

Let's read **Galatians 5:1-12**.

Gal 5:1 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.

Gal 5:2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

Gal 5:3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

Gal 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

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

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Gal 5:7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth?

Gal 5:8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

Gal 5:9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

Gal 5:10 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.

Gal 5:11 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.

Gal 5:12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

The first part of **Galatians 5:1** -- *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free* -- that sentence, that phrase, concludes Paul's previous admonitions, particularly in chapters three and four.

The second part of verse one -- "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" -- is a bridge to the rest of the epistle.

In the rest of **Galatians 5:13-26**, we're going to consider what it means to live in Christ's freedom -- in terms of not living in the flesh -- and -- living by, or in, the Holy Spirit. It'll take us multiple weeks to go through just those few verses.

In **Galatians 6:1-10** we'll consider how we are to relate to each other in Christ's freedom.

And we will conclude our study of **Galatians 6:11-18**, just as we began our study of Galatians by **learning from Paul's testimony and example**.



This week we'll go through a few supporting scriptures to the passage that we just read, **to better understand the nature of our freedom in Christ** as referenced here in Galatians 5:1-12.

The original Greek in verse one is a little tricky to translate into English. The best translation is as we have read it. The best translation of that first phrase is that **it is for freedom that Christ has set us free**. It is not *to* freedom -- it is *for* freedom. And the reason that we are saying that, or emphasizing that, or the translators felt that was the best way to render that, is: **believers in Christ Jesus are made free by Christ Jesus and then called by Christ Jesus for or into freedom**.

There is a divine purpose to Christ setting us free.

He has set us free *for* something. It's not just, "Okay, you're free now, do whatever you want." There's a purpose to why Christ has set us free. There is an outcome to our freedom.

The freedom we can and should experience is both in relation to Christ -- stemming from Christ alone -- and it is true and possible that we are free from anything that might enslave us. **This is not a partial freedom that the Bible is describing**. It's not saying God will set you free from this category of sin, or this category of temptation, or this category of the flesh. But **it is saying that the Lord Jesus sets us free from anything that would enslave or entangle us**.

When we are freed from what entangles and hinders us, we are then free to do what the Lord requires of us -- to fulfill the Lord's purpose for our lives.

Now, Paul reiterates two important truths in this passage.

Just think about all the things that we've already studied in the first few chapters -- first four chapters -- of Galatians. So, in these first six verses, in verses one through six, he is reiterating: you don't have to be circumcised: **you don't have to keep the law to earn your salvation, or be justified**.

If you think you must be circumcised, you haven't understood the gospel of grace, and Christ's sacrifice is of no value -- it's of no benefit. We haven't availed ourselves of what Christ has done on the cross if we think that we must keep the law in order to be saved. We have not understood the gospel of grace. That's what Paul is reiterating. Circumcision is not what's paramount.

★ **Faith in the Lord and his word, expressing itself in love for the Lord and for others, is what's necessary.**

The second truth, from verses seven through twelve: Paul says -- and he's alluded to this even before -- he says:

★ **the false teachers who tried to mislead and confuse you will pay the penalty for keeping you from obeying the truth.**

Now, I'll address this tangential point about "the penalty," and verse twelve, specifically about "emasculating themselves," and so on -- I'll talk about this specifically in our sermon discussion on Wednesday -- since that's not the main passage, or main point, of this passage, and I'm not spending any more time on that this morning. So, if you want to know more about those verses, join on Wednesday.

So, how can we understand the gospel of grace by faith in Jesus, exercise faith in love, and live by the truth of God's word?

It is only if we approach God -- or come to God -- in the freedom that he has given us,

- that he has ordained for us,
- that he has made possible for us...

It is only if we live in the Holy Spirit,

- in whom is freedom, and

It's only as we bear the fruit, or the result, of freedom in Christ --

- which is sanctification,
- and its end, eternal life.

So first -- because of what Christ has done, we can approach God in freedom and confidence.

Hebrews 4:16 tells us that because of what Jesus has done for us on the cross, we can ...

Heb 4:16 ...approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

What a statement! You can sit there right now and be thinking of at least one need -- maybe ten, maybe fifty. Maybe it's for you personally. Maybe it's for a family member. Maybe it's for a colleague. Maybe it's for a friend. But you can easily think of so many needs right now.



