

33. The Book of Galatians 5:5-6 (Topical)

Liberty For Life-Part 4

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We have been studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings going through the book topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ.

The book divides itself into 3 main areas of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

I. **Liberty from Lies**—verses 1:6-10

II. **Liberty from Law**—verses 1:11-4:31

III. **Liberty for Life**—verses 5:1-6:15

In our study this morning, we find ourselves recently entering into the third main division of the book—**“Liberty for Life.”**

Galatians 5:1–6 (NLT)

¹ So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. ² Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey every regulation in the whole law of Moses. ⁴ For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace. ⁵ But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. ⁶ For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

As Paul begins to *'tie everything up'* and bring his argument to its climax and conclusion—he is presenting the people of Galatia with a choice. But this is not a choice that is exclusive to them—it's a choice that extends to all of humanity as well.

Life is all about choices—a seemingly endless parade of choices that we make every day.

Many of these choices are small and don't have much of an impact on our lives like—what we're going to have for breakfast or what color socks we're going to wear that day. But then there are choices that impact our lives in profound and substantive ways like—who we're going to marry or what career we're going to pursue.

These are choices that people are faced with all the time, choices that make life possible and often enjoyable. But then there are choices that will not only impact *this life* but will also impact the *next life*—as in where we're going to spend eternity, whether in heaven or in hell.

This was in fact the choice that Paul is addressing here in his epistle to the Galatians.

Let me go on record as saying that—the greatest choice a person will ever make in life is the choice whether to believe in God and serve Him—or not. If a person chooses to believe in God—the next decision they are faced with is to choose *what* God they're going to believe in (in Hinduism alone they worship 330 million gods!).

If they come to the conclusion that the God of the Bible is the only true and living God—then they have to choose how they are going to approach Him, have a relationship with Him.

That choice boils down to 2 primary options or paths they're going to walk in their faith journey to know God. But at the heart of this journey is the question: ***“How is a person made right with God (saved), and by what means are they allowed entrance into heaven to spend eternity with Him?”***

Is it by keeping the works of the Law (religion) or is it by simply putting their faith in Jesus Christ and receiving salvation (and heaven) as a free gift of God's grace?

Now, I'll warn you—there is an extremely powerful, super intelligent, hyper-malevolent spirit-being known as the Devil who is your enemy and who is trying his best to get you to make the wrong choice, a decision that will lead you down the wrong path—a way that seems *right* but in the end it's a way that leads to death (hell).

As we have said numerous times—the biggest lie the devil has ever fed the human race—is the lie that you get to heaven by being *good* (however a person defines 'goodness'). Or in other words, that heaven is a *reward* for deserving people—which is the lie of religion.

As we have pointed out—there are really only two 'religions' in the world—the religion of ***human achievement***, and the religion of ***divine accomplishment***.

Every religion and religious system in the world apart from Christianity falls under the category of human achievement—in other words, what we do for God to earn His favor (and if they believe in the God of the Bible)—to earn a place in heaven someday.

Only Christianity (which is not a religion but a relationship) falls under the category of divine accomplishment—in other words, what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ to offer us a place in heaven as a gift.

The world says—***“Human achievement is how you're made righteous in the eyes of God.”***

But God says, ***“My righteousness is apart from all of that—My righteousness is based on 'divine accomplishment'—it's based on what I have done for you, not on what you do for Me.”***

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NLT)

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹ Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Galatians 5:1–2 (NKJV)

¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage [key verse of the book]. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

When Paul says that if a Gentile submits to circumcision (as an adult), as a way of observing a religious ritual to earn salvation—what Jesus did on the cross in shedding His blood for them to pay for their sins will be rendered meaningless, worthless, and therefore will profit them nothing!

Let me repeat again what Paul is saying—If you put your faith in religion in general and/or in a ritual in particular to make you righteous—then what Jesus did for you on Calvary’s Cross won’t be of any benefit to you. That includes water baptism, confirmation, lighting candles, praying the rosary, keeping holy days, going to church—listen to what Paul is saying here!

Now, say you have chosen to believe in the God of the Bible; you have embraced the true gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of grace and you have prayed to receive Jesus into your heart as your Lord and Savior—how do you truly know that you are saved?

Well, I think Paul alludes to that in verse 6 when he said, **“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”**

What I believe Paul is saying is that—the kind of faith that saves a person will be demonstrated through God’s love manifesting itself through them.

