

“Freedom From and Freedom For”

Galatians 5:1-15

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Last week we discussed clues and the conflict of legalism...

Big idea was “we are children of promise not of performance”!

...We need to live by faith in the promises of God...

...not by guilt or compulsion in the performance of laws.

And just like Ishmael persecuted Isaac...

... the fleshly, legalists often persecute those trusting in Christ by faith.

Legalism: those who depend on moral law ...

...rather than on personal religious faith.

It was a pretty convicting set of clues that we all can be guilty of!

- They say the right thing, but they don't do it.
- They like attention from people, but they don't love people.
- They major on the minors, but they totally forget the majors.
- They care about the outward, but they give little attention to the inward.

...Ouch!

Title this morning is “Freedom From and Freedom For”

Last week we ended with the verse we will start with...

5 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

I showed you a... power cord that always gets tangled...

...when I am not using it.

I need to stay plugged into the power of the promises to keep from getting entangled in legalism.

But the first part of the verse is literally...

...“for freedom Christ has set you free”.

1.Freedom is a central part of the mission of Christ.

“Freedom is good for people. They are healthier, happier, more motivated, and more in control of their lives under conditions of freedom. People thrive when they are free.”

This is just what God desires for us.

So...Don't get back under that yoke of bondage.

A yoke was a large heavy wooden bar.

You were tied to it and walked along with another animal.

Jesus said, his yoke is easy and his burden is light.

Easy literally is usable, manageable, pleasant, or kind.

Light means not heavy, quick and agile.

Now Paul will expand on this idea of freedom from...

2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. **3** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. **4** You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Paul is reminding us...

...to add anything to Christ subtracts everything from Christ.

IF you seek to be right with God by the law, you have to keep it all.

You can't pick and choose what you follow.

If you are going to keep the law, you have to keep it all.

Circumcision? Then Passover and offerings and sacrifices...and oops!

You can't do that, so what are you going to do?

Most legalists like to pick and choose...

But, you can't tell the policeman that pulls you over for running a light,

...I know I ran the light, but I wasn't speeding.

"No amount of obedience can make up for one act of disobedience." Wiersbe

You don't get closer to Jesus focusing on keeping rules or laws.

You are actually falling farther away.

2. Freedom is linked with grace.

Fallen from grace doesn't mean fallen out of favor with God...

...It means departing from the unmerited favor of God.

...Any departure from grace is a fall...

With grace, unmerited favor, I am free to get close to God.

With works, merited favor, limits me to a distance.

5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

Now Paul is looking ahead to the hope of eternity when we will all stand before God.

He says we eagerly wait, not anxiously work.

The righteousness that we look forward to is by faith.

It is not circumcision that will save you...

...In fact it does nothing, it is an empty sign.

...Just like baptism is an empty sign without an inward reality...

...Unless I have believed in my heart and turned to Christ... ...baptism is nothing more than a quick dip.

On that final day, I don't have to worry if I worked hard enough.

- Taken a class, but not known if you would pass/get credit?
- Have you ever done a job, and hoped it is good enough when the customer will see it?
 - You know that anxiety?

...We don't need to have that.

We don't anxiously wait or work...

...we eagerly wait because our righteousness is settled in our faith.

So what does work?

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

3. Freedom allows faith to work through love.

What does this mean?

The outward expression of inward salvation is not law it is love.

When I put my trust in Christ who loved and died for me...

...my heart responds with love for Him and love for others.

Getting circumcised, reading your bible, sharing the gospel...

...These mean nothing without the love that comes from faith.

I am free from a list of laws so I can just let faith work through my newly acquired love.

7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? **8** This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you.

Paul uses one of his frequent athletic analogies...running.

NIV 7 “You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?”

4. Freedom can be hindered and hindrances can spread.

It is graciously given, but it can be personally restricted.

The picture here is of an athlete running and being cut in front of and tripped up, hindered from running well or totally led off course.

You were following the Lord as your pacer...

...Your faith was working out through love...

...but somehow you got off course.

This detour is not from the heavenly race director.

They may be thinking, what do you mean, were running?

We still are running. We are working harder than ever.

We are more disciplined. We are more productive.

What is the problem?

The problem is a little legalism goes a long way...

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

So Paul goes from racing to cooking...

Leaven is fermented dough and helps bread expand and rise.

It is a common analogy for sin in Scripture.

It was associated with Egypt and called the “bread of affliction”.

It was forbidden in nearly all sacrifices.

