

1. After an escape – you don't go back

- A. Every now and then you hear of a captive who has managed to escape from their captivity
 - 1). Not too long ago I read the story of a woman being held by ISIS
 - a). She spoke of how she was constantly mistreated – abused – living in fear
 - b). But they let their guard down and she was able to sneak away to freedom
- B. We rejoice when we hear about these kind of escapes
 - 1). How this woman living in terror was now enjoying freedom and security
- C. But as I read this – there was one thing that never crossed my mind
I never once wondered if she would give up her freedom and return to her captors
 - 1). Why? That would be a foolish decision – a ridiculous – unthinkable act

Point: But that is exactly what was happening in these Galatian churches

- A. They'd been freed by grace from the works of the law
Freed from a system of human performance in an attempt to win God's favor
Freed from having to keep extra-biblical traditions and the mere teachings of man
 - 1). Yet many were choosing to bring themselves back under the bondage of works
 - a). Trying to earn through their own efforts what God had already given them by grace
- B. The tragic thing is that many believers are still doing this today

Thought: We can tend to act like it is no big deal – just a little legalistic I guess...

But notice how Paul responded: Gal 3:1-3 (GWT) You stupid people of Galatia! Who put you under an evil spell? Wasn't Christ Jesus' crucifixion clearly described to you? (2) I want to learn only one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by your own efforts to live according to a set of standards or by believing what you heard? (3) Are you that stupid? Did you begin in a spiritual way only to end up doing things in a human way?

Transition: Those verses give you a hint of the tone of this letter

2. The tone of the letter

- A. Many of Paul's epistles are warm – gentle – tender – THIS ISN'T
 - 1). This is Paul with a clenched fist – his tone is tense and confrontational
- B. Why? Paul is fighting for the freedom of these believer's he loved so dearly
 - 1). They were his children in the faith – the fruits of his first missionary journey
 - 2). But they were turning away from the Gospel of grace they'd heard from Paul
- C. They were listening to a group of false teachers who were deceiving them = Judaizers. Legalist
 - 1). Who were telling them that faith in Christ alone wasn't enough for salvation
 - 2). You had to add compliance with the Jewish laws, rituals and ceremonies
 - a). Their message was faith PLUS works – faith in Christ PLUS human merit
- D. To promote their message these false teachers were tearing down Paul and his message
 - 1). They were attacking Paul's authority
“Paul is not an Apostle sent by God – he is self-appointed – a renegade”
“Therefore his message did not come from God – it is man's message – heresy”
 - a). IOW he's a phony and you can't trust him
And if you can't trust him – you certainly can't trust his message
 - 2). And it was working! The Galatians were turning from the truth to their lies

Point: So in this letter we see Paul aggressively hitting back

- A. Defending his calling – proving he was a God appointed Apostle
Defending his message – proving he was preaching that message God had given to him
 - 1). His motive is to move the Galatians away from the lies they were embracing

- a). Which was a phony gospel that could not save
Ga 1:6–7 (ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁽⁷⁾ *not that there is another one...*

- 2). Paul is fighting for the purity of the Gospel – we must be accurate here
 Get this wrong and you proclaim a message that won't save the sinner
 - a). Allow that to be distorted and you have no message to proclaim – just religious!
 You can still call it the Gospel like they did– but it is no longer good news

Point: So Paul is fighting for the truth – defending the purity of the Gospel in the church

- A. He is fighting for these believers – fighting for the freedom and joy that grace brings
 - 1). When you lose the grace of the gospel you lose your freedom – bring self under bondage
 AND you lose your joy (see more about this in a moment)

Transition: Let's look at grace calling us into freedom

3. Grace calls us into freedom

- A. Free to live a life characterized by rejoicing in our relationship with God
 - 1). Free to rest in our acceptance and security – because of the work of Christ
 - 2). Free to glory in the truth that our God loves us
 That He's not always mad at us because we struggle and trip and fail at times
 - a). He sees us through the finished work of Christ – His perfection
 The anger for our sin past – present and future was absorbed by Christ
 - 1a). He disciplines us now – but always out of love never anger
 Every thought towards you now is loving - warm
 - 3). Therefore were free to anticipate His blessing in our life – the blessings Christ earned for us
 - 4). Free to look forward to the future with excitement – I am secure in Christ

Point: Free to enjoy our Christianity – free to enjoy God – free to enjoy life as an adventure
- B. So many Christians don't enjoy Christianity – don't enjoy intimacy with God – security
 - 1). They always feel guilty – always feel like God is disappointed with them – upset
 Why? Because they are focused on their own performance – works
 Rather than being focused on the work of Christ - therefore they see every one of their flaws