And the Bible says that we have been given the privilege, the freedom, the grace, so that we can approach the throne of grace -- the source of all grace, the source of light and life, and all that is good -- **we can approach the throne of grace with confidence and freedom.**

We don't hesitate. We come into the throne of grace. The only way you can do that is if you understand what the Bible is talking about when it says that "we have been set free in Christ Jesus." Otherwise, what confidence can you have?

And you will hear this with people all around you -- they say, and I'm talking about those who will approach God, or who will pray, or who feel that they are living in some way a good or moral life -- and they say, "Well, God must hear my prayer because I've been good." But if you ask them, "What confidence do you have that the Lord will hear your prayer? What confidence do you have that the Lord will answer your prayer?" -- they really can't respond to you. They don't have a confidence. And what is important for us to understand is that we don't have a confidence "in ourselves."

Because we have believed and accepted Jesus -- because he (Paul) believed and accepted Jesus -- Paul approached God with confidence, as a child would run to a loving father in any and every circumstance. Because Paul approached God's throne of grace with his needs, Paul received mercy and grace.

Because he received mercy and grace, Paul states in **Ephesians 3:12** that **in him** -- in living with the Lord, in living in harmony with the Lord, and in living in obedience to Jesus -- **through faith in him**, through faith in the Lord and in his word and in his promises, **we may approach God with freedom and confidence.**

Eph 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Remember, we don't merit an audience with the King of kings by our good works.

We can't come into his presence and say, "Look at all the good things that I've done. Let me gain entry, or let me tell you what I need, and you are obligated to listen to me." We don't merit the coming into God's presence, the approaching of God.

When we are made free in Christ, we are brought into union with Christ. We can now approach God -- not because of our righteousness, **but because of Christ's righteousness.** This is the gospel message: that we can approach God because of Christ.

And this is not a glorious truth that applies only when we die, or Jesus returns, and then we're joined to him and we stand before the great throne of the Lord and we say, "Lord, I think I'm okay because I think I'm in Christ." This is not for then -- **this is for now. Because we are united with Christ Jesus, the Bible tells us that we are filled with the Holy Spirit, who enables us to approach God every day -- now! And he enables us to approach God every day with freedom and confidence.**

So that should be our reality.

Not, "When I get to heaven I'll be able to stand before the Lord because of Jesus." **But, "No -- every single day on this earth I'll be able to approach Almighty God because I have been set free in him, because I'm united in Christ Jesus."**

As **2 Corinthians 3:17**, tells us:

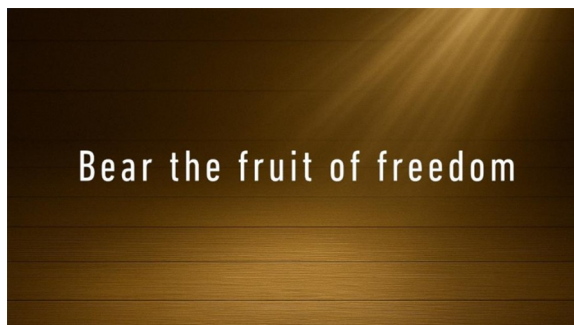
2Co 3:17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Freedom. Every day. Our freedom in Christ is reaffirmed. The Lord strengthens us to live free of entangling, besetting sin -- is enabled -- and **our freedom to approach God without fear is made possible by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.**

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free

- Freedom from sin.
- Freedom to choose to live for the Lord.
- Freedom to love God, and others, wholeheartedly.
- Freedom to serve God, and others, sacrificially.
- Freedom to approach the Lord for grace and mercy.
- Freedom to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

When we live in the Spirit, in the freedom of the Lord, we bear the fruit of freedom.



Listen to **Romans 6:15-23**, as the Word of God connects what we are considering -- or what we have considered thus far in Galatians -- and what we will be considering as we continue in Galatians. But here in Romans chapter six, Paul is explaining very similar concepts. We said this even last week -- Paul repeats himself in all these epistles. And in one epistle he will say one thing, but in another he may expand on that same point. And so we read all of the scriptures together. We cross-reference the scriptures to see how these things are explained, and brought out, and available for us to grasp.

So, in **Romans 6:15**, it says:

Rom 6:15 What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? (Shall we sin because we have been set free?) By no means!

