

Live in Gospel Freedom! It's Vital, So Stand Fast!

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles.

Go to the book of Galatians chapter five. Galatians five, we're actually gonna start in verse one. Galatians chapter five, we will start in verse one.

One through 12 this morning. Galatians five, one through 12. Page 149 in the Black Bible. Galatians chapter five, verses one through 12.

Let me read and then we'll do our study. Therefore in the freedom Christ set us free, stand fast and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Behold, I, Paul, say to you, if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole law.

[1:19] You've been severed from Christ. You are seeking to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace. For we, through the Spirit by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you and the Lord that you will adopt no other view.

But the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

Would that those who are troubling you even mutilate themselves? Before the Berlin Wall fell, a substitute teacher wrote in the Washington Post, about the depressing experience he had while teaching three advanced government classes in a suburban Virginia school.

[2:39] And the article was written in 1990, so you can imagine this was before that, because it was 89, I think it was, when the Berlin Wall fell. So it was written in 1990. He decided to poll his students on the basic question of whether the American system of government was morally superior to that of the Soviet Union.

51 of the 53 high school seniors, he asked, the brightest high school seniors in one of the best school systems in the country saw no difference between the two. Not coincidentally, the two children, who did comprehend a difference, were Vietnamese boat children.

They had received a valuable education in reality when they experienced collapse of their homeland into the darkness of totalitarianism. And now her nephew married a gal whose parents were Vietnamese boat children back in the 1970s.

Freedom has a high cost, doesn't it? A cost people don't seem to appreciate anymore. They take it for granted. And yet this freedom that we have in this country is nothing compared to the freedom we have in Jesus Christ.

Which is why Paul's theme here in Galatians is live in gospel freedom. And today we'll see, this news is vital, so stand fast, and here's how you can stand fast.

[4:16] He's gonna give you seven ways of how you can stand fast in this freedom of the gospel in these first 12 verses of chapter 5. This news is vital, so stand fast.

And here's how. This news, it's so vital, so stand fast. And here's how we can stand fast. So we're moving into this last section of doctrine on the brink of the practical outworking of the gospel freedom.

And remember that the aspect of the gospel, the key aspect of the gospel is this. We are justified by faith, grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, so live in this gospel freedom.

That's the heart of the gospel. You are made right with God, not by your works. Your works contribute nothing to be made right with God.

Nothing. It's not because your works, your good works outweigh your bad. No. God credits you, his own righteousness, in Jesus, through the means of faith alone.

[5:30] That's it. Free grace. The gospel is not just necessary, as we'll see, for our salvation.

The gospel is necessary for continual Christian living. We always have to remind ourselves of the truth of the gospel. It's for the whole Christian life. And that's why we begin here at verse 1, which we ended here last week.

This is the transition verse between chapter 4 and chapter 5. And so we begin here, stand fast in freedom. Paul says, therefore, in the freedom Christ set us free, stand fast, cling to this freedom, the freedom we have in this news of the gospel.

Just to reiterate some aspects that we looked at last week from this verse, freedom means deliverance. Deliverance from the law.

The curse which the law pronounced upon sinners everywhere is freedom from fear, from strict obedience to the law to try and gain God's approval. Freedom is the purpose Christ came to give his life for sinners.

[6:46] We're all called to stand firm in this gospel freedom, resisting all attempts to make ourselves subservient to law, to try to gain God's acceptance, to try and gain God's approval.

That brings nothing but a curse. Based upon one's trust in Jesus alone, a person can be free, a true son of Abraham, similar to the freeborn Isaac.

We looked at that last week. It was promised to Abraham and Sarah by Yahweh himself, by grace. So freedom is a positive state, fulfilling the law of Christ.

And the heart of freedom is serving God willingly, happily, freely. It's free access to the Father through Jesus himself. At the cross, so keep standing firm. Oh, we're not looking at that yet. Stand firm in your freedom. Continue to do so. Be like a tree standing strong, like soldiers of old. And notice the next part of verse one, and do not be subject again to yoke of slavery.

[7:49] Having been freed from the unbearable yoke of paganism, don't shoulder another yoke, like Judaism. Why go to another ritualism, having just been freed from one already?

Why would you do that? Don't give in to legalism, or antinomianism, that is. Stay on the straight and narrow path of the gospel of freedom.

We talked about this last week. Don't listen to yourself. Preach the gospel of free grace to yourself. You'll have the opportunity, as we partake of the elements. Proclaim the gospel to yourself.

