



Date: April 1, 2025

Galatians Section: Galatians 5:1-15

Key Text: Galatians 5:1

Main Idea: Christ Has Set Us Free

Genre: Letter

Author: Paul

Audience: The Church in Galatia (Specifically Gentiles)

Setting: Between 47 and 55 A.D.

Quote of the Week: "Better to go to heaven alone, then to hell with a herd." - Charles Spurgeon

Galatians Preview:

Highlight:

The Book of Galatians is a New Testament epistle written by the Apostle Paul to the churches in Galatia. This letter serves as a passionate defense of the gospel of grace, addressing the critical issue of justification by faith apart from works of the law. Paul confronts false teachings that insist on adherence to Jewish customs for salvation, affirming that believers are made right with God solely through faith in Jesus Christ. Themes of freedom in Christ, the role of the law, and the transformative power of the Spirit are central to the letter. Paul also emphasizes the unity of all believers, declaring that in Christ there is no distinction of race, social status, or gender. Galatians culminates in a call to live by the Spirit, producing the fruit of godly character, and to use this freedom to serve one another in love. The book is a foundational statement of the Christian faith, underscoring the sufficiency of Christ's work and the freedom it brings.

Focus of Galatians:

- **Topic/Themes for Galatians:**
 - Freedom in Christ Alone
 - The Gospel of Grace—No Additions Required
 - Justification by Faith, Not Works of the Law
 - The Spirit Empowers, Not the Flesh
 - **The Cross Defines Our Identity and Freedom**
 - Our response to this Truth:
 - Believe in the True Gospel - Walk by Faith - Stand Firm in Freedom - Live by the Spirit - Love and Serve One Another

Recap:

Galatians 5:1-15: Christ Has Freed Us

- We are going to be reminded in verse one that Christ has set us free. He has set us free from not just sin but also from the burden of trying to earn God's favor through the law.
- Verse 1 is a loaded verse with tons of theological implications within it. He is going to start by telling them, "For freedom, Christ has set us free".
 - We have talked about this before, but it is very important to remember that we have been set free for a purpose. We have been bought with a price for the glory of God, and if we tend to make our freedom all about us and how we get to go do whatever we want to now that we have been freed. We are totally missing the point.
 - Josiah will talk about it more later on, but we are going to see that there are some who will flip this passage on its head and try to make this passage say something completely different.
 - I want us to see this idea of being free, contrasted with what it looks like to not be free. Many believers struggle with guilt or performance-based spirituality. Paul reminds us that the gospel sets us free from trying to "be enough" on our own. This is the foundation of Christian identity: freedom, not fear.
 - We are going to see that Christ has set us free from our brokenness. We will never be enough to meet the lofty standards of a Holy God. Nor will we ever make ourselves clean enough to be seen as good in His eyes. This is the only thing that could come as a result of someone outside of ourselves.
- This is also just cool to see how we don't have to pretend that we are better than we are. We don't have to pretend that we are stronger than we are or that we have it all put together. OUR ONLY BOAST IS CHRIST!! It's in His life that we take our boast, it's in His death that we find our covering, and it's in His power that we find our strength.

Beautiful chart from Pastor Pat:

- I am freed from a debt I could not pay.
- I am freed from a burden I could not bear.
- I am freed from a gulf I could not cross.
- I am freed from a wrath I could not satisfy.
- I am freed from a relationship I could not fix.
- I am freed from a standing I could not alter.
- I am freed from a standard I could not meet.
- I am freed from inadequacy in service.
- I am freed from rejection in relationships.
- I am freed from pressure to perform.
- I am freed to love without condition.
- I am freed to embrace with shame.
- I am freed to share without deception.
- I am freed to give without reservation.
- I am freed to rest without guilt.

- Next, we will see that Paul tells them to stand firm, therefore. This is the idea of being stationary. (Greek definition) This might seem like something that He is telling them to do by their own power or maybe “God did His part; now you need to work to be strong”.
 - But this idea of standing firm and being stationary suggests that we are already in something that is, in fact, going to hold us. It is the idea of holding fast to the one who is faithful. Paul is telling them to look to the one who will never fail them and has already secured their salvation.
- Paul will remind his audience that while they are looking to Christ, they are not to submit again to a yoke of slavery. And this yoke of slavery that Paul is referring to is legalism.
 - This definitely might be a buzzword for some, and for others, this might be something that we just slap on everything when we see people doing good works.
 - But I want us to see that legalism usually stems from a very good place (or so we think). It is something that seeps in slowly and starts to rob us of the job and assurance that we have in Christ Jesus.

