

True Freedom Galatians 5

NT Hebrews 8.
OT Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Today we are starting in chapter 5. And as with most chapter divisions they seem to always be mid thought and in wrong places. Of course we know the original letter didn't have chapter divisions but rather was one letter, written with a purpose and a specific message, sent to a specific group of people. So with that in mind it is helpful to get the big picture that leads us up to this point, and also a reminder isn't bad since we haven't been in Galatians for a few weeks.

We won't spend a lot of time rehashing over what we have been over a few times already, but it is important to remember that Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Galatia as they were dealing with false teachers who had come in and was leading them astray. Instead of working out their faith, through the spirit in Love as Paul says to do these men were bringing the law back in. And as we see in this chapter it was specifically the practice of circumcision.

These Judaizers were seeking to make Jewish converts out of the Christians because in their mind it was the only way to gain a right standing before God and was necessary to become an offspring of Abraham. But As we have already gone over a few times and have seen, Paul destroys that argument by calling all those who have faith in Christ, who is the promised seed given to Abraham are the true children and it isn't the physical descendants but rather the spiritual descendants who are the intended heirs to the promises God gave to Abraham.

So a few weeks ago we were finishing up chapter 4 where Paul was explaining the two covenants, the one given to Abraham, and the one given to Moses. If you remember Paul used Abraham's 2 sons who were both born of different women as metaphors for these 2 covenants. He said that one covenant, pointing to the Mosaic covenant to Israel was the child of the bondwoman Hagar and that All those who are under that covenant are slaves to the law. This is important to remember as we go into chapter 5. He also went on to argue that no matter how much a child who was born a slave works, no matter how good he is, obeying his masters every command at the end of the day he is still a slave and not an heir. Such was the standing of Hagar's son Ishmael. Even though his father was Abraham, his mother was a slave therefore Ishmael was born into slavery not being a seen has a valid heir to Abraham.

Paul likened Hagar, and Ismael to the Law given to Moses, and to the Jews who were holding to those laws. This would not have sat well with the Jews for they believed their physical descendants is what made them right with God but here Paul calls them illegitimate children. Paul recognized that there was more going on here than just being physical offspring and in fact it was God's intention all a long to adopt for himself a people of all nations. And while there was of course a physical manifestation of God's promises to Abraham, they were just a shadow of the true fulfillment which was Christ.

Paul shows this by using Abraham's wife Sarah as an example of the second covenant, or as Paul says in Hebrews that we read this morning, a better covenant. Isaac was the promised son, the one whom God had promised Abraham and had said that through him all of the nations shall be blessed. Sarah, was Abraham's wife, she was a free woman so therefore her child was not born a slave as Ishmael was but was born free. He was the legal offspring of Abraham. He was Abraham's legitimate son and Paul says that he is symbolic of the new covenant in Christ.

Even in the event of these 2 brothers conception is a telling of the difference between the old, and the new covenant. One was man working out his own way, Sarah who was unable to bear children told Abraham to have a child by her handmaiden as a way to work around that problem. So this child who was born according to the flesh was just like the keeping of the old covenant. It is man, working toward his own righteousness. The mosaic law shows Gods holiness and is his law pointing to righteousness, it doesn't take long to see though that it is impossible for man to make himself righteous, for the law is so oppressive, so overbearing, and impossible for man to keep of himself, it is a ministry of Death not a way of righteousness or salvation.

And in perfect opposition to the conception of Ishmael, who Paul says in 4;23 was born according to flesh. Was Isaac, who was born of Sarah through promise. this was the working of God. He took Sarah's barren womb, and made her able to bear a son. It wasn't by Abraham and Sarah's sheer willpower, it wasn't by any ability of their own, or any scheming or working around their problem to force it, it was God who fulfilled his promise to them and made it possible for her to bear a child. These are very important distinctions between these 2 mothers and their offspring and the symbolic nature of them in relation to the 2 covenants.

So, now that our minds are back focusing on Galatians today, we see that Paul takes all of this and runs right into further teaching in Chapter 5. Right after going through talking about Abraham's 2 sons by the 2 different women he continues right on with an exhortation to the Galatians. He says, now that you see you are of Faith, in Christ and that you are the adopted children of God, heirs to the promises you need to therefore Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free.