Say, I am saved by grace, through faith alone in Christ alone. That's how I'm saved. I'm justified. Yes, I did that thing wrong. That was me. But God, he was gracious to me, and he saves me.

All because Jesus died for that sin. If you're here, you don't know Jesus, or you're listening to his message, you don't know Jesus, you can be freed from sin. God can forgive you.

[8:52] Repent and trust Christ. You'll be saved. These Judaizers were calling him to be circumcised, to follow the Old Testament.

The Old Testament law, in order to be accepted by God, you can be approved by God. It's the only way, if you follow the law, but this is nothing but slavery. It's not gospel freedom, it's enslavement. So freedom means deliverance from the law and its curse. It's freedom from fear. Trying harder and harder, be perfectly obedient.

Fear from oppression. Freedom is fulfilling the law of Christ. Serving God happily. Freedom is free access to the Father. Jesus himself did all this.

You contributed nothing. So now, here's seven ways we can stand fast in this gospel freedom. Paul gives these seven significant statements, so to speak, or ways to stand fast.

[9:57] This is how you can stand fast in these first 12 verses, or I should say verses 2 through 12. Number one, we must focus on Christ. How do you stand fast in this gospel freedom?

First, focus on Christ. Focus on Christ. Look at verse 2. Behold, I, Paul, he's seen to be asserting his apostolic authority here, I say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

If one embraces circumcision, if you embrace this aspect of Old Testament law that you have to be circumcised and then you're good, you get God's approval, you do a certain work, and you're justified, then Christ is no prophet.

We see here the antithesis between circumcision and faith in Jesus. Christ's work then is no avail. To say that the law is necessary for salvation and then claim that Jesus is the Redeemer, it's incompatible, inconceivable.

Chapter 2, verse 21, Paul says, I do not nullify the grace of God for his righteousness is through the law. Christ died needlessly. If salvation is by works, you gotta try harder.

[11:27] And tell me, why did Jesus have to die? Here's the contrast. It's law or Christ, legal prescriptions or his atonement, circumcision or grace, works or faith, worldly religions or biblical Christianity.

Slavery or freedom, slave or son. Which would you like to have? If you try to mingle these together, it's deadly.

Either we rely on Christ entirely, or not at all. There's no in between. And that's what Paul is trying to say here.

If you receive circumcision, if you think works contribute to justification, Christ is no benefit to you. There's no point. Why celebrate the gospel?

Why partake of the Lord's Supper? If it's all up to you to try harder to get God to save you and that you can be made right with God by your works. What's the point?

[12:40] Either we trust Christ, or we don't. Either it's law, or Jesus. Either we follow these legal prescriptions, or you bank on his atonement.

Either you go by circumcision, or you put a work in there, whatever, or grace. Works or faith.

Remember, a Christ supplemented is a Christ supplanted.

If you supplement Jesus, you're just supplanting him. Look at what he says in verse 3. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole law.

He's speaking to every Gentile Christian and Jewish Christian who receives circumcision as a legal obligation necessary for salvation. It sealed the law, so now you must fulfill the whole law.

And the law's appetite is voracious and relentless. Just like bedbugs. They're making a comeback, you know.

[14:00] You know those big cities? That's the truth. They're making a comeback. They have a voracious appetite for human blood.

God, ugh, that's nasty. It's getting harder to eradicate them. They were eradicated. And we're coming back. We won't go into the reasons why.

But anyways, that's the law. It has a voracious appetite. It's relentless. It will not let you go.

It will enslave you. To follow the law for justification equals abandoning salvation by grace altogether.

If one places confidence in their own works, one must understand that God demands perfection and if there's no perfection, you're cursed. It's all or nothing, baby.

[15:03] Verse four. You've been severed from Christ. You who are seeking to be justified by law, you've fallen from grace.

If one wants to be justified by law, then two results happen. First, you're severed from Christ, that is, you're removed from Christ's fear of operation. You cut off relations with Him.

The cord that connects them to Christ snaps. He's talking about human responsibility here. And second, result, you've fallen from grace, which really is an explanation of the first. They lost their standing in grace.

You've forgotten grace. You've fallen away from that. Justification is not attained through the law. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, incorporating into Jesus, all on the basis of who He is and His work on the cross, His atoning work on the cross.

That's it. That's why it's crazy news. That's why people think you're a nutcase for believing that. I mean, all my sin is transferred upon Jesus.

[16:20] All my sin is transferred upon Him, and I'm credited with God's righteousness because of Him and in Him? Yeah. It's crazy. It's the truth. So justification is either all of grace through faith in union with Christ or it's nothing at all.

