

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Galatians 5:1-6:18

NIV MEMORY VERSE: Galatians 5:22-23

SLIDE: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity...

...When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual:Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!

Anyone recall who spoke those words and where those words were spoken? Yes. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "I Have a Dream" delivered 28 August 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C.

SLIDE: There are a number of parallels from that speech to our topic today:

1. **BUILD:** The letter to the Galatians is the Apostle Paul's *Magnum Opus* on freedom. If you want an expanded version of Galatians, read Romans. Galatians is Romans in miniature.
2. **BUILD:** Christ Himself signed our Emancipation Proclamation. That decree became the great beacon of hope to those released from the shackles of adherence to the law and our consequent attempt to gain God's decree that we are just.
3. **BUILD:** And when we allow that freedom to reign, in the words of Thomas A Kempis, we will:

BUILD: **First**, seek another's best interest rather than our own.

BUILD: **Second**, we'll choose to have less so others can have more.

BUILD: **Third**, We'll seek the lower places in life, dying to the need to be recognized and important. And

BUILD: **fourth**, we'll always and in everything desire that the will of God may be completely fulfilled in us.

So appreciate the work both Dan and Carol put into these past two weeks.

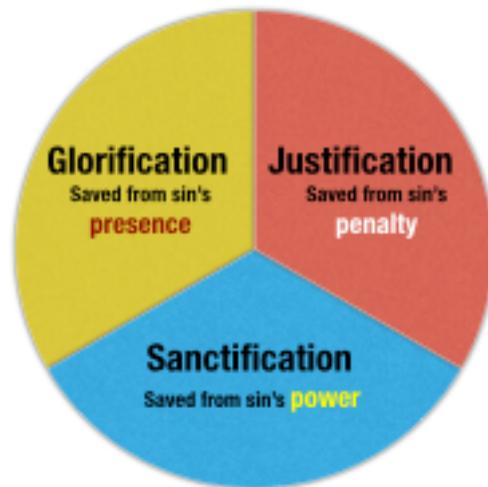
Dan's work on justification, defined as *the act of God by which He declares (Gr: *dikaioō*) sinners to be righteous by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone.*

Gal. 2:20 says, *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.* "When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, our sin and sinful nature is crucified on the Cross of Christ. When He died on the Cross, so did all of our sin as well as our sinful nature. **What died was replaced by a new life** – given to us by Christ, and it is Christ Himself that lives in us.

SLIDE: Carol's work concerning Law and Grace. She pointed out three errors which have continued to today:

1. Legalism – The teaching that we are saved by works, by observing laws and traditions established by some modern churches.
2. The second is called Anti-nomianism. That teaching says that because we are saved by grace it makes no difference how we live and behave. An accusation Rome made against the Reformers. Luther responded with are saved by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. He referred to the Christian life as a *Fides Viva*.
3. The third error is termed Galatianism. This false doctrine teaches that we are saved by grace and then afterwards KEPT by the Law, making our ultimate salvation dependent on our works rather than the grace of God. An accusation the Reformers made against Rome.

SLIDE: So many get tripped up and fall into one of these errors because they don't understand the nature of our **SALAVATION**. Paul summed this up in the eight chapter of Romans and verses 29-30, *God knew what he was doing from the very beginning. He decided from the outset to shape the lives of those who love him along the same lines as the life of his Son. The Son stands first in the line of humanity he restored. We see the original and intended shape of our lives there in him. And those he planned to be like his Son, he also called; and those he called, he also made right with him; and those he made right, he also glorified.*



Back to Galatians...

Before plunging into this third section of his letter, Paul interjects a verse that is at once a summary of all that has gone before and a transition to what follows. It is, in fact, the key verse of his entire letter.

Gal. 5:1, It is FOR freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm (HOLD FAST!), then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Boice, "The Jews of Paul's time spoke of 'taking the yoke of the law upon oneself,' it is therefore likely that Paul is referring to such an expression here. To the Jews the taking up of the law's yoke was good; indeed, it was the essence of religion. To Paul it was assuming the yoke of slavery. Perhaps Paul was also remembering that Jesus had spoken of

Christians taking His yoke upon them (Matt 11:29-30), but this involves a different kind of service—one that is 'easy' and 'light'—as the readers of the letter are to see."

I'll refer to Matthew 11 at the close of our time together.

Falling Back Into Legalism – 5:2-6

SLIDE: *Gal. 5:2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*

QUESTION - Why was circumcision THE issue?

Gen. 17:9 Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. 10 This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you... 14 Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant."

Circumcision was THE SIGN of the covenant and it was an everlasting covenant.

