



# PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

## GALATIANS 5:1-17

### LESSON: FREEDOM IN CHRIST — February 19, 2017

#### INTRODUCTION:

**Chapter 4:21-31** Paul asks why do you still want to be under the law? Haven't you heard it and know what it means? The written Word says Abraham has two sons—one by a bondwoman born of the flesh and one by a freewoman born by way of the promise. The son of the slave girl Hagar was rejected. The son of the free woman Sarah obtained the inheritance. Paul uses these two illustrations for the benefit of the Galatians who were tempted to place themselves under the burdens of the law again. Verse 24 talks about an "**allegory**." An "allegory" is an indirect presentation of a meaning, figuratively implied but not expressly stated. The two women symbolize two covenants: law and grace. Hagar represents the Mosaic Covenant of law and bondage and the mother of the child of the flesh. Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant of grace and liberty and is the mother of the child of promise. The earthly Jerusalem stands for Judaism. But, the Jerusalem above is the heavenly spiritual city that's free, which is the mother of the New Testament believers who are not slaves under the law, but sons under grace. The next words of the Scripture (v.27) tell the barren to rejoice and those that are not in travail are to shout forth joy because there are many more desolate or deserted wives that have more children than those who live with or have a husband. Paul tells them that they along with him are brethren as Isaac, being children of promise. Yet at that time the child born after the flesh persecuted the child born of the Spirit, so also it is now. But the Scripture says to drive out the bondwoman and her son for he will not be heir with the son of the freewoman. Paul closes by affectionately calling them brethren, reiterating that they are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free (**4:21-31**).

#### LESSON: I. REMAINING IN LIBERTY Galatians 5:1-6

**5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.** God's way for man to be justified was not the way of the law. Once the law had been broken, the penalty had been enacted; it had to be paid, and it was paid through the glorious message of the cross—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Galatians were to stand fast in the liberty Christ has made; the liberty that made us free. He's freed the believer, but legalism destroys liberty. Christ has made us free, but only if we believe. False teachers had arisen teaching that Jesus Christ had not come to give us a new approach to God. They're saying, he just came to add new teachings to the law. And the Galatians were about to become entangled again with the yoke of bondage. "**Yoke**" is a symbol of slavery. And the yoke of slavery is the bondage of the law which makes the law keepers slaves under a binding yoke. Again, I say, a believer is not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. The purpose of freedom belongs to the children of the free woman.

**5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. "Physical Circumcision"** was the cutting around and off of a small piece of excess skin that covers the tip of the penis. It was usually performed on the eighth day of life (Gen.17:10-14; Rom.4:11-12). A ritual of depending upon religious things to make us acceptable to God did not lead to salvation. The old way of circumcision of the law profited nothing. "**Spiritual Circumcision**" is first of all not of the physical and not of the hands. This circumcision is not of the outward but of the inward being. It is the circumcision of the heart; the spiritual removal of the old fleshy nature where we yield to the Spirit's power. To be circumcised by the Spirit of God (Colo.2:11) is more important than the physical surgery Jer.4:4; Rom.2:25-29). He helps us receive the pure

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heart and a right relationship needed to be acceptable to God because of what Christ did.

**5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.** Paul testifies to every man that's circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law. the Galatians again about circumcision as not being a condition of salvation. To accept circumcision as a condition of salvation binds one's self to the slavery of legalism. A debtor is one who assumes an obligation. Thereby, they laid themselves under the obligation to fulfill the whole law.

**5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.** Those once exposed to the gracious truth of the gospel, who then turn their backs on Christ, and seek to be justified by the law are separated from Christ and all prospects of God's gracious salvation. Their desertion of Christ and the gospel only proves that their faith was never genuine. There cannot be two grounds of salvation, two means of justification, or two ways of life. To accept the one means to reject the other. It is either law or grace, either works or faith, either self-righteousness, or the righteousness of God, either circumcision or Christ. The Galatians were in danger of substituting law for Christ as a means of salvation. Therefore, if they were trying to be saved by the law, Christ had no effect upon them and would be fallen souls—fallen from grace.

**5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.** Born-again believers, not through the flesh, but through the Spirit of God cling to the covenant of grace, and wait (in earnest, constant expectancy) for the hope of righteousness by faith. They were to stand fast because the hope of righteousness is by faith. And by faith we hope in Christ Himself who is the hope of righteousness.

- Their hope for righteousness comes through the Spirit of God who stirs hope and gives absolute assurance that God will take his faith and count it for righteousness.

If we are not careful, good works can start to substitute for our faith in God. It is not our good works that keep us in relationship with God. Wait for the hope of righteousness by faith, and not for the sake of your own works.

**5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.** All true Christians, being taught by the Holy Spirit, learn that...

- their hope for righteousness comes through Jesus Christ alone—not by a ritual (circumcision, law) nor by the lack of a ritual.
  - Neither undergoing a ritual (circumcision) nor being without a ritual brings hope.
  - Neither having and keeping the law nor being without law brings hope.
  - Neither working for righteousness nor not working for righteousness brings hope.

Nothing absolutely nothing can provide the sure hope of righteousness within a person except Jesus Christ: His righteousness and His death alone can offer hope to man.

- And our hope for righteousness comes by faith wrought by the love of God. God sent His Son to secure our righteousness which encounters Him dying for us. When a person really sees this, it breaks him, and he bows and surrenders his own love, faith, life, and loyalty to Christ. We love Jesus because He has loved us.

The one who lives by faith is internally motivated by love for God and Christ.

