



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Philippians, Colossians, Philemon Sermon Series
Supports Session 10: The Gospel's Freedom
Sermon Title: The Lure of Legalism and License
Passage: Galatians 5:1-13

Connection to Colossians 2:16-23

Paul's concern about the Colossian church forfeiting their freedom through faith and grace was also a concern for the Galatian believers. After experiencing salvation by grace, believers then and now must guard their freedom in Christ against legalism and disobedience. The chains of religious ritual and unbridled appetites eradicate the glorious freedom offered by faith in Christ.

Introduction/Opening

When a former inmate returns to patterns of crime and is sentenced again to prison, it is called "recidivism." High rates of recidivism are stubborn statistics battled by many law enforcement jurisdictions. When a Christian returns to former patterns of life that were to be forsaken through the grace of repentance, the result is a tragic loss of freedom from sin.

Outline

1. The freedom of faith
 - a. Jesus intends great joy for us along with peace and purpose (John 16:33). Due to our human frailty, we experience only a portion of the joy of our freedom. Paul describes in our text a plan to realize that joy and resist the process that leeches away our freedom and peace.
 - b. After twelve spies had reconnoitered Canaan and reported back to Moses, the former slaves thought it better to return to the bondage of Pharaoh than attempt to conquer the promised land (Num. 14:1-4). Forgetting their former pain as slaves and how God had destroyed the armies of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, they preferred a return to familiar miseries rather than accept the challenge of conquering the promised land through faithful obedience.
 - c. Believers are tempted to return to old patterns rather than risking walking in the Spirit.
 - d. Paul reminds the Galatians that they were called to freedom (Gal. 5:13). Their purpose is a joy through being holy. Holiness includes realizing we are set apart for a purpose. This is God's intention for us. To be holy we must agree with God and set ourselves apart from legalism and the evils that will imprison us if we succumb to temptation.

2. The lure of legalism
 - a. For the churches in Colossae (Col. 2:11) and in Galatia (2:12; 5:2-6,11-12), false teachers demanded adherence to ritual circumcision. Some false teachers taught the congregation at Antioch that converts could not be saved unless they were circumcised (Acts 15:1). The council of Jerusalem ruled on this issue and adherence to other requirements of the Law of Moses (Acts 15:11).
 - b. Paul addressed false teachers in Galatians that shifted emphasis from grace to works of the law. Paul declared that they had “fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Paul was not expressing that salvation can be lost. Salvation is a gift from God, and the Lord doesn’t require His gifts be returned. The passage states the folly of turning back to works righteousness after accepting the gift of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
 - c. We are prone to set up various standards. If we totally abstain from drinking alcohol, we may feel superior to those that consume an occasional glass of wine. If we are faithful in our daily quiet time of Bible reading and prayer, we may look down on those who fail to punctually observe their quiet times. And in the process of setting these marks of progress, we fail to see that we have become judgmental and are becoming miserable as we harm our friendships.

3. The web of wickedness
 - a. Another way to forfeit the power and peace of grace is to yield to temptation. As a fly is lured to its death in the spider’s web so the sinner forfeits the joy of life by becoming a prisoner of sin.
 - b. James describes the process. He revealed temptation is from our evil desires which give birth to sin which results in death (Jas. 1:14-15). This freedom-ending process must be resisted by each of us. Paul instructed believers to stand firm and resist the yoke of slavery (Gal. 5:1).
 - c. Salvation frees us to live in obedience to God as a member of God’s family. The standards that come with salvation serve as protectors for us. What appears to be restriction leads to joy and fullness of life. Through obedience we experience freedom.

Conclusion

The people of Israel continued to be tempted to return to Egypt. Even after being in the promised land for years, the people approached Jeremiah about returning to Egypt as the Babylonians surrounded them. Jeremiah told them that going to Egypt would lead to their being defeated in Egypt. They returned despite Jeremiah’s warning, and it cost them. We will experience the same disappointments if we “return to Egypt” instead of standing firm in the promised land of joy, peace, and obedience.

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