Point: They are legalistic = legalism is a fixation on our performance
 Where walking by grace is focusing on Christ's performance for us
- C. **Defining terms:** What do I mean by the law? And legalism? (you'll hear these terms a lot)
 - 1). Law in this sense is any system that is based on human merit – human performance
 - a). It may be the OT law or a set of *extra-biblical* rules or traditions
 - 2). Legalism is when we bring ourselves under that system and base everything on our compliance with that set of rules
 God's accepts me – loves me – blesses me on the basis of my keeping those rules
 - 3). It can be a set of man-made – extra biblical rules or traditions of the church you attend
 - a). You don't go to movies – women don't wear make-up – play cards (million of them)
 Men have hair that is only a certain length – don't eat sugar (Sugar blues – temple)
 - b). This set of man-made rules becomes a phony measurement of spirituality
 - 1a). Keep it and you feel God owes you a blessing
 - 2a). Fail to keep them and your carnal at best – not even saved at worst
 - c). I always like to ask the legalist – “Show me that in the Bible”
 - 1a). If it's there I'll comply – if not then it is just your opinion isn't it!

Legalist hate that!

Point: Give in to legalism and you will lose your joy and assurance – producing fear and doubt

My Experience of Legalism (Why I hate it)

- A. Background: I came into Christianity – walked in grace for a few months - honeymoon
 - 1). I was so in love with Jesus – so much joy – victory - peace
- B. But eventually like the Galatians – I stopped thinking God’s grace was sufficient
 - 1). It can’t be this simple - it must require MORE than just relying on the finished work of Christ!
 - a). So, like the Galatians I started adding things – faith PLUS this and that
To really be accepted by God I needed to do all these things too
- C. I set up this standard in my mind – a set of self-imposed rules – faith in Christ PLUS...
 - 1). Pray this long every day – read this many chapters in the Bible
I’d read about fasting – OK that has to be done – at least one day a week
I ended up with this whole list – faith – PLUS all these to be acceptable to God
 - 2). Problem with laws and rules and regulations – *they demand perfection*
 - a). There is no grace in a law – there is no grace in a rule
They simply demand – *do this and do it all the time and you’ll be acceptable*
 - 1a). Fail - fall short and you’re not acceptable
 - 3). Problem I kept falling short
 - a). Read and pray for a week then miss a day! Condemnation – God is mad!
I’d get angry at somebody – have a lustful thought – failure!!!
 - 1a). I tried but couldn’t be perfect
 - b). So I felt shut out from God – “Why would God love a failure like me?”
“Why WOULD He bless somebody like me?”
“Why WOULDN’T He send somebody like me to hell?”
 - 4). Know what I’d do? (See if you can relate) I’d promise to try harder!
“God, I promise I’ll do better. Tomorrow I’m getting up early and I’m praying even longer and reading even more. I’ll serve in ANOTHER ministry in church and make sure I don’t watch ANY TV” ... and on and on and on – *the performance treadmill*
 - a). That would last a few more days (sometimes a few hours) and I’d fail again
 - 1a). Seemed like the harder I tried the more I failed
 - b). I was miserable – no joy – no peace – afraid I was going to end up in hell
 - 1a). I was being crushed by my own inability to be perfect
- C. Tragic result of this legalistic approach to God - I ended up hating Christianity
 - 1). That which had so thrilled me at the beginning – I ended up not liking at all
And to be honest I didn’t like this harsh God of Christianity all that much
 - a). I rarely felt like He loved and accepted me – I never felt like I could please Him
Because I never felt like I measured up to this standard that seemed so hard
 - 2). To be honest if I could have walked away from Christianity I probably would have
 - a). But the ONLY thing that kept me going – I feared going to hell
So I’ll try and endure this miserable experience until I get to heaven (I hope)
 - b). I wasn’t serving God because I loved Him – it was because I feared hell

Point: But this was the fruit of Christianity lived under legalism – based on my performance
I hated Christianity and wasn’t too thrilled with its God!