What are some of the ways that we think that legalism stems from? (Good and Bad)

- When we start to base our standing with God on what we have done. That is when we have a Christless Christianity. We have seen so many examples of people in the Bible that we are very much not righteous or good people (David, Lot, Noah).
 - And this was not because they had done anything on their own to make themselves righteous. It was because they had faith in Jesus, and by the power of His blood, He has made them righteous.
 - You have heard us say it before, but I will say it again. We need to lean into the fact that we are broken people. Not because we like to sit around and feel sorry for ourselves or because we like living in misery. But because this is the only place where we will find true power! If we want to see real change in our lives, stop pretending we’ve got it mostly together and start leaning on the power of Christ. Stop looking to the yoke of slavery! And stand firm in Christ! Because He HAS set you free!!
- Then, in verse 2, Paul will say: “Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.”
- **We know that Paul isn’t against circumcision itself. What is he talking about when he speaks of Circumcision?**

- Then he will venture on to say in verse 3 that “every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.”
 - Paul will show us that if you try to rely on one part of the Mosaic law (like circumcision) to be right with God, then you can just stop there. You are then obligated to keep the whole law perfectly. Not just one aspect of it, but the entirety of the law must be kept to be made right with God.
 - This echoes James 2:10: “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.”
 - Circumcision wasn’t just a minor choice, it symbolized embracing the entire Old Covenant system. So, for Gentile Christians in Galatia to accept circumcision as necessary meant they were turning from the New Covenant of grace in Christ and going back under the yoke of the Old Covenant, which cannot save.
 - This verse highlights the classic law/gospel distinction that the Bible stresses. The law demands, but the gospel gives. If someone seeks justification through law (like circumcision), they reject the gospel's free offer of righteousness through Christ.
- Then, in verse 4, we have some language that might be quite confusing if you just grab this verse out of context. We see language here about people being severed from Christ. Which definitely sounds scary for us.
- This is a serious warning, not a statement that true believers can lose their salvation.
 - So what does “severed from Christ” mean? → It means that someone who tries to be justified by the law (through circumcision or works) is functionally rejecting Christ. They are cut off from the benefits of His grace because they are seeking righteousness somewhere else.
- “You who would be justified by the law.” To seek justification by the law is to rely on your own obedience instead of Christ’s perfect righteousness, which is credited to believers by faith alone.
 - We believe that our justification is solely based on Christ’s law-keeping. So, to pursue justification through law-keeping is to reject the very heart of the gospel.
- “You have fallen away from grace.” What does this mean? → This isn’t talking about losing salvation. It means they have departed from the gospel and placed themselves back under a covenant of works, which can only bring condemnation.
 - This is similar to Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-29, which issue warnings to people who may have professed faith, tasted gospel blessings, but now abandon grace in favor of legalism or unbelief.
- Then, in verse 5, we see how he mentions that through the Spirit and by faith. Let’s pause there for a moment. Paul is reminding them that their salvation only comes through the Spirit as a result of faith. It is not something that we have done or earned. It is the work of the Spirit.
 - He then goes on to speak of this hope that we have. He is speaking of this already, but not yet hope that we have in our Lord Jesus. We have already been made righteous before God, but we have not yet been glorified to be with Him (the redemption of our bodies).

- Then this hope of righteousness that he speaks of, this is not a maybe we're hoping that this happens. No, we eagerly wait with confidence that the righteousness of Christ has brought us life and standing before the father (adoption as sons, as Ben talked about before).
- It's a forward-looking, Spirit-powered, grace-based hope, completely opposite of the backward-looking, law-based fear that legalism brings.
 - In verse 6, Paul will wrap up his idea by reminding them that in Christ Jesus, there is no amount of rituals or religious activities that can define us a child of God. He is destroying the argument that circumcision is necessary for salvation. He is saying that circumcision is of no advantage. Point blank.
- Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Any attempt to earn righteousness through the law is a denial of the gospel. True believers live by the Spirit, walk in faith, and bear the fruit of love—not to earn salvation, but because they are saved.
 - Paul is warning that legalism is all-or-nothing. If you go down that road—even with something as seemingly small as circumcision—you're choosing to live under a standard that can only condemn, not save.