Rom 6:16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey -- whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

And again, we've said this before -- understand what the Bible means about physical slavery and all of the things associated with it -- but notice that in this phrase he says, *when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves*, this has to do much more with bonded labor and other kinds of situations that were prevalent in the ancient Near East. But he's making that comparison, and we'll go on and we'll see why he's using this -- making these comparisons.

But he is saying, when you offer yourselves to the Lord, you are offering yourself not as a slave anymore to sin, but as a slave to the Lord -- a slave to righteousness.

Continuing in verse seventeen -- **Romans 6:17:**

Rom 6:17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance.

Rom 6:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Rom 6:19 I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.

Rom 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

Rom 6:21 What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We often quote that last verse -- **Romans 6:23** -- and we use it almost as a warning. *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* And we use that as part of our sharing of the gospel.

But you understand that Paul is saying that in Romans to believers? And he's saying that -- he's asking them to consider -- that if they remain as slaves to sin, the payment for that labor, the payment for that servitude, is death.

But if you will offer yourselves to the Lord, who takes you and cleanses you and frees you, and you are no longer a slave to sin but you are a willing servant of the Lord's command -- he says when you do that, you will now have eternal life. That's the contrast.

But in verse twenty-two -- note that verse twenty-two again, because -- or let me read verse twenty-two again:

Rom 6:22 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, **the benefit you reap leads to holiness**, and the result is eternal life.

Because we have been set free from sin by faith in Jesus, and have willingly offered ourselves up to obey the Lord Jesus, the fruit of our freedom in Christ Jesus is that we are sanctified -- made holy and perfected in Christ -- until we are joined together with him for eternity.

This is a glorious truth -- and a vitally necessary frame of mind, worldview, a way to see the world and to think about the world and the Word and everything else.

We must pray for the Lord's wisdom to comprehend this truth and to be renewed in our thinking of who we are in Christ Jesus.

When we don't see ourselves correctly in Christ Jesus, we struggle with sanctification. "Oh, all these sins, all these temptations, all these things that are coming at me, all my anxious thoughts, all these... all these ways in which I keep falling short. Oh God, I don't know -- this Christian life is so hard."

We have not understood the freedom that the Lord has given us.

Because when he says that he has made us free, **he's saying:**

- "I'm giving you the Holy Spirit, and
- the result, the fruit, the benefit of your freedom is that:
 - I will sanctify you.
 - I will keep working in you.
 - I will keep refining you.
 - I will keep perfecting you.
 - That's my promise."

That's what the Lord is saying.

So, when we understand this, and when we understand that as a result of our being freed in Christ Jesus we are freed from sin and shame and guilt and condemnation, then we start to experience the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to make us more like Jesus. That's the purpose of setting us free. That's the goal that the Holy Spirit and the Lord has for us. It's not to leave us as we were, but to make us like Christ. That's his goal, that's his purpose.

And so we will experience an ongoing process of sanctification. If we're not experiencing that ongoing transformation, we must evaluate whether we are truly free in Christ.

Now, again, I'm not saying you don't know the Lord Jesus, but I'm saying -- **have you accepted the Lord Jesus in all of his grace and mercy?** Or are you trying to work out your salvation by your good works -- to earn your salvation, and to maintain your salvation, and to continue to be made holy by your good works -- by saying, "Oh God, look at this, look at this, look at this -- you must make me holy"?

No. The Lord is saying,

- "You come to me, and
- you understand and
- you realize who you are in Christ Jesus and
- what I have done for you and
- the freedom that I have wrought for you."

And as you do that -- as you yield to the Holy Spirit, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, for all the areas of our lives to be surrendered to him so that **he comes in and occupies all of the rooms of our lives**, all of the rooms

of our heart -- not just the main front room: "This room is tidy. This room is good, Lord, you can come in here. But all the rest of this stuff -- no, no, I have all sorts of things back there that I don't want you to see."

When we yield to him and say,

"Lord, come and free up all this space. Free up all of my heart. Free up all of my soul. Free up all of my life. Come and inhabit my life in its entirety" ...

...that's when the sanctifying, ongoing purification of the Lord is at hand, is at play, is effective within us. So -- which brings us to our point of application:

We must respond and apply by standing firm in the freedom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Our salvation, our sanctification, and our eternal security are all dependent on our freedom in Christ -- not us.

