

Christ has set us free

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[0 : 00] 5, Galatians chapter 5, just whilst you're finding that, one thing I will add is just to pray for the date that we move is three weeks tomorrow, it's on the 21st of December, we like to keep it nice and active in our household, so 21st of December we move and I really value your prayers for that day, thank you.

So, I'll give you a couple of minutes to find Galatians 5. Interestingly, when Daniel was just saying that we could come to Galatians 5 today, he used the words joyous and I was thinking joyous too and then I got into the word and I got challenged by it and it may not be quite such a joyous message but it hopefully will impact our hearts, so anyway, let's read Galatians 5 together.

For freedom, Christ has set us free. Stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look, I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ. You who would be justified by the law, you have fallen away from grace.

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

[1 : 28] 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 the Lord that you will take no other view and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

In that case, the offence of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves. For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for their flesh, but through love serve one another.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word. You shall love your neighbour as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh.

[2 : 33] For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident.

Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Amen. I got to the end of last week's sermon.

[3 : 51] I thought we kind of reached a crescendo in the book of Galatians. And that chapters 5 and 6 were then going to be far more uplifting. And I'd be able to come here and be a little bit more encouraging to you.

It's not worked. I'm sorry. As I started going into Galatians 5, I just saw things.

And my heart was being challenged myself. And this isn't me talking to you. This is God speaking to all of us. And I've been challenged.

I've been really challenged. I'm just sharing the thoughts of what this passage is trying to say to us. And sharing some of the challenges that I felt as I was going through my preparation.

See, Paul knew in the same way that we do, that not every single person is going to enter the kingdom of God. Unless a person is changed.

[4 : 56] Or in our lovely Christian jargon, unless a person is born again. Unless that person is transformed from being a false worshipper to being a true worshipper.

From being someone who's rebelling against God to being someone who is going to trust God. And it's this contrast that the Apostle Paul continues to vividly portray and picture to the Galatian readers.

Paul has confronted the Galatians' self-centeredness. Self-centeredness which would be of absolutely no eternal good.

And it was the basis for last week's message where we were looking at Paul telling them and telling us that there is another way of living.

That other way of living that is in Christ. And with Christ dwelling in them. Today, when we're looking at Galatians 5, we're looking at the topic of freedom.

[6 : 08] Freedom. And we're going to look at it under two aspects. A freedom that is maintained of the gospel. And we're going to look at it also from the perspective of live by the spirit of freedom.

That first point of maintaining freedom of the gospel. I love the way that this chapter opens up. Verse 1 here. For freedom, Christ has set us free. What an opener. The slavery of the law has been quashed because Christ has come as the liberator.

It's that incredible freedom in God through Christ. And it's a phenomenal statement. It's the whole weight and the burden of the slavery to sin and to the law to self-justification has just been removed by Christ.

Where you feel that burden. If you watch oxen, when they've got a yoke upon them, it pulls them down. But as soon as you take a yoke off, you can stand upright. And that's what's been taught to hear.

[7 : 34] This is reiterating a point that Paul is saying that to be in Christ is a freedom. And it is not a bondage. To maintain this freedom, Paul says, the religious act of circumcision has got to be rejected.

It's a subject that Paul is raising once again. He mentioned a few times through this book of Galatians. Why?

Why? Why? Because what Paul is desiring is he's desiring so much that the Galatians will really understand that those false teachers, those Judaizers, are using that circumcision as a theological symbol and that it needs to be dismissed.

It needs to just be rid out of their teaching. Because to add that theological symbol is to actually add to the gospel.

And we heard earlier in Galatians that to do that is actually to mean to lose Christ. Because you become justified by the law. And the chapter says then, if you're going to be justified by the law, you're going to fall.

[8 : 51] You're going to fall from the grace. You're going to miss out on the grace. See, what Paul is saying here to the Galatians is you can't have it both ways.

You can't have it both ways. You've got to make a choice. It's a choice of Christ alone by faith or not.