Galatians 5:7-15 (Josiah)

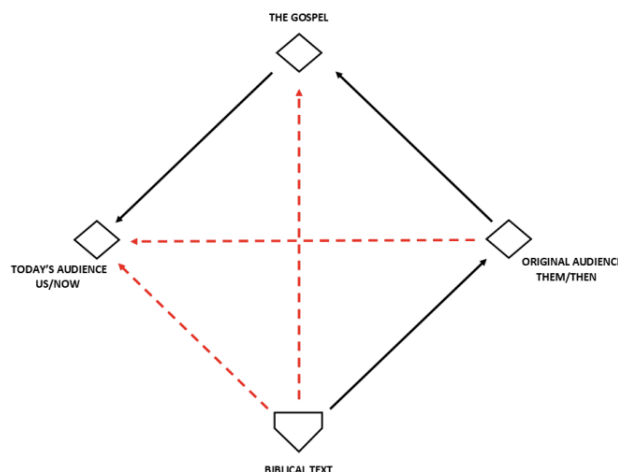
- Chapter 5 marks a switch in the language Paul uses; he shifts from argumentative to warning and provides the implications of living by faith that he described in chapters 3 and 4.
 - Paul concludes his argument at the beginning of chapter 5 and transitions into the last 2 chapters. He begins by diving into some imperatives by heeding the church body against false teachings.
- Beware of False Teachers
 - Paul laments over the Galatians, pointing out that they were “running a good race”, showing disappointment not only in the Galatians for falling to the lies of the Judaizers but also in the Judaizers who wrongly cut in and kept them from obeying the truth.
 - Paul points out that the Judaizers who preached the gospel of Jesus “+” were not from God; they preached the gospel of the flesh and the gospel of death.
- This serves as a good reminder, it is good and heeded to listen to others outside of yourself- elders, friends, pastors, books, etc., while also standing it up to the ultimate test, scripture. There is only one test that can measure if someone's teaching is from God and/or biblical, simply the Bible.
 - We can often misinterpret scripture, and community and scholars can redirect us towards the truth, but there will always be people who think they have revealed or uncovered something new and shiny, and often it is unbiblical and false. That is why it is so important to have scripture be the test of all teachings, because it is the one thing in a world full of twisted truths and lies that remains constant throughout the tides of culture and time.
- Paul continues to warn the Galatians against false teachers by using the imagery of yeast.
 - Yeast is a theme that is seen throughout the bible, seen in the teachings of Jesus (Matthew 16), Paul (1 Corinthians), and Old Testament traditions. It can be used to signify good and evil; in this context, and for the majority of its use, it is used to resemble evil.

- The imagery of yeast or “leaven” can be seen in the feast of unleavened bread that the Israelites followed, in which they would eat bread that did not contain yeast; therefore, it is called unleavened bread.
 - Paul uses this imagery because it would be powerful and meaningful to the audience. The power of false teaching can have a cascading effect in a community that isn't rooted in the truth of the bible.
- Confidence in the Lord (verse 10)
 - The tone here shifts from warning to optimism; he is confident that they will turn back to the truth and blames the Judaizers for misleading them.
 - Note that Paul is not expressing that he is confident in the Galatians to turn back to the truth, but instead, he is confident in the Lord that they will turn back.
 - This is important to note because the change of heart and a reversion to the truth do not come from within ourselves but come from the Spirit through us.
 - Another thing to note is the burden that is on the shoulders of the teachers and leaders.
 - This theme is not foreign to Paul’s teachings...
 - James 3:1 - Not many of you should become teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.
 - Hebrews 13:7 - Obey your leaders, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.
 - Explicit qualifications and instructions of leaders within the Church
 - 1 Timothy 3
 - 1 Corinthians 4
- **Why do you think there is such a burden and responsibility upon leaders and spiritual teachers in almost all of Paul’s letters?**
- Persecution and the hypocrisy of the Judaizers (verses 11-12).
 - Paul points out that his teaching is the opposite of the teaching of the Judaizers by showing the response of the culture around him to the teaching of Paul and the teaching of the Judaizers.
 - The teaching of the gospel is counter-cultural, upside-down, and radical, while the teaching of circumcision (Law) appeases cultural and societal leaders.
 - The gospel teaches the opposite of human nature, and therefore, it will always be opposed to culture and the ways of the world.

