

# Christian Liberty, Part 10

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Now may I encourage you to turn with me in your own Bibles to Paul's letter to the Galatians, and chapter 5. And I shall read verses 1 through 12.

"For freedom did Christ set us free. Stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage. Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if you receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receives circumcision, he is a debtor to do the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law. You are fallen away from grace. For we through the Spirit, by faith, wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love. You were running well. Who hindered you that you should not obey the truth? This persuasion came not of Him that called you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence to you-ward in the Lord, that you will be none otherwise minded. But he that troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he be. But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then has the stumbling block of the cross been done away. I would that they that unsettle you would even go beyond circumcision [literally, that they would mutilate or castrate themselves--strong, coarse language, but it is the language of the Holy Spirit.]"

Let's pray.

*Our Father, we thank You for the privilege we have had to vent our gratitude and our praise in our psalms and hymns. The privilege of seeking You together in corporate prayer, of hearing the reading of your Word. And now as we come to this central place in our worship, when we put our natively proud and arrogant, sin-loving hearts in a posture of submission and reception before Your voice, we ask that the Holy Spirit will come both upon preacher and listener alike, and that we may hear what the Spirit would say to us this day. Amen.*

I'm quite certain that some of you have had the privilege that I have had in standing in that very room in Virginia where the fiery orator Patrick Henry uttered his famous words, "Give me liberty or give me death." And while untold multitudes have died in our country and in others in order either to secure or to maintain civil and religious liberties, God in Jesus Christ through the gospel has procured and offered to us a liberty that makes any civil liberty pale into insignificance.

Every time the gospel is preached in its fullness and in its purity, God in Jesus Christ is standing before sinners, bound in the manacles and chains of their sin, imprisoned in horrible bondage to sin, and proclaims liberty to the captives. And therefore, whenever the gospel emerges in its purity and in its power, the biblical doctrine of

Christian liberty once more comes to front and center in the thinking and in the faith and practice of God's people. And so, for the past some Lord's days, I have been bringing a series to you entitled, "A Fresh Look at the Doctrine of Christian Liberty".

We come this morning to the tenth in that series of sermons, and especially for the benefit of our visitors, let me take just a couple of minutes to capture the heart of what we have considered and discovered thus far.

I began by saying that we cannot understand the biblical doctrine of Christian liberty unless we take the time to wrestle with the broad-stroke biblical data which points on the one hand to the reality and nature of our bondage and slavery in Adam, and then the reality and nature of our liberty and freedom in Christ. We did that.

And then we asked the question, having been set free in that nine-fold freedom in Christ, What is the goal of that freedom? Why has God set us free? Through the proclamation of the gospel and the application of that gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit to our hearts, to what end has He set us free? And I suggested that Zacharias, father of John the Baptist, in his prophecy recorded in Luke 1:74 and 75, gives us a wonderful, distilled, comprehensive answer to that question. For in that prophecy he said, "That we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might render worshipful service to Him." That's the heart of the end for which we have been set free, the end for which we were made.

Adam in Eden before the fall, every facet of his life was an act of worshipful service to his God. Sin has enslaved us, made us the slaves of self and of the devil and of the flesh and of the world. We were never made for that. And gospel liberty sets us free to fulfill the purpose for which we were created, to render worshipful service to our Creator and now our Redeemer God. And the quality of that service, Zacharias said, "is to be without fear, in holiness and righteousness, before His face all of our days."

But then I said we have a problem. The human heart, being what it is, is constantly at work because of remaining sin in the believer who has been set free with the promised gospel liberty, is constantly tending to abuse the most precious of God's truth. And I used the analogy of each of us having within our hearts two attorneys who have set up an office within us, and they are constantly pleading their case. One of those attorneys is Mr. Libertine and the other is Mr. Legality.

Mr. Libertine is constantly seeking to persuade us to degenerate our liberty in Christ into a license for sin. While on the other hand, Mr. Legality seeks to persuade us to denigrate our liberty in Christ as inadequate to deal with our sin. You see the subtlety of that. On the one hand, Mr. Libertine's saying, "Since you are free in Christ, then don't be concerned about whether you sin or do not sin." Mr. Legality comes along and says, "Oh, you say you have liberty in Christ, but surely that liberty is not sufficient to deal with all of your sins. There must be something plus Christ, both with respect to the guilt of our sin or dealing with the ongoing pollution of our sin. Justification and sanctification, Mr. Legality is constantly seeking to put something between us and Christ in our dealing with sin.

