



# The Law and Freedom

Galatians 5:1-15

Week of March 20, 2022

Before Connect Group

- Galatians 5:1-15
- Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Galatians 5:1-15, ESV

# Sermon Notes

*Christ frees us from needing to earn our salvation through the law, frees us to be fully follow Him, and frees us to love one another deeply.*

Paul, talking to the church in Galatia is addressing an issue within the church. Specifically, that they have abandoned the true Gospel by returning to the old understanding that followers of Christ must fully adhere to the old requirements of the law in order to be saved. Apparently someone had come into their midst and taught that being Christian, or followers of The Way, had not been enough but that they needed to uphold all of the traditions of the Old Covenant submitting fully to the saving power of the law. Paul, in no uncertain terms calls this contrary to the Gospel and exhorts the people of God to stand firm in the Gospel and live according to the Spirit within them that draws them deeper in relationship with Jesus Christ and expresses it as love for one another.

In our modern setting, we seem to run into the same problem that the church in Galatia did. Gospel drift is a real concern in churches that pull in directions. People come and preach Gospels that run contrary to the actual Gospel of Jesus Christ. We try and make the Gospel more appealing, more fun, and more relevant. We trade the promise of eternal life for the temporary enjoyment of programmatic, event based church that only serves to stroke our own ego. Or, even worse, they add requirements to the Gospel that a person must meet in order to be legitimate members of the church. The warning Paul gives to the church in Galatia is to ground themselves fully in the Gospel so that they know a false Gospel whenever they hear it and casting it aside. We are not saved by the additional requirements we add or the **Christ frees us from needing to earn our salvation through the law, frees us to be fully follow Him, and frees us to love one another deeply.**

## We Are Not Saved By The Law But By Faith

- *Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*
- In this passage, Paul begins by talking about freedom, that we are free because of the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.
- Justification - the act of being declared righteous before God.
  - This is not a process that one gradually grows into or we are gradually more and more justified. There are not degrees of holy and there are not degrees of perfection.
  - Justification is a light switch that is either on or off, not those fancy dimmer switches.
  - *James 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*
  - It does not matter if you mostly kept the law, if you broke any part of the law then you are by definition a law breaker, unjustified, unrighteous and unholy.
  - Why harp on this so much? Because some of us walk around a bit too high that we did something to earn the salvation we have received.
  - Luke 18:9-14 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will

be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

- Following the law for salvation is slavery
  - It is of no benefit.
  - If you break one part of the law you are a law breaker, definitionally.
  - If you are 99% holy (and you most definitely are not) and 1% sinful then you are definitionally unholy. Any slight deviation from perfection is the definition of imperfection. Not that God is talking about some slight deviation but a massive rebellion against a Holy and Sovereign King.
- The church in Galatia sought to create additional levels of compliance, not obedience but compliance, that people must look like them, talk like them, act like them and conform to everything they did before they can consider themselves members of the church.
- Our modern church has not grown any since the church in Galatia either. We consistently put up additional hoops for people to jump through as if there were more requirements to salvation other than faith in Jesus Christ
  - We expect perfection out of people before they can be Christian.
  - Christians have become this people who are so antithetical to grace.
  - We judge people as they walk in the door. We measure their holiness and their sanctification as a measure whether they even belong in the church at all. We scoff at people who come to church and look different, think different, and frankly sin different.
  - We want grace for ourselves but will turn our noses down at those who do not conform to what we think church should be and who we deem to be an appropriate person that comes to church.
- Requiring that people have full obedience to the law in order to come to Christ is the opposite of the Gospel. Yet none of us, absolutely none of us, can find our salvation through obedience to the law.
- If a church is growing, continuing to reach people as one body with many members, being good stewards of the time, talents, and treasures that God has given, staying on mission to proclaim the Gospel in all the world and to walk through the doors that God has opened, while opening doors for others to join this family in Christ, then, we have to understand that our church is going to get really messy.

People come to Christ at their lowest, at the height of their rebellion and they cry out for a Savior. Our response in this moment should not be to judge them in their sin or make them conform to our traditions but to hug the unclean knowing that they came to Jesus because deep down their soul knew they needed a Savior. From that recognition of a need of a Savior, God purifies the unclean.

## **Obedience Is The Sign of Someone Free and In Christ**

- *Galatians 5:5-6 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*
- Sin had created a barrier between us and God. The unrighteous, the unjustified, could not approach the infinite holiness and perfection of God.
  - In high school, I had been on a rowing team the entire time. Practices were long and grueling and often resulted in being caked in dirt, sweat, and various smells that accompanied exercise. After I came home, exhausted and wanted to sit down, my parents made it entirely clear that I was not to sit on the couch, the carpet, or come near them until my state of grossness had been dealt with.
  - In essence, I had been too dirty to even approach some places in the house until the

issue of my filth had been cared for.

