

One Or The Other – Gal 5:1-6

What a great day to worship the Lord; Especially so, as we remember the events of this day some 2000 years ago, and sing the same thing they did – Hosanna!

So let's continue to worship the one who saves, by turning to Gal 5:1-6

[1] *For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

[2] *Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. [3] I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. [4] You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. [5] For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. [6] For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

➤ Paul starts with freedom, ends with love, and covers faith and works in between; A lot And though we often think of freedom as escape from *political* tyranny, Paul's talking about our freedom from the *Law's* tyranny
Freedom from adhering to the *Old* Covenant rules and regulations, when living under the New; That's the freedom for which Christ has set us free in *these* verses

Or to say it another way, he has released us from a *works*-based mentality, to live by a *faith*-based mentality
Where the burden to pay our way to heaven has been lifted

➤ And Paul's like – “Don't go back to that;” Same thing we saw in chapter 4 (v9) *Stand firm therefore* [v1], *and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.* (1b)
Which for us, isn't so much a tendency to live according to the *Law*, but good works in *general*; Conforming ourselves to a nebulous code of *moral* standards
That's *our* risk, our tendency – a mentality of good works

And the first thing I want to commend to you, is don't succumb to it

1. Don't succumb to a good works mentality (v1)

Just like we've been set free from the legalism of the Law, we've been set free from the *moralism* of good works

Referring to the constant pressure to do *good*, in order to avoid bad

➤ My Mom had a piano teacher growing up, who was so over the top that she would smack her hands with a ruler when her posture wasn't good; Crack
Sometimes her wrists would be too limp, and “crack;” Other times they were too curved b/c her hands weren't strong enough to strike the keys with sufficient force – “whap!”
And on a few occasions she would slouch b/c she was tired, and sure enough – “Crack!”
So naturally, mom toed the line; Not b/c she wanted to, or saw the value in it, but b/c she *had* to in order to avoid the disdain of her teacher

That's moralism; The constant pressure to do good *works*, in order to avoid bad *consequences*; Like God's wrath – “Crack!”

➤ Or, on other side of the coin, it's the mentality that if you do *enough* good works, you'll reap the benefits
Like that Christmas song, *Santa Claus Is Coming To Town*

“You better watch out, you better not cry, you better not pout I'm telling you why;
Santa Claus is coming to town”

IOW you better toe the line, have good posture, and straighten up in life – or you won't get your gifts; You won't get what you want

Perfectly representing a moralistic, good works mentality

So when you sing it, just make sure you do so a bit “tongue in cheek;” And let it serve as a reminder not to *succumb* to such a mentality, when it comes to your life

B/c at the end of the day . . .

• It leads to bondage

A good works mentality leads to bondage; Or as Paul says it – *a yoke of slavery* (1b)
Always living in fear that you're not doing *good* enough, or that you're not doing *enough* good

I've seen people so laden with that mentality, they can hardly move; Fear grips them; “What if” confines them; Anxiety paralyzes them
A form of bondage so powerful, it's like an addiction

➤ And the best thing you can do, is *burn the yoke*
That's what Elisha did in 1 Kings 19 when God called him to follow Elijah
He was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen, dependent on and essentially tethered to them
But after speaking with Elijah, he decided to *burn* the yoke, and move on
B/c *nothing* was going to keep him from doing what's best

And that's the very attitude we need to take with the yoke of moralism; Thinking that good *works* get us ahead; And get us into God's graces
They don't; Burn the yoke once and for all

Especially so, b/c . . .

• Christ has set us free from that

For freedom [freedom from a good works mentality; freedom from bondage in that respect] *Christ has set us free* (1); And gave his life to prove it

➤ When our girls were growing up, I knew that the gospel ethic had taken root, when they *wanted* to behave, and *wanted* to help, and *wanted* to serve . . .
Instead of feeling like they *had* to; Or that it was a means of getting what they wanted
In which case they were free; And so are you as a child of God

So whatever you do, don't go back to that; Don't succumb to that mentality (**Summary**)
And if you do, remove the yoke and burn it; Ask God to help you see it, and be done with it; That's the first principle

2nd, from v2-4, is that . . .

2. You can't have it both ways (v2-4)

As in you can't trust in *God* to save you, *and* in good works, at the same time
Faith and works don't mix; Like drinking and driving; Or *texting* and driving; Or oil and water; One *always* pollutes the other
That's the idea in *these* verses; You can't have it both ways

Which is *particularly* relevant in our day, with so many religions, even ones purportedly based on the Bible, that *combine faith and works* to be right with God And Paul's like – not true; In fact, when it comes to being justified before God . . .