So we examined what I believe are the two most pivotal, crucial texts to help us to shout down all of the persuasiveness of Mr. Libertine when he begins to whisper in our ears that because we are free from the condemning power of the law, we are free from the sin-galling influence of the law, we are free from bondage to the devil, to the world, etc., then "let us sin that grace may abound. The higher mountain of sin we raise, the higher mountain of grace is magnified." And if we are to shout down such reasonings, we need to have the truth of Galatians 5:13 and 1 Peter 2:16 etched upon the tables of our hearts.

There the Apostle says in Galatians 5 and verse 13, "For you, brethren, were called for freedom. Only do not use your freedom as a staging area for the flesh, but through love, be slaving for one another." If that text is a sentinel over in that corner of this building, ever there guarding our preaching of liberty in Christ, we will not be able, with impunity, to use that liberty as a launching pad, a staging area for our flesh. But we will be reminded that we are so free in Christ, free from the dominion of self-pleasing, free from the standards and goals of this world, free enough to know what your needs are as a believer, to know what the needs of sinners are, that I can voluntarily make myself a slave for their well-being.

And then as we saw last Lord's Day in 1 Peter 2 and verse 16, after Peter has summoned believers to various areas of submission to constituted authority, he tells them, "Yet in that submission you are to carry out your life as free, and not using your freedom for a cover-up of wickedness, but as bond-slaves of God." Never using our freedom either as a staging area for our flesh, nor as a thick, down comforter by which we cover up wickedness in the name of Christian liberty.

Now, that's the review. This morning, we turn our attention to Mr. Legality. that in-house lawyer, or as our British friends would say, solicitor, who would keep us from the full enjoyment of our liberty in Christ--follow me now--when it comes to the question of how we deal with our sin. How are we to deal with the reality of our sin, either in its guilt or in its polluting influence upon us? Mr. Legality would constantly be presenting his case that would be nothing less than an intrusion upon and a negation of our true liberty in Christ. And we begin our effort to address this issue with what I believe is the most crucial text in all of the New Testament with respect to our solemn duty and privilege to tenaciously hold to our liberty in Christ against all the pleadings and arguments of Mr. Legality and his entire law firm. And that text is Galatians 5 and verse 1: "For freedom did Christ set us free. Stand fast, therefore, and do not be entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

Now let me say just a few words about the larger context of the letter to the Galatians. This directive, coming toward the end of this letter, comes in a letter that most serious Bible students agree is the most passionate of all of Paul's letters when it comes to polemics, that is, arguing on behalf of truth and against error. The letter begins in chapter 1, verses 1 to 5, with an ordinary greeting. Paul is not going to allow the departure of the Galatians from the heart of the gospel to keep him from being a gentleman. So in spite of the fact that his heart is throbbing with holy, white-

hot passion for truth and against error, he still pauses to give a proper introduction to his letter, and that's what he does in verses 1 to 5. However, unlike all of his other epistles to the churches, even to that church at Corinth, with all their problems, he took time to commend them in a whole paragraph. But here there's no commendation. He starts right in, right hot, verse 6:

"I marvel that you are so quickly removing from Him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel, which is not another gospel, only there are some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be damned. [That's what anathema means. Let him be damned.]"

The only place I know where someone's calling down damnation on an angel. The angels that left their first estate and were cast out of heaven with the devil, God consigned them to chains of darkness. But here the apostle is calling down not only damnation on an angel, on himself. He said, "If I come back to you and say, 'Hey, you know, folks, I've got some fresh insights to the gospel', if it isn't the gospel I first preached to you, let me be damned." That's strong language, folks. If I use language like that, you'd say I was coarse. I'm just quoting it. That's what's there. Look at the text: "Though we, an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any other gospel than that which we preached unto you, let him be damned." "Paul, isn't that one of those things, like Pastor Martin, at the end of the sermon, you want to apologize and say, 'I got carried away a little bit in the heat of my spirit?'" He said, "No way! I'll say it again. My mind is settled. This is not excessive passion. If, as we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preaches unto you any gospel other than that which you receive, let him be anathema." That's strong stuff.

