

The Best Freedom Ever

Galatians 5:1-15

Introduction

A few days ago, the United States of America celebrated the Fourth of July—also known as Independence Day. This has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1941, but the tradition of Independence Day celebrations goes back to the 18th century and the American Revolution. On July 2nd, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence, and two days later delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. From 1776 to the present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence, with festivities ranging from fireworks, parades and concerts to more casual family gatherings and barbecues.

(<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/july-4th>)

Because of this event, the United States of America is free country and lead to the country it is today. I am sure most of everyone in here today if not all can say we are grateful to be a part of a free country. There are some people throughout the world that do not quite have the same freedoms we do here. I am grateful to be an American citizen.

There is however a freedom that transcends the freedom of being an American. It is the freedom found in no one else but Jesus. The moment you put your trust in Jesus, you became a new creature, your spirit which was dead in trespasses and sin was born again made alive! You were set free from the penalty of sin! In addition, through obedience to His Word and growing up in Him, you can be set free from the power of sin in this life.

If you are here today and have not been set free by Jesus from the penalty of your sin, being an American will be the best freedom you'll experience. In the end, it won't matter because without Jesus, there is no true freedom.

This leads us to our text today, Galatians 5:1-15.

Background

- Galatians is likely the first book written in our New Testament. It is Paul's earliest letter written around A.D 49.
- Galatians was written because the churches of that region were facing a theological crisis. People known as Judaizers came into the region and caused conflict with false teachings. The essential truth of justification by faith alone was being denied by the Judaizers—legalistic Jews who insisted that Christians must keep the Mosaic Law.
- In particular, Judaizers insisted on circumcision as a requirement for Gentiles who wished to be saved. In other words, convert to Judaism first, and then you can become a Christian. When Paul learned that this heresy was being taught to the Galatian churches, he composed an epistle to emphasize our liberty in Christ and to counter the perversion of the Gospel that the Judaizers promoted.

(Reading of the text)

Galatians 5:1-15 (1) Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (2) Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. (3) For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. (4) Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. (5) For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. (6) For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. (7) Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? (8) This

persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. (9) A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. (10) I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. (11) And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. (12) I would they were even cut off which trouble you. (13) For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. (14) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (15) But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Outline

I. The contrast of Christ's freedom and man's effort to freedom, vv. 1-6.

A. Paul exhorts them to "stand fast" in the freedom Christ gave them, v. 1a.

1. Notice who gives the freedom – its Jesus. We do not make ourselves free.

2. Freedom is a gift from God received by faith.

3. "Stand fast" means it takes effort to stay in this place of liberty. Someone who is positionally made free in Jesus can still live in bondage; they can be deceived into placing themselves back into slavery.

a. Unfortunately, many believers who have been set free by Jesus live their lives as if they are still in bondage to sin.

b. By God's grace, your position of freedom in Jesus will never change.

B. "Be not entangled again with yoke of bondage," v. 1b.

1. The yoke of bondage is referring to the law.

2. (No, this is not the yellow stuff from an egg.)

3. A yoke was a harness used by oxen and other animals to ease the work of hauling a load.

4. Peter made similar comments regarding the law being as “yoke.”
5. Acts 15:10: “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”
6. In ancient culture, the word yoke was a term that was used to describe submission. Thus, when someone was described as being yoked to someone or something, it was communicating the idea that they were in submission to that person or thing.
7. There is a yoke that we should take on. – It’s Jesus’ yoke!
 - a. Matthew 11:28-30 (28) Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.
 - b. The way we start that is becoming a part of His church!

C. Attempts to gain freedom on your own effort will profit you nothing, vv. 2-4.

1. Here Paul makes the argument that circumcision will profit them nothing.
2. This goes back to the situation of the letter, Jews were pushing circumcision on Gentiles to be saved.
 - a. Paul is not condemning the act of circumcision, but he is condemning the aim for it to make one right with God.
 - b. Just like circumcision or any keepings of the OT law, any kind of effort on our part to gain favor with God will profit us nothing.
 - c. What a shame. Jesus, dying on the cross, pouring out His blood, His life, His agony, His love for us - and it will profit you nothing!

Two men died with Jesus; for the one who put his trust in Jesus, it was eternal life. For the one who trusted in himself, it profited him nothing.

3. Those who aim for circumcision to be right with God must also keep the whole law!

Illustration: If you plan on getting pulled over by a police officer soon for speeding or running a red light. I want you to try something. Tell the officer “I know I was speeding, but take this in consideration, I have never robbed a bank, I have never shot and killed anyone, I never did a hit and run.” Give it a try because you’ll give the officer something to laugh about. If you transgress in one way, then you become a transgressor of the law. It doesn’t matter if you keep the other ones, you must keep them all. This also shows the concept of good outweighing your bad to be right with God is ridiculous. (We use an illustration similar in Basic Bible Truths lesson 2.)

4. Those who are justified by the law are “fallen from grace.”
 - a. This statement here has caused some confusion. This does not mean a Galatian believer has lost his salvation or that its possible.
 - b. Fallen from grace is a state of condition, not something that happens to a believer. Notice the usage “whosoever of you are justified by the law.” No one is justified by law.
 - c. Two chapters prior, Paul states this: Galatians 3:10-11 “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.”

