

Galatians #14

November 3, 2024

Series: Galatians: Treasuring the Gospel of Grace

Today's Message: Guard your Freedom Like it Means Something, pt 2; Galatians 5:7-15

Martin Luther was involved in a spirited debate with a brother in the Lord that disagreed with his view on eternal security and the role of Christian liberty in the life of a believer. Luther's opponent expressed his concern that Luther's view promoted a lifestyle of promiscuity and debauchery. He stated something to the effect that if he adopted Luther's view of freedom then he was free to do whatever he pleased. To which Luther responded, "Then tell me, sir, what do you please?" He was asking, what is your driving motivation in life? To please God? Or please yourself?

Christian freedom is never the right to do whatever you please. But rather, Christian freedom is the power to do as you should. It is allowing Christ and His word to control your life, causing each believer to live out the life of Christ in them!

The text we study today is riveting. Paul points out 1) The Danger of the Deceivers (5:7-10); 2) his personal frustration with the deceivers (5:11-12); and 3) that freedom in Christ is the power to love one another (5:13-15).

I) (5:7-10) The Danger of the Deceivers.

- A) (5:7a) The Galatians had it right.
 - 1) You were running a good race.
 - (a) Running by faith. Faith in Christ gave them an earnest zeal to hold to the truth.
 - (b) Running according to sound doctrine.
 - (i) They were on track, **running by faith!**
 - (a) Holding firmly to the doctrines of grace
 - 1. "By grace you are saved through faith...and not of works" (Eph. 2:8).
 - (b) Holding firmly to doctrine of Christ.
 - 1. Christ meant everything to them when they first believed.
 - a. "You were running a good race."
 - 2) Running well until the Judaizers came in and began turning them away
 - (a) From the grace of God,
 - (b) And the pure faith in Christ.
- B) (5:7b-8) The False teachers tripped them up
 - 1) Who cut in on you?
 - (a) "Who" is used in the singular. Paul is saying that it was one person.
 - (i) Have you ever noticed how gossip starts? It starts with one person and spreads to many.
 - (b) "cut in" or "hindered"
 - (i) To throw them off stride, causing them to deviate from the race of faith set before them.
 - (a) To question the Gospel they had received. "Maybe it's not of faith in Christ alone."
 - 1. Remember, the false teaching asserted that Gentiles must become Jewish.
 - 2) Who kept you from obeying the Truth?
 - (a) The Truth taught by Paul that justification is by faith alone (Gal. 2:15-16)
 - (b) The OT taught the same thing! The Judaizers ignored the OT teaching concerning Abraham, who was justified by faith and not by works (Gal. 3:6-29; 4:21-31).
 - 3) (5:8) Who persuaded you to disobey the Truth?
 - (a) They had been on the right track, meaning that they were persuaded by God's Word.
 - (i) They proved that they were on the right track b/c "faith [was] expressing itself through love." (Gal. 5:6)