What in the world has got him so worked up that he bypasses the ordinary pattern of giving some commendation? Surely there must be some things in this church, he could say, as we saw in chapter 5. He said, I have confidence to you, word in the Lord, that you'll be none otherwise minded. So he wasn't totally despairing of this bunch. What is it that had him so worked up? What was the problem? Well, here was the problem. Paul had preached a gospel to both Jew and Gentile, which was God's answer to the most burning question any human being can ever entertain. You know what that question is? What is the most burning, vital, important, crucial question any one of you sitting here can ever entertain? What is it? "Oh", you say, "what will he look like when he rides over the hill on his white horse?" No, no, I'm telling you girls, that's not the most important question you can ask. No, it isn't. No, it isn't. "What will I look like in my wedding?" No, no, no, that's not the most important question. You know what the most important question is? How can I, a hell-deserving sinner, be just with God? That's the question. How can I, a sinner in Adam, a sinner from my conception, a sinner in my infancy, a sinner in my childhood, a sinner in my prepubescence, a sinner in my teenage years, how can I, a sinner, be accepted as righteous in the presence of a holy and a just God?

Well, Paul preached the biblical gospel, that gospel that was given to him by direct revelation, as he says in verse 11 and following, and that gospel had three notes that came through with unmistakable clarity. Sinners who deserve hell get right with God by grace alone, that is, by the unmerited favor of God. No sinner has a claim upon God. God has no obligation to anything but damn us all. It is a salvation provided, extended, proclaimed by God's grace alone--no merit in the sinner. It is based upon the work of Christ alone, and it is to be received by faith alone. And if you will read through, speed read through the book of Galatians and circle every time you find the word grace, Christ, and faith, you'll see that the letter just throbs with that emphasis. There was no mistake about it.

When Paul went into that area of what is now south-central Turkey and preached the gospel to that Galatian area, he preached with unmistakable clarity: "Sinners, would you find acceptance with God? You will find it based upon God's grace alone, the work of Christ alone, received by faith alone." And many, under the mighty work of the Spirit, embrace that gospel and the Savior who comes out of the womb of that gospel into the hearts of believing, penitent sinners. But what happened? Along came some teachers that we call the Judaizers. And these Judaizers, you know what they were saying very clearly in Acts 15, verse 1, and then again in verse 5? These Judaizers were saying,

"Look, Paul's gospel was good enough as far as it went, but it's those words alone at the end of His gospel that we've got to scrub them out. We don't want to get rid of grace. We don't want to get rid of Christ. We don't want to get rid of faith. But it's this business, grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone. We want to scrub out the alones and we want to put comma, grace comma, Christ comma, faith, comma. And after the comma, here's what you need to do to be saved."

Look at Acts 15 and verse 1. What does it say? "Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, saying, Except you be circumcised after the custom of Moses, You cannot be saved." And then verse 5: "it is needful [necessary, obligatory] to circumcise them and to charge them to keep the law of Moses." In other words, these teachers were not simply saying, "Your male Christian professing believers need to go to the local synagogue and have this ceremonial right as something that is detached from anything." No, they were saying,

"Circumcised in order to enter into the visible community of God's ancient covenant people and become kosher Jews. [In other words, the gospel Paul preached was inadequate. It didn't take you far enough.] If you are to be fully saved, saved with a capital S, capital A, capital B, capital E, capital D, underlined, exclamation point, painted in orange day-glow paint, you want to be really saved, it is Christ--oh yes, we don't want to get rid of Christ, don't want to get rid of grace, don't want to get rid of faith, but we want you to go all the way, be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, that is, embrace the whole Mosaic covenant as the way of your life."

That's what they were teaching. And Paul describes that. Notice the very significant language in chapter 2 of Galatians. Remember what we're trying to do. What was the problem that got Paul so hot under the collar? Well, look at chapter 2, verses 4 and 5: "And that because of false brethren, privily brought in, [now notice] who came in privily to spy out our liberty that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." See the emphasis? When these people came along and changed the punctuation in Paul's gospel, Paul says, "They came to spy out our liberty in Christ and to bring us into bondage." So when he says in chapter 5, "For freedom did Christ set us free, stand fast, be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage", we have got to understand those words in terms of Paul's previous use of them.

The issue is this: our true liberty in Christ and the gospel of salvation by grace alone, in Christ alone, received by faith alone, they stand or they fall together. And Paul understood that. That was the burning issue. Do you see that? If you don't see that, the rest that I try to preach this morning will just be watching somebody get excited and worked up and finishing a sermon. That's the larger context of Paul's language in chapter 5 and verse 1.

Now, let's look at the text itself. I'm going to use exactly the same headings that I used when I opened up verse 13. We have, first of all, the glorious affirmation: for freedom did Christ set us free. And then we have the necessary exhortation. Only the difference is you have the positive first and the negative next. "Stand fast, therefore [positive], and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage [negative]."

