

The Gospel in Galatians Lesson 11 4Q 2011

Freedom in Christ

SABBATH

Read first paragraph, “In Galatians...” thoughts?

What do you understand freedom in Christ to be?

What are we free to do?

- Are we free to smoke?
- Are we free to drink?
- Are we free to do drugs?
- Are we free to eat gluttonously?
- Are we free to commit adultery?
- Are we free to hate people who are different from us?
- Are we free to be bigots, racists, sexists, elitists?
- Are we free to believe in a God who is punitive and wrathful?
- Are we free to reject the idea of God altogether?

Do we have the freedom to do all of these things?

What is the problem with exercising one’s freedom in these ways?

Why, if we exercise our freedoms in this we are we no longer free in Christ?

Because We LOSE our Freedom!

- We become enslaved to drugs, alcohol, tobacco,
- We lose our health so we are less free to exercise, walk, ski, climb, help around the house, minister to others, witness Christ
- We become obese and are less free to bend, lift, walk, ride...

- We become enslaved in our minds to distorted concepts are unable to relate freely to others, we are imprisoned by distorted God concept and cannot represent God correctly...

But, in Christ, are we free to:

- Stop our addictions?
- Live healthier lives?
- Give of ourselves to bless others?
- Give our time, money, ingenuity, energy to promote the truth about God?
- Are we free to love others?

And what happens if we exercise our freedom of choice in this way? We gain more freedom, ability, autonomy, health, wisdom, capacity for love!

Read second paragraph, “Paul addresses...” thoughts?

The lesson points out two dangers, legalism, defined as trying to earn God’s favor through works, and abusing our freedom in Christ and becoming licentious.

Thoughts?

Is one who lives licentiously actually free in Christ? How could one think one could be free in Christ while living a life of sin? If one assumes a legal model of salvation, then one can live a licentious life, violent life, arrogant, bigoted, sexist life claiming their legal penalty has been paid while they are free to continue in sinful living.

Haven’t you heard things like:

- Jesus freed me from the penalty of the law
- I was saved at 14, it doesn’t matter what I do now. Jesus paid for all my sins past present and future.

- When we accept Christ we don't stop sinning

How can one believe they are in Christ while continue to live sinfully?

By believing a legal model of salvation, which is what the church of the Dark Ages taught. We sin, but we can have a legal payment made, either by ourselves by paying money to the church, or doing penance, or by Christ paying His blood to the Father. Either way, we live in sin and get our legal penalty paid.

When one understands the true nature of God's universe, His law of love, then one realizes true freedom only exists in a life united with Christ in heart, mind, method and motive. True freedom exists only in those who have experienced radical transformation of heart such that they are free to love, rather than live in fear and selfishness. Freedom exists when we are united with Christ in loving God and others more than self!

When one surrenders to God, can they live a life free from sin?

We are studying Galatians 5:1-15 this week, let's read verses 13-16:

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ¹⁴ The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

What is this saying? Is this saying, when you accept Christ's legal payment you will continue to gratify the sinful nature, but don't worry, Christ has paid your legal debt and you are free from punishment by the Father?

Or is it saying you are free from the dominating control of your own fear and selfishness which leads us into actions which violate God's design for life – the law of love?

Is it not true that when one opens the heart to Christ, the Holy Spirit comes in and there is a heart change, a change in the desires, motives, longings of the being, so that, when a mistake happens, when an old habit presents, when we impulsively, or reflexively lose our self-control and act selfishly out of habit, preconditioned response, impulse – our HEARTS ARE NOT IN IT! We are grieved in our own hearts and fall down repentant before God asking for further healing and transformation so we won't stumble like this again?

Notice, our hearts don't go on gratify the sinful nature when we live by the Spirit – even if we do stumble, our hearts are grieved, sickened and unhappy over this and we long to be delivered from this body so weak and corrupt.

And thus we choose, as God gives us wisdom, to make intelligent choices to overcome – we remove from our environment avenues which tempt, porn materials, alcohol, tobacco – we get into support groups, 12 step groups, we engage in ministries to help others, we spend time filling our minds and hearts with God's healing word.

Just as we would following our doctors instructions and intelligently apply his treatment plan, likewise when we no longer want such sickness of heart, we follow God's plan for our healing and transformation.

SUNDAY

Read memory verse at top,

“Stand fast therefore in liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”
Gal 5:1

What do you hear? “Hold your ground! Don’t waiver! Don’t move! Don’t fall back! You are free –

- free to love,
- free from working to cure yourself,
- free from fear and insecurity,
- free from fear of God punishing you,
- free from the distortions of Satan’s lies about God.
- Don’t fall back into believing your remedy in Christ is insufficient, or God requires some work on your part to cure you, or that if you don’t accept Christ God will punish and torture you. Don’t let your minds be enslaved with falsehood, doubts, lies and distortions about God!”