- Yet, while I could go take a shower and change, sin is different. The stain of sin cannot be cleaned off by ourselves and we find ourselves unable to approach God under any kind of circumstance.
- God, being the source and purity of life, cannot allow impurity to exist in its presence and the stain of sin stains the soul to the depth of our identity and our person. Sin is not something we do but it is grafted in to our DNA and identifies us as sinners. Even if we had wanted to clean ourselves up, it is a dirty sponge trying to clean a dirty dish, it will simply not be clean. Those who sin stand in rebellion against a just and perfect God who will deal harshly with sin.
- *Isaiah 59:1-4 Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies; your tongue mutters wickedness. No one enters suit justly; no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.*
- The issue here is not in the hands of God being unable but in our own ability to present ourselves as appropriate before God. Our sinfulness disqualifies us from standing in the presence of God or even cleaning ourselves up to do so.
- The core of the Gospel is that for the first time in history, in all creation, a perfect thing cleansed the imperfect rather than becoming tainted by it.
- *Isaiah 6:6-7 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for."*
- The Angel approached Isaiah with a coal from the Lord and rather than the sin of Isaiah making the coal unclean and unfit for service, as is normally the case in temple worship, the fire of the Lord purified Isaiah and made Him worthy.
- We are similarly worthy, not because of our ability to follow the law, but because of the work of Jesus Christ. He and He alone paid the penalty of our sin, dying on the cross in our place and cleansing us from sin's effects.
- Now, in our freedom, we are free to approach God. We have been declared righteous in the eyes of God and now, with our identity no longer being in sin but fully in Christ, we can stand before God.
- The sign of love of God is obedience to follow Him, knowing that He is the way, the truth, and the life. He is the source of all things good and the source of life for all who come to Him.
- Obedience is not squandered on living according to the flesh and the desires of our rebellion because our lives have been changed in our spiritual DNA.
- *Hebrews 4:14-16 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*
- God calls us to come into the Holy of Holies, standing before Him where once only the pure could do so, now, it is open to all who would follow Him. And not just that, but to approach God with confidence.
- We still struggle with sin as our sanctification catches up to our justification. We grow in our expression of holiness because we have already been declared to be righteous in the eyes of God.
- That sin you have been holding on to that you think makes you so unclean that God

could never love you, that is only lies from the enemy that wants to steal, kill, and destroy any hope you have by wallowing in self-pity and keeping you from engaging God who draws you closer to Himself.

- You can be free because you already are. Now, pursue God knowing that the barriers between us and Him have been shattered by the nail pierced hands that bled for our salvation.

The sin of the Pharisee and Judiazer was to tell people they were unworthy to approach God until they cleaned themselves up. The sin of the Gentiles was to believe it.

## **Our Freedom Is Used to Love One Another**

- Galatians 5:14
- The whole of the law is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself. As Paul brings this up, it is a clear reference to the great commandment. The wording is incredibly similar between the two.
- *Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*
- The foundation of our love for other is based in our love for God first. Out of this love is the expression of love for each other. The expression of love for one another presupposed that our identity has been formed in the grace and love towards God first. It builds on the idea that we have been given such a profound amount of grace that snatched us out of the hands of death
- Who can claim that they earned the love of God? Who can claim that their behavior merited God's love? Yet, we receive it all the same.
- Therefore, our response to the love of God should be a tremendous outpouring of love for one another as we uphold and uplift one another in a God's pursuit of His holiness.
- We cannot claim that we grasp the unearned love of God while simultaneously refusing to extend that love and grace to one another. This had been the flaws of the Judiazers and the Pharisees that they required a higher level of righteousness than they required of themselves.
- Our motivator should be to love people into deeper relationship with God.
- Now I want to be clear because some of you heard something I didn't say. I am not talking about reducing every part of obedience to some subjective view of what they think is loving for them. God gets to define love and gets to dictate the conditions of holiness.
- Love cannot be accomplished while pushing someone away from the direction that God is going.
- Calling someone out in their sin is an absolutely loving thing to do if you do so with the intention of walking them through as brothers and sisters in Christ.
- Again, let me clarify, because, again, some of you heard something I didn't say. This does not give you permission to be a jerk to the body of Christ and hide behind some false banner of "I'm doing this in love"
- The Gospel finds more reasons to include people and forgive sins than it does to jump to removing them from fellowship. There is absolutely a time to disassociate from false teachers and unrepentant sinners, but this should be final action taken in sadness and mourning rather than our first step.
- We love one another because Christ first loved us. We forgive because Christ first forgave

us. We walk with one another through the storms and the mess of our lives because Christ took on flesh and did so for us as we were against Him.

- We need one another as a body of believers. As people come in and the church gets messy we walk with one another through the mess and encourage one another to grow so that, empowered by the Spirit within us, we go out and proclaim the Gospel in the world.

In a moment, I'm going to ask people to do something a little bit different from what we normally do. Now is your turn to respond. For some of you, you have been trapped in this judgmental form of Christianity that needs people to jump through hoops before being in relationship. The altar is open up here to come up during this last song and repent. We can take this first step to heal by acknowledging where we have sought to add to the Gospel and keep others away. For others, we have been too scared to approach God in our sin, thinking we are unclean. Run to the altar, run to God. This is your moment to bring whatever you think disqualifies you and place all things in the hand of God. If either of those are you, this moment is for you. I don't care if you are too old or too young, you aren't too anything to come to Jesus. We will pray with you and pray for you. This, is our opportunity to be free in the Lord, free to follow Him, and free to love one another.

# Connect Group Discussion Questions

- What does it mean that Paul emphasized that he is speaking on the law tell us about the point he is trying to make? What is Paul's background?
- What effect does sin have on our standing with God? Why is this the effect?
- What are some of the standards we try and add to people being a part of family of believers? Why do we attempt to add these additional standards?
- How does the cross of Jesus Christ free us to be obedient to follow Jesus Christ? What role does obedience play in our relationship with Jesus Christ?
- What are the differences between justification and sanctification?
- How does our love for one another reflect the love that God gives to us?

## Challenge For The Week

The Gospel is bigger than us all. It moves beyond our own preferences and ideas to give us fully to obedience to Jesus Christ

- This week, take some time to consider whether you relate more to the person who wants to ensure that people are "good enough to be in church" or if you are the person struggling with bringing your sin to God.
- The Gospel will make church messy as the lost people come to begin their relationship with Jesus Christ. Who had God placed in your life that you can proclaim the love of God to so that they might know Jesus Christ more?