- Paul here is pointing out that the teaching of the Judaizers is there to avoid persecution, to appease government and religious leaders.
 - The cross is offensive to human nature, it insults those who think they are enough. By adding works of the Law to the gospel, the Judaizers take away this offense.
 - **In verse 12, what is Paul's intention, and why does he use such strong language?**
 - Implications of grace and of the Law.
 - Paul finishes this section by laying some implications of gospel truth.
 - He lays out that in Christ, we have freedom, not freedom to indulge but freedom to love others as we were created to. The fruit that is yielded from the Law is fruit of the flesh, selfish and introspective, while the fruit of grace, or of the spirit, yields selfless fruit, fruit that is recognized by its service and love towards one another.
 - The Law is meant to be used to foster faith and bring love in community, but instead the Judaizers used it to inflict turmoil, conflict, doubt and evil.
 - Paul corrects this misunderstanding and lays out that the Law is summed up by one word(sentence), "You shall love your neighbor as yourself". This is a slam dunk, Paul finishes his argument against the Judaizers and their use of the Law, and then uses the Law against the Judaizers, the very people attempting to enslave people under the Law, but instead of using it as a means of salvation, he uses it as a means to stir up love and community.
 - Before continuing into further gospel implications, which we will cover next week, Paul finishes with a final warning against bickering and turmoil within the Church. Using strong language of biting and devouring, Paul conveys the importance of unity as a body that works as one unit.
 - Quick summary from Pastor Pat.
 - Keep it clean.
 - Stay the course.
 - Love the community.
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ANOTHER WAY TO GO ABOUT THIS IDEA: THINK BASEBALL

- When preparing and studying scripture, our focus is to always stay true to the scripture.
 - In order to best do this, we use a method called the Simeon Trust method, which simply lays out a process to faithfully discern the Bible.
- FIRST:
 - Understanding who the text was written to. (The Audience)
 - Understanding why the text was written. (The Purpose)
 - Understanding the structure, genre, context, emphasis, and melodic line of the text.
 - In a nutshell: The first step focuses on understanding what the text meant to its original audience.
- SECOND:
 - Once we have done this, we must filter it through the Gospel.
 - This means understanding when and why this text was written in reference to the cross. → Is it pointing to the coming of Christ (OT), is it pointing to Christ and what Christ has already done (NT), is the text speaking of law, is it speaking of the Gospel, etc?
- THIRD:
 - Once we've understood the text's original meaning/audience and have filtered it through the Gospel lens, we are able to determine what it means to us now. Without this process, proper application of the Bible is essentially impossible.
- COMING HOME:
 - Once we understand the appropriate application of the text, our legwork essentially stops, and we become fully reliant on the Holy Spirit to work in us.



The Gospel: *We Can't, God Can, Jesus Did!*

- **Sin.** None of us can escape it. Because of sin, we are enslaved and burdened under the weight of the law. We are trapped in a cycle of guilt and condemnation, unable to achieve the righteousness God requires. God's standard is perfection, and no amount of good works, rule-following, or religious activity can justify us. The law has revealed our sin, but in our brokenness, we need someone to save us from it.
 - “**10** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” **11** Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.” **12** But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.” (Galatians 3:10-12)
- **Christ Redeems.** These two words are at the heart of the gospel. In His mercy, God provided the only way for our salvation—through Jesus Christ. Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse for us, bearing the full weight of our sins on the cross. Through His sacrifice, we are delivered from the curse of the law, declared righteous through faith, and granted the promised Spirit.
 - “**13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— **14** so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.” (Galatians 3:13-14)
- **Crucified with Christ.** Being crucified with Christ, our old self is put to death, and we are raised to new life in Him. This life is not earned by our efforts but is lived by faith in the completed work of Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us. It is only through Christ that we are made alive and can live a life pleasing to God.
 - “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)