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The Mission
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Galatians 3.26-5.17

Turn if you would to Galatians chapter 3 and to verse 26 and we're going to continue our study here in Galatians and tonight we're going to talk specifically about the benefits of our freedom in Christ.

You know sometimes when prisoners having spent a longtime in prison are released, it's not very long before they're back in prison again. And many times they go back on purpose, because even though they're free, they've never learned how to live and enjoy life as a free man.

And many times they'll commit crimes and purposely get caught so they can get locked back up again. They're just not comfortable living in a society with all the responsibility that comes along with it. And rather than be faced with the challenge of freedom and responsibility, they choose instead bondage.

Well, that's sometimes the way it is with our freedom in Christ. The freedom we have in Christ is not always easy to handle. In fact, it is actually a little easier sometimes just to revert back to some form of legalistic type religion.

And sometimes it's more comfortable for people just to follow a set of rules whereby somebody tells you every move to make, rather than depending on the Lord for wisdom everyday.

And no doubt, some who have come to Christ, don't fully understand the blessings that they have when it comes to freedom in Christ.

And so Paul desperately wants these believers, living in the region of Galatia—as well as every one of us—to grow in our understanding when it comes to the freedom that we as Christians have in Christ.

And so I want to pick back up where we left off last week in chapter 3 and verse 26 and let's look at some of the benefits of the gospel of grace.

And his list begins first with the benefit of sonship or the benefit of being in the family of God.

Now, for times sake, I'm not going to read the entire passage tonight, we're just going to dive right in and go through this a few verses at a time, and so you're going to need to follow along with me in your Bible. And if you don't have one, there should be one in the book rack on the back of the pew in front of you.

Look at verse 26 if you will. Paul says,

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

In other words, if we have received Jesus as our Savior and if we have an ongoing, genuine relationship with Him, then we all have the same heavenly Father as others who have done the same thing. And because of that, like it or not, as Christians, we're all one big family. We're all brothers and sisters in Christ. And just like we don't choose our earthly family members, we don't choose our brothers and sisters in Christ. That's all up to God. Amen?

And I don't know about you, but I'm glad I don't have to depend on my peers to vote me into the family of God.

And then Paul says in verse 27,

27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Again, that means if you've been saved, you're in the family. That's why we're called Christians, because we're in Christ's family.

Have you ever met somebody, say in a grocery store or at work or wherever and you just had this automatic connection to them?

When Trish and I were in Switzerland, we were on the train and we met this really nice older couple, even older than us, and they were traveling around the country on the train much like we were. And they were from upstate New York, and they had both been librarians all their life and now they were retired and traveling and seeing all the things they had read about.

Well immediately, I just sensed that they were Christian's. And it wasn't long before our conversations confirmed that. We'll, we talked to them for the time we were on that train together and then we went our separate ways.

Well, a little later on that same day, it just so happens when we got ready to return back to wherever we were staying, they too were on that train and as the Lord would have it, they were sitting right next to us again.

And so we talked again for the length of that ride and when we departed, we knew that would probably be the last time we would ever meet. And so I told them, I said, we'll talk again. I'll see you in heaven one day.

And so when you meet a fellow believer, or when a family member or friend becomes a believer, one thing you can know for certain is that you'll eventually spend eternity with them. And though it may not excite you that you're going to spend eternity with certain people, that's the truth! We're all kinfolks if we're in Christ. And if someone is truly a Christian, then they're your brother or sister in Christ.

Now, the word baptism mentioned here in this verse is not referring to water baptism. When we're first saved, we're symbolically baptized into Christ; in that we are crucified with Christ. We die to our sins and our old life is buried, and we are made new in Christ.

And we read about that back in Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20. And really we ought to know that verse by heart.

Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

And then in verse 28 Paul says,

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Now, again I'm sure there were probably Jews who didn't care to be around certain Gentiles, and no doubt some Gentiles, who didn't really care about being around certain Jews. But there were probably also Jews who weren't fond of certain other Jews, and Gentiles who weren't fond of certain other Gentiles. But our personal feelings about other people have no bearing whatsoever on our relationship with others when it comes to our family in Christ. Whether Jew or Gentile, or male or female, we're all brothers and sisters, if we're truly in Christ.

Verse 29

29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Now, here Paul reminds us of another benefit we have because of our freedom in Christ. And that is that all Christians are "Abraham's offspring."

Which means we are all heirs to the promise which God gave Abraham when He stated that he was justified by his faith.

Now, when we get into chapter 4, Paul is expanding on the idea of a believers' new position as an heir of Christ Jesus. And in verse 1 he writes, **Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all,**

Now, back during this time period in history, slaves were still a way of life. And a child of the master or slave owner, who was the actual legal heir of an estate, well, while they were still a child, many times, a slave would be assigned to take care of them. And also they would have a tutor. But eventually the child would grow up, and they would no longer be under the control of this steward and tutor. And they would at that time, become the rightful owner of their parent's estate.