But faith by Christ alone is the only way to maintain freedom of the gospel. Paul is urging them to walk through the Spirit by faith which produces good works of love in verse 6.

Which counters any thoughts of the readers or even of ourselves that the Christian life is to be completely of faith in which works of good and obedience are of no matter.

that's not what's being said. See, it is the sanctification of the believer that the process that a believer goes through of becoming more holy that occurs after justification and where sanctification is a lifelong process.

[10 : 11] The sanctification that doing the good works for God once you've been justified not to achieve justification. And so the apostle he challenges the Galatians challenges them and he says how is it that you ran well?

You ran well but you've fallen away. How is it that you started off okay but you've fallen away? And it made me think about how a few years ago on a New Year's Day I foolishly signed up for a run across Bobbin Moor in Cornwall and unsurprisingly Cornish weather at that time of year isn't the nicest similar to here.

And I stood at the start line it was about 10am on a New Year's day and it was to run out across the moor and up to the top of Cornwall's highest point and then back again and I'm standing there at the start line bang off you go and I charge off like a hare and I'm going across the moor and I started really really well and I get to the highest point and I'm spent I am done in I have nothing more to give and once I've been out at front to start off with these other runners then start to go past me I was falling away I started well I started well but I couldn't maintain it the Galatians they started well they believed the truth they believed as they should they obeyed the truth but in that race as they were running they fell they fell they fell from grace and hence why Paul is saying what he is now I want you to just feel the despair in Paul's mind the despair in his mind these people have known the truth they have known it and they have fallen just imagine how he's thinking you haven't maintained freedom of the gospel you haven't maintained the freedom you've allowed the false teachers to persuade you to abandon the truth you've now been hindered and that hindrance has become like leaven I mean think about just a little bottle maybe just a bottle of water and you put just a drop of poison in the top the whole thing's contaminated you started off in the truth Paul is saying and you let the false teachers teach you otherwise you become contaminated you're falling away and Paul is very squarely blaming the false teachers and he's saying for them to cease to stop doing what they're doing to emasculate themselves

Paul is basically designed the harshest possible way of dealing with those false teachers that they would just disappear off the face of the earth he doesn't want them around these Galatians and polluting their minds any longer but also what Paul is doing here is he's contending for the faith Jude chapter 3 Paul is contending for the faith when did we last contend for the faith I was troubled by that when did I last contend for the faith the world that we live in today it encourages toleration it encourages open minds but where's the truth gone where's the saying when wrong is wrong when false teaching is precisely that where's it gone

[14:35] Paul is being persecuted by those false teachers for preaching Christ crucified and as we saw in Galatians 4 the Isaacs will be persecuted by the Ishmael Christ crucified was a stumbling block a massive stumbling block Christ crucified is a stumbling block today as well as it tells people that they can do nothing to save themselves tells them that they can't do anything to gain salvation I stand here I'm a sinner saved by grace I have done nothing absolutely nothing nothing at all to save myself and to gain salvation it is all of Christ Paul is saying the choice is

Christ or the choice is law a choice for each person to receive and for those who minister the word to preach it it's clear cut there is absolutely no alternative maintain freedom of the gospel receive and share Christ receive and share Christ Christ through the gospel Christ of our word the bible if you've received Christ when do you share Christ when do you share Christ again this is a challenge to me as much as to any one of us in this room today when do I share Christ have you shared the gospel with someone in the last two years I want you to be honest in your heads right now when did you share Christ in the last two years when did you share Christ in the last twelve months when did you share Christ in the past month when did you share Christ in the past week when did you share Christ in the last twenty four hours and if you answer no one and if we're honest there are going to be some of us where we're going to answer we share Christ with no one in any of those time periods.

Then we need to do something. We need to take a good look in the mirror at our lives. What does it look like? What needs to change?

What needs to change that we not only maintain the freedom of the gospel but we become prepared to share Jesus Christ with a world of lost people of sinners outside of these walls even today.

