

**February 19, 2017
Freedom in Christ
Galatians 5:1-17**

¹ It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

² Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

³ Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

⁴ You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

⁵ For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

⁷ You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

⁸ That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

⁹ "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

¹⁰ I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty.

¹¹ Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

¹² As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want.

Good Morning! I thank you for coming to spend a portion of your Sabbath here at FBC- PF. Our purpose is the advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus the Christ and we do this with public worship, preaching of the gospel, Christian living, personal evangelism and Christian education. Our mission is to help one another in Christian love and spread the Word of God.

I want everyone who was here yesterday for our quarterly meeting of ABCMC to stand. As always, we got high marks for our food, planning and hospitality. Thank you. To everyone that planned and prayed for a successful meeting thank you. We have hosted this meeting 6-7 times during my tenure and each one has been a blessing.

As we move into the sermon for today I want to review where we have been because I am attempting to lay some building blocks for Christian living, one of the purposes of this church. So, I will begin with a few questions:

Have you done any reading in Galatians?

Remember that failing to read is like coming to class w/o homework completed – you will probably get something but not as much as you might get if you read, study and pray.

How have you been living since 1st Sunday?

- LIVING LIKE YOU BEEN ADOPTED BY GOD THE FATHER?
- LIVING LIKE YOU HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER WHO ADOPTED YOU?
 - LIVING LIKE YOU HAVE HOPE?

Again, remember if you are not living as God has called you to live you should not be expecting God to bless as God has promised to bless. (Repeat)

How have you been loving since last week?

- Are you adjusting to those you wish to love?
 - or are you expecting them to adjust to you?
- Are you accepting those you wish to love?
- Are you sacrificing for those you wish to love?
- Are you speaking the truth to those you wish to love?
- Are you freeing those you seek to love?
- Are you willing to suffer for those you seek to love?
- Are you willing to spend time with those you seek to love?

Today we continue with our **examination and application** of Paul's letter to the church at Galatia. In Galatians 5:1-17 makes another transition. In vv 1-6 Paul calls for his readers to protect their freedom. Then in vv 7-12 he exposes the false teachers who are robbing them of their freedom. Finally, in vv 12-17 he reminds them of what they have been called to, **freedom**, and how it is expressed, **in love one to the other**.

Well, we have talked about living and loving so if we are going to build a solid foundation we need to talk about what it means to be faithful and how our faith impacts our living and loving. Please pray with me and for me as I labor with this theme:

Faith in Action – How Are You Doing?

SHALL WE PRAY?

God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, we come this morning to hear the Good News. Good News that will strengthen us and allow us to run on a little while longer. Good News that will remind us that you do indeed have the whole world in your hands. We thank you for placing us in this place and time to be a part of your mighty work. We thank you for the vineyard to work in and enough to get the work which you have assigned to our hands done. Now Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit abide with us and allow us to hear from the throne room of grace. In the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ we pray. Amen and Amen.

Faith in Action – How Are You Doing?

The church at Galatia was in the midst of what I will call growing pains. They had heard the good news from the Apostle Paul and they were following Jesus the Christ as Paul had explained it to them. But some other folks came early one morning with some scrolls for them to read; they came with another

explanation of how and what they must do in order to be really saved. I would imagine that those folks who came looked much like them and dressed and spoke like them, but they said, "what you have been taught is not the whole story, our leaders have been given us the whole story and we just want to come in and share what we know to be true". The newly converted Galatians did not completely understand their freedom in Christ and the part they did understand just seemed too easy.

Can you hear them? We have been saved because the Son of God came and dwelled among us. He, Jesus who was without sin, took on all of our sins, past, present and future so that we might choose to return to a right relationship with His Father, the Creator of the universe. And for all of this we do not have to do anything, but confess that Jesus is the Son of a Living God and love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

I would imagine that seemed too easy, Paul must have missed something. So here are these folks, knocking on our doors, coming in because we invited them in and telling us that before we can be truly Christian we must be Jews first, because Jesus was Jew and was sent to save Jews.

Do you see the **first problem**? If you don't know what you believe; if you don't pray to stay strong in what you believe; if you let folks into your home with a different gospel you may find yourself in slavery again to sin and disobedience. How can you avoid this first problem? So, glad you asked. **You must study the word, you must pray over the word, you must be in community with others doing the same thing.**

Faith in Action – How Are You Doing?

How many of you are willing to admit that you dreamed, plotted and planned how you would live once you were grown and free of the demands of your parents? You would come and go as you pleased? Eat what and when

you wanted. Do chores on your schedule or not at all. You were firm in your belief that you knew what was best for you. You could not wait for freedom. For some of you that freedom was all that and more. But some of the rest of us, we learned that freedom brought with it another set of responsibilities.

Meal planning

Budgeting

Bill paying

Errands to grocery stores, dry cleaners, laundry mats, drug stores

Transportation

Employment – getting it, keeping it, advancing in it

And we got a wakeup call – freedom ain't really free

If we are not careful we become like the Galatians and let someone cut us off from our goals and we find ourselves looking for short cuts. A man to help with the bills, a woman to do the cooking and the cleaning, sponging off the folks we wanted to be free from.

And in all of our freedom the faith we were taught moves to the back burner, if not entirely off the stove. For we don't have a plan for keeping our faith with our newly founded freedom. Faith in Action requires a plan.

Faith in Action – How Am You Doing?

Let's see we have talked about **studying and being intentional about being with like-minded people**. We have looked at how our desire for freedom can sometimes enslave us to **unhealthy relationships and habits and working on our faith is no longer part of the plan**. So what is left to consider when we talk about faith? Glad you asked. Love is left.

How do you put up with a wayward child? LOVE

How do you forgive a cheating spouse? LOVE

How do you rebuild a relationship? LOVE

What makes you do right when you would do wrong? LOVE

What lifts you up when you have been beat up, beaten down and left for dead? LOVE

What makes you continue to attend a church when folks make you mad? LOVE

As I worked on this sermon I tried to find stories from my life or illustrations that would drive home the point. But instead I found scripture:

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

¹³This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. ¹⁶And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. ¹⁷This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. ¹⁸There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 James 4)

Faith in Action – How Are You Doing?

Benediction

⁵May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15

How are you Living

How are you Loving

How are you using your freedom

How are you standing firm

Law or grace

How are you following

How are you producing fruit?

What we really find here is the basis for preserving true religious freedom. Paul's authoritative appeal is not an example of authoritarian religious tyranny, but just the opposite: it is a charter for genuine spiritual freedom.

In Galatians 5:1-12 Paul calls for his readers to protect their freedom (5:1-6). Then he exposes the false teachers who are robbing them of their freedom (5:7-12).

The liberating, redemptive act of Christ that sets us free from slavery and imprisonment under the law has also been a major theme of this letter.

Now that we are set free from living like slaves under the law, we can all live together in one family as the beloved children of God who by the indwelling Spirit call God "Abba, Father" (4:4-7).

Paul understood their motive as *trying to be justified by law*. In other words, they thought they could gain God's approval only by belonging to the Jewish nation. This meant they did not consider faith in Christ to be a satisfactory basis for God's approval. They were being convinced that faith in Christ had to be supplemented with identification with the Jewish people through circumcision and law observance.

Circumcision or Christ, law or grace: these are exclusive alternatives. You cannot have it both ways. You must choose.