

The Source of True Freedom

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- [0 : 00] Good morning. Again, we are gathered in the Lord's house to worship, and we are privileged to be here.
- Welcome here, everyone, as we fellowship together. I would like to touch into the one announcement on the meeting on Tuesday regarding our worship teams, our song leading.
- And so we're planning a meeting to kind of review where are we going with our worship. Where should it be going as far as the music that we do?
- Is there training needed? So we'll be envisioning how do we glorify God the best. And so we'd welcome many of you to come, if not all of you, to come out and be part of that and just help set direction as we review and envision and look ahead and so on.
- It's healthy. We want to establish healthy worship teams. Not saying that we're not healthy now, but ensure that we do have healthy teams.
- [1 : 33] And secondly, and probably most importantly, that our congregation is worshiping on Sunday morning in song. And that is key.
- That's what it's all about, is to lift our hearts to God. So that's this Tuesday at 7.30. If you're unable to come and you have some input, talk to perhaps Dale before the meeting.
- That would be good. So last Sunday we had finished our series in eschatology, end times teaching, and we finished off with the last verses in Revelations 22.
- And so this morning I'm piggybacking on Pastor Henry, what he's been going through in Galatians, and so hence we're in Chapter 5.
- And I've titled the message this morning, The Source of True Freedom. The Source of True Freedom. As we dig into these 15 verses, the question that comes, what is true freedom?
- [2 : 48] What is true freedom? And I'm open to some thoughts. What does true freedom look like?
- Peace with God. Amen. Amen. Anyone else? True freedom.
- True freedom. Okay, I didn't get the first part. Being in the center of God's will for your life.
- Freedom. From slavery to sin. So it's the opposite of being enslaved.
- Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. To know the truth. Okay. Being in God's kingdom.
- [3 : 55] Being in God's kingdom. All right. True freedom. What are the things that want to bind us?
- Because we're going to talk about that this morning. Fear of man.
- But not you, Helen. The fear of man. Yes. And we will zero in on that one.
- The fear of man plays a bigger role than we want to acknowledge. The fear of man. What will they think?
- What else keeps us from true freedom? Broken relationships. Okay. Unforgiveness.
- [5 : 08] Satan. Okay. That's a very general statement as he's behind all evil, right? Legalism.

Yeah, absolutely. And actually our text zeros in on legalism. So that's going to come out very much. So as we look at this morning, we see that Paul, teaching through Galatians, has very clearly shown the two sides.

We have faith or works. Faith or works.

Grace and law. A different way of saying it. Grace and law. In the examples that Pastor Henry has brought, Ishmael versus Isaac.

Right? Faith and works. Faith and law. Faith and law. Further, in the text, the previous chapters, the New Jerusalem versus Mount Sinai.

[6 : 27] Mount Sinai, the law was given. The New Jerusalem represents faith. Where we meet Jesus. Righteousness versus unrighteousness.

I took it one step further out of application. Victorious living versus frustrations and failure.

Faith and works. And ultimately, heaven and hell is the result of these two sides.

And so the passage that we're going to be working with is dealing with righteousness or being justified before God.

And I just want to clarify that before we dig in. It's not dealing with the sanctification process where God cleans us up and makes us, transforms us more into the image of Christ.

[7 : 38] So it's initial salvation, becoming righteous before God, is what's at stake here. And so we have to keep the right perspective, context as we go through this passage.

Verses 1-6, Paul reveals the source of true righteousness. And then verses 7-12 talks about false teachers or legalists who would lead us astray.

And then the last three verses will talk about that we walk in that freedom. And so we get in the first six verses there.

And as Paul starts, Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Indeed, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And so the issue at hand in the context directly in the Galatian church is there are Judaizers who are teaching, if you are not circumcised, you are going to hell.

[9 : 09] You cannot be saved with Jesus alone. You have to be cut in the foreskin of your flesh.

And if we would take that directly, we would say the ladies were all okay. And it's talking about men here. But in a general context, it's legalism that's getting pushed here.