Our salvation -- the fact that we are justified. Our sanctification -- the fact that we are made holy and made like Christ Jesus. And our eternal security -- the fact that we will be with him for eternity, that eternal life has begun even now. As we talked about in previous weeks, **we are already experiencing heaven on earth because the Lord is with us.** And when we are in eternity with him, we are in his presence for eternity, joined together with no other separation, no other corruption to it.

But let us return to **Galatians 5:1**, which said:

Gal 5:1 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.

Notice -- "standing firm" is not "striving hard."

What do we say?

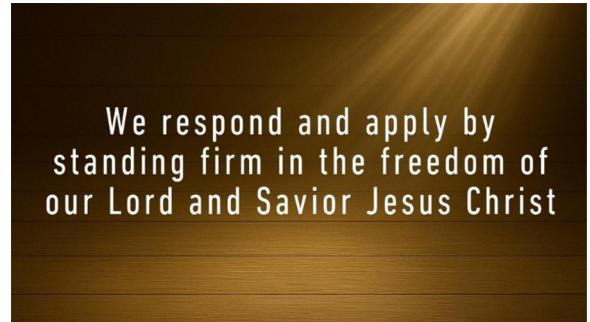
- "Now that you're a believer -- do this.
- Now that you're a believer -- go there.
- Now that you're a believer -- give."
- And we say, "You've got to now strive hard, you've got to work hard."

And so standing firm -- for us -- **looks very different from what the Bible describes:**

- ★ **When we put on the armor of God, we don't charge into battle.** (Isn't that amazing?)
- ★ **It doesn't say, "Put on the armor of God and fight."**
- ★ **It says, "Put on the armor of God -- and stand."**

When we are called to stand, standing is "being," not "doing."

- **Standing firm means** embracing, by faith, the Lord's grace and forgiveness offered through his love and mercy.
- **Standing firm is** being transformed in place -- by the renewing of our minds.
- **Standing firm is** resisting temptation that comes to you -- not moving towards what may tempt you because you think you're strong enough in yourself to overcome it. "I've got on the armor of God."



I know the Word of God. I know how to rebuke the devil. I will go and face the battle. I will go and take care of this. I'll do this."

- **No. The Bible is never asking you to do any of those things.**
- **It says, "Standing firm: Stand firm."**

Standing firm is knowing who you are in Christ Jesus,...

...instead of the world, your flesh, and the devil telling you who you were in the past, and who you should be in the future -- even as you are accused in the present that you don't measure up. That's the work of the world, the flesh, and the devil. That's the message that will keep coming to you.

But you've been set free.

If you're allowing that message -- no matter what it may be, which area of life it may be -- as a child to your parents, the relationship that that entails; as a parent to your children; as siblings, as colleagues, as neighbors, as friends -- whatever the relationship that you are right now even thinking of and saying, "Oh, I don't know about that" -- **the world, the flesh, and the devil are all about trying to accuse you in all these ways.** To remind you of how you failed in the past. To tell you that you can't be certain about the future: "You better take some action here. You better do these things. You better become good." And you better talk to that family member. **And the world, the flesh, and the devil will continue to tell you and accuse you of how you fall short -- how you don't measure up.**

Standing firm in Christ is to be founded strong on his promises, on his power, on his presence.

Standing firm in Christ is to be so completely rooted and grounded and formed in him so that when Christ moves, you move. So that when Christ acts, you act. You're not falling behind, you're not running ahead, you're not moving to either side -- you are in step with the Holy Spirit.

You stay in step with the Holy Spirit no matter where you're being moved to, no matter what the season of life, no matter what challenges you may be facing. If we will live in this kind of freedom, if we will live in this kind of awareness, oh life becomes a whole lot easier, life becomes a whole lot less stressed, and no anxious thoughts.

Why does the Bible tell us that those things are possible? It's not lying to us. It's not saying, "Don't be anxious about anything," and then in actuality, "Well, you're going to be really anxious about this category, and this category, and this thing -- but try not to be anxious about anything."

It just gives a flat-out statement: *Don't be anxious about anything. But in everything, with prayer and thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God, and the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

That is the promise of the Word of God -- that when we stand firm, the house that was built on the rock stood because it was founded firm, not because it was moving, not because it had all sorts of stuff to it -- it just was founded firm. **It stood firm on the right foundation.**

This morning, I want to challenge you, and I want to encourage you, as we've been going through this book of Galatians, and as we have more to go through, more to keep comprehending -- we have to keep fighting, and ...