- A. But thank God He inspired Paul to write a book like Galatians and Romans (it’s counterpart)

- 1). Here are truths that will free us from legalism – so we can walk in grace
- 2). Truths that will assist us in falling in love with God – experiencing His love for us

Transition: Let's look at how the truth sets us free from legalism

4. The Rescue: Truth sets us free from legalism

- A. God does demand perfection to be accepted (I had that right – the standard is high)
 - 1). AND He HAD set the standard far beyond my reach
- B. That really frustrated me until I saw the beauty of the gospel – the glory of grace
 - 1). I saw this God I thought was mean, harsh, hyper-critical – unable to be pleased
Was the most incredible Father – truly the lover of my soul
 - 2). His Spirit illuminated the amazing truth – NOW GET THIS
The standard God required me to keep - *He had already kept for me*
His Son lived that life of perfection – Jesus met the requirements to get into heaven for me
 - a). *I am accepted unconditionally, freely, eternally because of HIS finished work*
- C. I must have felt like Paul when this truth struck his understanding
 - 1). He speaks of his struggles in Romans 7 – not always living like he wants
At times failing to do what he wanted to do – and doing those things he hates – falling short

Finally he cries out in frustration: Ro 7:24 (ESV) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

- 1). Yes Paul, what did you find out? I feel the same way!
I need to know *who can free me from me* and my lousy, inconsistent performance
Who can free me from this condemnation & guilt I always seem to be under
Who can free me from feeling God is always mad and disappointed with me
 - a). Who can free me so I can actually enjoy God and Christianity

The Answer: Ro 7:25 (ESV) Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

- 1). There it is! It's because of what Christ has done for me – not what I do for Him
- 2). Religion is based on my work for God – Christianity is based on His work for me
So I'm accepted because of His performance and not rejected because of mine

The Result: Ro 8:1 (ESV) There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

- 1). I stand in His righteousness – therefore the law can find no place to judge me now
 - a). It scans the entirety of my life and only sees Christ's righteousness placed into my account
- C. I am imperfect – I don't hit the standard – never have – never will
His Son came to earth and for 33 years never fell short of the standard
 - 1). On the basis of THAT I stand before God
AND because of that He is not angry – He is not disappointed
 - 2). There is no wrath towards me left – Jesus absorbed it all at the cross - every bit
 - a). God now sees me through His perfect performance – and there is no condemnation
 - b). And I am loved! Every day I can anticipate His goodness in my life

4. Grace changes everything

- A. I am no longer trying to earn God's love through my pathetic performance
Christ earned my acceptance with God through His perfect obedience
- B. Now I can just relax and enjoy God – resting in His love for me
AND now out of **THIS** understanding of grace everything finds its proper motivation – it all clicks
 - 1). I don't read my Bible now to be accepted by God = a legalistic approach

- I read my Bible because I am accepted by God = that's walking by grace
- a). I want to read those truths that so thrill my soul - Grace saturated truth!
 - b). I want to read this book that ignites my heart – and tells me about my Father
- 2). I don't pray to be accepted by God = the law - legalism
I pray because I am accepted = grace
 - a). I want to draw near to a Father like this – the lover of my soul
 - 3). This is my motivation behind service, giving, worship, church attendance
 - a). Not to be accepted but because I am accepted – I'm grateful – *it is all an act of worship*
- C. Some people are afraid of grace – some teachers afraid to teach it
 “If I believe that –freely accepted – unconditionally - through His performance not mine - I'll just sin it up!”
- 1). No – you get a grip on this and you'll fall in love with God
Result: 1 John 4:19 (NKJV) We *love Him because He first loved us.*
 - a). Out of that love – rather than fear – you'll start to desire to live for Him
 You'll want to draw near to Him – want to serve and obey Him
- D. This is the message of Romans 7 (Turn to Romans 7)
- 1). In beginning of Romans 7 Paul answers the question arising from Romans 6:15
Ro 6:15 (ESV) What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace?
 - a). OTW Why doesn't freedom from the law produce lawless people?
 Or from the other side – Why doesn't this thought of grace = unmerited favor
 This thought of being accepted by Christ's performance not ours
 - 1a). Why wouldn't that free people up to sin rather than motivate them to obey?
 - 2). Answer Romans 7: I'm taking time here too free you to not be afraid of Grace – unmerited favor
 I'm fighting for your freedom and joy!
Ro 7:1–4 (ESV) Or do you not know, brothers—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? ⁽²⁾ For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. ⁽³⁾ Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. ⁽⁴⁾ Likewise, my brothers, *you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.*
 - 3). Here's why being freed from a legalistic approach doesn't make you a crazed sinner
 - a). The believer is like one who died to an old spouse = in this case the law and its works
 Which freed them to be joined to another spouse = in this case Christ and His grace
 - 4). The analogy is marriage here – you were in a relationship with a cruel, harsh taskmaster
 - a). One that made your life hard – you never felt like you were good enough
 Always felt like a failure - peace and joy were impossible = life under law
 - 5). But that person dies – you marry a person who is so different
 - a). One who treats you so kindly – accepts you so unconditionally – loves you sacrificially
 - b). That love changes you – it causes you to love them in return – you desire to honor them
 You want to please that person to a far greater extent than law could ever motivate you
 - 1a). You may have done things for the first spouse – but only out of fear
 You had no desire to serve them – no joy when you did
 - 2a). But with this second spouse – you desire to serve – desire to please Him
 Your service is joyful – and to serve sacrificially seems so reasonable

