

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON – Sunday 27th April 2025 am
TITLE: “Living Free” TEXT: Galatians Chapter 5
SERIES: Freedom in Christ -Pt 5
Scripture references from the ESV

Galatians 5 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified^[a] by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ But if I, brothers,^[b] still preach^[c] circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,^[d] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do^[e] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

We all prize freedom, whether it is freedom from oppression or freedom to be ourselves. Sadly, those freedoms we prize often lead to us being enslaved to the expectations of the tribe we align with or to patterns of behaviour we regret.

**True freedom can only be only found in
a Spirit empowered personal relationship with Jesus Christ**

Jesus is the only one who can set us free, and when he does, the freedom we enjoy is like no other freedom. When he was on earth, those he spoke to were enslaved to sin but were trying to live free through their own efforts. He said to them: **If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36)**. Jesus sets us free:

- From the penalty of sin and the power of sin in our lives
- From trying to earn our acceptance with God through keeping the law of God
- From our real enemies – the world, the flesh and the devil
- From death: both physical death, through the promise of resurrection to life, and eternal spiritual death, by bringing us into fellowship with God.
- To love God, with a desire for him alone, and to obey him
- To love and serve other people.

The Gospel is good news which tells us that what Jesus has done sets us free.

We were imprisoned under the law of God, and we are all guilty of breaking God's moral law. None of us are as holy as God. We were imprisoned on death row, awaiting the sentence of eternal separation from God's grace and goodness. No one could plead our case before the divine judge, except Christ. He alone has broken into our prison cell and taken our sin on himself. He alone has satisfied the law's demands by dying in our place and securing righteousness for us.

- All we had to do was to place our faith in him, trusting that what he did was sufficient for God to justify us.

It is a wonderful freedom.

However, Paul shows that there is a risk that we could lose that freedom and be enslaved again (**v1,13** above).

1. **There is the risk of slavery to works based righteousness (v1)**. A yoke was a heavy beam that was put across the shoulders of an animal or person and tied them to another. It was a heavy weight that pulled them down. When we try to make ourselves right with God by our own efforts, we are weighing ourselves down with a heavy load of rules. That was what was happening to the Gentile believers in Galatia.

They had started well, trusting in Jesus alone for their justification and had been living in the freedom of the gospel. However, a group of Jewish believers were telling them that, to be really right with God, they needed to keep the law of Moses, including circumcision. If they did not, they were not truly saved. The Gentile believers were being tempted to follow this Christ + gospel. Having spent a lot of time arguing that: **a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ,because by works of the law no one will be justified.** (Gal 2:16), Paul now calls them to make a decision.

- They can stand firm on the gospel of grace, or they can believe the lies of the false teachers and turn to the Christ + gospel that means keeping the law or the church rules or traditions, on top of faith in Christ.

When Adam and Eve sinned, and knew they were guilty, they tried to cover themselves by sewing together fig leaves. They could not do it, however. It required God to act, using a sacrifice, yet we still try to cover our own sin by sewing fig leaves together!

There is an inherent danger in this (v2). If we try to add to Christ's work by any form of legalism, we turn the priceless work of Christ into something worthless. In effect, we are despising Christ, and he becomes of no advantage to us.

- You cannot have justification through faith in Christ and through your own works of righteousness.

Grace and law cannot exist side by side

Additionally, if you try to be justified by works of law, then you are obligated to keep the whole law (v3). Under the old covenant, failure in one area of the law meant failure to keep the whole law and resulted in being cursed. If we give up on Christ alone, the result of our failure to keep the law is severance from Christ (v4). If we look for alternatives to faith in Christ alone as a means to be justified before God, it shows we never had a proper relationship with God.

- A person who is truly saved cannot lose their salvation

The danger of being enslaved to works based righteousness is severance from Christ

2. **There is the risk of slavery to our fleshly desires and passions (v13).** The fact that we can get forgiveness for our sin does not mean we can live as we please. Christ

has not just set us free from the penalty of sin. He has also set us free from the power of sin that enslaved us.

The gospel of God's grace does not give us a licence to go on sinning.

Christ has not abolished the principles of the moral law.