But while they were still a child, Paul writes in verse 2,

2 They would still be under a guardian and or stewards until the time appointed by the father, or until the time he becomes an adult.

And then Paul continues in verse 3, and he says:

3 Even so we, when we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world.

Now, you'll notice here that he uses the pronoun "we," which means he's referring specifically to the Jews who were in the churches there in Galatia.

And he says, "We"—meaning the Jewish people—were held in bondage to the law of Moses, (which by the way, no one could keep).

But he says, there came a time when these Jewish people "grew up", that is, they grew up spiritually. And that's in verse 4.

4 But when the fullness of the time had come,

In other words, it was accomplished through the coming of Christ in the “fullness of time,” which means Jesus was born at the perfect time in God’s plan.

And then Paul writes, And **God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

In other words, it was only because Jesus kept the law perfectly, that He would be qualified to quote “**redeem those who were under the law**”.

The work of Christ, who is our Redeemer, allowed both Jewish and Gentile believers to be adopted into the family of God. That means that if we are in Christ, we have been granted all the rights of an adult heir to our Father’s estate.

You know I was thinking about that, and I was thinking about how many times, people get all sideways with each other over their parent’s belongings when they die. And how silly that is really when we put in the perspective of eternity. Because even though their estate may be of great value, as far as this world is concerned, it means nothing as far as eternity is concerned. And no matter what the value of those things are here in this world, they can never compare to the value of what awaits a believer when they get to heaven!

And we, no doubt, take that for granted, way too often. And we place way too much emphasis on the things of this world.

And so Paul’s point here is: Why would anybody in Galatia—or anywhere else for that matter —want to go back into the bondage they were under by trying to keep the law? Why would anybody want a list of rules to

keep, instead of enjoying their freedom in Christ? Why would anybody want to trade their freedom in Christ and the inheritance that awaits them in heaven, for spiritual bondage?

And then with that, Paul adds another benefit in verse 6: He says,

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Now, that term “Abba,” was an affectionate term. It was what the children in Paul’s day, would commonly call their father. And today, it would be equivalent to our term “daddy”.

And then Paul delivers some warnings against this false gospel of legalism. He asks, why?

Having come to know God by faith and faith alone; **why** would his readers want to turn back to the law and become enslaved again.

Verse 9 says, But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?

And of course, this is exactly what these legalistic teachers were advocating. And not only that but it was also what some in the church there were doing.

In verse 10 he says, **You observe days and months and seasons and years. 11 I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.**

In other words, they were still observing the Jewish Sabbaths, and all the Jewish festivals.

And so Paul asks them; to remember the example he had set for them when he was there before. And how they had so gladly accepted him and the gospel that he had preached.

And then he pleads with them in verse 12, He says,

12 Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you.

Paul surely didn't try to pull them back under the law when he was with them! In fact, he was trying his best to teach them how to live free from the law. And so here again, he's trying desperately to get them to resist these false teachers and to live like he did, when he was with them. To live free in Christ by living by faith.

Now, like any good teacher would, who is delivering some challenging information, Paul uses an illustration to get his point across: And in verses 22 & 23 he reminds them of a story from the Old Testament.

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a free woman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the free woman through promise,

And he's speaking of course of Ishmael, who was born to Hagar, who was a slave; And Isaac, who was born to Abraham's wife Sarah, who was a "free woman."

And Paul compares the two mothers with two covenants. Hagar represents the Mosaic covenant, which was given at Mount Sinai. And so she illustrates "bondage to the law".

Sarah, on the other hand, represents the new covenant that comes from "the Jerusalem above," or for heaven—and so she illustrates the promise of freedom in Christ.

And then notice how Paul applies that illustration in verse 28: he says,
28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. “

In other words, the Galatian believers had received the promise of salvation. However, just as Ishmael, the son of Hagar, persecuted Isaac, so the legalistic Jewish teachers are effectively persecuting the believers in Galatia.

And so, what should they do about it?

Well, Paul actually paraphrases the words of Sarah from Genesis 21:10, and he says,

30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not

In other words, just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac back in Genesis chapter 21, these Judaizers—or these false teachers—are persecuting the church.

And so Paul in quoting this verse from Genesis is calling for these Judaizers to be disciplined, and to be sent away from the church, if they won't repent of their teaching.

Now, these are pretty strong words, but Paul is reminding us here, that there's no room for compromise with people who teach a false gospel. And in this case that salvation and spiritual growth can come by works.

That kind of teaching can't be tolerated, because people can't live up to that kind of teaching. The only thing that's going to come out of a teaching like that is discouragement. Because you can't replace grace, nor the freedom in Christ with a list of man made rules.

Now, that doesn't mean that rules are always wrong, but it does mean that they can never ever earn you a right standing with God. No amount of

work or discipline or rule keeping will get you into heaven. Only the freedom that comes by having a genuine relationship with Jesus will get you into heaven.

