, and selfishness, will always destroy and divide. **As a community, we must take care of one another; therefore, we must not let pride overtake us, gossip or slander one another, or do anything for selfish gain!**

- How do we manage these things and love God and people in the intended manner? **“Remain in me, and I in you”** (John 15:4).

PRODUCE PRODUCE (GALATIANS 5:16-26)

FLESH VS. SPIRIT

God and sin are eternally opposed. Therefore, the battle between our flesh and the Holy Spirit will not end until we receive our perfected bodies in eternity.

- Paul unpacks this in detail in Romans 7 & 8 and shares further truth on this matter. If we are to walk in the Spirit, we must focus our minds on the things of the Spirit, and we will also receive life in accordance with the Spirit.

BEING LED BY THE SPIRIT

In order to live by the Spirit, **we must be willing to be led by the Spirit. We cannot be led by someone to whom we are not willing to submit.**

- “If [we] are led by the Spirit, [we] are not under the law.” **This does not mean we are above the law, but instead, allowing the Spirit who remains in us to lead us, resulting in adherence to the law through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.**

WORKS OF THE FLESH

As we see in vs. 19-21, Paul included sexual sin, religious sin, societal sin, and social sins. All the works of the flesh listed are rooted in selfishness, and therefore lack love and respect for ourselves and others.

- When our flesh is in control of our desires and actions, these relational problems produce fruit of sin, and we begin to look more like the world.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Unlike the works of the flesh and the fruit of sin, the fruit of the Spirit promotes health and sustainability in the life of the Christian.

- We cannot display any of the fruit in fullness if we are not relying on the Holy Spirit. However, **if dependent on the Spirit, we may display this fruit even when it seems inappropriate regarding our situation.**
- In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul shares the gifts (plural) of the Spirit, but here, notice that fruit is all encompassing in its singular usage.
- The fruit of the Spirit is not intended such that one Believer may display one and a different Believer another, but **they are all to be embodied simultaneously by all Christ followers.**

WE MUST CRUCIFY OUR FLESH

Our passions and desires will be unable to direct us if we have crucified our flesh and submitted to the Holy Spirit’s leadership. “I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

- If we are born again, we are indeed crucifying our old self and taking on the identity of Jesus. **We are not reconfigured, but instead, new!**

“...KEEP IN STEP WITH THE SPIRIT.”

Through sanctification, we are made to look more and more like Jesus. Even so, we must never let pride take over and boast in self-righteousness regarding a progression in our faith.

- To be conceited, or to envy, as it relates to obeying the law and remaining in the Spirit, will cause division among the Church and is usually rooted in legalism.

THE LAW AND THE CROSS

- **When we cling to the law and our righteousness, Christ’s sacrifice is worthless.**
- The yoke of the law is a heavy debt (613 commandments), and His yoke is easy (Matthew 11:30).
- **Rely not on our own strength; instead, remain in Him.**

LEGALISM

- We cannot live under the law partially if we claim to adhere to the law entirely.
- **Are we so legalistic in our faith that it challenges certainty in our salvation?**
- **The Holy Spirit will personally convict us. Have we pushed personal convictions on others as absolute truths for their lives?**
- **Have we judged them accordingly?**

WALK BY THE SPIRIT AND NOT BY THE FLESH

- How have we submitted to authority in our lives?
- **In order to be led by the Spirit, we must be willing to submit to the Spirit.**
- **Are we utilizing our freedom for selfish reasons, or are we loving one another through the power of the Spirit?**
- **Are we displaying the fruit of the Spirit?**
- Matthew 7:17-20