Paul's response

Rom. 2:28 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29 No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

Col. 2:11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,

Col. 3:11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

SLIDE: The choice before the Galatians was between Christ and no circumcision at all, or circumcision and no Christ at all.

This explains why Paul is so categorical in condemning the practice of circumcision for the Galatians. It is not that circumcision in itself is that important. In fact, Paul himself had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3); just four verses farther on (Gal. 5:6) he will say that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value."

SLIDE: What Paul is condemning is the theology of circumcision—namely, the theology that makes works necessary for salvation and seeks to establish conformity to some external standards of behavior as a mark of spirituality.

Verse 4 Once again Paul reiterates his points, this time dropping the hypothetical "if" for the much stronger statement: "**You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.**" Have they desired to be saved by legalism? In that case, Christ is of no value to them and the burden of keeping the whole law is theirs.

Remember Paul's primary concern of the letter is the question, "Who are the true children of Abraham?"

Paul's response: Those, especially Gentiles, who have faith like Abraham's, who are thus freeborn sons and not slaves. They have become so by faith in Christ and the promised gift of the Holy Spirit; on the other hand, those who would enforce Gentile believers to be circumcised are bringing them under the law and thus into slavery.

SLIDE: The Judaizer's equation would read, "Faith + works of the law = justification."

BUILD: Paul's equation would read, "Faith = justification + works."

So, how does one exercise their freedom? Answer = Live By The Spirit - *Galatians 5:13-26*

Freedom's Abuses

Gal. 5:13a, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature..."

What was the Judaizer's fear and chief complaint? That those who are "free from the Law" would become lawless.

John Stott, The Greek word here translated "Indulge" (*amphorae*) is used in military contexts for a place from which an offensive is launched, a base of operations. It therefore means a vantage-ground, and so an opportunity or pretext. Thus our freedom in Christ is not to be used as a pretext for self-indulgence. **Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.**

Freedom's Joy

Gal 5:13, "My friends, you were chosen to be free. So don't use your freedom as an excuse to do anything you want. Use it as an opportunity to serve each other with love (a willing to look out for the BEST interests of the other – a willingness to die for the other if necessary). 14 All that the Law says can be summed up in the command to love others as much as you love yourself. (CEV)

As someone once said, "Any man wrapped up in himself makes a very small parcel."

Our fulfillment in life comes through sacrifice and service and magnanimous gestures of grace.

Option: Clip – Les Miserables –

Bishop: Now Don't Forget, Don't ever Forget, you've promised to become a new man.

Jean Valjean: Promise? What, Why are you doing this?

Bishop: Jean Valjean my brother you no longer belong to evil. With this silver, I have bought your soul. I've ransomed you from fear and hatred, and now I give you back to God.

Walking by the Spirit – 5:16-25

We're free in Christ. But that freedom is constantly challenged by the flesh. To grow in Christ demands that we take deliberate action. That's why Paul says,

Gal. 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

"Live by the Spirit" or "Let your conduct be directed by the Spirit."

Flesh and Spirit on Display

What, then, does life in the Spirit look like? Surely the Law-seeking **Galatians**, who were used to assessing life by visible evidence, sought some way to evaluate whether one was living in the flesh or the Spirit. So Paul first supplies them with a catalog of the sins of the flesh; then he sets before them the fruit of the Spirit.

The Deeds of the Flesh

SLIDE: *Gal. 5:19-21, When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

The phrase "sins like these" shows that Paul didn't intend this list to be exhaustive. Rather, it is representative of the whole spectrum of sinful activity. We won't take time to examine each word in the list, but the fifteen actions can be divided into four main groups: (1) illicit sexual activity, (2) religious perversion, (3) social conflict, and (4) drunkenness.

The Fruit of the Spirit

SLIDE: *Gal. 5:22-23, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

Though these characteristics defy rigid categorization, some commentators divide them into three triads: **SLIDE:**

1. **Inner** attitudes **sourced** in God (love, joy, peace),
2. **Relational** qualities **expressed** to others (patience, kindness, goodness), and

3. **Personal** qualities that **guide** individual conduct (faithfulness, gentleness, self-control).

Practically Speaking

All this begs the question, "How?" How do we walk in the Spirit? How do we keep the flesh from getting a foothold? How do we live a life that consistently reflects the goodness of God? Paul brings this section to a very practical close.

Consciously, consistently saying no to sin. Reminding ourselves of **who** we are in Christ. Pursuing His will, His life. His glory...in His strength. That's what it means to walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit came to live with us when we believed, and He is with us for the whole journey (*Since we live by the Spirit, let us (continually) keep in step with the Spirit*"v. 25).