Let’s spend the rest of our time this morning looking at the 2-key words that Paul is building verse 6 around—**“faith”** and **“love.”**

What is faith?

There are 2 main types of faith that the Bible says a person can exercise—*saving* faith and *practical everyday* faith. To *come* to Jesus requires one kind of faith—and to *walk* with Jesus requires another.

Saving faith is the faith of a moment which affects my eternity—**practical** faith is moment by moment which affects my daily life.

Two of the classic verses with regard to *saving* faith are—

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NKJV)

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ So then faith [saving faith] *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

A classic verse on the subject of **practical faith** is found in Hab. 2:4 (quoted 3 times in the N.T.—Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; and Heb. 10:38)—***“the just shall live by faith...”***

Let’s focus our attention exclusively on **‘saving faith’**—since that’s the faith Paul has in mind in Galatians 5:6.

Many people are harboring under a deadly delusion and that is that any faith in God is enough to save them—and that is absolutely untrue.

John 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, **“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed...”**

One commentator made the point of saying, that “*It’s possible to believe in Jesus and yet not really believe in Jesus.*”

I realize that sounds like a contradictory statement—but it makes perfect sense when you realize that not all faith is saving faith!

John 2:23-25 (NKJV)

²³ Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. ²⁴ But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, ²⁵ and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.

James 2:19 (NLT2)

¹⁹ You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

Titus 1:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him...

Even though John 8:30 tells us that many Jews *believed* in Jesus—He tells them that the only proof that their so-called faith has brought them genuine salvation is for them to **‘abide in His Word’**.

John 8:31 (NKJV)

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, **"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.**

The Greek word for **‘abide’** means to *continue* or *remain*. The word translated **‘indeed’** means *truly*.

So, Jesus is telling them, **“If you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples”**—implying that there were some who followed Jesus, who did believe in Him—but they didn’t have *saving* faith and therefore were not *truly* His disciples.

Please notice this is not a conditional statement—Jesus didn’t say, **“If you continue in My word, you will become My true disciples.”** Continuing in the Word of God doesn’t *earn* or *purchase* you salvation—instead Jesus is saying that *continuing* in God’s Word (obedience) is the proof or ‘fruit’ of genuine salvation.

This verse always reminds me of the warning Jesus closed the Sermon on the Mount with. In Matthew 7:15-20 He first warned us about false prophets—but then in verses 21-23 He went on to warn us about false professions.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²² Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' ²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

He is basically saying, **“Make sure you’re not deceiving yourself”**—because many church-going, professing Christians will be shocked on the Day of Judgment to discover—they won’t be going to heaven!

Remember who Jesus is talking to here—these weren't atheists or agnostics—the *irreligious*—no, these were those, who were on earth, the *very religious*—which is why He told people, "***Be not deceived!***" because religious people are the most susceptible for being deceived.

Listen, many people have been deceived by false teachers, T.V. preachers, prophets, and pastors—there are many who go to hell because they sat under the teaching of false doctrine and have been deceived. But many others go to hell who sat under the teaching of the truth yet have never made a real commitment to Jesus Christ.

These have deceived themselves into believing they are true Christians when in fact they're nothing more than phony, counterfeit 'Christians'.

What are some of the causes of self-deception?

1. A false sense of assurance

This is often due to the fact that many Christians, after they pray with someone to receive Jesus, will then tell them to never doubt their salvation from that moment on—to do so, they say, is to *'doubt the Word of God and give place to the devil.'*

The problem with that is we don't know what's in their heart—and therefore we can't be certain that they have received Jesus Christ in truth and are now born-again.

We have to wait and see if spiritual fruit is produced in their lives (Jesus said we would know them by their fruit)—and that takes time!

2. A failure of self-examination

These tend to be the folks who take God's love or His grace or both to such an extreme that they never really face *honestly* and therefore never really take *seriously* the sin in their lives.

These people are sprinkled throughout the church.

These are those who feel that as long as they believe in God, go to church (once in a while), and try to live a "good life"—then God's love will *cover* them and eventually *carry* them to heaven someday.

Because of that mindset they never practice any self-examination—even though we are commanded in the New Testament to do that very thing.