- (b) Now they were on the wrong track, meaning that they were persuaded by the false religious mindset that abandons faith and grace and turns back to rules and regulations!
 - (i) Do this and do that in order to measure up to a standard of acceptance before God.
 - (a) Salvation is all of God's grace and none of our own! (**read Rom. 8:28-30**)
 - 1. "...from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13b-14)
 - (b) For these believers it snuck up on them and spread through the whole church.
 - 1. The Judaizers teaching was no gospel at all and was not from God! (Gal. 1:6-7)
- C) (5:9) It doesn't take much deception to permeate the whole church.
 - 1) "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."
 - (a) A single false doctrine can spread through the whole church! Its like cancer spreading through the body. Or like James wrote, that a whole forest can be set on fire by a single spark!
- D) (5:10) The Deceiver will pay a high price for deceiving the church.
 - 1) The deceiver will be judged for spreading the false doctrine.
 - (a) Jesus said in Matthew 18:6, "If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."
 - 2) **But believers are secure.** "Paul had confidence in the Lord that they would take his view. Why?
 - (a) Philippians 1:6, 7c: "He who began a good work in you will see it through until the Day of Christ Jesus...for... you all share in God's grace with me."
 - (b) John 10:28-29: Jesus said, "I give them eternal life, and they shall **never perish**; no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand."
- II) **(5:11-12) Paul's Personal Frustration with the Deceivers.**
- A) (5:11) The false teachers were maligning Paul and the message of the grace of God, claiming before the Galatians that Paul still preached circumcision.
 - 1) Probably drawing from the time in Acts 16:1-3 where it says that Paul had Timothy circumcised. Timothy was part Jewish. So as to quell disputes among the Jews to whom Paul and Timothy would minister, and in order for Timothy not to be the subject of controversy, Paul had him circumcised. But not for any other reason than to dampen any disputes among the Jews.
 - 2) Paul, as an apostle never advocated for circumcision. To do so would render Christ's death on the cross as useless (Gal. 2:21).
 - 3) The cross was offensive to the Jews because crushed any value of works according to the Mosaic law.
 - 4) The cross was, and is offensive to people today (Jews and Gentiles) because it removes any claim to "self-reliance" and "self-sufficiency" based on a person's works for righteousness!
 - 5) It is offensive to sinful man because "Salvation is found in one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)
 - (a) To trust in any work generated by an individual renders the cross of no use to that person!
 - B) (5:12) "emasculate" or "mutilate" themselves.
 - 1) Paul is saying that if they believe that circumcision earns them divine favor with God, why don't they just take it to the next level and mutilate themselves.
 - (a) Everyone in that day would have been familiar with the cult of the nature goddess Cebele. The Cebelean priests would mutilate their genitals to prove devotion in order to gain favor.
 - (i) Paul is expressing his passionate objection to the heresy promoted by the Judaizers.
- III) **(5:13-15) Freedom in Christ is the power to love.**
- A) Paul addresses the concern of the Judaizers that Paul advocates freedom among Christians to live sinful lives devoid of any morality. This is called "antinomianism" or lawlessness.

- B) (5:13) “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.”
- 1) What the Judaizers failed to acknowledge was the radical change that takes place in the life of the believer.
 - (a) The believer is born-again, which means that at the new birth Christ’s own nature and Spirit resides in that person.
 - (i) Galatians 3:26 declares, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”
 - (ii) Galatians 4:6 says, “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”
 - (b) The believer now has power to turn from what *they* want to do, and instead to do what *God* wants!
 - (i) And the Bible teaches that believers are to abstain from doing what the sinful nature desires.
 - (a) Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:16, “Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; [but use that freedom] as bond-slaves of God.”
 - (ii) Just as Jesus did not “live to please Himself” (Rom.15:3), so believers have been endowed with that same selfless desire through the indwelling Holy Spirit.
 - (c) Believers choose to model Christ and demonstrate this best by “serving one another in love.”
 - (i) Christ Jesus, the God-man, is the most free. And He made Himself nothing, taking the very form of a servant (Philippians 2:5-7).
 - (a) Now, we who belong to Him, and are possessed by the Spirit, are most free when we follow Christ in serving God and one another in love!
- C) (5:14) Paul draws their attention to the act of fulfilling the law of Moses in the following way:
- 1) First, he doesn’t advocate keeping a strict adherence to the law, nor does he advocate lawlessness. Remember, he was accused of teaching both!
 - 2) But he does say that the law is fulfilled in them when they love one another!
 - (a) In Romans 13:8-10 Paul expounds his teaching on this by saying, “...for he who loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore, **love is the fulfillment of the law.**”
- D) (5:15) Paul blunts any notion that we can use our freedom to do whatever we want regardless of the effect our behavior has on others.
- 1) Our freedom must not be used to serve ourselves first and foremost. It must be used in subjection to one another.
 - (a) To “consider the needs of others before our own” must be our watchword of our freedom!
 - (b) Otherwise, if we keep on serving our own needs above the needs of others, we will be like vicious animals biting and devouring each other.
 - 2) Our actions and attitudes toward others is more revealing of our submission to Christ than anything we could ever dream of “doing for Christ.”
 - (a) It reveals our true attitude toward Christ and His gospel, which was freely given to us at the cost of the life of Christ, who gave up His life for us all!
 - (b) We close with this great reminder, and it puts the right perspective on every relationship we have. It encompasses our relationship with Christ and with our fellow man: “The only thing that counts is faith [in Christ] expressing itself through love [for one another].”