Paul says, don't go there. It's a very, very stiff warning. He says, do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Now, what's a yoke? What's a yoke? Yeah.

So it's that wood piece across their necks to harness, to bring two animals into harmony. And in Matthew 11, Jesus bids us to come into yoke with him.

[10 : 27] He says, for my burden is easy, or my burden is light. I will carry the load for you. And in the positive sense, Jesus is saying, come into yoke with me.

Come alongside and walk with me. And I will carry your load. Here, the yoke of legalism is getting pushed.

And Jesus, through Paul here, is saying, do not, do not get into harness under a legalistic yoke.

For if you are walking alongside another that is legalistic, and you're yoked together, who's pulling who?

And you're in trouble. And we need to get out of that yoke. And so Paul is very adamant here as he exhorts the Galatians to stand fast in the freedom in Christ.

[11 : 44] And what were Christ's requirements for salvation? One word. What is it?

Faith. Faith. Faith. It's a very big word. In fact, it's the biggest word. Well, maybe grace is the bigger word in the Bible, but faith is right up there.

That is huge. Faith. To believe God. To trust God. To surrender my life to God. It's all embedded in that word faith.

And so stand fast, therefore, in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Do not be entangled with a yoke of bondage. I testify in verse 3.

I testify in verse 3 again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

[12 : 43] And if you want to start to please God by keeping, by works, by legalism, then you are in debt to pay for your own salvation.

And how is that going to turn out? Not so good. For we cannot pay for our own salvation.

It means eternal separation from God. So there are people in the Galatian church who are on the fence, so to speak.

They have heard the word of God. They're drawn to it. But on the other side, there are legalizers who are teaching their doctrine.

And they're toying with these people's minds. And Paul says, don't go there. Don't go there. For righteousness cannot come through the law.

[13 : 59] In verse 2, he says, I, Paul, say to you, those that are being tempted to go and get circumcised. I say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised. He is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ who are attempted to be justified by law.

You have fallen from grace. If you take that turn, the grace of God is no longer in your life.

It's very sharp. A sharp division. Trusting in self-effort versus God's effort.

And God's effort was on the cross to pay for our sins. He says, you have fallen from grace.

[15 : 10] And the word estranged there, that means to be cut off. To be not part of it anymore.

So, estranged from Christ, you're no longer in His grace. And you've left. Again, this has been interpreted.

Men and women who are truly born again can lose their salvation. In the context, that is not what Paul is teaching here.

But he's saying to those who are hearing, who know the truth, and they have a decision to make.

And he's calling them to decision as they're tempted to go the wrong way. You have fallen from grace.

[16 : 15] For we, through the Spirit, eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. So, in verse 5, Paul segregates further. First, he says, you to the group that is toying with us.

And then he says, we walk, or we, through the Spirit, eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. So, what is the hope of the legalist?

Work hard enough. And ultimately, the hope of works is that when I stand before God, I'm hoping that the scales will tip in my favor.

That is misguided. That is false. And ultimately, that is deceit. Being deceived.

For there is no pleasing God by our own efforts. And what pleases God is that we trust Him and put our faith in Him.

[17 : 32] But on the contrary, the hope of the believer is righteousness by faith. Righteousness by faith.

Why is that so hard? Let's just pause on that thought.

Why is trusting God for righteousness by faith so hard? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?

Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? It's too good to be true. Why? Why? It takes you humility. It takes you humility.

I have to humble ourselves to realize I can't do nothing. We feel it. Okay. Humility. Humility. Ultimately, it's saying to God, I'm letting go.

[18 : 35] I'm giving up control. I'm trusting you with my life. I'm trusting you with my life.

But that is contrary to our flesh. We don't want to trust what we can't control. And that's why it's called faith.

And like was said in the back there, it's too good to be true. And in most human cases, that's true. But with God, it's not. It's all about His work, not ours.

And so that is the struggle in humanity from Adam and Eve onward to today. By faith or by human effort to please God.