SLIDE: Jesus said, *"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.* **Matthew 11:28-30** (MSG)

Other's Burdens, Our Load - *Galatians 6:1-5*

Gal. 6:2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ...6:5 for each one should carry his own load

G. Walter Hansen, sees the two verses as complementary.

Paul uses two different Greek words to make a clear distinction between the *burden* (*baros*) and the *load* (*phortion*). Though these two words are basically synonymous in other contexts, the change of nouns in this context indicates a change of reference. Verse 2 refers to the need to come to the aid of others who cannot carry the crushing burden of the consequences of their sin. Verse 5 refers to work given to us by our Master, before whom we will have to give an account of how we used the opportunities and talents he gave us to serve him. It is because we desire to fulfill our God-given mission in life that we learn how to carry the burdens of others. In other words, as Christians examine their actions to see if they reflect the love of Christ, they are at the same time led by that self-evaluation to consider how to serve others in love.

Two Fields, Two Choices

Becoming like Jesus (sanctification) is a deliberate discipline. Fred Allen once said, *"Most of us spend the first six days of each week sowing wild oats, then we go to church on Sunday and pray for a crop failure."*

To grow well, we have to sow well. Christians have two fields before them into which they can sow: (1) the field of the flesh and (2) the field of the Spirit. If we're to live to glorify God, we must sow in the field of the Spirit.

We reap what we sow: in financial support of our pastors, in holy living, and in doing good.

9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

*Heb. 13:16, And **do not forget** to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

We all can lose heart while doing the Lord's work, can't we? We all ask ourselves, AM I MAKING ANY DIFFERNCE? IS WHAT I AM ENGAGED IN HAVING ANY AFFECT AT ALL?

We may have to wait to see the full harvest of all that we're sowing in this life, but we will see it ... in another season. So don't give up. The Lord knows your work. And He's causing your seeds of service to bear fruit for His glory.

There is a magnificent story in Marie Chapian's book Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy. The book told of the sufferings of the true church in Yugoslavia where so much wrong has been perpetrated by the politicized ecclesiastical hierarchy. That which has gone on in the name of Christ for the enriching and empowering of corrupt church officials has been a terrible affront to decency.

One day an evangelist by the name of Jakov arrived in a certain village. He commiserated with an elderly man named Cimmerman on the tragedies he had experienced and talked to him of the love of Christ. Cimmerman abruptly interrupted Jakov and told him that he wished to have nothing to do with Christianity. He reminded Jakov of the dreadful history of the church in his town, a history replete with plundering, exploiting, and indeed with killing innocent people. "My own nephew was killed by them," he said and angrily rebuffed any effort on Jakov's part to talk about Christ. "They wear those elaborate coats and caps and crosses," he said, "signifying a heavenly commission, but their evil designs and lives I cannot ignore."

Jakov, looking for an occasion to get Cimmerman to change his line of thinking, said, "Cimmerman, can I ask you a question? Suppose I were to steal your coat, put it on, and break into a bank. Suppose further that the police sighted me running in the distance but could not catch up with me. One clue, however, put them onto your track; they recognized your coat. What would you say to them if they came to your house and accused you of breaking into the bank?"

"I would deny it," said Cimmerman.

"Ah, but we saw your coat,' they would say," retorted Jakov. This analogy quite annoyed Cimmerman, who ordered Jakov to leave his home.

Jakov continued to return to the village periodically just to befriend Cimmerman, encourage him, and share the love of Christ, with him. Finally one day Cimmerman asked, "How does one become a Christian?" and Jakov taught him the simple steps of repentance for sin and of trust in the work of Jesus Christ and gently pointed him to the Shepherd of his soul. Cimmerman bent his knee on the soil with his head bowed and surrendered his life to Christ. As he rose to his feet, wiping his tears, he embraced Jakov and said, "Thank you for being in my life." And then he pointed to the heavens and whispered, "You wear His coat

very well."

In our freedom, let's wear His coat well and not become weary in doing good.

Digging Deeper

- *In what ways are you exercising your freedom in Christ to expand the kingdom of God?*
- *How tolerant are you of other Christians and their exercise of freedom?*
- *What is the downside to being free in Christ?*
- The spiritual life is anything but passive. Paul said to the Philippians, "*Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure*" (Phil. 2:12b-13). God saved us. He is shaping us into the image of His Son. He is maturing us. But that doesn't mean we're a passive member of the process. Yes, it's ultimately up to God whether He allows the farmer's crop to come in. But what farmer would neglect sowing, tending, and reaping—presuming upon God to bring in the crop anyway?
- Is there any part of your spiritual life that you've given up on or stopped putting effort into? If so, what is it? How can you get back on track?