All right, let's seek to exegete, unpack the text to understand by the help of the Spirit of God what God the Holy Ghost has deposited in this passage. Here's the glorious affirmation. Paul uses the noun and the verb with the same root. It's like a play on words. "For freedom did Christ set us free." He's declaring that when Christ saved us by grace, through faith, He set us free to the end that we might enjoy that freedom. For freedom did He set us free. You say, well, obviously. That makes sense. Anything else would be stupid. Yeah. That's why he says earlier, "Oh stupid Galatians. Oh foolish Galatians. You're doing something stupid."

Let me illustrate. Here's a man who's been in prison. He's been considered a dangerous felon. So he's not only inside the prison, but he's in shackles. And through due process, they find out he's the wrong guy in there. He doesn't belong in there. And so one day, the jailer comes with all the proper authorization and says, "John, a mistake was made. You don't belong in here. We're going to free you." And he goes over and he unlocks all the manacles and the shackles. His hands are free and his legs are free. He opens the door, takes him out to the front, to the entrance to the prison, and says, "John, you're free." Now, what would you think? If no sooner is he made free than the authorities come and slap the cuffs on him again. No, no, no. If he's set free, he's set free to be free. Yeah, everybody knows it. You don't need to have IQ of beyond 80, 90 to know that.

This is what Paul is saying in this glorious affirmation: "If you're a Christian, you Galatians, you've embraced the gospel that I preached to you, that gospel that said freedom from the condemning power of the law is to be had in Christ by grace, through faith, and no additions to grace alone. Christ alone, faith alone--that's the gospel I preached to you and that freed you from the condemning power of the law." Notice how Paul says it in chapter 2, verses 19 and 20:

"I through the law died to the law that I might live unto God. I couldn't live to God as a free man as long as I was bound to the law in its condemning power. But in union with Christ, I died to the law. All of its condemning power was exhausted in my substitute to the end that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me. That's freedom. No longer can the law thunder its condemning voice at me. It thundered against my Savior, and in union with Him, I died to all of its thunder and condemning power. I am a free man from the condemning power of the law. Furthermore, I'm a free man as a Jew who was formerly bound over to the Mosaic law covenant, not only under obligation to keep the moral law."

But as he says in Philippians 3,

"I was strict in all my obedience to all the requirements of the Mosaic law. Touching the law, blameless. You never would have come and found me in the corner of the most remote restaurant eating one little shrimp. You never could find me doing it. Never once! Touching the law, I was blameless. All the kosher rules, I kept them. All of the dietary rules, I kept them. All of the other requirements, I was utterly blameless."

But now, he says in Galatians chapter 3, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." That law, he goes on to show in chapter 3 and verse 23,

"Before faith came we were kept in ward under the law, shut up to the faith [there he's speaking of the Mosaic law covenant] had the influence of keeping us hedged in away from the defiling influence of the Gentiles, constantly pointing us to the faith that would come. But now that faith has come [that means now that Christ has come, the fulfillment of all the types and the shadows] the tutor goes away. The pedagogue is no longer needed. We are Christ's free sons. We no longer need the Mosaic Law covenant. In Christ it is done away with."

That's the whole teaching right through the book of Galatians. I can't go into all the details. Now that's the gospel he preached.

Now think with me. He went and he preached that gospel, and many embraced it. Christ alone, offered in grace alone, received by faith alone, so that no longer did

they need to dread the thunderings of the broken law. No longer did they need to wonder, "Shall I eat this or shall I eat that? This is clean, this is unclean. Have I kept all of the laws? Is this my wife's thirteenth day since the beginning of her period, or is it her fourteenth day? If I touch her on the thirteenth day, I'm defiled. I can't go..." My friends, think what it was. No wonder it was called the yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.

Do you ever read that stuff and take it seriously? I've just come through it. And I said, "Lord, thank you I didn't live then." I mean, everywhere, I keep this, I keep that, I do this, I do that. "Cursed is everyone that continues not in everything that is in the book of the law to do them." That's what the text says. Paul came saying, "You're free. You're not only free from the condemning power of the law, you're free from the Mosaic law covenant. You are saved by grace." Isn't that what they established, as you heard in the previous hour, in Acts chapter 15? Do we need to make people kosher Jews in addition to grace, Christ, and faith? They said no. Acts 15, verses 7 to 11:

"God made choice by my mouth that Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. God, Who knows the heart, bore them witness, giving the Holy Spirit as He did to us, made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why do you make trial of God that you should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in like manner as they."