Get to our second point. Live by the spirit of freedom. I felt a little bit more uplifting here because what a way to live in the spirit of God.

[18:00] Verse 25. I find this absolutely key. If we live by the spirit let us also keep in step with the spirit. The person of the spirit lives in those who have been given new life through faith in Jesus Christ.

It's important to remember though that the law is not a person. The law can't live within any one of us. The spirit of Jesus Christ is deeply personal because it can live and wants to live within each one of us.

But that verse there it starts with a really important word if. If you live by the spirit you have made a choice you have made a choice for life then walk in the spirit.

That's what Paul is saying. He's saying that to the Galatians. If you have made a choice then walk in the spirit. For it's by the spirit of God himself that you have been saved.

The spirit of God brought you to that point of repentance. So now walk in it is what Paul is saying to the Galatians. When saved we're all freed from the power of sin.

[19 : 18] We're able to live as God wants us to live rather than as we want. Walking by the spirit from first waking breath in the morning until going to sleep at night it has major implications.

major implications that Paul is making clear to the Galatians and to us as we read this letter ourselves. Because he seeks for a person to live by the spirit of freedom just on a Monday morning?

A Sunday during church? Maybe one evening a week? No. What Paul is saying is you need to live by the spirit always.

every moment of every day. Paul again he comes back and he's saying there's two ways to walk. There's a walking by the flesh and there's walking by the spirit.

And they're in opposition with one another. But they're of unequal force. I want you to imagine a mammoth tug of war event.

[20 : 30] I really enjoy seeing a tug of war at a country fair. You know you see these two groups normally of farmers holding on to the tug of war and they're giving it some welly.

You know there's a really pulling on that rope. I want you to imagine a mammoth tug of war tug of war here but rest assured that the spirit is superior to the flesh.

The spirit is superior to the law. Because those who are led by the spirit have been released from the law. You know that tug of war is going to have a clear winner. You know if you imagine that you've got the flesh on this side and the spirit on this side the spirit is just going it's going to win easy hands down no questions asked.

Live by the spirit. Paul is saying is you can expect the desires of the flesh and you can expect you can expect conflict even living by the spirit.

Paul himself says in Romans 7 verse 18 for I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh for I have the desire to do what is right but not the ability to carry it out.

[21 : 42] It is natural for fallen humanity and that's you and me as well every single one of us in this room this morning to have desires of the flesh because let's face it living in complete submission to God can be and frequently is so exceptionally hard isn't it?

Let's be honest I mean I struggle with this living utterly in submission to God that is not easy we do get these other desires we do get these other temptations Paul says to the Galatians that they are not to indulge in the flesh what they are to do is to control it see Paul is acknowledging that temptations will come he's also referring here to the danger of using using the grace of God the freedom that is in Christ to be an opportunity for self-indulgence to indulge the flesh in the acts that are referred to there in verses 19 and 21 you read those things sexual immorality impurity sensuality idolatry sorcery enmity etc that's not me that's not me really seriously let's be honest here yeah you never have any thoughts of jealousy never never argue with anyone no divisions no dissensions let's be honest if I'm honest

I've got to put my hand up there are things there that I struggle with we all struggle with if we're honest Paul's trying to say here is that Christian freedom it's not a freedom to sin you're not being saved by grace you're not being saved by faith in Christ Jesus that you can then go about being tempted by these things and living in these things because you know the grace of God is going to cover you no that's not what this is about it's not a freedom to sin but it is a freedom from sin a freedom from sin commit sin and you become a slave to sin you get that yoke back on your shoulders and you feel the weight of it but in verse 24 Christians are said to have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires renounce the claim of the old self it is if you just imagine it's been nailed to the cross as you nail those things to the cross they are left there and you can walk away in the spirit the works of the flesh they are plain they are obvious they are evident the person living by the works of the flesh whether they are admitted or whether you're in denial they are evident to others and they are not truly in Christ and if they're not in Christ they are not heirs of the promise to