- **Works negate faith**

V2 – Look [he says]: *I, Paul* [as opposed to the Judaizers, the false teachers], *say to you that if you accept circumcision* [as a means of being justified], *Christ will be of no advantage to you.*

Not that circumcision is wrong in and of *itself*; Or that he's just thinking of circumcision alone . . .

But that it's representative of the *entire* Law; *All* good works; Like he says in Titus 3 And if they're done for the purpose of being right with God, they negate a person's faith

B/c Paul says that *Christ will be of no advantage to you* (2b)

IOW his work on the cross for your sake, will have no effect on your heart and soul; It's negated

It's like the guy who had an old baseball autographed by Babe Ruth

And hearing that it might be valuable, he decided to sell it

The problem was, you could barely see the autograph; It had faded over the years

So to make it clearer, he took out his pen, and traced over the letters; Essentially

obliterating the real autograph, so that the baseball was *worthless*

His work, negated *Babe's* work; Just like ours, negates Christ's

➤ Now, does that mean good works are *out*? Not at all; The book of James is clear about that; *Faith without works is dead* he said (James 2:26)

Nor is Paul *contradicting* James; Who said that *a person is justified by works and not by faith alone* (James 2:24)

It's not a contradiction, b/c that statement is a summary of the *context* in James, to say that works always *accompany* our faith, and *prove* our faith, and *show* our faith

But they don't *supplement* our faith, or *earn* our salvation somehow, or even *ensure* it

To the extent someone believes *that* Paul says, good works actually *negate* our faith

And James would agree; Otherwise he wouldn't have agreed with Peter at the Jerusalem Council, who said that we are *saved through the grace of the Lord* Jesus (Act 15:11)

So works aren't out, and this isn't a contradiction

But it *is* a sobering statement and clear warning, that you can't have it both ways

And the reason I think, is that . . .

- **God will not share his glory**

Works negate faith when it comes to our salvation, b/c God won't share his glory in saving us

Is 42:8 is clear – *I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other.*

And Is 48:11 the same – *My glory I will not give to another.*

God is a *jealous* God the Bible says, and will not share the credit for what he does, with anyone or anything; Not with you, and not with the things you do*****

That's why he says in v3 – *I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.*

B/c that's your only hope of salvation if you rely on *part* of it; Jesus will be of no help You have to make the baseball yourself, play the game, swing the bat, hit the homeruns, and sign your own name

Faith *and* works don't mix; It's one or the other

➤ And if you try otherwise – *You are severed from Christ* he says; V4

You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law [you who rely on good works to save you whether in whole or part]; *you have fallen away from grace.*

- **Works sever us from Christ**

If you depend on good works, in any measure, to save you or keep you, you're not saved

A reliance on good works to be right w/ God, severs us from the saving grace of his Son It cuts us *off* from Christ

And as hard as it may be for some of you to hear, that includes things like infant baptism in some religions; Believing it saves you or somehow *contributes* to your salvation Or confirmation in some circles; Or taking communion; Or doing penance

➤ On that note, I'll never forget a visit to a Catholic church in Morelia, MX back in 2002 There was a long approach from the street to the front doors, consisting of cobblestone steps and cobblestone bricks; It had to be 100 feet And as we got out of the car, we saw a woman slowly traversing that distance on her knees; Weeping and calling out to Mary as she went Almost certainly thinking that her suffering was a form of penance, through which she could be forgiven and saved; And it's not true

Not only is that unbiblical in and of itself, it's contrary to what Paul explicitly says here *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law* [you who would be justified by works]; *you have fallen away from grace.*

If you believe, as many do, that you're saved through faith *plus* works, instead of faith *apart* from works, you're in error; And trouble

B/c you can't have it both ways; It's one or the other (**Summary**)

In fact, it's really just faith; That's what he gets to in v5-6

3. It's faith and faith alone that leads to heaven (v5-6)

After telling us that works won't cut it, Paul tells us why faith *does*; V5

[5] *For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves* [i.e. those *with* Christ as opposed to those cut *off* from Christ] *eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.*

The *hope of righteousness* refers to our quiet confidence that God will deliver us to heaven just as he promised; That place of righteousness and holiness, for all time

That's what we *wait* for; And *all* we wait for – glorified bodies in a glorified place

And do so, not as a bunch of care-less homebodies; But eagerly

We wait *eagerly* for the hope of righteousness; *Eagerly* for the joy of heaven

➤ I remember when Becky and I were engaged, eagerly anticipating our *marriage*, our union, our life together; We couldn't *wait* to be one flesh

We couldn't *wait* to stop saying goodbye; We couldn't *wait* to be together

You could have powered a small *city* with the electricity between us

Why? B/c by faith, trust – we had a relationship, we had a future, and we had a plan
And we *eagerly* awaited it

How much more, heaven? With a place prepared and God's plan to make *it* happen?

