

Galatians 5

V.1

-We hear this verse a lot and sing it in our songs, but what did Christ set us free from?

-was it just a physical freedom so that no one could tell us what to do anymore?

Rom 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

-wow...how much more free could a person be?

-since the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, mankind has been under the yoke of sin and death

-and without Christ in our lives, we live under the same burden

-even if we try to live a good life, we know we are still sinning

-so we have nowhere to unburden ourselves so we carry this sin with us and over time it just becomes too much to bear

-so people look to other solutions for an escape

-drugs, alcohol, work, women, pleasures of the flesh

-anything to distract them from the burden of sin they carry

-so for all of you who are still trying to carry it on your own, know this:

-Jesus came to set the captives free

Mat 11:28 "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and **YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.**

Mat 11:30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

V.2-3

-Hi is not saying that if you are physically circumcised that you can't accept Christ

-he is talking about putting your faith in the Law

-as a symbol of identifying with the Law, people would be circumcised

-kind of like being baptized identifies you with Christ

-so if you are trying to be saved by the Law, you have no need for Christ

-but if you are trying to live by the Law, you are then obligated to keep the whole Law

Jas 2:10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all.

-if you are thinking that keeping the law is something that interests you, you should read over the list of 613 laws you would be required to keep

-these are laws that the Jews have come up with which they have taken from different places in the bible

-it won't take you long to figure out that you can't do it

V.4

-here is the most compelling reason yet to abandon the Law

-Paul says that if you are trying to be justified by the Law, you are actually severed from Christ!

-that is something that will land you in hell as sure as the most ungodly lifestyle

-trying to live by the law says "I can do it on my own"

-faith in Christ says "there's no way I can make it on my own. I need Jesus to save me"

V.5-6

-circumcision, which is a sign of keeping the law, means nothing to Christ

-if a little thing like circumcision could make you righteous, then Jesus went through a lot of unnecessary pain and suffering on the cross.

-remember before He was crucified, Jesus prayed:

Mat 26:39 And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

-but that's what the Law teaches; that you can do enough good works and bypass what Jesus did on the cross

- you want to know what matters in the Christian life?

-Its LOVE

-that's what it is all about

1Jn 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

-since we know that God is love, it is only natural that we love others since He lives inside of us

- **1Jn 4:20** If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

1Jn 3:11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

1Jn 3:23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

Joh 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This is why I love reading the books written by John

-he understood this more than anyone else that I know of in the bible

-I think the reason his writings speak to me so much is because that is the one area that I struggle with

V.7-9

-after you get saved, you can bet that there will be those who will try to hinder you

-the source of always the same (the devil) but it will come in many different forms

-it could be the people you work with

-it may be a relationship you are in that is not good for you

-it could even be people in the church who are leading you away from the truth of the bible

-he says that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough

-Jesus referred to this in His parables about the kingdom of heaven

Mat 13:33 He spoke another parable to them, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened."

-this isn't a positive reference

-what this means is that nonbelievers infiltrate the church and can infect the entire body

-just because someone is in church or even preaching on stage, don't assume that their motives are pure and noble

-Either way, there will always be those who will try to lead you away from the truth

-that's why it's so critical that you know the truth yourself

Joh 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Eph 6:14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH

-and the truth can only come from the bible

-don't rely on others to teach you what it says

V.10

- this is why it is so extremely important to be disciple once you get saved
 - you need to be taught not only the elementary things of God, but the deeper truths as well
 - if you don't, then you will not be prepared to defend your faith when people come with verses out of your bible telling you that it means something different that you think it does
 - just because people don't believe the truth about Christ and the bible, doesn't mean they don't know the bible
 - often times, people from a cult or those who are set on disproving the bible know scripture references better than most Christians
 - Peter says:
 - 1Pe 3:15** but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;
- there is a judgment coming for each person who deliberately leads someone away from Christ
 - Although Jesus is referring to children here, I believe this applies since we are all God's children:
 - Luk 17:1** He said to His disciples, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!"
 - Luk 17:2** "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble."

-if people genuinely understood the wrath of God and what awaited them, they would run to the cross as fast as they could

Heb 10:31 It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

V.11

- Paul isn't saying that he is teaching circumcision, but he is proving that he isn't
- The proof is that he is being persecuted
- if he wasn't teaching circumcision, then his message wouldn't be offensive
 - the cross of Christ, the true gospel, is a stumbling block for those who live under the law
 - with the true gospel comes freedom and equality
 - legalism gives the religious leaders a very strong hold over the people
 - through religion, they can control the way you think, the way you dress, what you do with your money, how you raise your kids, where you go to church, what you think of other people
- Gal 5:1** It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

V.12

- interesting verse here
 - at first I was a bit troubled by what Paul is saying here
 - would a believer like Paul actually wish this sort of pain on other people?
 - if you look at it a bit closer and see what the words actually mean in the original language, it seems to lose something in the translation
 - "those who are troubling you": the word "troubling" means driving out or removing
 - the word "mutilate" means to amputate (by irony)
 - So it's pretty clear that what he is saying is that "I wish that those who are trying to remove you would remove themselves
 - and this is done in an ironic way since they are talking about circumcision and removal of the foreskin

V.13

-some people have the idea that once they say the words that they give themselves to the Lord, nothing can change that

-so after they are saved they think they can live however they want to

-you hear people discussing the position of “once saved, always saved”

-this is the danger with that line of thinking

-Paul warns people not their new found freedom in Christ as an opportunity to fulfill the desires of the flesh

-so is it possible to fall go wind up in hell once you’ve been a believer?

