

Freedom Vs. Self-Centeredness

Galatians 5: 13- 25

11/13/22

Day 1:

For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13(NASB)

Something Seth keeps reminding me is that the bottom line of Christianity is grace. However, the Christians in Galatia did not understand the freedom they had in Christ, preferring to revert to the old legalistic way.

We are no longer under the curse of the Law, for Christ was made a curse for us, at Calvary. Rather, we are under the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which... by faith in Him, has set us free from the law of sin and of death.

The perfect Law pointed its accusing finger at our fallen, sin nature, which caused us to recognize our sin and our great need of salvation. The Law identified our sin, but was insufficient to save us. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth as a man and died to pay the enormous price for our sin - for God, in His grace, sent His own dear Son as the only acceptable offering for our sin.

He became the full and final sacrifice for the sin of the whole world, and Christ's offering of Himself freed us from slavery to sin and allowed us the opportunity to join Him in His kingdom. But many believers in that Galatian church found it difficult to move from the pre-Cross legalism of the Mosaic Law, to the post-Cross freedom we have in Christ. They felt the need to **DO** something to make amends for their sin, instead of believing that **JESUS** paid the price for their sin in full.

Christ's death condemned sin in the flesh and paid the full price for all sin. We do not have to DO anything. We have to simply BELIEVE that Christ did it all for us.

The incredible freedom we received in Christ, released us from the recurring need to offer daily sacrifices to God. It freed us from the annual obligations to have our sins covered for another year by the insufficient blood of bulls and goats. Having been saved through our faith in Christ, **ALL** our sins, past, present, and future, are forgiven, and we are to put off our old former ways. We are to live by faith and we are to walk in spirit and truth.

But sadly, there are those that take advantage of the wonderful freedom we have in Christ. Some seek to turn the wonderful freedom we have in the Lord Jesus, into an opportunity to indulge in sin. Some allow the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life to dominate our mind - catapulting us into an ungodly, carnal lifestyle that is detrimental to our spiritual growth, disastrous to our Christian witness, and dishonoring to the lovely Lord Jesus Who bought us with His own blood.

No wonder that Paul reminded the Christians in Galatia that carnality is as abhorrent in the life of a Christian as legalism, which binds us to keeping the Law which we can never attain. No surprise that Paul so forcefully reminded them, "You were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."

Day 2:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16(NASB)

As believers, we are called to live in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, and to walk in spirit and truth. As Christians, we are called to live a spiritual life and not to give into our self-centeredness; to bear the fruit of the Spirit and not to produce our own works of the flesh; to live under grace and not under law. As disciples, we are to walk by the Spirit so that, we will not carry out the "desires of the flesh."

Scripture reminds us in many places that we can only walk by means of the Spirit when we place our lives under His full control. We can only walk in spirit and truth when we are led by the Holy Spirit of truth and guided by His Word of truth.

To live the spiritual life that God requires of all His children means that we should be willing to submit to His will and authority, in every situation we meet. In all our day-by-day dealings, we are to suppose to be submissive to His leadings and obedient to His corrections, trusting His Word, listening to His voice, and depending on Him alone. We are not to rely on our own human abilities, actions, intuition, and strength, because we are unfortunately corrupted by our sin nature.

The spirit and the flesh work in opposition to each other. They lust against one another and are totally incompatible. Our regenerated human spirit and our old sinful fleshly nature will remain bitter enemies and in conflict with each other, throughout our earthly life. But through the resurrected life of Christ, we have been given the means to walk by the Spirit so that we will not carry out the desires of our old, sinful, fleshly nature.

Paul himself recognized this inner conflict that we all face, when he cried, "*O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dying body.*" He recognized the inner turmoil that he faced in the inner core of his being, but Paul knew that the answer to overcoming "the lust of the flesh" was found in Jesus Christ. He alone has given us the power to overcome the desires of the flesh and it is achieved as we walk in spirit and truth - in submission to the Holy Spirit of Christ.

The flesh refers to the old sin nature, "the old man" that was crucified with Christ when we trusted Him as Savior. We are to keep our fallen nature, that "old man" nailed to the Cross and permanently disabled as we walk in spirit and truth. Only as we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit and depend on Him by grace through faith in Christ, are we able to walk by the Spirit and enabled to live as God intended us to live.

Day 3:

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Galatians 5:17(NASB)

As descendents of Adam, we were born in the “flesh” with an old sin nature which is at enmity with God, but as Christians, we are born again in Christ. As believers, we are born of the Spirit of God with a new Christ-like nature and reconciled to God through the blood of Jesus so that we may not do the things that we please, but instead we do those things that honor God.