If you're not eagerly waiting for heaven, if you're not eagerly waiting for righteousness,
if you're not eagerly waiting for glory – sinless, certain, perfect, and forever . . .
You have to wonder about your focus; You have to wonder about your relationship;
You have to wonder about your future
B/c those *with* Christ, as opposed to those *apart* from Christ, *eagerly* wait for the hope
of righteousness (5)

➤ And do so, *by faith*; That's what it says; By *faith* we eagerly wait (5)
We not only *live* by faith, but *wait* by faith; Or should
With the *assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen* (Heb 11:1)
Assurance, and conviction; We don't wait with a wish; We don't wait with a dream
We wait with certainty; We wait with confidence; Faith

The *question* is, faith in what? Faith in whom? And the answer of course, is Jesus
We wait by . . .

- **Faith in Jesus**

That's the implication; B/c Paul already said it in **Gal 2:16**
We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ
And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God (Gal 2:20)
Including faith to wait for the *consummation* of all things*****
So it's faith in *Jesus*, and *Jesus alone*, that leads to heaven; That's the first part

2nd, is . . .

- **Through the Spirit**

First 4 words of v5 – *For through the Spirit*, we wait by faith
IOW we wait by *faith* in Christ, through the *Spirit* of Christ; The Holy Spirit; Through
his power and presence in our lives
That he will *bolster* our faith; And *strengthen* it; And spur us on in that respect

So often, if we think of the Holy Spirit at all, we think of him as passive; Or even passé
And yet he's always there, always encouraging, always enlightening, always
awakening, and always strengthening
So that our hope of righteousness is *always* secure; Even when we're not

It's faith in Jesus and Jesus alone, through the powerful presence of his *Spirit*, that leads to
heaven; And it's completely . . .

- **Apart from works**

That's the next verse; [6] *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything*; Good works don't matter when it comes to heaven
Good works don't matter when it comes to righteousness
For *sanctification* they do; And serving; And ministry; Totally
But not for righteousness; Not for *justification*; Not for *salvation*
It's faith and faith *alone* that leads to heaven

Faith that arises . . .

- **Out of love**

That's the last part of the equation; Good works count for nothing
Only faith working through love it says (6b); Only a loving faith, *works*
Grudging faith, compulsory faith, forced faith – leads to nothing; Counts for nothing
If you have to muster your faith; If you have to manufacture your trust; If it's not born
out of a *love* for Jesus, and an overwhelming *gratitude* for what he's done . . .
It's useless; All for naught

➤ When **Louis Zamperini** was captured by the Japanese in 1943, after 47 days adrift at
sea, he had to trust his captors for food and shelter; Had to
He was completely at their mercy; And he hated it; Every minute of it
For 42 days he was kept on an obscure island in the Pacific, where they beat him,
deprived him, and barely kept him alive
But it was all he had; He *had* to trust them; It was forced; It was mustered

And where did it get him? Nowhere; It got him nowhere
His forced faith in the Japanese, only led to more torture and *more* imprisonment; 2
years more

And the same is true of us*****

If your faith in Jesus is forced or grudging; If you depend on him only for fire
insurance; If he's a means to get ahead in life, or a means to live a good life . . .
It's all for naught; B/c the only thing it leads to, is suffering; Forever

➤ That's why the thought that believing the gospel just in case it's true, will get you
nowhere; You've heard that, right?
“You might as well believe; You might as well trust him; If it's true, you're good; If
not, no biggie; What do you have to lose?”

Everything; You have *everything* to lose with that kind of faith
B/c it's not born out of *love*; It doesn't come from your heart; There's nothing soul-
changing, knee-bending, or life-altering about it; It's completely *void* of love
Which according to Paul, is the only thing that counts – *faith working through love*
Faith in Jesus, out of *love* for Jesus; That's what saves; That's what leads to heaven

So whatever you do (**Summary**), don't succumb to the bondage of a good works
mentality, or flirt with the disaster of faith plus *works*; It doesn't work
Only faith in Jesus, through the Spirit, out of love

Pray – Lord, would you impress these warnings on our hearts? Would you use them to
save those in error? And those who have been deceived? Increase our faith; Stir our
affections; Solidify our hope; And set us free; That's our prayer
And we give now, b/c you have

Close – **Welcome Packet; Step 1; Easter/Good Friday** – Invitations

Journey Devotional – At the door; New content, Interactive elements for kids and
families, Spotify play list; Help prepare your heart for Easter; *Elder prayer*