

Series: Guarding the Gospel of Grace

LIBERTY AND LOVE

1 CORINTHIANS 8; GALATIANS 5

Text: Galatians 5:13

Galatians 5:13

¹³ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Introduction:

The epistle to the Galatians was actually written to the believers in the region of Galatia. Many believe that some of these were among the first churches that Paul established on his first missionary journey. It is evident that Paul held a strong desire for the church to prosper.

The churches in Galatia had become influenced by the legalistic teachings of the Jews. They had begun trading the liberty of salvation for the demands of the law. Paul expresses his displeasure in their reversion to legalism and abandonment of the true teachings of the gospel.

Note again the words that we read in 1:6-7.

Galatians 1:6-7

⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:

⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.

They had once been a shining light for the glory of God, but now were entangled in the mire of false doctrine.

The problems the Galatian believers faced may differ from the problems of today, but the remedy for these problems remains the same.

Note:

1. THE LONGEVITY OF THE BELIEVER (VS. 7-9)

Galatians 5:7-9

⁷ Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?⁸ This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.⁹ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

These churches were built upon the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, but their doctrine had become tainted with the views of false teachers.

It is important for every generation to hold fast to the truth of the gospel. Anything that isn't consistent with the gospel of Christ must be forsaken.

We deal with much of that in our day, (legalism still exists, the ecumenical movement, denial of the deity of Christ and His blood atonement, etc.).

We must do all we can to ensure the longevity of our service unto the Lord.

Let's see what we can learn from the Galatian churches.

Note:

A. A Past Remember (vs. 7a) – “Ye did run well”

Galatians 5:7

⁷ Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

Paul remembered a time when the Galatian churches were successful and prosperous for the Lord.

He remembered a time when they were sold out unto the Lord, with the church being filled with believers.

They were known to serve the Lord consistently regardless of outside influences.

Their lives were consumed with a zeal for the Lord and the church was a mighty influence in the world, reflecting the grace and mercy of God.

Note also:

B. A Present Reproach (7b) – “Who did hinder you”

Galatians 5:7

⁷ Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

A once prosperous and vibrant church had faltered, and faded.

The testimony of truth they once held was no longer evident.

What could've possibly happened to hinder their work for the Lord?

Paul was amazed that in such a short time the churches had turned from the truth and were heading in the wrong direction.

We must be careful to avoid the hindrances of life in our walk with the Lord. This has the idea of “being cut off in a race, or having our path obstructed so as to interfere with our progress.”

I wonder if we are running the race that we used to.

Are we as committed to standing for the truth of the gospel and the glory of God as before?

Have we compromised our stand to gain the favor of the world?

What does the Lord see as He looks upon the race that we are running?

Note not only the The Past Remembered and the Present Reproach but also:

C. A Persuasive Reminder (vs. 8-9)

Galatians 5:8-9

⁸ *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*

⁹ *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

Paul reminds them of their obligations. Their concern was not of this world.

We're reminded of:

A. Our Calling (8)

Galatians 5:8

⁸ *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*

They were reminded that the doctrine they were following and their lack of service was not of the Lord. They were part of the body of Christ and were expected to uphold the truths of His gospel.

We have not been called of the world. We are not here to please the world or submit to its demands. We belong to the Lord and are obligated to live for Him every day and in every way!

Note not only are we reminded of our calling but also:

B. Our Consecration (vs. 9)

Galatians 5:9

⁹ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Paul then speaks of the nature of leaven. It is always mentioned in regard to sin. Once leaven is introduced, it spreads throughout the entire loaf. Sin cannot be played with or dabbled in. It always defiles, even if it is perceived as a small amount. Once sin is introduced, it spreads until it contaminates the entire body.

We are called to be a holy people, separated from the world and unto the Lord. The longevity of our service will be greatly hindered if we fail to live consecrated lives!

Note:

Colossians 2:8

⁸ *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Note not only the Longevity of the Believers but also:

2. THE LIBERTY OF THE BELIEVERS (vs. 13)

Galatians 5:13

¹³ *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Paul now turns his focus to religious liberty in the Lord. This is a doctrine that is wonderful for the Christian, but it must be shared in its proper context.