D. What a freedom in Christ looks like: vv. 5-6

1. Those in the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. They rely on Jesus, not their selves!
2. Those in the Spirit know circumcision or uncircumcision means nothing. What matters is faith working through love, both of which are absent to the legalists.

II. The effects of those aiming to take away freedom, vv. 7-12.

A. The false teachers ruined growth to the Galatian believers, vv. 7-9.

1. Paul acknowledges “ye did run well.” They had a good start, but a good start did not keep them from deception.
 - a. They received Paul as a messenger from God.
 - b. They received the Holy Spirit with great joy.
 - c. Yet, they still received the negative influence from the Judaizers.
2. The word here for “hindered” in the original is a metaphor derived from military operations. The word ἀνακόπτω signifies “to break up a road” The Galatians were doing well until someone broke up the road they ran on.
3. Paul knows who hindered them, he was making sure the people knew they didn’t get their false information from Jesus.
4. The corrupting influence of legalism and other doctrines that diminish Jesus are like leaven in a lump of dough. A little bit soon corrupts the whole lump.
 - a. In the Jewish mind, leaven almost always stood for evil.
 - b. Yeast is a good illustration of sin – it is small, but If left alone it grows and permeates the whole.

- c. Paul is saying that the legalistic commitment they have right now may be small, but it is so dangerous that it can corrupt everything.

B. Paul's confidence in the church vv. 10-12.

1. Paul expresses his confidence in two things:
 - a. His confidence is that the church will no longer accept the view and embrace the doctrine he is teaching them in this letter.
 - b. His confidence is that the one who brought false teachings and discord among them receives judgment.
 - (1) If you contribute to lead others away from Jesus, believe me, God will not let you get away with it.
 - (2) It's one thing to reject God, it's even more to reject God and cause others to reject God.
2. Paul expresses he does not preach circumcision as a necessity.
 - a. The evidence of this is he receives persecution from the people that do.
 - b. If he did, the offense of the cross is ceased.
 - (1) There is a tremendous offense that some take from the preaching of the cross.
 - (2) The cross Jesus bore indicates you cannot save yourself. Christ must die in your place or you have absolutely no hope at all. You are not good enough and never will be to be put in a right position with God.
3. Paul wishes those who teach salvation by the works of the law would be "cut off."

a. Paul previously had some harsh words for those who preach another Gospel.

(1) Galatians 1:9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

(2) In other words, let him be condemned to hell.

III. The best usage of your freedom in Christ, vv. 13-15.

A. The call to liberty leads to serving one another in love, v. 13.

1. As believers, we have total freedom in Christ.
2. With that freedom, we are to serve one another in love instead ourselves.
 - a. God will not accept any service not done out of love.
 - b. Love is the mark of a Christ follower.
3. Jesus came to set the captives free, not to keep them in bondage or put them in bondage all over again.
 - a. We are free from the law, and free from sin.
 - b. Romans 6:15-18 (15) What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. (16) Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (17) But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (18) Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

B. The fulfillment of the law is by loving your neighbor as yourself, v. 14-15.

1. This is the second of the two greatest commandments Jesus gave.
2. Now, he is not here commanding to love yourself, but speaking with assumption because of the love and care we naturally love ourselves.
3. A wonderful test of our spiritual state is simply how we treat and love other people. No matter what spiritual image or status we may have, God cares how we treat others. Often, we want to make our spiritual measure exclusively on how much we pray, how much of the Bible we know, how many things we don't do, but the measure is how we love our brothers and sisters in Jesus.
4. This act here is going to require humbling yourself and emptying yourself of selfishness.
 - a. This is easier said than done because our nature and flesh fights to please ourselves.
 - b. Emptying yourself of selfishness is not easy, but the reward from God is great.
5. But if ye bite and devour one another. . .
 - a. That is how the church can act when it is using its liberty as a platform to promote their own selfishness.
 - b. If you want to see some fireworks, put two selfish people together.
Selfish people will eventually be consumed by one another.

Conclusion

As American citizens, we get to enjoy the benefits of freedom in our country at the earthly level. Freedom is not free. Men and women put their lives on the line and fight for our freedom, and we thank them for that. The freedom Christ gives us was not free either. It cost the precious blood of our savior to purchase our freedom. I do fear a time may where these God given freedoms and rights will begin to be stripped away from us little by little, but even if it comes in my time – I know where my true citizenship is – The Bible teaches that our citizenship is heaven – That we are ambassadors for Christ. My American freedoms may be stripped away someday, but the freedom I have in Jesus will never be stripped away. If there has never been a time where you put your trust in Jesus to save you, the freedom you have as American citizen is as good as it will get. You have not yet experienced true freedom. Sin still has dominion over you and you will face its penalty. Through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, true freedom is offered to you. His death, burial and resurrection secured that. If you would put your trust in the Lord, you will have the best freedom ever.

John 8:36 “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”