The issue at hand here, as I said, was circumcision. What is the circumcision in our lives today?

[19 : 53] Jesus Christ. Okay, I'm going to reword my question.

What are we struggling with today? So circumcision represented works in our life. Self-effort. What are the things that we struggle with today?

What we struggle with letting go of. Giving up habits. Traditions.

How do traditions stand in the way? Traditions. That's a good one because it's very real.

Traditions. Control. Control. Control. You know, every one of us individually may struggle with our own circumcision, if I can call it that.

[21 : 21] What is keeping me from putting my full trust in God for righteousness? And some people, it may be food.

Food. Food. Food. Habits. Different traditions.

Many of us here are Mennonite background. And some of you will have grown up with, you have to keep the three holidays, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.

And I've heard it expounded that if you don't, you are not a believer. And there may be a background to where that came from.

Very likely it is Catholic. I don't know the origin of it. And yet, the scripture does not support it. And so we cannot use tradition because we're adding it to Christ and saying, you have to do this, you have to do that.

[22 : 46] Otherwise, we're making them salvation issues, circumcisions of the heart. And so whatever it is that keeps us from going all the way, God wants us to let go.

I would encourage us to give that some thought, even prayerfully after we leave here.

Is there anything in my life that God wants me to let go of? That's a circumcision in my life. Going back to verse 5.

For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but faith working through love.

And so Paul narrows down the Christian life. And we put away all external pressures and works, and we narrow it down, faith working through love.

[24 : 25] It's like we have blinders on. It's Jesus-focused. And so we are told to put faith in Him, in Jesus Christ, complete dependence on God.

And love, working through love, we can define love as goodwill towards others. And then, therefore, faith is expressed first through God's love towards us, goodwill, that He died for us.

As we embrace that by faith, putting our trust in Him, that starts to work out in our love for others. Faith working through love.

2 Corinthians 5.21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

He made Him who knew no sin to become sin for us.

[25 : 48] And the result, that we become righteous in Him. And it's true. It's the only way.

And so thus, it was a battle back in Paul's day, and we have to recognize that today. How do we fight our flesh in this matter?

And when my neighbor is watching, and I'm tempted to do something I normally wouldn't do because I want to please him, how do I get the strength to not be a pleaser of man?

And it may be that my neighbor would not like it if I would pray with this person, and so I don't pray. And yet, I knew God wanted me to.

And the list can go on and on. How do we fight that? How do we conquer those fleshly desires that rise up?

[27 : 09] The fear of man. And the answer is to be focused on Christ and to depend on Him for that strength in that moment.

To desire, to want to do right, but then to turn to Him for the strength to complete it. For in ourselves, we can desire, but then so often, we fail.

And Paul expresses that well in chapter 7 of Romans. And so, recognizing that all of that is to no avail, it's no use.

It's useless. In fact, it hinders. But all that matters is faith working through love. Two years ago, we had the privilege of visiting in Belize.

And George, I'm going to use an example of the church that you attended there. Right in Shipyard, an evangelical church. But living in an old colony setting.

[28 : 40] And we saw people that had come to this new church. And they were struggling with, what do the people think around me?

They're living right in the midst. They're driving horse and buggy. They're dressed in very, very traditional clothes.

How do I become free? And live right in those circumstances. It was such a clear picture to us to visit that and see that.

And the battle was so real. And it caused divisions and strife in the new church. You know, we should dress traditionally to keep our neighbors happy.

We should do this. We should do that. And none of it, none of it works. For if we live to please men, then we will fail.

[29 : 46] And so that's the essence of Paul's teaching here. Verse 7. You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Notice the you. You ran well. You started well down this path. Why are you turning off? Why are you turning off?

Who hindered you from obeying the truth? There's a who here. A personal pronoun. It's talking about persons or people. Individuals.

Someone is influencing you. Someone physically present. Is keeping you from obeying the truth.

This persuasion does not come from him who calls you. This is not of God. God does not call us into bondage. Into legalism.