Notice:

A. The Delight of Liberty (vs. 13a)

Galatians 5:13

¹³ For, ***brethren, ye have been called unto liberty***; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Paul reminds them of their relationship to Christ.

They are born again, brethren of the faith.

The Jews were teaching a doctrine of legalism under the law.

The matter of circumcision was still being taught as mandatory for acceptance to God.

He wanted to remind them of what they had in Christ the Lord. They were no longer under the law, but under grace.

- The law declared that man must do something for God and grace reveals that God did everything for man.

Our righteousness is dependent on the blood of Jesus rather than my ability to maintain the law of God.

We would never be able to keep the law of God.

James 2:10

¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

Note not only the Delight of Liberty but also:

B. The Danger of Liberty (vs. 13b)

Galatians 5:13

*¹³ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; **only***

use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Along with the encouragement of liberty must also come a warning against its abuse.

Believers have liberty in Christ.

We are no longer bound to live under the law, but that liberty must not be used as an occasion to sin.

The grace of God is no license to indulge in carefree sin.

Many have the attitude that they can do as they please and as long as they ask forgiveness it will be OK.

This is a dangerous philosophy.

One who believes and teaches such doctrine practices heresy.

Salvation cost the Lord His own life.

He gave His very best upon the cross for our sin.

If we are truly saved, there will be a desire to please the Lord and live for Him.

It is impossible to live above sin, but the Christian cannot indulge in sin and feel good about it.

Clearly one is not in a right relationship with the Lord if he feels as if the grace of God is just an opportunity to indulge in sin.

Paul dealt with this in Rom.6:1-6

Romans 6:1-6

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? ² God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? ³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: ⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

Note not only the delight and danger of liberty but also:

C. The Duty of Liberty (vs. 13c)

Galatians 5:13

*¹³ For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, **but by love serve one another.***

Rather than using liberty as a license to sin, it must be used as an opportunity to serve.

Rather than a desire to satisfy the flesh, there should be an overwhelming desire to serve the Lord and others.

We have been set free from the bondage of sin and are expected to use that liberty as an occasion to be used of God.

Can you imagine the world that we would live in if everyone had a desire to serve others above the desire of pleasing themselves?

Note not only the Longevity of the Believers and the Liberty of the Believers but lastly:

3. THE LOVE OF THE BELIEVER (VS. 14-15)

Galatians 5:14-15

¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. ¹⁵ But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The believer ought to desire longevity in Christian service, use liberty in a way that pleases God, and also love as commanded of the Lord.

The call to love is not something that is optional.

Note the love that believers are to possess:

A. It is Universal

We are to love our neighbor. This is a broad term, taking in a multitude of people.

- We are to love our neighbor – (Matt 5:43)

Matthew 5:43

⁴³ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

- We are to love our enemies – (Matt 5:44)

Matthew 5:44

⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

- We are to love one another – (John 13:34)

John 13:34

³⁴ A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

- We are to love the Lord – (Mark 12:30)

Mark 12:30

³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

Not only is our love to be Universal but also:

B. It is Sacrificial

We are to love our neighbor, whoever we meet, as ourselves.

The same love and devotion that we reserve for our own needs must be offered to those whom we meet in life.

We have dealt with the idea of sacrificial love many times, and yet we fail to possess it.

This is contrary to the flesh.

It is not within our nature to love and care for others as we do ourselves.

Clearly the Lord offered sacrificial love. It was His love that took Him to the cross.

Not only is our love to be Universal and Sacrificial but also:

C. It is Beneficial (vs. 15)

Galatians 5:15

¹⁵ But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

Paul warns the believers of Galatia of the results of a lack of love.

When love doesn't exist, people literally devour one another.

I know that we don't devour each other in a physical sense, but many have been devoured due to a lack of love.

Churches have spilt because love has been withheld. Homes have been destroyed because people failed to love.

Where love ceases to exist, destruction and ruin are certain.

Close:

We have considered some powerful truths in this passage. No doubt we all could do better in ensuring our longevity for the Lord and taking full advantage of our Christian liberty in a way that pleases Him. I am certain that we could all love more than we do.