

Intro: Spent the last 48 hours looking for a quote. I know it exists...I used it before. Couldn't find it. Not online, not in my files of previous sermons, not in any of the books I thought I originally may have read it. It is an AMAZING quote...perfect for the message today: " *Free To Serve God and Others!*"

Since I couldn't find it...I recreated it from memory...Goes something like this:

"The condition of my being is such that I cannot have mastery over my own heart. It is only as my heart is submitted to Christ that I can find freedom from sin."

That is EXACTLY what the Apostle Paul is saying to the Galatian Christians 5:1.

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

He explains that and unpacks it for us in Romans 6:16-19!

Paul says, there are 4 choices you can make that lead to freedom.

- Choose the right master: You are GOING to serve someone...choose
- Make Right Choices
- Choose to Stay on Course
- Choose to Serve Others

Let's look at those one at a time and understand what Paul is saying about how we LIVE in Spiritual Freedom

1. Choose The Right Master!

5:1

One of the mistruths we have been taught in our culture is that we are free to do whatever we want to do without any influence from others. Great western cultural philosophy, totally untrue biblical theology! The truth is that without Christ in our life we are slaves to ALL kinds of things!

- Bible tells us in Rom, Cor, Peter, Eph, Col: Before knowing Christ we were slaves to power of sin!
- Many of us are slaves to self-imposed expectations...We don't live in freedom...but in bondage
- Some are slaves to expectations imposed by others: Parents, Spouses, Teachers, Friends
- Some are slaves to their work, to the culture, to the pursuit of wealth or power or influence!

Here is the reality. Everyone serves SOMETHING...or SOMEONE! We don't have a choice of whether or not we are going to be serving...OUR choice...purchased for us on the Cross of Jesus Christ is: Now I can CHOOSE WHO I SERVE!

Look at those two slides again now:

- The nature of my being is such
- You are slaves to the one you obey...offer yourself as a slave to righteousness (serving God)

Lesson #1: Choose To Serve Christ! Offer yourself to Him!

The more you try to be a disciple of Jesus and live for yourself...for others...for wealth...for power...for some expectation or influence in your life...even you OWN...The more frustrated and unsuccessful you will be!

2. Make The Right Choice: The Power of Christ Alone.

5:2-6

The temptation that is offered over and over to us is...JUST ADD THIS (fill in blank) to Jesus...and it will be great! And when we fall for it, what we discover is that the (----) doesn't spiritually strengthen and help us, it weakens us! What we add to Jesus to make Him BETTER ends up stealing the spiritual strength and power from our life!

The Judiazers were offering the Jesus, PLUS the Law! And Paul goes straight at them and says, don't be enslaved!

If you do that...add ANYTHING to Jesus, the Law or anything else...TWO AWFUL THINGS HAPPEN:

- a. Severed from Christ: Lit = *to be cut off from, to be made of no effect*
- b. Fallen away: Lit = *to leave the sphere (place) of grace in Christ, and move into sphere of the Law!*

Did the Apostle Paul JUST SAY WE CAN LOSE OUR SALVATION? ABSOLUTELY NOT!

Then what in the WORLD is he talking about...because it SOUNDS that way, doesn't it? He is saying:

- Do NOT accept any cheap substitute for Grace
- Do NOT sacrifice the power of the Spirit for the works of the flesh
- Do NOT believe any promise of righteousness other than through faith and faith alone.

Listen: Paul is NOT talking about JUSTIFICATION! He is talking about SANCTIFICATION: Remember last week?

- Justification: Declared Righteous
- Sanctification: Becoming Righteous
- Glorification: Made Righteous

Paul is teaching us: If you think you need to ADD to Christ's work...then in reality, cutting self off from His work!
You haven't LOST your JUSTIFICATION...but there is NO WAY YOU WILL EVER be sanctified in the life...Won't work!

Lesson # 2: Choose Christ ALONE! Don't ADD anything to His work...it doesn't add...takes away!

3. Choose To Stay On Course.

5:7-12

In these few verses Paul is using the analogy of running a race...a familiar illustration for him. He equates the journey and process be being a follower of Jesus with being in a race, probably referring to the Olympics. In some places he says, KEEP RUNNING, in other places he says, DON'T GET TIRED, as he approaches death says I HAVE FINISHED...Here He tells Galatians...Why did you let someone cut in on your lane and keep you from running successfully!

Illus: Watch the Olympics: Runners have a lane...some races, if you cross lane, disqualified! Hinder others

Almost every year we see a runner cut someone off, slow them down, make them lose, unsuccessful!

Paul uses that analogy to do two things: Ask a question, And Issue a warning!

- Question: Who are YOU allowing to "cut you off" today? Galatians it was Judiazers
For YOU...who is cutting you off? 3 Common things that will "Cut us off"
>False Teacher: (Talking with my wife about something posted online) What the heck were they thinking?
2Tim 4:3 "Latter days, not put up sound doctrine, teachers say what itching ears want to hear"
>Selfish Motives: God...I'm glad you are here to serve ME...and give me everything I want!
>Temptations/Distractions of World: Lust of Flesh, Lust of Eyes, Pride of Life, Garden, Jesus, 1John
- Warning: It only takes a LITTLE compromise just a LITTLE error mixed with the truth to throw you off track
(NASCAR: Usually a "brush" and you see an awful wreck!

Illus: Almost 40 years ago Eugene Peterson: A Long Obedience In The Same Direction: Discipleship in Instant Society

Lesson # 3: Choose To STAY On Course! Don't let anyone or anything hinder you...even your own desires!

4. Choose To Serve God And Others.

Gal 5:13-16

Paul finishes by coming full circle to make his point. Jesus gave you freedom to serve Him and Others! Choose Him!

3 Choices...Make the Right One!

- Do not use your freedom as an opportunity to serve flesh: YOURSELF! Selfish Christian Oxymoron
- Do not use your freedom to criticize and critique others! JUDIAZERS! Only we have it right!
- Instead, use your freedom to be like Jesus...To SERVE The Father...and Others!

Mt 20:28 "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Question: Where in YOUR life do you put others first in the name of Christ...and server them instead of self?"

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| >Movie night? | >Youth Leader | >Drive Thru Nativity |
| >Small group leader? | >Children's Leader: Massive Need | >Tech Team |
| >Food Pantry? | >Winter Relief: Night Hosts! | >Deacon/Prayer Team |

No One should do EVERYTHING...Everyone should do SOMETHING!

Truth: You CANNOT grow into the person God intends...without serving. Impossible. Shapes you through Service

CONCL: >Who are YOU serving? >Making Right Choices? (Christ ALONE)
>On Course? Recalibrate? >Are you serving God...and others.

No such thing as selfish Christian: Service is an expectation of God...Not an optional Choice when it fits your schedule