-let’s look at a few verses:

-many people use this verse where Jesus says:

Joh 10:28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

-but look at the verse right before it:

Joh 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

-He is referring to those who follow Him and who hear His voice

-it’s true that no one can take us out of His hand, but we have the free will to get out on our own if we want to

Heb 6:4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

Heb 6:5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

Heb 6:6 and *then* have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame.

-this is pretty clear

-Paul is talking about believers who have fallen away from the faith

-people who do this are in a very dangerous position

-Jesus tells a parable about this topic:

Mat 24:45 "Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time?"

Mat 24:46 "Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Mat 24:47 "Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Mat 24:48 "But if that evil slave says in his heart, 'My master is not coming for a long time,'

Mat 24:49 and begins to beat his fellow slaves and eat and drink with drunkards;

Mat 24:50 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect *him* and at an hour which he does not know,

Mat 24:51 and will cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

-this servant is doing exactly what Paul is warning about

-using his freedom while his master is away as an opportunity for the flesh

-if you find yourself doing that, you really need to spend some time searching your heart and see just how committed you are to your master

V.14-15

-that sounds so simplistic but it’s true

-all of the commandments God has given us can be wrapped up in the statement “love your neighbor as yourself”

-who is your neighbor? Anyone around you

-what would happen if we loved everyone around us as we love ourselves?

-we wouldn’t lie to them

- we wouldn't steal from them
- we wouldn't talk bad about them
- we wouldn't be jealous over what they have
- you wouldn't hit on his wife
- and if the whole world did this, there would be no crime or warfare
- but this wouldn't work if only half or even ¾ the world agreed to do it
- that's why we will never see this happen until Jesus returns
- so it's obvious that what is lacking in this world is love
- the natural reaction we have is to talk about people and focus on their negatives
- if it was natural for us to act in love and focus on the positives, God wouldn't have to tell us to do it

V.16

- so what does it mean to "walk by the Spirit"?
 - look at how the early church obeyed the Spirit:
 - Act 13:4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit
 - Act 16:6 having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;
 - Act 1:2 by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.
 - so to walk by the Spirit means to obey what He is telling you to do
- Rom 8:13** for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

-Walking by the Spirit also means no longer trying live by the Law

Rom 7:6 But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

V.17-18

- if someone tells you that once you accept Christ, you won't have any more struggles....run from that person
 - if people think that being a Christian means you won't have to struggle with the desires of the flesh anymore, they are greatly mistaken
 - listen to what Paul says about his own struggles:
- Rom 7:14** For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.
- Rom 7:15** For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I *would* like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.
- Rom 7:16** But if I do the very thing I do not want *to do*, I agree with the Law, *confessing* that the Law is good.

Rom 7:19 For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want.

Rom 7:20 But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

Rom 7:21 I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.

Rom 7:22 For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,

Rom 7:23 but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

-isn't that a relief?

- if someone like Paul (who was the greatest evangelist in history, had a face to face encounter with Jesus, and wrote about half of the New Testament) struggles with the flesh, doesn't it stand to reason that we will too?

- the problem is that even after being born again, our bodies still have a sin nature

-and this sin nature will continue to be at odds with the regenerated mind until the day we die

-so what was Paul's solution to this problem?

Rom 7:24 Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Rom 7:25 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

-we have the promise that one day Jesus will set us free from this body

V.19-21

-this is a pretty strict list of things not to do

-if we are honest, I know that each one of us is guilty of at least a few of the things on this list

-have you ever been jealous or envious of someone

-have you ever been drunk or immoral?

-have you ever had an outburst of anger or a dispute with someone?

-it's tempting to look at a list like this and say "that's it...there's no hope for me"

-if you struggle with these things on a daily basis doesn't mean you won't inherit the kingdom of heaven

-look what he says:

".....that those who **practice such things** will not inherit the kingdom of God"

-people who play in the NFL or PGA don't just get there by accident

-they have such a passion for playing the game the best that they can so they practice as much as possible

-they practice it because they enjoy it and want to get better at it

-he isn't referring to those who are struggling with sin and are convicted about it

-if you enjoy your sinful lifestyle and practice it, then obviously you will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven

-and anyone who practices such a lifestyle won't be surprised when God won't allow them into heaven

V.22-23

-if you want to know how if you are walking more by the flesh or by the Spirit, take an honest look at your own life

-if you see a lot of the problems from the previous list in your life, you are still being controlled by the flesh

-if you see things like love towards others, joy, self control, kindness and patience, then you are being led by the Spirit

-you've probably heard this story:

"A Native American Elder once described his own inner struggles in this manner: 'Inside of me there are two dogs. One of the dogs is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time.' When asked which dog wins, he reflected for a moment and replied, 'The one I feed the most.'"

V.24-26

-if we claim to be born of the Spirit, we must also walk by the Spirit

-I can't think of anything that does much more damage to the image of the Church than seeing Christians living a life in direct contradiction to the Word of God