Read last two paragraphs, “Paul’s words...” thoughts?

Why do you think Paul uses this phraseology? Was it to communicate that our freedom is a legal price paid to an Imperial authority to purchase our freedom from a slave master?

This idea is what Christianity communicates and this idea is what keeps millions in bondage!

We are enslaved, not primarily by our sinful condition, but by God who has imprisoned us on Cosmic Death Row, and is threatening to execute us for eternity, if someone doesn’t pay our death penalty to the Universal Executioner.

What enslaves us? God’s government? Satan? We are enslaved by our carnal natures and the lies we believe about God that prevent us from knowing and trusting Him.

Then what is the price to set us free? The truth about God which destroys the lies in our minds and wins us back to trust, AND a new, humanity, cleansed and perfected back to God’s original design, which was achieved by and in Christ!

Paul wants his audience to understand that they are really free, just as free as a slave is free. Free from what enslaves

them. The bondage of a literal slave is imposed by the rules of slavery of that government. Such slavery is arbitrary and has an arbitrary law which enforces it. We are enslaved by our own condition of sinfulness and it is our inability to heal ourselves and put ourselves back in harmony with God's design for life which enslaves us.

The people of Paul's day were familiar with slavery and what it would mean to the slave to be free, thus he uses this as an example, but we must not be overly literal. God's government is not like human governments and thus to concretize this example distorts the divine government, which is exactly what happened when Imperialism infected Christianity, and we are still trying to free ourselves from it.

MONDAY

Read second paragraph, "This pattern..." thoughts? What does, "We know that our old self was crucified with him," mean?

What was crucified with Christ?

Our old self, which is what?

What does this language mean in practical terms?

Does it mean that all recorded sins, past, present and future were laid upon Christ at the Cross and judicial punishment was inflicted upon Him to punish Him in the place of all humans to exact retribution and assuage God's wrath?

Does it mean that Christ took upon Himself our sinful condition and at the Cross Christ destroyed that terminal condition? Our old self was crucified in Christ when Christ overcame as a human being by loving perfectly?

This week one of our online class members, Eric Hillis, emailed me a Hebrew literal translation of Isaiah 53, listen to verses 3-6:

3. One being despised and shunned of men. A man of pains, and **one being known of illness**. And as [we] conceal[ed] [our] faces from him, one being despised and we did not account him.

4. Surely, **our illnesses, he carried/bore** and he was **burdened with our pains**, and **we accounted him** one being touched one being smitten of God and one being humbled.

5. And he from being wounded **from** our transgressions, and from being crushed **from** our depravities. The discipline/admonition of our well-being/peace [was] upon him. And in the welts/stripes of him, he is healed **to us** (i.e. **we consider that the welts/stripes are "healing" him, or for his good**).

6. All of us, as the flock we strayed. Man, to his/our way he/we faced/turned. And **the LORD, in him, intercedes [with] all of us/our depraved/depravity**.

<http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/OTpdf/isa53.pdf>

In the fourth paragraph it states,

“The context suggests that Paul is referring to freedom from the bondage and condemnation of a law-driven Christianity.”
Do we struggle with such problems today?

How does a law-driven Christianity manifest itself today?

- Believing one cannot go to heaven if goes to church on the wrong day?
- Believing one can be saved by eating the right foods? Or one can be lost by eating the wrong foods?
- Giving tithe in order to get blessings and make more money?
- Believing your legal penalty for sin has been paid by Christ’s blood? How does such a belief affect the believer?
- Believing the records of your sins, when you accept the legal payment, are erased from heaven’s record. What does such a belief do to the believer?

Other ways we have a law-driven Christianity?

What is supposed to drive our Christianity? The law of love, which is giving, beneficence, loving others more than self!

TUESDAY

Read first sentence second paragraph, “The first consequence of trying to earn God’s favor by submitting to circumcision is that it obligates the person to keep the entire law.”

Thoughts? What do you think? What ideas are connoted in this sentence? Are there any problems with this entire thread?

Questions that came to me as I read this sentence were:

- Did we earn God’s favor by putting His Son on the Cross and offering God His Son’s blood?
- Can we earn God’s favor?
- Did Christ die in order to earn God’s favor?
- Was it ever necessary for any being to earn God’s favor?
- What does the idea imply about God to even suggest it was necessary to earn God’s favor?
- On the other side, is the lesson suggesting we are not obligated to keep the entire law?
- Is the lesson suggesting that when we accept Christ we are not expected to live in harmony with the law?
- What law?

Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” Matt 22:37-40

Thoughts? Are we not expected to live in harmony with all God’s law?

Are we obligated to breathe if we want to live? Are we not obligated then to keep God’s law?

So what is Paul talking about when he says that if we allow ourselves to be circumcised then we are required to keep the entire law?

Here is my paraphrase of Galatians 5:2-4:

Gal 5:2 Now listen carefully, I, Paul want to make this extremely clear: if you included circumcision as a necessary element in the remedy to sin and selfishness, then you dispel Christ and nullify the true remedy he brought. 3 I say it again, any man who is circumcised as a means of healing from selfishness and sin, is choosing a course without Christ's free remedy and thus is required to heal and cure himself. 4 Those of you who are trying to be healed and set right with God by observing a set of rules or rituals have rejected Christ and his methods which heal; you have rejected God's graciousness and accepted a false remedy.

Fourth paragraph states, "Paul's third objection to circumcision is that it hinders spiritual growth."

How? Why?

Circumcision as a means of salvation, closes the mind to God's Spirit, truth, and darkens the understanding.

What things are done in Christianity today that hinder spiritual growth?

- God said it, I believe it, that settles it
- We don't ask questions we believe on faith without understanding or evidence
- Accepting an Imperial Roman concept of God's government with an imposed law, imposed legal penalties, and a legal system of salvation in which God is required to legally pay our penalty
- Others?

Wednesday

First paragraph asks, “How should a person who is not saved by works of the law live?” thoughts?

Why?

- How should a person, with pneumonia, who is not cured by working, but by taking antibiotics, live?
 - Should they smoke?
 - Should they aspirate food?
 - Should they breathe asbestos infested air?
 - If they are healed by antibiotics, and they are taking their antibiotics, why shouldn't they smoke, aspirate food or breathe asbestos infected air?

Isn't this the same reason why those who are healed by trusting their lives and hearts into God's hand not live licentious lives?

Or is it that if one lives a “sinful” life they don't actually damage their character, warp their reason, sear their conscious and destroy the faculties sensitive to the Spirit of God, but instead they form a list of legal offenses that require punishment by the governor of the universe?

Here is a major problem for our young people with penal model substitutionary theology, and why many leave the church or end up in wild living – listen to a couple of questions submitted to me by Collegedale Academy students regarding sex.

- If God will forgive you then why can't you have sex before marriage?
- If you plan on marrying someone after being with them for a very long time is it sinful to have sex? And is God angry with us even though you love that person beyond

description? And if you pray together and love God then how is it wrong?

- What is revealed by these questions?
- What concept do these high school students have of God and sin?
- Why do they think sin is wrong?
- Because it either breaks God's law or gets God angry at us – and thus, if that is the problem, then we don't need to modify our lives, we need to fix God, and how do we do that?
- We appease Him with His Son's blood, while we go on living in sin, this is what penal substitution theology does in the minds of our young people.

So how do we answer their questions?

- Is the sin problem God's attitude or our condition?
- If your parents will forgive you for not brushing your teeth why brush them?
- I have a patient who prays for healthy lungs but smokes a pack of cigarettes per day – how could smoking be wrong if she prays?
 - I am not angry at my patient for smoking, but is my anger the problem?
 - Prayer doesn't void your choice or change God's laws
 - God's forgiveness doesn't prevent the damage from ongoing violations of His design for life (sin)

THURSDAY

Read top dark section and first paragraph, - thoughts?

What do you think of the answer to the difference between doing the law and fulfilling the law? What do you understand the difference to be?

What about the last sentence regarding trying to earn God's approval for doing what the law requires? Does God approve of doing what the law forbids?

Read the last paragraph, "Although it is..." thoughts, what would prompt such a conclusion as the last sentence? Do you hear a gross misunderstanding of God's law?

Their statement of "the law and love are not incompatible" is just like saying, "breathing and life are not incompatible." It is foolish. The reality the law is love, and until Christianity realizes that God's law is love, the design principle life is built upon, we will struggle with a confused theology and distorted picture of God. Consider the pink section at the bottom:

"What's easier, and why: to love others or simply obey the Ten Commandments?"

Again, what is the problem with this question? Love is fulfillment of the law! You cannot obey the 10 Commandment without loving others it is impossible.

FRIDAY

Read first two paragraphs, thoughts? What is our role in working out our salvation?

Read question #3 – thoughts? This is like a patient who wants medications to help cure his lungs so he can smoke more, or a liver transplant so he can drink more.