To that I ask, what is this liberty that we are given? In our culture we know a lot about liberty, we pride ourselves in our liberty, in fact in many ways we worship our liberty. We live in a country were we enjoy many freedoms that other countries do not. But this liberty has so permeated our existence that it it has become a point of pride in us, and it has formed our culture and we have become a stubborn people with little respect for authority. How dare anyone tell us how we can live, what we can do, were we can go, or how we can dress. We are free to do whatever we want, or so is the American mindset. But this is not the liberty that Paul is talking about here, it has a much bit deeper meaning then just being free to do what we want. I think that what He is talking about more precisely is our liberty that we have in Christ, which is through Christs work we have liberty from the slavery of sin, guilt of sin and the punishment of sin.

These 3 things, sin, guilt and death are intrinsic traits since the fall of Mankind in Adam. God said eat of this tree and you will surely die...and we did, not only physically but spiritually. Adam was cast out of the Garden, away from the paradise God provided and through Adam's sin, mankind was cursed and cast out. Paul's argument about the offspring of Abraham applies here to the offspring of Adam as well. We are all born children of Adam, fallen and slaves to sin. Just as our father was, so are we. Bound in sin, a slave to sin, We seek out our own selfish desires, our own pleasures without any thought or regard toward God who created us. we live a life apart from God, dead in our sins and lost in our desires of our flesh. And with that comes guilt. And even though it may seems that most people lack guilt today, they really don't they just know how to hide and suppress it. It manifests itself in many ways. You don't have to look long to see mankind's way of coping with guilt which really just digs them deeper into a hole of despair and hopelessness. We, by nature are slaves to our sin, we are lost in our guilt, and we are hopeless in our deaths. But Christ has come to grant us liberty and make us free from this slavery.

This goes back to the doctrine of Adoption. Let us turn to **Roman's 5, starting in verse 12.**

All of us are children of Adam, natural born sinners, and rebels to the one who created us. But God, who is rich in mercy and grace adopted us out of Adam's family into his own through the work of his only Son, Christ Jesus who payed the the cost of our rebellion and sin on the cross for us that we may become heirs.

So that is one aspect of the liberty that we find in Christ. We are no longer slaves of sin, but free. We have been given the Holy Spirit to indwell in us to convict us, to guide us, and help us as we travel through this journey of life. Being free from sin, does not mean that we will not sin, but rather because of our now changed hearts, and because of the Holy spirit we no longer are slaves to it, but we have been given the power to overcome it.

The other aspect of the Liberty we receive from Christ is freedom from the Law and its condemnation. If you remember from earlier in Galatians Paul called the law a curse, and all who live under the law are cursed by the law. The law is not a guide for our lives, the law does not bring righteousness to a person, keeping the law does not make one holy. In fact as Paul says it is quite the opposite. The Law came to make sin, even more sinful because it is a picture, a shadow of God's perfect righteousness. No man can keep it, all of man is condemned by it so we needed someone to free us from it. So as Paul tells the Galatians, if you have faith in Christ, you are children of Sarah, of the promise, and of life and not the children of Hagar, of bondage, of law, and death.

So now that we have been set free from sin, guilt, death and the law..Paul says in second half of verse 1. do not be entangled again with a toke of bondage! Now that you are free, don't seek to put yourself back under the law which is a minister of death.

This is just as important to Christians today as it was to the churches then. We may not have Judaizers coming from Jerusalem a church, telling everyone they must become Jews. we don't need it because the churches themselves create their own laws that they put over their members. Dictating to them how to observe the Sabbath, or lists of things they should or should not do, trying to bring back the old covenant into the new. Putting a yoke of bondage back on those who are free and Paul is warning us here do not do that! Back in Galatians 4 verse 9 he 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? You observe days and months, seasons and years.

Or If we turn over to Colossians 2 vs 20 he says the same thing but in more detail. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourself to regulations. Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle which all concern things which perish with the using according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

So here too Paul is telling the Colossian churches the same thing...you are free in Christ, do not put yourself back under the bondage of the Law. The danger here is that these regulations, laws, or list of requirements become your religion...they become your faith, they become that by which you measure yourself. You end up becoming so focused on the outward appearance and workings of your practice of religion that you end up becoming in danger of focusing on the wrong things. These Jewish

Christians did. They took the teaching of Paul, of salvation by the free grace of God and added in their Jewish Laws and works of righteousness making it a litmus test to mark what makes a true believer. The problem is, that it was their standards, not Gods.