3. A fixation on religious activities

There are many people who have grown up in church—or maybe they discovered church later in life but now attend faithfully and are involved extensively. They go to church and enjoy singing the songs, hearing the sermons (last long as they're positive and uplifting), and being involved in all their church's functions, and activities which makes them feel needed.

Now, please don't misunderstand—this is not necessarily a bad thing unless church activities a *substitute* for a true relationship with God. If they do, it causes them to be deceived into thinking they have a relationship with God—when all they really have is a relationship with a church.

Again, don't forget that the people Jesus talks about in Matthew 7:21-23 are not the *irreligious*—they are the very religious who apparently had based their relationship with God on their religious activities. This will lead to a horrific announcement by Jesus to them on the Day of Judgment—*“I never knew you...depart from Me into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels!”*

4. A fair exchange approach

A fourth cause of self-deception is what some have called the *“fair exchange”*, or the *“balancing out”* approach. This is the person that—when they see something wrong in their life, instead of repenting and turning from disobedience to obedience toward what God has said—instead they find something *good* in their life and make a ‘fair exchange’.

In other words—they rationalize it in their mind by thinking that the good things they do *balance* out the bad, and that the positive *cancel*s out the negative.

Paul the Apostle said, *“If we judge ourselves now—we will not have to be judged by God someday.”*

Examine the evidence in your own life and make an honest judgment—

- is your life different today than it was before you *“accepted”* Jesus as your Savior—
- are you *continuing* in God's Word?

Can you look at your life now and say a transformation has taken place—*“I'm not the same person I used to be. I can honestly say that the things I used to do (party, take drugs, have sex, lie, steal etc.) have been replaced with a desire to be in church, to read the Bible, to pray, hang out with other Christians and tell people about Jesus.”*

A transformed life is the greatest proof that you have crossed over from Satan's kingdom of darkness and death into God's Kingdom of light and life.

The real issue that Jesus is dealing with in Matthew 7:21-23 and in John 8:31 is contrasting true saving faith with an empty profession of faith. So, once again—***how can we know what kind of faith we have?***

Saving faith is demonstrated through obedience to what God has said, while the other is mere head-knowledge manifested in lip service.

But again, Jesus said—***“If you continue in My word [obedience], you are truly My disciples.”***

1 John 2:3-5 (NKJV)

³ Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵ But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him [saved].

➤ Going back to our original question—*how can you know that you are truly saved?*

Well, Paul tells us that true saving faith will be demonstrated through God's love manifesting itself through us.

Galatians 5:6 (NKJV)

⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

What is Love?

The word ‘**love**’ is the Greek word *agape*—a word most often used in the New Testament in relation to *God’s* love. God’s love (agape) isn’t just words and feelings—it’s actions (the definition of God’s love in 1 Corinthians 13 contains all verbs).

Agape love is *action* based, not *feelings* based—“*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*”. (John 3:16)

John says that true Christians love other Christians—but not just *verbally*—they love them tangibly.

1 John 3:16-18 (NKJV)

¹⁶ By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren. ¹⁷ But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸ My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.

James 2:15-16 (NKJV)

¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit?

Loving people, as God commands, with His agape love is *impossible* for us—it is beyond our ability because it’s a supernatural, divine love!

This is not a love I can *generate* or *imitate*; it is not in me to love like this—God’s love has to be *given* to us.

Romans 5:5 (NKJV)

⁵ Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

It is through our abiding in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit flowing through us that this kind of love can become a reality in our lives to touch others around us.

1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV)

⁷ **Beloved, let us love one another, for love [agape] is of God; and everyone who loves [agapes] is born of God and knows God.** ⁸ **He who does not love [agape] does not know God, for God is [agape] love. (Comment)**

So once again, John uses the love of God as *proof* or as the ‘*litmus test*’ that we truly belong to Him and that His Holy Spirit is living inside of us.

John tells us that “**God is love**” and unless we manifest His love towards others—we really don’t know Him:

1 John 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ **And by this we know that we are of the truth...**

“**And by this we know that we are of the truth** (genuinely saved)” —refers to what John has just said in verses 17–18.

“The tangible demonstrations of love towards other Christians in *need*—shows that someone is a Christian indeed!”

1 John 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ And by this we know that we are of the truth [genuinely saved], **and shall assure our hearts before Him.**

In other words, we will pass the self-examination test and have assurance of our salvation!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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