Grace, faith, Christ, those were the issues. And here at this gathering in Jerusalem, those were the issues that are highlighted.

So here is the glorious affirmation. Paul says to these Galatians, "Look, in that initial proclamation of the gospel that offered you freedom in Christ, freedom from the condemning power of the law, freedom from the Mosaic law covenant." If they were Jews, that's what He preached to the Jews. If they were Gentiles, He said, "You have no obligation to get circumcised and become kosher Jews. No, no. All of that stuff pointed to Christ. You've got Christ. You've got the substance. You don't need to grab for shadows. You have Him. You don't need shadows." Along came the Judaizers and said, "No, no, no, you need something more."

So that leads us then to the necessary exhortation, having given that glorious affirmation for freedom, "Christ has set you free." In other words, if you do not stand in the freedom for which Christ set you free, you are frustrating the very purpose and end of His salvation. So he gives this necessary exhortation. The positive: "Stand fast, therefore." This word "stand fast" is a present imperative verb that means "continually stand your ground in that freedom into which you came when you embraced my gospel before these scoundrels came along with another gospel."

And we use the term "stand fast" that way. We say in a given discussion, "Boy, did that guy hold his ground. Boy, did he stand his ground." Or we'll say to a son or

daughter, "Look, if somebody tries to persuade you, blah, blah, blah, stand your ground." That's what Paul is saying, "Here's the ground onto which you were brought through the preaching of my gospel. It was freedom ground. And for freedom ground, Christ set you free. That's where you've got to stand. He put you there. Stand there." Very simple. Don't let anybody budge you. Christ put you in freedom ground. You stand on freedom ground. So there's the positive conclusion being, since the purpose of the saving work of Christ is freedom, to yield our freedom is to denigrate the very fruit and the very goal of His agony, of His blood, of the shrouded heavens, of the cry of dereliction, of all of the horrors of Golgotha, to give up freedom ground is to denigrate Christ and His sufferings.

That's serious stuff, folks. That's not just yielding to some persuasive would-be teachers. That's not just yielding to that little lawyer in our heart called Mr. Legality. It's a slap in Christ's face. He says, "For freedom I set you free." We say, "But Lord, it's all right if I move off the ground you purchased with your blood and secured for me by your Spirit. That's all right." "No, it isn't all right. I died to set you free from the condemning power of the law, from the sin-provoking power of the law, from slavery to sin, Satan, from self, from the Mosaic law covenant, from the rules and regulations of man, and from the fear of death. And now you give up what I purchased so dearly, so carelessly, in such a cavalier way." No, Paul says, "Stand fast, therefore."

Now follow me. As surely as the end for which Christ died is frustrated, and the salvation He purchased is disgraced, when I use my liberty as an occasion for the flesh, when I use my liberty as a cover-up for wickedness, what a disgrace to Christ who died to make me holy, who died that I might render worshipful service without fear in holiness and righteousness before His face all of my days! What a horrible, horrible slap in the face of Christ when I use my liberty as an occasion to the flesh! But my dear brothers and sisters, it is equally a slap in the face of Christ when I give up my liberty and do not stand in the reality of that liberty in the face of my sin. And how am I to deal with my sin, both in its guilt and in its defilement, both with reference to justification and sanctification? The moment I move off my purchased liberty in Christ and I don't stand in it, I disgrace the Savior who bought it for me. And so Paul says, "Stand fast, therefore."

And now the negative, "And be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." The NIV translation captures the sense of this very wonderfully: "Do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." You see the picture? You know what a yoke was? With animals, it was that wooden bar that put them both together to plow the same furrow, to drag the same cart. With men, it was that bar across the shoulders that would hold equally weighted tubs of water, loads of brick, whatever it is. He says,

"Don't let men come along to you, for whom Christ has taken away the heavy yoke of legalism. He's lifted that yoke off your back. He's placed upon you the light yoke of loving service rendered to Him Who loved you and gave Himself for you. Don't let these people come along and lay upon you this yoke, this burden, this yoke of slavery that want to take you back under the law, back under rules and regulations,

back under the sense that Christ is not enough, so when you sin, once you move away from grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone, what do you do? Then you say, 'Well, since He wasn't adequate to get me in, then grace and Christ and faith are not adequate to keep me in, so I've got to do something. I've got to pray some more before I can get forgiveness. I've got to have more devotions before I can get forgiveness. I've got to be more faithful at prayer meetings before I can get forgiveness.'