Either one loves Christ or you're estranged from Christ. There's no in between. And what happens is we begin to listen to ourselves, right?

You begin to listen to yourself. You listen. No, don't. And let that thing we're gonna do with the elements, let that talk to you. Not in like a mystical, creepy way.

I'm not talking about that. Let it talk to you, telling you the tangible, tangible tasting, smelling, maybe Jesus replaced, right?

Anyway. Smelling of the Lord's Supper, these elements, tangible aspects of the gospel, let that tell you the truth.

[17 : 33] It's all by grace. It's your faith alone in Jesus. So first, let's focus on Christ. Second, we must wait for the hope.

How do you stand fast? Hope on Christ, excuse me, focus on Christ, wait for the hope. Verse five, look at verse five. For we, through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. We, the conviction of Paul and those Galatians who remain faithful to the gospel of freedom, faithful to the freedom of grace. We, through the Spirit, the solid expectation generated, is sustained and generated by the Holy Spirit.

The law produces death, the Spirit gives life. The law creates fear and wretchedness. The Spirit gives hope and assurance.

The law enslaves, the Spirit frees. So he says, we, through the Spirit, by faith, we're waiting for the hope of righteousness.

[18 : 45] The law brings uncertainty because none meets its requirements. the news of free grace brings certainty because Jesus died for us taking our sin and secures eternity for those who trust him.

Your eternity is secure. That's the hope you have. We wait. Not hoping and, wait, I was like, I really hope it's gonna rain today.

I really hope it's not gonna snow. It's a hope. It's based upon fact. The hope to which the justification of believers points them forward. The hope that's prompted by righteousness already known.

God always fulfills his promises to his people. It's not a wish. It's a surety. We have surety that God will fulfill his promise of the hope of the inheritance.

We have hope that he will come to bring us home. How do you stand fast? Wait for the hope.

Judgment day is our justification experience now.

[19 : 55] We have hope. Wait for that hope. Trust in that hope. Because we're declared righteous by faith, we can have a sure, steadfast hope.

And the active principle of our legal, righteous standing is through the Spirit. Who is, if you will, the down payment of that hope?

He's the pledge of that hope. Or, I'll offer this as well. He's the engagement ring.

He's the promise that you're going to have the time of righteousness where you're with the Lord.

How do we stand fast? Focus on Christ.

Two, wait for the hope. Three, we must love others. Verse six, we must love others. Four, verse six, four, in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything.

[21 : 06] Union with Christ makes circumcision or uncircumcision matters of no importance.

Doesn't matter. They're totally irrelevant compared to union with Christ. It's not about the foreskin. It's about being united to Jesus.

So what really matters? Faith working or expressing itself through love. That's why he says that at the end of verse six. But faith working through love.

What does this mean? Well, faith is not made operative through love. I mean, Catholics teach that. Faith, which operates through love, is equivalent to the faith which justifies.

Paul is using this statement as a springboard in the last part of his letter to become very practical. We're gonna see that next week. Chapter five, 13 through 15.

[22 : 15] We are the conduit through which the gospel love flows from us for each other. real true faith, real true faith operates through love.

Faith makes genuine work possible. Or another way to put it, by faith, excuse me, faith by which we're justified is of such a nature that it will express itself through love. A person becomes a loving person.

that's active faith. So how are you gonna stand fast in this? We love others. Our faith should display itself in our love for the body of Christ.

Our commitment to the local church. Paul said this to delineate his authentic life in Jesus over and against the false charges from the Judaizers.

who really hated Paul. They charged him with proclaiming a gospel and encouraged him to promote sin. Paul says, no way. In regards to the Spirit, that faith through which we're justified is the beginning of new life in Jesus.

[23 : 30] It's empowered by the Spirit. Justification marks our new life in the Spirit. Faith through which we're justified is also at the same time that which receives the Spirit who is given on the basis of justification and it shows itself in love.

One writer puts it like this, quote, faith operates through love because the faith which is the means of justification also at the same time receives the Spirit who is the principle and the producer of the new life of love.

The Spirit produces that in you. And you're going to see that next week I think because it says Galatians chapter 5 the fruit, one fruit of the Spirit is love.

So the gift of justification and life in the Spirit involve at the same time the task of a life that loves. So faith works or becomes effective or proves its genuine character by means of love.

How are you showing you're standing fast in the gospel of freedom? You love others. You love the body. Faith is made perfect by works of love.