Before we were saved, we had one single, sinful nature - the “fleshly” nature which is at enmity with God. But at our rebirth, we received a new, second godly nature - the “born again” spirit of man. We were given a new spiritual nature in Christ, that is eternally united with our Savior, at peace with God, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ so that we may not do the things that we please.

But from the moment that we became a Christian, the old “fleshly” nature started to conflict with our new Christ-like spiritual nature, for the flesh pulls against the spirit, and our new spiritual born-again Christ-nature pulls against the old fleshly Adamic nature within.

God could have chosen to remove the old sinful nature the moment we trusted Christ as Savior, but He chose to allow the two natures to co-exist within our earthly body to remind us of our human frailty and ensure that we maintain a surrendered dependence upon Him in everything we do.

Instead of removing our old self God in His grace came to dwell within us. And although our “fleshly” nature will continue to be in opposition to our new self during our journey through life, we are instructed to yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit of God: "*For greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.*"

We are instructed not yield to the flesh, (the old sin nature) but rather to yield to the Spirit of Christ so that we may not do the things desired by the flesh, but be increasingly transformed into the person that God wants us to be.

Day 4:

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Galatians 5:18(NASB)

We are to stand fast in spirit and truth. We are to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Holy Spirit of God. When we submit to His leading and guidance we are delivered from a life of bondage to all sorts of fleshly inclinations and set free from legalistic practices, laid down by law.

When we are not being led by the Spirit, we are walking in the flesh and not living as God desires... in spirit and in truth. And the sad consequence of a fleshly Christian life means that we forfeit the beautiful freedom we have in Christ and place ourselves back under slavery to sin and legalistic practices, which rely on self and not on God.

Although a “fleshly” Christian life and a legalistic leaning does not necessarily mean gross indulgence in sexual immorality and other unseemly practices, it does mean that our actions are in opposition to the will of God for our life - for the appetites of the flesh are not necessarily sinful, but they do refer to any works of the flesh that emanate from the old sin nature (our fleshly heritage before we were born-again) rather than the new-life-in-Christ which we received as a result of our faith in His finished work on the Cross.

As born again believers, the old life that we received from Adam, through our earthly parents, was crucified with Christ on the Cross of Calvary and must remain nailed to the Cross if we are to stand fast in our new-life-in-Christ, walk in newness of life, and be led by the Holy Spirit of God. Christ identified with our sinfulness so that His death would become our death - death to all that belonged to our past heritage.. in order that His resurrected life would become our new-life-in-Christ. As born again believers, we receive a new nature that needs to be nurtured and fed throughout our earthly Christian walk, and it is only accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Before we received the freedom to walk in spirit and truth through faith in Christ, we were in bondage to a law that we could not keep and a fleshly nature that we could not control. But the Law was a teacher to bring us to Christ so that all that is of the fleshly “self” could be put-away in Him and remain nailed to the Cross - so that all that is of Christ may manifest itself in our lives as we walk in spirit and truth and are led, moment by moment, by the Holy Spirit of God.

Day 5:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Galatians 5:22(KJV)

The beautiful fruit of the Spirit comes out from the Holy Spirit and is perfected by Him, and each facet is a jewel that beautifies the life of a believer. Each grace stands alone and yet together, the fruit of the Spirit unites into one perfect gemstone which is rooted and founded on God's love.

The love of God pours forth a fountain of graces that are each uniquely attractive, but which intertwine together into a complimentary oneness that so exemplifies the gracious goodness of our God.

When God's love is the first and foundational fruit, it is interesting to note that joy is the first pretty face that peeps out from the radiance of His love. Joy in the heart of the believer must be grounded in God's love, without which it fades into man's feeble attempts at happiness. The joy of the Lord was the fruit that caused Paul to rejoice, "*As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, for in all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy.*"

The wonder of salvation and mercy of God that forgives us our sins and gives us Christ's righteousness is the greatest joy, as is the glorious hope of our eternal home that God has prepared for all those that love Him.

One day we all will be together – a company of saints that is overflowing with joy, for in His presence there is fullness of joy when He will wipe away every teardrop. But in the meantime, may the love of God be manifested through an inner joy that is founded on Him. Let us be genuinely joyful when others rejoice, and not resentful of their good fortune.

Let us be prepared to share the joy of the Lord sensitively with those that are in pain and be a channel through whom God pours His love into the lives of those we meet.