We have to resist this tendency of ours, especially if you have grown up in church:

- to make it about the rules,
- to make it about the law,
- to make it about our actions.
 - “Surely there's something that I have to do -- don't I?”
 - Surely there's something that I must be responsible for -- isn't there?
 - Surely I have to say these right things -- don't I?”

I mean, we make it about ourselves. We make it about the rules -- and then we fight the rules.

- When we hear somebody say, “Oh, this is what you should do -- should do, or should not do.”
- We say, “No, that doesn't agree with me.”
- So, because we make it about the rules, we argue about the rules.
- Because we make it about striving in our flesh and in ourselves, we make it about judging each other's actions.

We don't look at each other and say, “I see a brother, and I see a sister who's free in the Lord.”

- We say, “Oh, how are you measuring up?”
- How am I measuring up?
- Are you able to see where I'm not measuring up?”

And we are constantly plagued by all of these tendencies that are actually taking us away from the freedom that we have in Christ.

This morning, I want for us to be freshly aware of these truths, and to freshly come to the Lord Jesus and to say,

“Lord God, you come and you make your way, your will known in my life, and you do what is necessary, Lord, to change my thinking, to transform my thinking -- because it's all about the relationship with you.”

This morning, even at 9:00 in our session, we were talking about this -- **the idea that we would change, be transformed by the renewing of our minds, to be focused on the relationship that we have with the Lord Jesus.**

It is such an incredible privilege, it is such a glorious truth, that:

- ★ the Lord has freed us.
- ★ He paid the price

That's the gospel message:

- ★ He shed his blood,
- ★ He offered himself when we could not save ourselves.
- ★ The Lord saved us.
- ★ The Lord made us free.

Now we have to live in that freedom.

- ★ We have to fight every tendency to go again to the yoke of slavery.

We must resist the temptation to pick up that set of rules, and that set of regulations, and that set of everything else that we say, “You must be circumcised, you must observe the Sabbath, you must do these things.” That's what the Jews said at that time. We have different words today, but we do the same thing. **We go after the rules, and we say, “This is how you have to live.”**

And we've got to come to the Lord Jesus and say,

“Lord, I thank you. I thank you for setting me free. I thank you for making me all completely free of every anxious thought, completely free of all my burdens that I can cast on you, completely free of all of these expectations, that I can simply come and trust you and rely on you.”

That's the gospel message that you want to share with somebody else.

Isn't that an appealing message to share with somebody else?

If you say to them, “Come to my church, come and find out about the Lord Jesus -- he wants you to come to church every Sunday, he wants you to give generously, more than you think you can give, he wants you to obey all these particular rules, he wants you to make sure that you do these particular things that are prescribed, and if you have any doubts about that, go on our website, it's all listed there” -- is that the message that we want to share with somebody?

Or is it that we want to tell them that Christ Jesus sets us free -- he sets us free?

We're going to spend a few minutes just to praise and to worship and to thank our God, and to let this word that I've shared with you -- just reflect on it, and to allow it to build in you, to stir you, and you decide, as led by the Holy Spirit: what do you do during the rest of this day? What should you do during the rest of this month, this year, or whenever -- where you need to turn some things over to the Lord and say,

“Lord God, I've been trying to hold on to this -- I just let it go. I free it up, and I let you work your freedom in me.”

Let's just pray and ask the Lord to move.

Hallelujah! Heavenly Father, we thank you and praise you that, Lord, you hear our cry. And, Lord, we thank you that day and night we can offer up our prayers to you and you hear us. The greatest prayer that we can pray is that,

“Lord, help us to stand firm in the freedom that you have wrought for us. You have done it all. You said on the cross, *It is finished*. Help us not to try to add to it. Help us not to think that we can do something in our own flesh. Help us to trust -- help us to trust in what you have already done. Let us, by faith, receive this free gift of God.”

Oh, thank you, Lord, and help us to stand firm, to live in this freedom that you have ordained.

We commit ourselves to you, and we ask you, Lord, to work in every area of our life where we have held on to all sorts of stuff and have remained in captivity.

Free us, Lord. Help us to discern those yokes of slavery. Lord, let us not return to it.

Lord, help us to worship you.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.