[24 : 52] That's what James says, James chapter 2. Stand fast in his freedom. How? Focus on Christ. 2. Wait for the hope. 3. Love others.

4. Watch out for leaven. Watch out for leaven. Verse 7.

You were running well. You believe the news of free grace. You got off to a great start. You're leaning forward toward the goal.

His statement was taken from a foot race in a stadium. It's like they take off. They're running. Good pace. They're going. Right?

And then they fall away. You were running well.

[25 : 52] Who hindered you from obeying the truth? What happened? Who blocked your way in the race? Who blocked you from obeying the truth which is equivalent to obeying the gospel?

They were proceeding toward a path that would lead them to ruin. Why did you deviate so severely from the truth? What are you thinking?

What are you doing? What are you doing? Watch out for this leaven because look at what he says in verse 8. This persuasion is not from him who calls you.

This persuasion is not from God. It's not from God. This persuasion to favor this false gospel did not come from God who calls people by his grace towards his grace.

God gave his son for his people out of gratitude for his gracious gift. All those who embrace him should spend their days giving praise to him and thoughts, word, and deed, loving others.

[27 : 08] But now they're saying no to God and yes to Satan. You're allowing these people to influence you. And that's why he says, look at verse nine.

A little leaven, leaven's a whole lump. Just put a little leaven in that lump of dough. Big old lump of dough, you just put a little leaven, what happened? You work that in, right?

It permeates throughout. Little causes have great effects. Small causes, big results.

the persuasive influence of error works righteousness, has a pervasive destructive influence once it is allowed.

Or you can even from 1 Corinthians chapter 15, bad company corrupts good morals. A little bit of carelessness can start a huge forest fire destroying thousands of miles, right?

[28 : 18] That person puffing their little cigarette, what do they do with the butt? They go out the window, right? That's all it takes, right?

Just that little thing. And then what can happen? That's what he's talking about. False doctrine, will produce false living, false teaching, like yeast spreads and permeates like cancer.

Cancer wants to take over your body, that's what it'll do, and your body thinks it's okay. Your body thinks, oh, it's part of it, it's part of the body, it's good, we're okay with that, and your body lets it grow.

a little bit of carelessness. Listen to this, for want of a nail, the shoe was lost, for want of a shoe, the horse was lost, for want of a horse, the rider was lost, for want of a rider, the battle was lost, and for want of a battle, the kingdom was lost.

All this for want of a horseshoe nail. Benjamin Franklin wrote that. The same guy who says, God helps those who help themselves.

[29:44] That's not in the Bible. That's a lie, by the way, too. So number four, watch out for leaven. Watch out for the leaven of those who say you have to gain God's acceptance through blah, blah, blah.

Number five, we must return constantly to the gospel. Verse 10, return constantly to the gospel. When he says in verse 10, I have confidence in you, in the Lord. Notice his confidence not necessarily in them, but in the Lord.

His hope is not in people, have confidence in you and the Lord. You will adopt no other view, but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment whoever he is.

You will adopt no other view. It's their attitude, where their thinking and their wills are won. He had personal confidence in the Lord regarding his converts, and he aimed at recovering them from this false doctrine.

[30:59] you guys have to return to the gospel constantly. And I have confidence in the Lord that you'll do this. Confidence in the God who works in the hearts of people changing them.

Paul's desire was that what he was saying to them in his letter would cause them to change their minds again and go back to this vital news that they would return to the gospel of grace.

Keep going back to the gospel of grace. Remind yourself of grace. You will not remind yourself of grace. You'll listen to yourself that you're not good enough.

You'll listen to the accuser. You shouldn't have done that. How could you call yourself a Christian? Yeah, yeah, yeah. You must go back to grace. Constantly remind yourself of free grace.

Yes, that's true. I did that, but God saved me and he's transforming me and Jesus died for that sin. Praise the Lord.

[32:09] And that's why he says end, but the one who's disturbing you shall bear his judgment. Whoever he is, it could be directed at some ringleader, maybe a person's high standing in the church, maybe just a generalization, whichever it is.

Judgment was certain. Paul's like, preaching a false gospel brings just condemnation. And if you connect yourselves to these false gospel preachers, you're going to face the same thing from them. We must always go back to the gospel. That's why you celebrate the Lord's Supper. Because it's a tangible reminder of grace. Don't let it become a thing where, oh, that's right, Lord's Supper, I messed up so many times in my life.

That's not the point of that. The point is to remind you of the love of God sent to you in Jesus Christ. Just remind you of grace. You don't deserve it.

