

3rd Sunday after Pentecost

June 26, 2022

“Called to liberty to serve one another through love” (Galatians 5:13)

By Rev. Ed Weber

“Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, today’s text for this 3rd Sunday after Pentecost is from our Epistle reading Galatians 5:13.

**“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.”**

Here ends our text.

Last week we spent a good amount of time in chapters 3 and 4 of Galatians. For in these chapters, our epistle from last week, Paul laid the foundations of what the heart of Christianity is: Sonship through faith in Jesus.

**“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”**

Paul taught us that it is a gift from God – our sonship, our “daughtership”. It is only through faith, created by the Holy Spirit that we are freed from the imprisonment of the law by the promise by faith in Jesus.

**“22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”**

And this promise to us of salvation and our eternal inheritance could only be kept by God because Jesus Himself suffered the imprisonment and curse of the law.

**“3 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”**

Paul even chastised the Galatians (4:1) that they had become foolish to believe that they could return to the law to be saved by the works of the law. **“Who has bewitched you?”** Paul asks in exasperation.

No, no, no! It is by faith alone that we are saved without the works of the law! The same faith as Abraham who believed that in his Descendant, Jesus, all the nations would be blessed. That includes the Gentiles! That includes us!

**“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. 29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:28-29)**

That’s pure Gospel! Pure love of God for all people! Pure freedom from the accusations of the law!

So, Paul begins our epistle today again with that reminder!

**“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Galatians 5:1)**

Don’t entangle yourselves with the weak and beggarly things of observing days and months and seasons and years. (4:9-10) That was a shadow of the Jesus coming to give us rest in our conscience from these things. Basically, don’t let anyone tell you you’re sinning if you eat meat on Fridays during Lent. That’s just a man-made law to enslave you again and take away your freedom from the Gospel.

Paul says in the opening verses of chapter 5, don’t let the Judaizers convince you that you have to be circumcised. No you’re free from the law! You can’t be saved by the law! Paul even says in verse 12 that all those who are deceiving you with this false teaching should be castrated!

No, no, no!

We are saved by faith without the law. The first danger is to believe that you are saved by the law. But the second danger is that as sons and daughters of God, you are freed from doing the works of the law! No, no, no!

Faith saves without works of the law, but it is never alone. Works of the law are the fruit of the Spirit of the new person in Christ. The Christian who goes to the opposite extreme and says that I don’t have to do any works of love, or even think that I can continue sinning and do whatever I please, is very confused and in spiritual peril!

**“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.”**

Faith is never without works of love. We are obligated as followers of Christ to a new life according to the Spirit. Faith without works is a dead faith. Our conscience is freed from the law by faith, but we are obligated then to love one's neighbor as oneself!

Yes, Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit in our epistle. They all flow from the love of Christ so that our first fruit is love.

**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.”**

Brothers and sisters in Christ, there is a battle that wages in each of us to follow our sinful flesh and not the Spirit. There are so many opportunities in our lives to show love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness to our neighbor and we are all guilty of doing nothing. We are obligated by the law to live perfectly in love with others – to serve others first as Christ served us first! Paul says in verse 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.”**

There are so many examples of how we should love our neighbor but let me focus on just one because it was a momentous event this week.

The Supreme Court said that Roe vs. Wade was not upheld by the Constitution. After 50 years of the Federal Government making legal abortions of babies, finally this was overturned and sent to the states to exercise their power to limit abortions.

This is all about loving your neighbor as yourself. For the mantra of the pro-abortion activists is: “A woman has a right to control her body”. Yes, we are obligated by the law to control our bodies so that adultery, fornication and uncleanness doesn't result in a pregnancy. That's obvious Paul says. **“Now the works of the flesh are evident...”**

To that list Paul adds, **“idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;”**

“And the like” – there are too many works of the sinful flesh to enumerate. Your list of sinful works of the flesh is many pages long! And Paul makes sure we understand this...

**“as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”**

It’s a serious danger for the Christian to think that he or she has a new freedom to live however one wants in whatever sin one wants! You’ll lose your inheritance because you will suffocate and destroy your faith!

Back to the pro- abortion mantra “My body – my life”. First of all, there are two bodies – the mother’s body and the babies’ body with a heartbeat as early as 15 days after conception.

In the mother’s womb is not a lump of cells, but a distinct human being of whom the mother and father is obligated to love as one’s self. In the mother’s womb is her neighbor. She and the father must show love, kindness, peace, joy, gentleness, longsuffering, faithfulness and goodness to this growing child. Is it an inconvenience to one’s personal plans? Possibly.

But the works of the sinful flesh include obviously selfish ambitions and murder. If one says that I can kill this life because it disrupts my plans to study or travel or have independence than one is indeed following the sinful flesh. If one doesn’t repent, and receive forgiveness from Christ then the inheritance is lost. And one will spend an eternity in hell.

No, no, no! We are not freed to break the law but are obligated to keep it and walk by the Spirit. We are obligated to not use our liberty to serve our selfish interests but to server one another in love. And this is applied to all aspects of our lives, including motherhood and fatherhood.

As we see our failures time and time again to love one another perfectly, we are humbled to repent often and fall upon the Good News of the Gospel that we are indeed justified by faith apart from the works of the law. Jesus has saved us and freed us from hell by His death and resurrection. And He has freed us now to live a

new life in service to Him and others. We are freed and obligated to love one another to proclaim all His marvelous works. We are all obligated to love our neighbors so much that we are willing to go the extra mile to make sure that they know of Jesus and don't spend eternity in hell.

As we think about our freedoms in our country this July 4<sup>th</sup>, we give thanks to God for the highest freedom, which is above any political or earthly freedom. It is the freedom from sin, death and the devil. And this new liberty we are then to use in loving service to others. We put on Christ daily!

**“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”**

**Amen.**

**The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and minds through Christ Jesus.” Amen. (Philippians 4:7)**