

## Galatians 5:1-15

### Introduction

#### I. Freed for love

- A. In chapters 1-4, Paul talks about how we are freed FROM the law (freed from trying to earn God's approval by following all the commandments)
- B. In chapter 5, Paul turns to talk about what we are freed FOR
  - 1. Freed for love (5:1-15)
  - 2. Freed for life in the Holy Spirit (5:16-36)

#### II. What does freedom from the law look like?

Example 1: Shawshank Redemption: how do you live in the free world after 40 years in prison?

Example 2: Retirement: how do you live in the freedom of retirement after 40 years of work?

### The Passage

#### I. We are freed FROM the law, so don't go back! (5:1-12)

- A. The issue: Galatians are "trying to be justified by the law again" (v. 4)
- B. Paul's command: "don't be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (v. 1)
- C. Paul's seriousness about this issue
  - 1. To go back to the law is to abandon the gospel and to be separated from Christ (v. 2-4)
  - 2. That way of thinking is so insidious, like yeast (v. 7-9)
  - 3. Those who are leading the Galatians astray will be judged accordingly (v. 10, 12). See Jesus' comment in Mark 9:42
- D. Paul contrasts that old life under law with the life of faith (v. 5-6)  
by "faith" (not works) we "wait" for righteousness (we don't earn it) and "we confidently hope for it" (which we'll receive on the final day) knowing that we'll receive it because we have already received the "Holy Spirit" who is our guarantee of our future righteousness
- E. Why would anyone ever be tempted to go back to the law?
  - 1. Because it makes us feel like we can justify ourselves and do it on our own, and we like to be in control and do things on our own  
"Performance-based approval": that's how everything else in our lives works
  - 2. So tragically, many people choose to go back to the slavery of the law rather than live in the freedom of faith (like Brookes in Shawshank Redemption who would prefer the familiarity of prison)

#### II. We are freed FOR love

- A. Some people never ask the "what are we freed for" question. They focus completely on the fact that we are freed from the law.  
As a result, they think they can live their lives however they want because of God's grace. Paul addresses that issue in v. 13: "don't use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature."

B. Christ frees us up to love

1. Under the law, we live by performance-based approval, and when you are performing and trying to earn approval, it is very difficult to love well.

2. Analogy: basketball tryouts

a. When competing for a spot on the team, it's hard to genuinely be open to helping the other players.

b. What if the coach told you the first day of tryouts that you had already made the team? You would be free to serve/love the other players

3. Bonhoeffer: "Self-justification and judging others go together just as justification by grace and serving others go together. Once a person has experienced the mercy of God, he or she will henceforth aspire only to serve."

4. Examples

a. Freed to love as parents

If you're trying to justify yourself and perform as a parent, then you probably need your kids to succeed (not just for them but for you). It's hard to love them well when you need them to succeed. But if your identity is already safe in Christ, you are freed to love them.

b. Freed to love as spouses

If you haven't embraced God's approval of you, there's still a lot of neediness, and you need life to be a certain way (including your spouse), so you might be very controlling. Or, you might need your spouse's approval so much that you're afraid to confront him/her. Finding our approval from God in Christ frees us up to not simply control or appease but rather love.

5. v. 15: biting and devouring each other (sounds like sports try-outs)

6. Jesus' own life

He had God's perfect approval before his ministry began (see Mt 3:17), so that freed him up to love and serve people radically  
He calls us to that same free life of radical love and service

C. Love actually fulfills the very law we've been freed from (v. 14)

1. The 10 commandments and other social laws are all summed up in this principle: "Love your neighbor as yourself"

2. So, the great beauty of this is that when we stop trying to justify ourselves by the law and just love each other, we actually fulfill the law better than we ever did before

3. Love even goes beyond the requirements of the law

a. The law creates boundaries and fences that define the behavior we have to do.

b. Love has no boundaries or fences

see the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25

## Conclusion

- I. What defines my life? Does loving others define my life?
- II. What barriers keep me from serving/loving? What do I need to be freed from in order to love and serve more?
- III. Who is someone in my life God is calling me to love right now?

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Explain what Paul means in v. 2-3 when he tells the Galatians that if they get circumcised, they are obligated to keep the whole law. What's his logic there?
3. In what areas of your own life do you sense yourself still trying to "justify yourself," still trying to "earn a spot on the team" through your own performance?
4. On Sunday, Dave mentioned people who accept their freedom from the law under God's grace but use that as an excuse to live however they want. It was suggested that such people have never really experienced grace. Do you agree? Why or why not?
5. Discuss the logic of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's comment: "Self-justification and judging others go together just as justification by grace and serving others go together. Once a person has experienced the mercy of God, he or she will henceforth aspire only to serve."
6. What barriers in your own life keep you from "serving one another in love" in more radical ways? What do you need to be freed from in order to love and serve more?
7. Who is someone God might be calling you to love more in this next month?