Rabbis spoke of leaven as the evil desires hiding in our heart.

The children of Israel celebrated Passover with unleavened bread.

They were traveling and no time to wait around for the bread to rise.

Had to get rid of leaven...

Jews were to derive no benefit from leaven during Passover...

...Can't feed it to their animals or derive benefit from its burning or at anytime after Passover if you had it during Passover.

One of the games that was played with kids before Passover was searching the house for any leaven.

If a particle of leaven falls into a boiling pot during Passover all the food is prohibited and the pot cannot be used during the festival.

(...But if you sold it or gave it away before Passover that was fine...)
...and could be bought back later. ;)

So what is Paul saying?

Legalism, works righteousness, approval from performance, salvation by keeping the law...this is like leaven.

Just a little bit of it spreads.

Motives become motivation,

motivation directs actions,

inward ideals become outward practices...

...and if it starts with legalism it will end with bad fruit.

Living by faith...

I am set free in Christ, no yoke of bondage to the law.

BUT I need something to help me.

The Holy Spirit's love and desires work out in my life.

I love God and the freedom I have in Him, and I want others to experience this life for themselves.

The legalist...

- If I obey these rules, I will become more spiritual. I follow a religious leader or system I look up to.
- I believe I have the power to obey and improve myself. I do what I am told and measure up to the standards set for me.
- I'm making progress. I don't do some of what I used to. Other people compliment me on my obedience and discipline.
- I am better than other people I know. How great to be so spiritual and mature.
- If only others were like me! God is fortunate to have me.
- I desire to share this with others so they can be like me. Our group has a good reputation and too bad others are not as good as we are.

The difference from outside is almost unnoticeable.

We need to stay on the Lord's course...

... and search our hearts to get rid of any leaven.

10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Paul is hopeful they will return to faith and grace and freedom.

His confidence is in them, but also in the Lord.
It is God who works in us, but we must also yield to that work.

11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. **12** I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

Word is that Paul himself is preaching circumcision, obviously not.
Paul says I wish those who trouble you would cut themselves off

Since circumcision is cutting off the foreskin on the male genitalia...
Paul says, I wish they would cut it all off!
Wow!

Maybe so they couldn't reproduce any more legalists??
But no matter what, those are fighting words, right?!

This is life and death.
Freedom and bondage.
This is either the eternal mission of Christ or the temporal work of men.
Let's close with this last idea about freedom...
...Freedom is a universal human motivator.

Human beings are always seeking freedom.
From William Wallace to Patrick Henry to Jocko Willink...
...men have lived and died fighting for freedom.
But why?

5. Freedom is best used when shared.

The true freedom fighters are not just fighting for freedom they are fighting for a better life for people and freedom is always a better life.

The "Trust fund kid" often becomes a lazy, selfish, good for nothing.

Forbes: The more money that is given to children from a young age, the less passion and motivation they have,
"Each individual needs a purpose, a reason to get up in the morning". "There needs to be a consequence of not getting out of bed," agrees Sandy Loder, who believes that "most problems start with the parents.

In the same sense...
...God is a good father...
...and He hasn't just given us this rich freedom for nothing.
...There is work to be done, there is purpose in life.

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

The call we have is to serve one another through love.
...I am not free just so I can indulge my flesh and live for myself.

I am free from performance and legalism so I can help others.

When I am all about performance and competition...
...I may be glad when others fail...
...I don't like to see someone else succeeding.
...I actually enjoy their struggles.

*Scarcity mentality refers to people seeing life as a finite pie, so that if one person takes a big piece, that leaves less for everyone else. This is a limiting mentality.
An abundance mindset refers to the paradigm that there is plenty out there for everybody.*

Scarcity mentality is the idea I worked for God's favor and you better too while you can...it might be gone!

Abundance mindset is knowing when God gives someone grace, it is not limiting the grace I get.

By grace my freedom is sure...
...I am free to forget about myself and help and serve others.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."
...The law is fulfilled in one idea...love your neighbor.

If you are worrying about keeping all the laws, don't.
...Just focus on one word...love.

Now that I am free from the law, I am free to love and serve others

I don't fulfill this "new law" **to get freedom or approval**...
...I fulfill it **because** I am free and approved.

15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! The alternative is biting and consuming one another.
That just leaves everyone injured!
This is the **literal dog eat dog world** of performance and hierarchy.

CLOSING...

We have freedom from legalism and for loving service.

When my work is done, I can help someone else.

Jesus has done the work, we are free to love and help others.