

Gospel Living: Freedom

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[0 : 00] If you would open your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5, we're going to go back into verses 1 through 6 again today.

We looked at verses 1 through 12 last time and just did sort of half the sermon, so we're going to come back and do the rest of it. And I will say that I do add to these when I cut them in half, so don't think to yourself that I had an hour and a half long sermon prepared last time.

I didn't. Let's hear from the word of the Lord. It says in Galatians chapter 5, beginning in verse 1, It was for freedom that Christ set us free.

Therefore, keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he's under obligation to keep the whole law. You've been severed from Christ. You who were seeking to be justified by law, you have fallen from grace.

[1 : 14] 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.

Let's pray. Father, thank you. Thank you that you've given us such a perfect treasure of your thoughts. I pray, Lord, that you would help us to know what your word says, that we might understand how you think, what you think about us, what you think about this world, what you think about everything.

Because, Lord, we know that what you think is true. And so, Lord, help us to not be distracted with the things that are going on around us and the things that maybe we brought in with us, but help us to be clear-minded, hearing what your word says, convicted, encouraged, challenged.

Because, Father, unless you, by your Spirit, open our eyes, we won't see the truth. And we need to see the truth.

Because that's when we will be set free. And we pray this in the name of Christ. Amen. So, if we just think about Galatians for a second, we've just been walking through this.

[2 : 35] And here are several churches in this Asia Minor area. And they have people who've been infiltrating their church, teaching them that they have to go back and obey certain laws if they really want to be Christians.

You Gentiles who aren't Jews, you can't really be a Christian unless you submit to circumcision and the ceremonial law. They're counting as essential things that are not essential.

Remember that? That the idea is that as we begin to pile on things as being essential for salvation or sanctification, that God does not count as essential, then we are launching off into this world of legalism.

And I would say that the long black train is both the life of legalism and liberalism, if you'll put the two together. And when we get to Galatians chapter 5 verse 13 next week, you'll see Paul say, So, as we think about this then, the whole point of chapter 5 is he tells them, listen, I want you to stand in freedom.

You've been set free, so I want you to stand firm in that freedom. So, how do we do that? That's really the question. We understand, and if you've been in the church for any length of time, you understand we're sinners.

[4 : 11] We have disobeyed and violated God's law. We're under the wrath of God. Yet, God in His love sent His Son to die on the cross for us. And we're supposed to live in freedom, not supposed to live as legalists, not supposed to live in lasciviousness.

Liberal, you like that word? Is it better than liberalism maybe? Anyway. We're not supposed to live in either of these two ways. We're supposed to live in this freedom, but what does that even mean? What does it look like?

I think from the passage, I see four things that we really need to go over and remind ourselves about that help us to live in this freedom that we have in Christ.

The first one is we need to remember the work of Christ. We need to remember the work of Christ. In verse 1 of chapter 5, here's what Paul says.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free. That phrase, that phrase is a description and not a command.

[5 : 20] And I'm going to teach you something here that I say a lot, and so I say it a lot, and I have a hard time not saying it. So I'm just going to teach you what it is that I say so that you'll be up with me here, okay? That description is a grounding phrase for the command that comes after it.

Now, you may not understand what I'm saying when I say that, but you do understand this, that if you have a slab foundation that's been properly installed, it becomes a good foundation for a wall to be built upon, right?

You build that wall not on the ground, not on, you know, the river, not on the creek. You build it on that foundation, whatever that foundation is. A descriptive phrase in the Bible, like this one, becomes that foundation for the next statement where he says, stand firm.

So, for freedom, Christ has set you free. Therefore, built upon that truth, stand firm. But when you use truth statements, you don't say foundation, you say that it's grounded.

That's just what you say, okay? So here's my point. My point is, is that for us to be able to stand firm, we have to go back and see that he's reminding us that it's for freedom that Christ set us free.

[6 : 45] And so when he's telling us that Christ set us free, he's just getting right into the work of Jesus. What was it that Jesus did? Jesus took on flesh. He condescended to this world to take upon our weakness, to take upon our limitations, to take upon himself the role as the head of the new race.

He took upon himself living a perfect life, doing all that his father had commanded him to do. He received his reward, this law-perfect righteousness that none of us could ever attain by our own actions.