You see what you're doing? You've got Christ plus. No, not circumcision and keeping the Mosaic law, but all the things that accompany our religious life together. And you put them between yourself and Christ. And when do you know that enough is enough? When do you know? You don't. And so you go with a troubled conscience, no joy, no peace, a negative view of God. You can't embrace the freedom and the glory of what it is to be an adopted son saying, "Abba, Father." He said, "Don't let yourselves be burdened again by your yoke of slavery."

And what was that yoke of slavery for them? Well, if you look at chapter 4--very interesting insight. Verse 8: "Howbeit at that time [since most of these Galatians were Gentile, heathen, converts, idol worshippers], not knowing God, you were in bondage [here the word bondage again] to them that were by nature no gods. But now that you've come to know God, or rather be known by God, how turn you back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments wherein you desire to be in bondage over again?" What do you mean, Paul? He said, "I'll tell you. You observe days and months and seasons and years. I'm afraid of you lest by any means I bestowed labor upon you in vain." What's he saying? Back in their pagan days, they're pagan religions, they had feast days and festive days and celebrating days. And he said,

"Back in your old pagan unconverted days, you remember when you were serving those things that are no gods? Yet you had a sense that you had to do something to the gods above you and outside of you. And you were in bondage to keeping this festivity and that festivity. And you did this and you did that. And it got you nowhere--no peace of conscience, no liberation from the power of sin, no liberation from an accusing conscience. Now the gospel came and what happened? You saw that all you need do is embrace the Savior Who lived a perfect life under the law, Who bore the wrath of God on behalf of sinners when He died upon the cross. And out of the infinite grace and goodwill of God, Christ was set before us. And we were told that if we would but embrace this Christ by faith, we would be forgiven and accepted, and we'd receive the gift of the Spirit, the Spirit of Sonship, and we would be able to call God our Father. And oh, we tasted that blessed reality."

Now Paul says, "What's happened? Along come the Judaizers. And they start not by trying to get you to be circumcised and become fully kosher Jews. They start out by saying, 'Wouldn't it be nice to just keep a few of the special religious holidays? I mean, surely it's good to keep a feast day, a fast day, a celebration day with a view to adding something to Christ.'" So he says,

"You observe days and months and seasons and years; you're turning back again to the weak and beggarly elements. That's the thing from which God delivered you in Christ through the gospel of Christ alone, Christ alone, faith alone. And now the Judaizers have come and they're taking you right back into that stinking stuff under the name of Jewish holy days and Jewish feast days and Jewish festivals: 'Surely they are different from your pagan feast days and pagan festivals. God ordained them. God instituted them. Surely God would not despise His institutions. So you need those things to perfect what this guy Paul said you had in completion and fullness in Christ.'"

And Paul says, "If you do that, my labors have been in vain. I preached the gospel of liberty and you're coming back again into bondage." And so he gives this exhortation: "Stand fast [positive]...[negative] don't be entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

This directive was so vital because it brought the people back to this simple issue. When you ask the question, "Out of that burning concern, how can I be right with God?" Let's put it in the language of the Philippian jailer, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He's trembling. He's about to kill himself. He's seeing the power of God, not only in the earthquake and in the shaking of that jail, but in the hearts and lives of Paul and Silas, who, though unjustly beaten and put in prison, are so full of the Holy Spirit. They're having a hallelujah meeting at midnight, singing psalms in praise to God. He sees the moral miracle of God transforming hearts. And he says, "I can't deny the power of God. I see it in the earthquake. I see it in these men. And I know I'm not right with this God. What must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas said, "Well, it's going to take us a long while to answer that question. Let's sit down and we'll..." No. "Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." They dared to set before Him Christ, naked of all ceremonies, all rituals, and say, "Mr. Jailer Man, in Christ, in Christ Himself, in Christ alone, in Christ embraced by faith, is all the salvation you will ever, ever need."

Paul preached that to these Galatians and along came the Judaizers and said, "No, no, no. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's fine. Comma. But Jewish feast days, Jewish celebrations, Jewish holidays, circumcision, the Law of Moses, these are essential if you're going to really be saved with all capitals underlined, exclamation points. Paul's salvation is just lowercase letters. We got a better one. And Paul says, "No, be not entangled again in the yoke of slavery."

Now, that's my effort to open up the text. I want to bring some final observations and applications. What's all this mean to me, to you, as one who has come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Anybody ever come up to you and tried to make you a kosher Jew? Nobody's ever come up to me. I've never had anybody in the name of Christ ask me if I were a circumcised Jew. Anybody ever ask any of you men that? So what's this have to say with us? Anyone ever come to any of you ladies and say, let me have a look in your kitchen, see if you've got all kosher food, you're keeping Jewish diet to any of you women? No. What's this say to us? I tell you, it's got worlds to say to us.