Abraham or of Abraham's seed as we considered earlier in this Galatian study isn't this a problem if we know the way why do we then not walk in it why why what I love here is that Paul's offering the other way show fruit by walking in the spirit of God see Paul comments that the works of the flesh they are obvious they are evident but if a person is living in the spirit then you're going to see the fruit of the spirit as well in that person therefore walking by the spirit is something the Holy Spirit enables by producing in each person strong desires that accord with God's will and it's exactly what God said he would do

Ezekiel chapter 36 a new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes so when the believer walks by the spirit they experience the fulfilment of the prophecy the Holy Spirit produces a desire for God's way that is actually stronger than fleshly desires the Holy Spirit aware of a person's shortcoming aware of each person's regenerate Christian nature and so he causes each person each of us to walk in God's statutes and to be led by the spirit with the desires to obey God when the spirit is leading you by producing godly desires then the commands of God they're not a burden any longer the ten commandments don't become a burden but they become a joy because not constricted but a life in freedom is what Paul is seeking to convey to the Galatians it's walking walking the talk having that active determination and that absolute the passive dependence completely on God it's a different way of thinking it's it's not looking at self it's looking out and being dependent on God without kidding ourselves too that we're producing fruit when we know we're not so in that sense despite us living 2000 years later walking by the spirit frees us from being under the law also 2 Corinthians 3 where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom when we picture walking by the spirit what do you think of walking by the spirit maybe meandering through a meadow in springtime maybe gayleagues just skipping along it's just a lovely environment taking that relaxed walk not a care in the world and you're just being led along by the spirit perhaps that's what you think about walking in the spirit

I'm sorry but that is daft that is not the way to think about walking in the spirit instead what I want you to imagine is that walking in the spirit is more akin to walking through a minefield of walking in a war zone of walking in a conflict now that may not be comfortable but that is the truth when you're walking in the spirit you're going into a battle see what Paul doesn't want is for the Galatians to misunderstand what he's saying he doesn't want them to be walking in the spirit just singing a few songs hearing a short message maybe hearing a nice story or two maybe something that makes them feel good and gives you that uplifting that temporary uplifting and then heading home and then getting on and living life as they please no that's not what Paul is wanting for the Galatians at all what Paul sought from them was a dedication from them that would seek them thinking more along the lines of my God my Lord if I don't walk by the spirit today

[30 : 04] I'm going to end up doing things that I know I'm going to regret they're going to end up giving in to the lust of the flesh spirit help me in this battle this series has been about facing the truth facing the truth not suffering the ostrich syndrome of having our heads buried in the sand so if if we are walking in the spirit where are you walking right now are you in the meadow just gently meandering through life or are you walking in the war zone where God wants you to be see God wants us looking at the people here in Westerhills he wants us thinking about the people in our communities a number of you come from different communities some of you are in

Currie Balerno Collington Juniper Green Baberton Gilmerton soon to be Harby he wants us to have a heart for these people that is led by the spirit for the thousands who are in each of those communities who need the gospel those thousands today that something happened and they died they're not going to heaven they're going to a lost eternity do you have a heart for these people do you have a heart for these people you need to live with the knowledge you're in a conflict that is real and avoiding the whole look my church is doing fine I'm just getting along just fine I'm doing okay it's avoiding all of that and avoiding having your head stuck in the sand and ignoring everything that's actually going on around you

Paul is clear to talk of showing fruit of the spirit rather than the works of the spirit to underline that what the spirit produces is not the person's work but it's the spirit's fruit it is the spirit's initiative it is the spirit's enablement note too that it is the fruit and not the fruits singular rather than plural and it's there for a reason when I used to work in an office back in Guernsey by profession I used to be an accountant this is not like an AA meeting accountants anonymous or anything I don't have a problem but when I used to work in an office I did really enjoy spreadsheets and there was one

particular function that I used to really enjoy and the function within a spreadsheet within a cell formula was concatenate I used to really love it when I had the option of using that because what it did was it joined a number of components together you could take a number of cells you could bring them together and oh fantastic