He died upon the cross for sinners, taking the punishment due to Adam and all of his offspring, including you and me. He took these holy offenses against God the Father upon himself and died in order to set the sinner free.

Without Christ, we would not be free. And our ability to stand firm in freedom has absolutely zero to do with anything we've done.

To stand in freedom means that we remind ourselves of what Christ has done. There is nothing we did to make ourselves free.

[8 : 08] There's nothing we can do to keep ourselves free. We are free because Christ has set us free. And if the Son should set you free, you are free indeed.

So this means that as we're trying to stand in freedom, we have to reflect on, remember, rehearse, and rejoice in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ as often as we can.

when we're tempted to count something as essential for salvation or for sanctification that is not essential, then what we need to do in that moment of temptation is go back and look at the cross.

I mean, if you're going to sit here and you're going to say to me that, you know, no, no, somebody's got to walk the aisle if they're going to be saved. If they don't walk that aisle, then they're not going to get saved. In that moment, in the temptation to believe that, we need to turn our eyes off the aisle and up to the cross and look what Christ has done.

Look at how He bled upon the cross. Look at how He took His life and gave it for us. That is the cure of believing something so horrific.

[9 : 17] Or when somebody begins to try to teach you and say to you, no, no, no, these things are essential. If you don't do these things just like this, then there's no way that you're either saved or being a good Christian.

I say to you, remember this, nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross I cling. Or what can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus. My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.

There is nothing that infuses the soul with steel like remembering the cross of Christ. In the face of all that goes on around us trying to draw us and drag us away from thinking about who Christ is and living in freedom, going back to the cross, remembering what Christ has done, that, that is how we stand in freedom.

And beloved, honestly, that's one of the reasons you should be under the preaching of the gospel every single week. I still preach because in large measure I need to hear the gospel every week.

[10 : 43] And I stand here as I preach these things and I'm hearing them myself. And my soul is getting fed because it's so easy to get distracted, discouraged, and despairing over all the things that happen in life.

And so why would I want to turn and go away from the one thing that puts that rigid steel in my soul like going back to the cross?

That's the problem with some people who are lost though because lost people think that they're free. They think that they're not in bondage to sin. They think they can just do what they want to and really the test of it all is to see that lost people are more like Pharisees than Christians are.

How is that? Because the Pharisees thought that they were okay and better than everybody else. And so many lost people believe that they're fine, they're okay the way they are, they don't like to give up how they're living, they don't want to do what everybody else is doing in the church instead, they want to do what they want to do on themselves and they have no conviction in their conscience.

They are under the wrath of God but the truth of the matter is that you are in bondage to your sin whether you realize it or not and if you are lost that I'm saying to you turn from your sin.

[12 : 11] Turn to Christ before it's too late. Standing in freedom means that we need to remember the work of Christ. The second thing is that we need to wait for the hope of righteousness.

We need to wait for the hope of righteousness. Look it down at verse 5. Verse 5 it says for we through the Spirit by faith are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

Now I want you to notice that the primary thought of verse 5 is that we are waiting for the hope of righteousness. That's the primary thought. The little phrase through the Spirit and by faith we'll get to those in just a second but the primary thought is that we're waiting for the hope of righteousness.

And then I want you to notice that verses 2 through 4 is describing and that's what we dealt with last week. We dealt with verses 2 through 4 last week. That's describing the dangers of legalism.

And so when we get to verse 5 and you'll notice verse 2 through 4 it's you, you, you, you, you, and verse 5 goes back to verse 1 where it's we. So verse 1 we, verse 5 we.

[13 : 18] So how do we stand in freedom? Paul says well we're waiting. We're waiting for the hope of righteousness. Just to think about what this means kind of in a big picture here.

The word waiting there is to eagerly wait. So Paul is saying we're eagerly waiting with hope right? And this hope is a confident assurance. It's not a hope so, it's not a wishful thinking.

In our day and age we often think of hope as something that's a wish for that we don't know is going to happen. That's not how the Bible uses this word. The Greek word behind that means a know so.

I know so. I'm confident, I'm sure. It's like the toddler standing on the edge of the pool jumping to his father knowing the father's going to catch him and not let him drown. It's that hope that we have in the Lord.