No one is telling you, no one is telling me to become an orthodox, kosher Jew to be saved, that I must become such in order to be justified, to be right with God. But there's a deeper issue. When you confront the guilt of your sin at any point in your life, and you ask the question, "How can I deal with that guilt?" It's real guilt for real sin. If in answer to that question you put anything between your guilty soul and a direct faith embrace of Christ, you have fallen out of your liberty in Christ."

You say, "Pastor, what are you talking about?" Well, this is what I'm talking about. "I blew it. I should never have walked by that literature kiosk in the airport. I stood where I shouldn't stand and before long I picked something off the rack I shouldn't have done. I let my eyes see filth." You get home, and what do you do? You don't do anything there in the airport but feel guilty and dirty. So you finish your trip and you get home. What do you do? You say, "I can't go to Christ. I mean, that was just blatant, stupid, irrational, willful sin. I indulged in uncleanness. So I've got to wallow around in some grief for a couple of days. I can't go right to Christ. I've got to get back into more consistent devotions before I can have any joy."

What are you doing? You're putting time, your grief, your joyless, morose attitude, a season of more devotions in prayer, you're sticking them between your guilty soul and Jesus! You've left your liberty in Christ! You're to go immediately, stinking and reeking and smelling with the vomit of your sin, and say, as the Bible warrants it, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye may not sin (1 John 2:1). But if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father." When do we have Him? When we sinned. I didn't write it, the Holy Ghost did. If any man sin, at the point of his sin, he has an Advocate.

And what's the Advocate there for? To plead our cause. Before you even walk down the rest of the hallway and you've left the filth that injured your eyes: "Lord Jesus, forgive me. I sinned. I'm ashamed. But Lord, I'm not going to shame You by thinking I need to have a half a day of grief; I need to go around morose and have my wife see my dejected face. No, Lord Jesus, You set me free from such nonsense. I'm going to go directly to You." You believe that? You act that way?

I think I'm pinching some of you where you need to be pinched. "Isn't that turning the grace of God into license?" No, my friend. That's turning the grace of God into what we need grace for. Grace is for sinners, unmerited favor. What do you need to add to it?

I picked on one of the men. Should I pick on one of the ladies? You really have been trying, really working on being a sweet, compliant, submissive wife. And God's helping you--God's really helping. But an issue came up and you stood your ground, toe to toe, with your husband. I mean, it was a blatant defiance of his headship. I mean, he approached the issue tactfully, sweetly, noncombatively, but I tell you, a loaded gun's a loaded gun. And that's what you were. And a hair trigger--you know what a hair trigger is? If you ever do any shooting, you've got to find out whether

you've got an ordinary or a hair trigger. A hair trigger is one where just the slightest pressure, boom. And you were hair trigger loaded that day.

In spite of your hubby coming in sweetly, tactfully, lovingly, I mean, we wish we'd had a video of him and we'd show it at a seminar on how a husband is supposed to dwell with his wife according to knowledge and all the rest. But you blew it. You were a stinker. Yeah, you women, you know, you were a stinker: "You did this, you did this, you did this." And no sooner was the stinking stuff out of your mouth and out of your face and the way you spoke: "Oh Lord, there I go again. But I got a supper to cook. And I got clothes to iron for the kids tomorrow. So I'm going to go around with a long face till I can get alone and have a half hour of devotion."

What are you doing? You're putting something between your guilty soul and Jesus. Stop it! With your hands measuring out the stuff of that meal, and with your hands over that ironing board--"If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father. Mr. Legalist said you can't go directly to Christ. You've got to put something Christ-plus, grace-plus, faith-plus. You say, "No, Mr. Legalist. Jesus is all, and Jesus is for me right now. Right now. Right now. Right now. Right now."

How often have we sung Hymn 411? Oh, it's one of my favorite hymns in my devotions. "Not despairingly come I to Thee? No, not distrustingly bend I the knee. Sin has gone over me. Yet is this still my plea? Jesus has died." Hallelujah. Hmm? Sin's gone over me. "Well, I've got to wait until I feel like it's gone off me." Got off you how? With a little bit of time? A little bit of your nasty, morose, dejected, joyless spirit? What's that do to wash away the guilt of sin? That's Jesus plus, folks. And you've got to stop it. That's the spirit that leaves your liberty in Christ.

