

NOTES for Class on Galatians 5: Legalism, Licentiousness, Love, and the Law

Mini-Review, Chapters 1-4

- The Judaizers created a great deal of uncertainty and confusion in the Galatian Church regarding how believers are justified before God. Is it faith alone, or does God require us to add works of our own?
- So for chapters 1-4, Paul has one goal, and that's to defend the Gospel of Grace, which states that man is only saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.
- Chapter 1, verse 6: You're deserting Christ by going after a different gospel
- Chapter 2, verse 21: If righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly
- Chapter 3: Abraham himself was saved by faith, not works. Not circumcision.
- Galatians 3:7, Romans 4:11
- Chapter 4: Illustration of the children born of two covenants, Promise and Law. One leads to freedom and life, the other to slavery and death.

Chapter 5 Intro

- Now that Paul has laid the groundwork, he gives us two apostolic commands: Verse 1, "Keep standing firm" in your freedom, and verse 16, "Walk in the Spirit" so you don't fulfill the deeds of the flesh.
- To simplify it even more, fulfilling those commands requires that we understand what this freedom is that we have in Christ.
- And unpacking Christian freedom leads to many more questions: What have we been freed from and what have we now been freed to do? Why does Paul equate circumcision with slavery when God commanded it in the Old Testament? What is legalism, and how can we recognize it today? What bearing if any does the Law of God have on Christians, and how does that impact how we live the Christian life? And when we're saved by God and given a new nature, what happens to our old nature? Do Christians have one nature, or two? And how does that truth impact our battle with sin?

Galatians 5:1- what is the nature of this freedom we have in Christ?

- We can't interpret the nature of this freedom through culture or experience.

- Some say that because we're under grace and not Law, that we are freed from any responsibility to obey the Law of God
- The Bible defines our Christian freedom: Galatians 3:13, Romans 6:23, Romans 8:1, Romans 6:6-7, Ephesians 2:1, Galatians 4:8-11, Colossians 2:20-22, Acts 13:39. This is what we have been freed from.

A Quick but Helpful Detour- the Perseverance of the Saints

- What does Paul mean that those who receive circumcision are severed from Christ and fallen from grace?
- John 6:39-40, Galatians 5:10

Why is Circumcision Legalism? Didn't God Command it?

- Galatians 5:3
- Galatians 3 (the purpose of the Law), Luke 18:9-14 (the difference between how a legalist and a humble man look at God's Law)

Salvation has Always been by Faith, not Works

- How many Old Testament saints were saved under the Law? Galatians 3, 4; Romans 4
- Psalm 51:16-17, Psalm 40:6, Hebrews 10:4, Romans 2:29, Deuteronomy 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4, Colossians 2:11

A Working Definition of Legalism

- Self-righteousness, attempting to earn God's favor or establish a righteousness of your own. Legalism in justification versus legalism in sanctification.
- Present day examples of legalism- modern attempts to be justified or sanctified apart from faith and the Spirit of God

Faith and Works

- Do works have a place in faith?
- In our justification, no. In sanctification, yes.
- Galatians 5:5-6, the Greek word "energeo", 1 John 4:8, John 14:15, 1 Corinthians 7:19

- So is Paul putting us back under the Law? No. Christ has fulfilled the Law and we are freed from the curse of the Law.
- The Moral Law is a reflection of God's character, not just a list of do's and don'ts
- Christian freedom isn't just what you've been freed from, but what you've been freed now to do. Galatians 5:13-14.

Summing it All Up

- Faith not only saves, it also loves
- Galatians 5:15, 16- the fruit of the Spirit exemplifies the normal activity and evidences of faith
- Do believers have one nature or two? We have one: Galatians 5:24, Colossians 2:20, Romans 6:6
- How does that truth impact your Christian life? It's the only reason you have a Christian life! The driving principle of your life used to be sin.
- Now, though you still struggle with remaining sin, the driving principle of your life is love because you are a new creation.