That's the whole point. That's why it's called grace. That's the whole point, right? Focus on Christ. Wait for the hope.

[33:17] Love others. Watch out for leaven. Return constantly to the gospel. Number six. We must not compromise. Or you can put don't compromise.

Verse 11. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?

Why were they accusing Paul of this? They charged Paul with inconsistency on his part. He was saying one thing but doing something else. If it was true, why were they still persecuting him for his news if he was preaching circumcision?

He's like, this is insane. Then he says this, then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. The cross proclaims that the way to righteousness is through Christ's death.

So it stands as a stumbling block to those who want to be justified by their own good works. I mean, this news about a Jew crucified, you can be made right with God, not through works but through faith, this is a scandal.

[34:38] This can't be for real. And to the world is foolishness to them, 1 Corinthians chapter 1, but to the called is the power of God.

For Jews, it's a huge obstacle for them. This news is offensive because it robs a person of making even the smallest contribution to their salvation.

You contributed nothing. Well, I should say, you did contribute. Your sin was what contributed to your salvation. That's it. Do you want a right standing with God?

Do you want to be made right with God as an act of grace alone received through faith alone and Jesus alone? Live this way. Don't compromise. Know that it offends.

That will offend people. Don't. It will be a stumbling block to them. They'll think you're a nut case. Christ crucified for our salvation is all sufficient.

[35:51] If we compromise this, we will dishonor the Lord, we'll keep meeting sinners from the one news they need, and cease to be a true, genuine church.

Let me say a little thing about that true, genuine church. How do you know of a true church? The reformer says there's three ways. One, the gospel is preached or taught.

Two, you administer the elements, the ordinances, excuse me, you administer the ordinances, which is baptism and the Lord's supper. Three, church discipline.

Three ways, three aspects of a true church. Leadership, you should have leadership, of course, but if you don't have leadership, you don't have elders, it doesn't mean you're not a true church.

You understand that? You can experience that in four weeks, five weeks, six weeks, seven weeks, eight weeks from now, but don't think you're not a true church.

[36:53] The gospel is being taught, you're holding to the gospel, partaking the elements together, and you have to exercise church discipline and do it. There's three. That makes a true church.

That makes a body. Don't think that this notion that there's an unbiblical church because they don't have leaders. It's ridiculous. This is what a true church is.

Don't compromise that. Don't ever compromise on the gospel. Seven, we must not tolerate false gospels. Don't compromise and don't tolerate.

Verse 12, whether those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves. Now, this mutilate, this could be taken literally or figuratively. I take it figuratively.

Others do as well. So the idea is this. They would even cut themselves off or exclude themselves.

Paul's desire was that they would shut themselves out and cease troubling God's people.

[38:03] That they would exclude or mutilate or cut themselves off from the congregation of God's church. So I'm taking this in a positive way, so to speak, or more active way from part of the congregation.

This should be our attitude with false gospels. Don't tolerate it. Don't listen to it. Don't tolerate them. We should want to exclude, want them to exclude themselves from God's people that they would cut themselves off from the truth.

It takes us back to chapter 1 of Galatians. Paul said, look, if anyone, we or an angel from heaven, preach to you a gospel contrary to that which you've received, which we've preached to you, let it be anathematized.

Let it be accursed. He says it twice. we cannot and should not allow false gospels to make their way into the church or make its way into your life.

You must stand fast in this gospel-free grace and this gospel freedom. This news, the last part of this news is vital.

[39:18] This news is so vital, so stand fast. And here's how we can stand fast. Here it is, the seven. Focus on Christ. Wait for the hope. Love others.

Watch out for leaven. Return constantly to the gospel. Don't compromise. Don't tolerate false gospels. And this would be a great opportunity for you, for us, to focus on Christ, to watch out for leaven, and to return to the gospel when we partake of the elements together.

We examine our hearts and we know we're not worthy. We, not concealing ourselves, but revealing ourselves, open ourselves up to the Lord.

Lord, you see my heart, you know what it is. Here I am. You remind yourself of grace that comes to you. Grace that's shown to you. Grace that's given to you.

Grace that you're showered with this grace through Jesus Christ. For Christians, those of you who know Christ, if you don't know Christ, it's not for you. And even for those of you who have something against another believer, or unbeliever for that matter, and you've not gone to make things right.

[40:41] If you've gone to make things right, you can't do anything about it, it's different. If you haven't gone to make things right, don't partake of the Lord's Supper. Try to make things right, and then come.