Part of my liberty is Christ has redeemed me from the curse of the law. He has borne the guilt of that sin fully, completely, without reservation. There's nothing left in the dealing with that sin but for me to lay hold afresh in faith, believing that if I confess my sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive me and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. What more is there to say, folks?

The legalist is in us. And as surely as the libertine is there, wanting to use our liberty as a staging area for the flesh, as a cover-up for wickedness, so likewise the legalist is in us that wants to add something to grace to Christ and to faith. And if you don't learn to manage your sin in the context of your liberty in Christ, you're going to have a fouled up, messed up, crippled Christian life.

But now, what about those of you who sit here, strangers to God's grace? You know you're not a Christian. You don't profess to be. But if you're honest, you'll admit you do have some measure of the sense of your guilt. One of the reasons you're here is you're scared to death if you stop coming to church as an unconverted man or woman, God will just let you go and you won't even care anymore. And you're scared of that. You've got enough sense of the reality of God and of heaven and hell and judgment and the fact that you're not all you should be. You have some sense of your

guilt. You've stopped trying to lie to yourself that you're not guilty, you're not a sinner; there is no hell. You've given up that nonsense. Thank God you've given that up.

Christ has preached to you week after week. He's preached to you this morning as the great Emancipator Who lived the life you should live but have not, died the death you deserve to die but dare not, rose from the dead and lives ascended at the right hand of God the Father on high. And we tell you, look, it's not your doing. It's no rituals, no rites. We don't invite you to the waters of baptism. We don't invite you to a wafer, to a piece of bread, to a cup of grape juice. We don't tell you you must now become something, fix yourself up, and when you get to a certain level of morality and decency, then... No, no. We say Christ is there in the Gospel for sinners.

But you see, your heart hates grace. Your heart hates grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone. You know why it does? Because you get saved by a salvation that's all of grace and none of your deserving, all of Christ and not your works, by faith alone, and all the glory goes to God. And we don't want to be in the posture where we say God gets all the praise. Is that right? But Paul says, "But of Him are you in Christ Jesus, Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, that according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord."

My sinner friend, the gospel we preach is a gospel of Christian liberty. Because it offers to you a Savior who does all the liberating. He does all the saving. And all He asks you to do is put yourself in His saving, liberating hands. That's all. "Come unto Me, him that comes to Me, I'll in no wise cast out."

"Ah, but I've got such habits." You don't get your habits all sorted out. You go to Jesus Who can get them... If He can take a man so full of demons, that nobody could bind Him with a chain; he runs around the hills and the caves cutting Himself and screaming and hollering, and in a moment breaks His chains and he sits clothed and seated in His right mind, what are your habits to such a Savior? He can deal with your habits. You don't get them all fixed up first. "Ah, but I've got this and I..." Forget all that. You say, "Lord Jesus, anything that needs fixing in me, fix it."

Now, you can't come to Jesus and say, well, I know this is off the chart, but I want to keep that. No, no, no, no, no, no. Repentance means you want Jesus to deliver you from everything that's displeasing to Him. And you come to Him to get delivered from it. That's repentance.

But you don't do the delivering first. I've got to get rid of this and rid of this and rid of this and rid of this. Then I can come to Jesus. Well, what is He going to do for you if you get it all fixed up before you come to Him? Then you can say, "Oh, Jesus and I, we share the glory. I got fixed up, some of it myself." No, no. You come to Him like you are, and when you get fixed up, you say, "Lord Jesus, You did the whole shebang. You did it all." And He loves to do it all for sinners. And if that's who you are, a sinner with all your bad habits and your chains and your guilt, just come to Jesus. And He's the great Liberator. And He said, "Whom the Son sets free is free indeed."

For freedom, child of God, did Christ set you free. "Stand fast, therefore, be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage."

I said to my fellow elders, I said, if by the time this series is over I've been accused of being both a legalist and an antinomian, I haven't preached it right. Paul was accused of being both a legalist and an antinomian. When I was preaching don't use your liberty as an occasion for the flesh, some of you probably sat there and said, oh, pastor's a legalist, wants to bring us into bondage. No, I just try to preach what the Word of God says. Some of you may sit there this morning and say, that's too simple. I mean, that'll leave people... My friend, you get wedded to a Savior who sets you free and it's all of grace and nothing makes you love Him more and want to serve Him more. You won't run around doing your own thing. You'll want to do His thing out of love to such a Savior.

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