[30 : 50] Not ever. Not ever. Rather, it is someone in your midst. And then verse 9.

A little leaven. Leavens the whole lump. We have the example of leaven. Often representing sin in scripture. But as leaven permeates through the dough.

And you put a bit of leaven in the mixture. And the whole thing is infected. And in the bread making process. It's a good thing. Because the whole thing rises. Right?

But in church, it's not. What he is saying, a little leaven, leavens the whole lump. So, if there are legalizers in church and it's left unchecked, it's going to spread.

It's going to spread. That's what he is saying here. And so, therefore, Paul is saying it has to be cut off.

[31 : 55] We cannot endure it or allow it to continue. But rather, teach the truth.

For it will wear off on our neighbor. And soon we have an infection that's spreading.

You know, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. For us, it may not be circumcision. Whatever it is that's negative, it could be a bad attitude towards something.

Or towards people. Or maybe even towards leadership. But if it's unchecked, it will be like cancer that spreads.

Like leaven. And it will cause disunity. And so, we are to make sure that we are not like leaven.

[33 : 01] And so, we are to make sure that we are not like leavens the whole world.

Like the sour guy that just destroys the atmosphere at work. And everybody doesn't have a good day. That's what this is talking about.

Only the consequences here are more severe. As it leads us astray from the truth. So, a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Then Paul says, But I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you have no other mind.

But he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?

Then the offense of the cross has ceased. Paul says, I am confident that you will reject that bad teaching.

[34 : 04] And that he who brings such teaching will bear his own judgment. The judgment of God. From the verse 11, we can tell there's accusations against Paul.

He has been preaching circumcision. He has been preaching legalism. It's false accusation. Paul says, If that was true, why am I being persecuted?

When we preach truth to someone that is very legalistic, what's the first thing that tends to happen?

Persecution in the form of temper. People that are legalistic and hanging on to it, they get angry fast when the truth confronts them.

Defensive. It happens just like that. Instant temper. I've experienced it many, many times.

[35 : 26] And Paul says, If I was teaching that, why am I still being persecuted? For if I went along with the crowd to please them, they would accept me.

They would not persecute me. And then the offense of the cross has ceased. But to preach the cross, Jesus alone is offensive to every works program.

Did you know that every single religion out there is works-based? No exceptions. Only Christianity, and even that term in the world is misconstrued already.

It's inaccurate. Following Christ is the only truth. By faith. By faith. In verse 12, Paul says, I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off.

And what did God mean here? Most scholars interpret this meaning that if they're teaching that you cut or circumcise the foreskin of your flesh, go one step further and mutilate yourself and castrate yourself.

[36 : 58] The literal translation of this verse. That if you want to teach that, go one step further and become a eunuch. And all the zeal will go out of you.

Now that sounds pretty harsh. In fact, if you look in different versions of the Bible, most scriptures interpret it that way.

And the New King James has cut themselves off. And in the footnote, it says mutilate themselves. The other interpretation, which is less accepted, is that they would simply leave church and go away.

Cut themselves off from the Galatians. And so, either way, Paul would want an end to this.

And if you are so stuck on legalism, do it to yourself. Mutilate yourself. Unfortunately, but in reality, churches, even today, struggle with this.

[38 : 23] As Satan has his messengers mixed in. And legalism is a key way to lead astray. And the last three verses tell us how this will surface.

How do we know? And it's a call to living in liberty. Verse 13, For you, brethren, have been called to liberty. Only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

For all the law is fulfilled in one word. Even in this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, beware, lest you be consumed by one another.

call to liberty and yet not an opportunity for the flesh. And that's likely the number one thing in opposition that we hear to being saved by faith alone.

Well, it's so easy to say that you're in Christ and now you can live as you please. not, not at all.

[39 : 49] And it's a total misunderstanding of faith as we've surrendered our lives to God. Here, Paul reminds them, do not use your liberty as an opportunity to live in sin, but rather through love serve one another.