We may be free from the law when it comes to justification, but we are not lawless. Charles Spurgeon explains: *What is God's law now? It is not above a Christian—it is under a Christian. Some men hold God's law like a rod, in terror, over Christians, and say, "If you sin you will be punished with it." It is not so. The law is under a Christian; it is for him to walk on, to be his guide, his rule, his pattern. "We are not under the law, but under grace." Law is the road which guides us, not the rod which drives us, nor the spirit which actuates us. The law is good and excellent, if it keeps its place.*

As an example, we are all guilty of stealing, going against God's command. We may not have robbed a bank, but we might have robbed our employer by spending too much time chatting to colleagues. Perhaps we have robbed God by not giving him the first slice of our income or robbed others of their reputation by gossiping and slandering them.

The law condemns us, and we feel guilty, but we remind ourselves that Jesus died so that we could be set free of our sin.

We rest in the assurance that, though guilty, through Jesus we are forgiven of our sin and accepted by God as if we were as righteous as Christ.

The command 'Do not steal' is no longer a rod over us.

The command is still a path under us that guides how we are to live now we are justified by Christ.

The law has not changed, but our relationship to it has. Previously we tried to find ways to justify our failure to keep it, but now we look for ways to follow it. We are not using our freedom in Christ as a means to live according to the flesh.

We have been set free to walk the path that God sets before us in his word.

Paul goes on to show the dangers of living lives that are enslaved to sin.

- Disunity within the body of Christ (**vv15,26**). When we live as we please, disregarding God's moral law, the result will be envy, rivalry, pride and hostility.

- We will be severed from Christ (v21b). If we live according to the flesh (vv19-21), then we will not inherit the kingdom of God. Living this way shows that we have never been truly justified before God.

**The dangers of being enslaved to our fleshly desires and passions are
disunity in the church and our own severance from Christ**

Throughout this chapter, Paul shows that the Holy Spirit is given to us to enable us to live in the freedom we have in Christ.

- a) **We are to stand on the gospel.** Without the Spirit, we will never have faith in Christ, but that is where our justification rests (vv5-6). When you stand before God and hear his verdict on your righteousness, it will not matter whether you have kept the law. All that will matter is whether you are united to Christ by faith and are trusting in Christ to atone for your sin and make you righteous.

To avoid the yoke of law keeping, we need to stand on the gospel

- b) **We are to walk by the Spirit (vv16-17).** The desires of the flesh and the desire of the Spirit are at war within us.

This war within us is one of the evidences that we are truly saved. The unbeliever does not have this same struggle. The assurance of these verses is that, as we walk by the Spirit, the Spirit will always win. It is a promise.

**When we walk by the Spirit,
we cannot, at the same time, follow the desires of our flesh.**

Previously, Paul spoke of the law as being a guardian that taught us what was right and wrong, but which could not change our desires. Now that Christ has set us free, God has sent his Spirit into our hearts to

- Teach us how to handle our new found freedom
- Enable us to live out the freedom in a way that results in love for God and obedience to him, and in love for others and service to them.

The Spirit changes our desires so that we desire what God desires

**The Spirit convicts us when we are making wrong choices and gently leads us
back to the right path**

The Spirit empowers us so that we are able to say no to sin and yes to God

The Spirit unites us to Christ so that the fruit of his righteousness grows in us
(v22ff)

It is a single fruit.

It is the life of Christ as he lived it here on earth

Through the Spirit at work in us this fruit of Christ's life is formed in us

c) **We are to die to sinful passions and desires (v24).** Paul has already told us that those who believe in Jesus have been crucified with him (2:20). Now, he goes on to say that each one of us is called upon to crucify our old sinful self. The Spirit puts our fleshly desires on the cross and leaves them to die, but crucifixion is a painful and long drawn-out death, and our old self cries out to come down from the cross.

- We are not to take our old self down from the cross and give it CPR.

**We must tell our fleshly desires that they have to stay on the cross,
and, if anything, bang the nails in harder to keep them there.**

- We can only do these three things as the Holy Spirit enables us. He has been given to us so that we can continue to live in the freedom that Christ has secured for us.

How do you walk in the Spirit? There is much to say on this subject, but you will experience the Spirit at work in you as you

- Prayerfully read your Bible
- Meet together with other believers to be taught the word, to praise God and to eat the Lord's Supper

**When the Spirit is at work in you,
he will keep you from slavery to all forms of works based righteousness
and from slavery to your sinful passions and desires.**

The hymn writer William Williams sums it up thus:

**In Thy truth Thou dost direct me
By Thy Spirit through Thy Word;
And Thy grace my need is meeting,
As I trust in Thee, my Lord**

(Here is

love vast as the ocean)