

# Sermon Notes – January 12, 2020

## Review

- ⇒ Galatians focuses on the heart of the gospel. Paul is concerned about the gospel being undermined by people who might appear to be religiously minded and biblically educated. Not all “false teachers” look the part.
- ⇒ Last week we traveled with Paul into OT history to see in the story of Abraham & Sarah that even believers who lived before the time of Christ were justified before God by grace through faith, not by works. That’s Paul’s point in Romans 4 as well.

## Today’s Text: Galatians 5:1-6

In today’s text Paul directly confronts the main subject that prompted this letter in the first place: Those who are insisting on the Jewish rite of circumcision as a requirement for followers of Jesus are adding “works” to salvation by grace through faith. Paul says, in a sense, “You can’t have it both ways; salvation is either a gift of God through faith in Christ, or it is by works.”

## Circling Back to the “Main Thing”: Let’s Be Clear!

- ⇒ Chapter 5:1 returns to the \_\_\_\_\_ introduced back in 1:6-7. Since that early start, Paul has been teaching, explaining, and defending. At this point, he is drawing conclusions and surfacing the \_\_\_\_\_ of all he has been saying so far.
- ⇒ Let’s also be clear about what Paul means by “freedom.”
  - Paul is writing to people with backgrounds in both paganism and in Jewish legalism. Both of those systems involve \_\_\_\_\_ of sorts. In the first, you’re a slave of your \_\_\_\_\_ (II Peter 2:19) and in the second, you’re a slave to endless rules.
  - Paul also does NOT mean “freedom to sin.” He addresses exactly this issue in Romans 6:1-14. Keller says, “At first sight, the gospel seems to remove all \_\_\_\_\_ to live a holy life. This is why over the centuries, churches have felt the need to tone down the radical claims of the gospel, trading gospel freedom for

a message which aims to stop people living ‘any way I want.’ Paul wants to show us that gospel freedom from fear & \_\_\_\_\_ leads us to obey God, not to please ourselves.” Cf. 5:13

## What Does Freedom in Christ Look Like?

- ⇒ Free people don’t focus on lists of rules (“the whole law”) and aren’t intimidated by an evangelical “\_\_\_\_\_ on God’s best” – aka “God’s perfect will for my life” (2-3).
- ⇒ Free people bask in God’s justifying grace (4).
- ⇒ Free people look toward Christ’s return with expectant hope, not anxious fear of \_\_\_\_\_ (5).
- ⇒ Free people focus on what does matter (Christ!), not on what doesn’t matter (6).

## What is the Unforeseen Problem with Being a Rule-Keeper?

- ⇒ Sometimes Rule-Keepers are so good at meticulously “coloring inside the lines” that they become proud & smug and look down at others who aren’t as good at keeping the rules. It’s kind of like the proverbial person who receives an award for being so humble and can’t figure out whether or not to display the award.
- ⇒ It is possible to be proud & self-righteous about what you DO as well as about what you DO NOT do.

## Responding to God’s Word:

- ⇒ According to 5:6, our goal is a genuine focus on Christ Himself, lived out daily in loving the people God puts around me.
- ⇒ Psalm 84:10 is powerful example of this. “My heart will be satisfied to enjoy the presence of God and to serve Him however so humbly. I don’t need a title, a special parking place, or public applause. My heart is at rest in the presence of a holy God.”

# Community Group Notes

## Getting Started

And it is done! The holiday season, that is. Any highlights to share with your group? Any difficulties that you're glad are behind you? Any specific hopes for the coming year? Take time to catch up and to meet any new people who've joined your group.

## Talking It Through

1. Review the sermon from Sunday: Read the text (Galatians 5:1-6) and review the main points from your notes. What was this week's sermon about?
2. It has been said that people have a "love/hate" relationship with rules. Rules are necessary in human society, they're helpful to define the boundaries, and they give us some indication of how well we're doing. But they make a terrible taskmaster. Who are the "rule-keepers" in your group? Who's willing to admit it? And who are the avowed "rule-breakers"? Talk about how you all view "rules."
3. Tim Keller writes, *"Rule-keeping religion is for the noble, the able, the moral, the strong, but the gospel is for anyone. Jesus actually said that the able, moral, and strong are in general farther from the kingdom than the moral failures and the spiritually weak."* How do you feel about that statement?
4. In Galatians 5:2 & 4 Paul says that if you add "works" to salvation by grace through faith, then "Christ will be of no value to you" and "you are severed from Christ." Is Paul using hyperbole here – intentional overstatement – or does he really mean what he says? What does that mean for how we teach our kids right & wrong on the playground? Can they just do what they want?

5. Paul's summary verse (5:6) essentially says, *"Whether you practice circumcision or whether you don't, that isn't the point; the issue is what you're trusting and who you're serving."* Now, apply that principle to the following (use other Scripture that applies as well):
  - a. Is it okay if I skip church to watch a playoff game, or is that an insult to God? (What would a good rule-keeper do?)
  - b. Does this principle give me permission to "fudge a bit" on my taxes so I can give more to missions? Will God be mad at me?
  - c. I'm trying to raise my kids to be good moral people. Don't I want them to be good "rule-followers"? Or do I just "focus on the heart"?

## Taking It Further & Taking It Home

READ Romans 6:1-14 and think about what it means to obey God, not as a MEANS of being saved, but BECAUSE I am saved by grace through faith. What exactly is Paul saying in this really important text?

## Time to PRAY

(Or do this at the beginning of your group time)

Take time to share prayer requests that relate to the people in your group, and then pray for those needs.

**Next Sunday: January 19, 2020**

**"Why is the Cross an Offense?"**

**Galatians 5:7-15**

**Matt Richey**

**Answer Key:** • passion • implications • slavery • fleshly desires • incentives • condemnation • fear of missing out • falling short