I'm looking out there and not many of you join me with the excitement I thought maybe at least one person would get enthused over this but what I'm trying to illustrate is actually the same function is at work here too with the fruit of the spirit for if you have one fruit of the spirit as listed in the verse then there are others two being aspects of the whole fruit see here you've got the love joy peace patience kindness goodness they are all parts of the fruit of the single fruit those fruits they're actually split into three now you've got upward fruit traits of our relationship with God you've got outward fruits where they're acts of goodness to others and then you've got inward fruit which is the character of God's people it's amazing

I want you to note that the fruit of the spirit that Paul references to particularly and it's been mentioned earlier in this chapter is love love now I'm not going to go all mushy on you but why are you talking about love because love is the all encompassing way of living of a person who bears the fruit of the spirit who is led by the spirit and walks by the spirit it's not love as a work of the flesh but instead it's love by the spirit it's the love that God showed to humanity by sending his son love on a whole other plane for Paul says to the Galatians that you were justified by faith by the free and sovereign work of the spirit and hence why a person who lives and then gives away all of their possessions who is eulogised by the world as maybe a great philanthropist or the most devoted martyr will still not please

[35 : 36] God they will not please God because what pleases God is walking by the spirit being led by the spirit and bearing fruit of the spirit all done in love that first came from God deny yourselves I need to deny myself so that the cross doesn't become your message doesn't become our message but it becomes our lifestyle as we deny ourselves and then can enjoy the fruit of the spirit and living by the spirit will result in resisting the flesh and living in liberty living in the incredible freedom and not living in bondage any longer freedom and being every single one of us in this room today there is a choice there are two paths that we can walk on but of course if you imagine two paths and I'm not going to have them so close together that you can straddle so they're far enough apart for our imaginations that you can't straddle and you have to make a choice two paths that we can walk on freedom or bondage a choice even if you leave this place today and you can deny this but the truth is there is only two paths that you can ever walk on or one path you can ever walk on and a choice of two freedom or bondage you know Galatians is never going to be an easy book you know I desperately want to be able to give you something a bit more encouraging and uplifting today but that's not how Galatians is written if we consider ourselves to be an heir of the promise if we consider ourselves to be justified by Christ

I want you to I want to invite you to take a little bit of a spiritual health check I want you to take some time with someone who's close to you and I want you to ask them whether the works of the flesh or the fruit of the spirit is evident in your life and I appreciate that's uncomfortable I appreciate right this second you're like I just want this man to get off the stage and stop but if you're really going to take serious the walk of faith of your calling in God I'd like to invite you to do that at some stage very soon if we know that our life is not right with God that the works of the flesh are clearly evident and this morning we know in our minds that our sinful state has been framed that we are sitting here and we feel almost like a rabbit caught in headlights can turn to God turn to God today by faith except that Christ has paid the price deserved by every single sinner so you may be free from the bondage of sin now folks living and walking by the spirit will mean that we don't gratify the desires of the flesh yeah those temptations will come our way but don't indulge them don't indulge them instead look to live a life that bears the fruit of the spirit at all times always when we walk by when we live by the spirit of freedom and maintain the freedom of the gospel all that we do all that we do will become Christ centred Christ centred our work our leisure time our friendships our relationships will all become Christ centred everything that we do Christ centred and not self centred I'll close with this quote our task our task is to take time each day to remember these truths for ourselves and to live accordingly if we have crucified the flesh then we must leave it securely nailed to the cross where it deserves to be and if we live in the spirit then we must walk by the spirit true freedom living by walking in the spirit amen amen to be too let's go de gin in the spirit and that's how we need to have a another we need to inside ■■■aaaaaah our the la en m