As Paul calls it in Colossians, it is the doctrines of men which look wise and humble but really do not add to your justification and standing with God, but rather puts an unbearable weight on you requiring obedience to something that you can not obey. Remember you can not pick and choose what part of the mosaic law you want to follow, if you fail in one you are guilty of all. That is why Christ said Come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Christ fulfilled these laws on our behalf, he became a curse for us, to pay the penalty of our sin. So if Christ has set you free, why then do you entangle yourself in bondage and laws and commandments of men? These commandments do not make you holy, only through Christs righteousness are you declared holy.

Picking up again in verse 2 Paul again is reminding the Galatians that if you look to the law, you will become a debtor of the whole law. He says, Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the law, you have fallen from grace.

So I think we need to clarify here exactly what Paul means. We must remember who he is talking to, we must remember that these were uncircumcised gentile Christians. Paul is telling them that their faith in God is what saves them, not circumcision. It was an inward working of God, not an outward working of man.

But then again on the other side We need to be careful not to take Paul to literal here. I have known of people who did not have their children circumcised because of a literal understanding of this passage. This idea comes out of the dispensation school of thought that since the law was for Israel, circumcision is only for the Jews, and since we are gentiles we should not circumcise our children. I think that is a misunderstanding of what Paul is saying here. We don't have to go much further to see that is the case, in verse 6 Paul says, For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcised avails anything, but faith working through love. So I think those that hold to the view that we should not circumcise our children today have missed the point all together.

As I said we need to remember the context of what Paul is saying here. The issue was that the Judaizers were putting circumcision before faith, and elevating their Jewishness as a requirement for justification . They were trying to be justified by the law to which Paul says in verse 4 will make you estranged from Christ, you will be apart from grace.

Salvation, is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. If you are trying any other way it will only end up in failure, death, and hell.

So, if following the law isn't a proof of our salvation. If the law isn't some litmus test for our belief then how do we know we are truly saved? Well, Paul answers that in verse 5. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. It is the spirit who indwells in us that ministers to us, witnesses to us, convicts us, encourages us. That is how we know. It can be difficult because we has humans want proof, we want something tangible, we want to be able to see it, we want to be able to touch it and I think is why we are so prone to fall back into a yoke of bondage. We want something

that we can look at, something we can measure ourselves up against so that we can prove to ourselves our righteousness.

But the bible teaches that any righteousness we try to gain on our own merit amounts to nothing before God. Our righteousness comes from God himself and is imputed or laid to our account. Paul says our Spirit eagerly awaits for hope of righteousness. If you want something tangible, something to hold on to, examine yourself to see if the spirit is ministering to you. If we skip a head a bit Paul says what the works of the spirit are. He says It is Love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control. These are the traits that mark the life of a Christian. These are the tangible things that prove if the spirit is in us.

Last week Jim preached in John where Christ says Do you not believe that I am in the father and the father in Me? Most assuredly I say to you he who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also. If you remember the diagram Jim put up on the board showing Christ in the father, and the father in Him, and the holy spirit in us and Christ in the spirit. This is where the outflow of the tangible works of righteousness comes from. We are adopted children of God, we should have the traits of our Father. After Paul lists the works of the spirit at the end of Galatians 5...he says against such there is no law. We do not need the law as a guide, or as a way to try to prove to ourselves our salvation.

We have the spirit who abides with us, ministering to us. We have the spirit eagerly awaiting that day of Christ's return. We have the holy spirit creating in us love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. We each should examine ourselves as to if we are resting in Christ and the liberty he has given us or are measuring ourselves against some commandments of men to convince ourselves of our salvation. One is freedom giving life, the other is bondage leading to death. If you are trusting in your own merits, your own works, meeting some list of good things you made for yourself, you need to drop all of it, repent of your sin and rebellion, and pride, and go to Christ, who's burden is light. It is only Christ's righteousness imputed to you that counts...not any you try to create yourself. Run to Christ and rest in him, and enjoy the freedom and liberty by which Christ has made us free.