Paul is saying that our current state of affairs is that we by the spirit and faith are eagerly waiting for the final full completion of the righteousness and the hoped for righteousness that God has promised to us.

[14 : 23] Paul is making sure that we understand that we have coming to us a sure and certain future. We have a certainty about what's going to happen to us because of what Christ has done for us.

Waiting for that righteousness, remembering the work of Christ, go together and help us stand in freedom without the certainty that that righteousness is coming, we begin to trickle off over into legalism trying to do something to help us be certain that maybe we can hedge our bets and maybe God will be somewhat pleased with us.

We had a Jehovah's Witness guy come by our house years ago. He was one of the leaders in their church in our town and I invited him in.

Because when I see a Jehovah's Witness or a Mormon come into my house, I get excited. I think to myself, the Lord has brought lost people here for me to share the gospel with.

So we talked for a while and I wanted to understand what he understood about salvation. Like, what is salvation? What does that mean? Where are you going? What is your belief about that?

[15 : 43] And he told me. And I said, and how do you get there? What do you have to do to be saved, if you want to say it that way? He said, well, you have to obey all the law.

And I said, okay, which law? He said, all the Old Testament law. I said, all the Old Testament law, you've got to obey it perfectly to be able to make it. He said, yes. I said, okay.

I said, at what point in your life will you know that you have righteousness, that you have heaven. And he said, I won't know until I die.

Loaded. That's what legalism does to you. That's what living apart from Christ does for you, is that you live your life and you have absolutely no certainty of what's going to happen to you when you die, but that is not the Bible's message.

The Bible's message is that we wait for the hope of righteousness. we know, we're confident of the righteousness that we have, of heaven that we have, of the relationship we have with the Father because of the work of Christ.

[16 : 54] We are to eagerly wait with hope, not being uncertain, but being free, standing in our freedom, waiting for that final full completion of our freedom.

The problem is for us as Christians it begins to get discouraging sometimes because we look at sinners around us and we look at what seems to be the fun that they're having and it looks like the lack of judgment that they're undergoing and it looks like the ease of their life that they seem to be living with and it looks like the mental health that they sort of have and we say to ourselves I just want that kind of a life and so we're willing to walk away from Christ to be able to have such a thing.

When doing so leaves you with absolutely no certainty of your future. We as Christians do not walk away from Christ for something that looks better but instead wait for the hope of the righteousness.

We know that it is coming. We are the ones who have been set free. We've not been severed from Christ. We're not obligated to keep the whole law. We live on grace.

So beloved if we're going to stand firm that we have to get our eyes off this world and what they're doing and we have to put our eyes upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

[18 : 21] Waiting for the final full righteousness that he is giving to us. Do you not see that people who have that no authority in their life?

They have that no leaning and resting upon God that not trusting in him. Do you not see them as being people without authority and if they're people without authority over their life that's what you call an orphan.

Why would you want to be? I mean just imagine some homeless kid out on the street he's free to do what he wants to but he has no authority and no one to call him and no one to say to him that he loves him no one to care for him and yet that's what the world is and we as Christians sometimes are tempted to run that way wanting to do what the world does but that is a place that is a place of being abandoned.

To stand firm in Christ we need to look forward to the day we need to be waiting for the day looking forward to the time when Christ comes back. Not only do we need to remember his work wait for the righteousness we need to rest in the Holy Spirit we need to rest in the Holy Spirit.

You look at verse 5 again and the main thought was we are waiting for the hope of righteousness but there's two phrases in the middle. The first one is through the Spirit.

[19 : 51] In other words he's saying that we wait through the Spirit. The Spirit is the one who empowers our waiting. Our waiting doesn't come out of my own ability but it comes by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us in all things. You'll remember that it's the Holy Spirit who convicts the world about its sin. The world doesn't just all of a sudden one day become feeling guilty about their sin.

The reason someone feels guilty about their sin is because the Holy Spirit is working upon them to show them their sin. He's the one who convicts. He's the one who brings the new birth.

John chapter 3. A person can't just be born again on their own. It has to happen by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the gift of faith. The Holy Spirit is the one who fills us so that the word of Christ dwelling richly in us we are empowered to do the things he's called us to do.