And the whole essence of surrendering to Christ and to have the Holy Spirit live inside of us is now to live without works, without law, rather in faith serving one another in love.

And as that is expressed, love flowing out of faith, it brings about harmony. If you are married here this morning, then you know how this works.

And we can, as verse 15 says, we can bite and devour one another or we can serve one another in love. And perhaps we've been on both sides.

But God's way is to serve one another in love. And marriage is likely the first place it has to take place.

- [41 : 22] At work, in church, in our relationships. relationships. And if you're not married and you're single here this morning, love flowing out of faith is the key to solid relationships.
- Without that, if we're legalistic, what happens? We fight and devour one another. has anyone ever been to a legalistic church meeting?
- What happens? Yes. Yes. And then they spit you out.
- There's biting and devouring because everyone thinks they are right. And it's my ideals against your ideals.
- It's my interpretation against yours, whereas we're leaving God's book out. And we fight and devour how does it say?
- [42 : 35] Bite and devour and we consume one another. And it makes you lose all zeal to be in any church setting.
- It destroys. It destroys. It destroys. I remember in the mission church in Villanova, Bolivia, that the first church meeting that we had, comments that flowed out of it.
- We have never experienced a meeting like this before. Every meeting that we in our past from the colonies, it was biting and killing with words and devouring one another.
- It was always a gong show. What's different? different. They outright ask, what's different here? We're not following rules.
- We're following God. We need to walk and pull in unity. And so it is in all our relationships when we're focused on faith and serving God out of love.
- [44 : 03] Unity will flow. whether it's in your marriage, at work, wherever you are. It works.
- We have been called to liberty. Only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh. Did you know that Christians need boundaries? Does that not flow against what I just said?
- Are boundaries legalism? I see some like this and some I don't know.
- Are boundaries legalistic? Did you know this book sets the boundaries for us?
- did you know when it comes to sexuality God gave us boundaries? In every aspect of life to follow God, to follow Christ, He has given us boundaries.
- [45 : 21] Not human ones, godly ones. things. And you as parents set boundaries for your children. I hope you do.
- And you ask a one-year-old what color of cup he wants at seven in the morning, you're looking for trouble. You're confusing that child.
- That child is not able to make decisions that young. that's a very simplistic example. But as children grow, we allow them to make more decisions, but we set boundaries.
- You don't give a four-year-old your cell phone and internet and say, here you go, figure it out. If you do, you're in trouble.
- We set boundaries for our children. God sets boundaries for His children to protect us. without that, did you know that children that have too many decisions to make become miserable?
- [46 : 33] They do. They need boundaries. They become miserable. And likewise, if we don't follow God's boundaries, as Christians, we become miserable.
- And we're not walking a straight line. We're all over the place. And so, hence, God's word. If you bite and devour one another, beware, lest you be consumed one another.
- And that, brothers and sisters, is the, well, it destroys us, but it's the worst testimony to the world around us.

And who would want to join a group of people that behave like that? It's not attractive to anyone. So as we, as we continue in life, as, as you as fathers lead your families, follow these principles, to lead and love by faith.

To lead our families according to this, not legalistically, but through faith. And if you're not in a, in a parent leadership position, but you're a child or, or a single, as you lead relationships, as you meet others, follow these principles, and you will see God bless and draw and attract others to himself.

[48 : 32] So very, very distinct. So may the Lord just give us courage and wisdom to go forward understanding this clearly. Let's pray.

Father, we acknowledge that without you, we struggle and that we are tempted to follow the flesh.

And I thank you for the clarity of teaching that you've given us in this chapter. to understand your will for us. And that we not dabble in adding to the sacrifice that you sacrificed for us.

That is yourself. That we don't add works to that. Lord, by your grace, we accept the gift. the gift of faith, salvation, righteousness, righteousness, declared righteous, because you gave yourself for us.

[49 : 53] What an awesome gift it is. We thank you, Lord. May you again show yourself strong in our lives this coming week as we seek to honor you.

In Jesus' name, amen.