Point: That is what understanding grace does!

- A. When we are Justified by faith – we die to the law – we are united to Christ
 - 1). He becomes that satisfying love of our life – our hero – our passion – our treasure
 - a). That will never produce more sin – it will always lead to a greater obedience
But obedience from the right motivation – love rather than fear
Romans 7:4 (NASB) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, *in order that we might bear fruit for God.*
 - 2). Understanding these truths puts delight into obedience, service, living for Him
 - a). Because we fall in love with the God of these truths – He did that for ME!

Summary: We NEED the truths that are in Galatians don't we?

- A. We need to be liberated from legalism and to begin to walk in the knowledge of Grace
- B. *We need to stop working for that which we already have – Acceptance by God*
 - 1). We need to start enjoying it – and falling in love with Him because of it
 - 2). AND THAT is what Paul is fighting for here in Galatians
Fighting to deliver the believer from legalism in the first century and in the 21st century
- C. Be praying that God uses this wonderful book POWERFULLY

Transition: Real quick what we will learn as we study Galatians – a sampling

II. THE TEACHINGS OF GALATIANS

1. We will learn the doctrine of “Justification by faith alone”

- A. That doctrine that everything else in the Christian life hinges upon
 - 1). Get this wrong and everything else gets skewed – you'll be off everywhere
John R. W. Stott: Nobody has understood Christianity who does not understand...the word 'justified'.

2. We will learn about Christian freedom

- A. Galatians has been dubbed the “Magna Carta of Spiritual Liberty”
And the “Christians Declaration of Independence”
- B. This letter will remind us again and again that we have been set FREE
 - 1). Free to enjoy God – Free to enjoy our Christianity
 - 2). Free to run to God because YOU ARE accepted because of what Christ has done
 - 3). Free to stand back up again after failure
- C. If you're caught up in the performance treadmill trying to earn acceptance with God
Galatians is the book for you – it will free you – that is why it is written

3. We will learn how to defend our freedom

Ga 5:1 (ESV) For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

- A. We are so legalistic by nature – we need to learn how to fight against that default position
 - 1). How to stand against our own thinking that wants to bring us back under the law
- B. How to stand against others who may hate the freedom we enjoy
 - 1). Legalist hate the freedom Christians enjoy – they want to steal it
 - 2). This book will arm us with truth so that we can stand

4. We will learn how to balance our freedom

- A. To flee from legalism is not to flee to license!
Ga 5:13 (ESV) '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.

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- 1). We will look at what real Christian freedom is

5. We will learn about dangers of leaving the Gospel of Grace

Ga 1:6–7 (ESV) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁽⁷⁾ not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.

- A. There is only one message that saves

Faith in Christ alone through grace alone PLUS nothing else

Eph 2:8–9 (ESV) For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁽⁹⁾ *not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

- 1). The minute anybody says you are saved by “Faith” PLUS

It is no longer the one message that can save a person from their sin

- B. We need to understand this – this truth is vital - foundational

6. We will learn what the purpose of the law is

- A. Ever wonder how a NT believer is suppose to interact with the OT law – we’ll learn that
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CONCLUSION

1. The purpose of Galatians is clear

- A. It offers freedom - it defends the Gospel of grace and courageously attacks legalism
- B. It rises up against the perversion of the Gospel that says "Man is saved by faith PLUS works"
- 1). It says "NO - Man is saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone PLUS NOTHING"
- C. It is a letter that reminds us to rest in the finished work of our Savior on the cross!
- 1). That helps us to rest in His love - quit trying to earn the acceptance you already have

2. When you start to understand all this your Christianity will take off!

- A. Will you sin more? Of course not! You’ll begin to desire to obey – not out of love NOT fear

Thought: We’re in for a thrilling ride

Please be in prayer about our study through this wonderful book