There's nothing in the Christian life that the Holy Spirit is not the power the strength and the ability and the source of power. He is the source of power for all that we do in the Christian life.

[20 : 55] We remember Paul's words in the letter to the Philippians that it is God who is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. So how do we wait for that righteousness?

How do we stand firm in the freedom that he's given to us? We must rest upon the Holy Spirit. He's the one who empowers us. He's the one that helps us to live this out.

You and I we cannot look to the future. We cannot wait for the day of judgment with hope and joy and peace and longing unless the Holy Spirit's working in us. Empowering us.

It's the same way if you look at the fruit of the Spirit. I can't have love and joy apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. If we're not eagerly waiting for that hope for righteousness, it's because the Spirit's not working in us and if the Spirit's not working in us it means that we've never been saved in the first place.

The Holy Spirit is the one who empowers us, fills us, lives in us, seals us, so that we might be people who long for and look for the day of Christ and the vindication of his life and ours.

[22 : 15] rest. So our job is not, see, resting in the Holy Spirit is not psyching yourself up, it's not slipping off into some meditative state and babbling things that make no sense in this world, it's knowing that he undergirds everything.

Let's just see how this works for a second, okay? How do you rest in the Holy Spirit? here's what I want you to do. Everyone, take in a deep breath and let it out.

God created that oxygen. God created that alveoli. God created those muscles.

God created those nerve endings and God gave you the ears and the auditory ability and the mind that's hearing what I'm saying and you did that just now because God gave it to you as a gift.

And every moment that we breathe, we are resting in God as we breathe. Now, some people do so as lost people who are not trusting in God.

[23 : 40] They don't even think he's a part of the process. My point is that resting in the Holy Spirit comes like this. He says to you, in his word, he says to you, study the word so that you're a workman who needs not to be ashamed.

So you pick up your Bible and you start reading it. He is the one who gave you the will and the power to work for his good pleasure.

That reading of the Bible, the fight that you have is a fight not between you and you, but between you, the sinful nature, and the Holy Spirit of God. You want to read it, but there's a part of you that doesn't.

So when you read it and when you go to obey him, that's him. If you forgive somebody, if you forgive somebody who has done something against you and you've forgiven them not in the way the world forgives, where they forgive but they don't forget, but when you forgive the way he's called done by the power of the Holy Spirit whether you felt anything or not.

Do you see my point? My point is that resting in the Holy Spirit is not something that we're going to have goosebumps about and a turning over of the stomach. We believe by faith that he is there.

[24 : 59] This brings us to the last thing because here's the thing. These first three things are really all about God and I want you to really think about that. That if our standing in freedom, our standing firm in freedom and not walking off from Christ, it's all about God and what he's done in us.

Our waiting, what is waiting? I mean, you're sitting there in the waiting room waiting for the doctor. Who's in charge of that? Not you. You're just waiting. If we're just waiting for that righteousness, he's in charge of it.

So the resting on the Holy Spirit, the waiting for the righteousness, and the remembering of the work of Christ, that's all him. So it comes down to this last thing and it's this one point.

What is our part? Trust and obey. Trust and obey. I want you to look at verse five and six.

In verse five, you see that we through the Spirit by faith are waiting for the hope of righteousness. And in verse six, he says that neither circumcision or circumcision means anything, but the one thing that means something is faith working through love.

[26 : 13] So in verse five, he tells us that we're going to wait by the power of the Spirit and through faith. And in verse six, he tells us what is faith. It's faith working through love.

So let's just think about a couple of things then. Number one, faith is always built upon facts. We don't just blindly leap out there and just believe something. I mean, that's kind of like when I was a kid and I believed that I could move things with the force.

You know, I just sat there after watching Star Wars and kind of went trying to move things. I just thought if I believed hard enough, it would happen. That's belief without any facts whatsoever.

It's not understanding anything about the world around us. But the facts of the matter are is that Jesus lived and died and rose again. Even secular sources outside the Bible tell us that.

Jesus is the one through whom we have salvation and it comes by grace through faith and not by works and law. Another fact is that one day he's coming back.

[27 : 17] We could just lie fact after fact after fact after fact. Our faith and our trust in him is not some sort of blind leap. We have facts upon which we are leaning in order to make decisions to take a step.