But now, there's something that freedom in Christ won't give you. It won't give you a guarantee that you'll have a trouble free life.

If you remember back to the book of Exodus, when the Israelites were delivered from their bondage there in Egypt, and they were given their freedom, which they had begged God to give them.

Well, when they finally received that freedom, it didn't end all their troubles; did it?

No, in fact, it just brought on more difficulty and hardship.

And remember what they did? They complained! And they questioned God and they said, we'd be better off back in Egypt!

And just the same, freedom in Christ, is not necessarily freedom from hardship. And freedom in Christ is certainly not freedom from responsibilities in life.

And in Galatians chapter 5, Paul's going to give to us two practical responsibilities that come with our spiritual freedom.

And the first responsibility, which we see in verse one, is to take a stand in your spiritual freedom.

He writes in verse 1, **“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”**

Again, Christ has made us free from bondage and to man-made rules and to works, as a means of salvation. One New Testament paraphrase puts it this way: It says, “Take your stand! And never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you”.

Remember, these false teachers were teaching that faith in Christ was not enough—and that even believers had to follow the law of Moses, which also included the rite of circumcision.

But Paul's telling his readers to take a stand against this false teaching. And in verse 4 he warns them. He says,

4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Now, Paul's not saying that if you have been truly saved by faith, that you can lose your salvation. But he is saying, that to follow the law in order to be saved, that won't bring about genuine salvation.

To believe that you can be saved by works, is to be cut off from grace and to be cut off from the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ.

And then Paul gives an illustration from the world of athletics.

He compares the Christian life to a race in verse 7,

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

He says, you were running well. So who tripped you up? Or who cut in front of you and distracted you?

And it was like these Galatians were still in the race, but they were getting off course by listening to these false teachers who were trying to mix faith in Christ with all these Jewish regulations.

And then he warns them in verse 9. He says,

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

In other words, it only takes one bad apple to spoil the whole basket. And so he's urging them to make no place for this false teaching. Not even a little bit. Because if it's not stopped immediately, it'll flood the church and

it'll turn out the lights. And that goes for us as well. There's no place for man made rules, and regulations in the church.

And then Paul adds a word of encouragement here in verse 10: he says,

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.

These troublemakers, Paul says, will one day bear the penalty for their false teaching. He doesn't say they'll one day go away. Because, truth is, they won't ever go away. Because Satan won't ever stop trying to take away the gospel of grace or add to the gospel.

Now, not only were these false teachers teaching a false gospel, but they were also telling lies about Paul. They were saying that he too was teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

But Paul in verse 11 says,

11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?

And so their lies didn't even make sense.

And then in verse 12, with a little hint of righteous indignation, he says,

12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

In other words, if these false teachers think cutting a little foreskin away is necessary for salvation, well, then, they ought to go ahead and just completely castrate themselves!

Now, that's pretty strong language coming from a preacher, but Paul is passionate about protecting the purity of the gospel. And he wants these believers to understand how serious this is; and that they too need to take a

strong stand against this false teaching, because it's extremely dangerous to believe that you can get into heaven by keeping a set of rules!

And so, their first responsibility and ours, is to take a firm stand in defense of the gospel and our freedom in Christ.

Second, we're not to take advantage of our spiritual freedom.

Paul writes in verse 13,

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.

In other words, this freedom that Christ gives you, is not the freedom to sin, but rather freedom from sin, so that you no longer live for sin.

True freedom in Christ is not seeing how close you can walk with the world and still be a Christian or how much you can sin and still make it to heaven.

True freedom in Christ is seeing how much you can serve!

And so Paul warns us, not to use our freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but rather as an opportunity, through love, to serve one another." Freedom in Christ doesn't look for opportunities to satisfy ourselves; it looks for opportunities to serve and satisfy someone else's need.

And then he makes an important connection in verse 14:

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

And what he means is that: Freedom in Christ produces a heart of love for others that accomplishes what the law truly demanded. And then he

gives us a summary of the law, which Jesus gave us: He reminds us to “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

In other words, true freedom, gives us a love for God, which leads us to reject the desire to live for ourselves, and to live for others and to serve others.

And then in verse 16 Paul writes,

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

So, what does Paul mean when he says, that we’re to “walk by the Spirit”?

Well, to walk by the Spirit is to walk in submission to the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to apply what we learn from God’s word.

And everything we need to know about living for Christ, and how to serve Christ, and how to serve others, and how to love others is right here in this book. Everything we need to live a life in Christ, is right here.

That’s why over and over and over again, we emphasize the importance of gathering together to study God’s word; whether it be in SS, or on Wednesday night, or in Sunday morning worship, or at our Men or women’s Bible study, or on Friday night or at VBS. Everything we do here is to point people to God’s Word so we can learn how to live our lives for Jesus.