My grandfather built a lean-to carport on his property when I was a kid. Actually, he built it before I was a kid. When I was a kid, I saw it. He used the cedar posts, trees that had been cleaned off.

He used those as his post to hold this thing up. And he built it very solidly. But it was low to the ground. My brother and I, we used to love to climb on top of it. But the first time I got up there with my brother, I was scared to death.

Because I was thinking to myself, it's just corrugated metal, you know, it's really thin, it's like I'm going to fall through this because I was a big chunky kid. And so we're up there and we're walking around and he tells me how this thing is built and he's talking about all the different things.

But eventually after he told me all these facts, I was like, okay, so this is safe to walk on. And he says, yes. So we did. We took off and we would run around and we would do all kinds of things. But it's because he showed me the facts, told me the facts, and therefore I could take that step of faith upon that building.

[28 : 35] That's what we're saying faith is. Faith is not about faith in ourselves. I'm not sitting here trying to work up some sort of thing and saying, you know, well, I just need to believe in myself more.

I just need to believe in myself more. It's like, I don't need to believe in myself. I mean, I'm self-attesting. Here I am. Look at me. I don't need to believe in myself. I have the facts.

I need to believe in him. My faith then is empowered by the spirit to do what it is that faith is supposed to do, and that is to lean and rest and trust upon Christ.

But he describes his faith as faith working through love. When you see the word love there, you need to understand Paul has two things in mind. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And what is that when we believe, that belief produces obedience. It's faith working through love.

[29 : 33] It's not that the obedience creates my faith. It's not as though I obey the two great commandments, and then, therefore, eventually, faith comes.

I am saved by faith, and that faith then produces this work, this obedience. obedience. That's why it's trust and obey. Can you imagine the mess? Can you imagine the mess that would have been there for Israel in bondage in Egypt if God had told them, I'll set you free from bondage, but first, you have to obey all my law.

Now, what happened? He said, I'm coming. Put blood on the doorposts. The fact was is that he was coming.

The fact was that they had already seen him do all kinds of damage to Egypt. He says, put the blood, and I'm going to look at it, and I'll pass over. Their trust led to their obedience.

Standing in freedom, beloved, means that we not only believe God in everything, we believe what he says, we believe that what he says about what's right and wrong, is right and wrong.

[30 : 50] We believe when he says that we're sinners, that we're sinners. We believe that when he says this is where salvation comes from, we believe that, we trust him, and because of that, we seek to obey him.

Standing firm in freedom is 75% the work of God, 25% us. His work on the cross, his coming one day, bringing out the righteousness and vindicating the power of the Holy Spirit, our part, trust, and obey.

There are some, there are some who think they are free, but they are not. They're locked into sin, enslaved to sin, addicted to sin, without Christ.

Those are the ones who are standing in judgment. And just so we can understand something about what goes on in our world, we need to understand that the judgment and the wrath of God being poured out, sometimes there are tastes of his wrath in this world.

God's upon mankind comes in the form of the rampant homosexuality that you see in our culture.

[32 : 27] And that is just a portion of the taste of his wrath. Because our society and many people refuse to bow the knee to him.

So as we look at this world and we want to say, you know, listen, hey, we want you to be saved because there's wrath to come, we need to be able to also understand and be able to help people and point them to the fact that they are experiencing much of that wrath now.

Because what they want to do is they want to rule their own lives, they want to be their own God, and he says, fine, you can have it with everything that it comes with. Because when you think you're the center of everything as a God to do what you want to do, then the most ultimate expression physically of that selfishness is homosexuality.

And people are arrogant and prideful and that is the heart and the problem to every sin out there.

It doesn't matter what it takes shape as on the external. The heart of it is pride and arrogance and an unwillingness to trust what God has said and to obey him.

[33 : 51] And he will not let rebels go far without bringing his wrath. But I'm here to tell you the good news. Even rebels can be saved.

even those who would say, you know what, I don't want anybody telling me what to do, you can still be saved. Because when God saves, what he's doing is he's taking enemies and making them his children.

And as we live in this freedom, go back and remember the work of Christ, waiting by the power of the Holy Spirit for the righteousness, trust, and obey.

Let's pray. Let's pray.