## II. THE THREAT TO LIBERTY Galatians 5:7-12

**5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?**— The Galatians were doing well to begin with. They had been running the Christian race well. Now, Paul wants to know who hindered them, who told them that they should not obey the truth? They had allowed some false teacher to hinder them, and to turn them from the truth. Paul is writing this that they will begin to...

- Obey the truth because the Christian life is a race.

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**5:8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.** It was not God who persuaded and called them into error. Any persuasion, any position, or any teaching that leads away from the truth of Jesus Christ is not of God. Paul is writing this that they will begin to...

- Obey the truth because God called them to freedom.

**5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.** The tiniest doubt of persuasion will come in and affect you from the truth. The word "**little leaven**" was used, meaning "**sin**"; false doctrine appearing to be harmless came in and corrupted the truth of what they had believed. Paul is writing this that they will begin to...

- Obey the truth because a little untruth corrupts the whole lump.

**5:10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.** Paul is saying that his confidence is in the Lord. And only through the Lord he can have confidence in them, that the Lord would bring them back to believing as he believes. But those that troubled (unsettled, agitated, and disturbed) their faith, whoever they may be will bear God's judgment. They were misleading believers and defiling the church of God with false teaching. Paul is writing this that they will begin to...

- Obey the truth because of the confidence others will have in them.
- Obey the truth because false teachers will bear God's judgment.

**5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.** Paul did not preach rituals (circumcision, baptism, church membership, etc.) were necessary for salvation, but the false teachers were saying that he did. Paul asks the question as to why is he persecuted by the Jews? And since he didn't preach circumcision it became the main reason for the Jews to persecute him so much. The point is that if he preached circumcision or legalism he would not be persecuted and thereby all the hostility which the preaching of the cross provokes would disappear. For them, the cross uproots the doctrine of salvation by human merit. Therefore, the legalists are offended that salvation is by grace without circumcision and obedience to the law. And the offense of the cross has become a stumbling block for them.

**5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.** The Judaizers were so insistent upon the Galatians using circumcision as a means of pleasing God that the apostle Paul wished that the Judaizers would cut off not only their own foreskin, but be cut off from the Galatians altogether. Their way of insisting on circumcision upset and disturbed, and was a threat to the liberty of the Galatians.

## III. THE PROPER USE OF LIBERTY Galatians 5:13-17

**5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.** Up until now everything has dealt with doctrine, now Paul begins to deal with the practical day to day affairs of the believer. He emphatically lets them know that they were called into liberty not slavery. The believer no longer has to work and work in order to secure God's approval and acceptance. The believer is accepted by God through the work of Jesus Christ. The Christian liberty is not a license to do as a person likes. It's not license to sin. It is being free to overcome the passions and urges of the flesh that unceasingly wage war against the better judgment of man. It is freedom to love and serve one another. This love identifies with a person's need, their concerns, and to serve one another.

**5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.** Paul expresses that the whole law is fulfilled (Matt.5:17) and summed up in one word: "**Love**", which also includes toward our neighbor as we love ourselves. That behavior will cause us to serve one another because of Love!

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**5:15** But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. Undoubtedly, there was some division that caused "**biting and devouring**" which refers to much more than just feuding and fighting. Men bite and devour each other when they violate each other. **Bite** is sudden anger and **devour** is deadly. An example would be of church strife affecting the body of Christ using its "*liberty*" as a platform to promote their own selfishness. Selfish people will eventually be consumed (destroyed) by one another. Paul says "*thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*" (5:14). Love does not bite or devour others. Paul advises all, to love, serve one another, and not use our freedom to sin. <sup>1</sup>The law only united Israelites together. The Gospel unites all men and that in relation to God [*GROTIUS*].

**5:16** This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. No person has the power to control the lust of his flesh—not within himself. Why? - Because the flesh fights for dominance. It takes the Spirit of God to help us to live, walk, be guided by the power and life of the Spirit. When we have continuous actions in the Spirit, we won't have time to fulfill the hungering passions or desires of the flesh. We have to make it a choice.

**5:17** For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. Paul describes two forces at work within us: our flesh and the Spirit. These forces are constantly fighting each other to win control over us. The flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other and this hinders a person to not do the things they wish to do. Therefore, the answer to conquering the lust of the flesh is the Holy Spirit!

## SUMMARY:

The Galatians were to stand fast because Christ had freed the believer. They were not to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. They were to stand fast because the law is not God's way for man to be justified. Paul brings up circumcision. Circumcision was a symbol of having the right background and doing everything required by religion. He lets them know that Christ would not profit them if they were trying to be saved by the law; they would be fallen souls—fallen from grace. Lastly, they were to stand fast because the hope of righteousness is Christ and is by faith (**5:1-6**).

The Galatians were doing well to begin with, but false teachers hindered them and turned them from the truth. God called them to truth, and didn't lead them to error. The tiniest doubt of persuasion came in and affected the whole lump. Paul's confidence is only in the Lord to bring the Galatians back to believing as he believes. And those that troubled them thought they were getting away would find out that His judgment would come upon them. Since Paul didn't preach circumcision, he was persecuted. He preached salvation through faith in the cross of Christ alone. And the cross had become an offense and a stumbling block for others. Paul wished that those troubling the Galatians would themselves cut off altogether (**5:7-12**).

Paul lets them know that they were called into liberty not slavery. They were not to use this liberty to sin, but to love and serve others. The whole law is fulfilled and summed up in one word: "*Love*", even towards their neighbor. But if you bite and devour one another, you will be consumed by one another. The best option is to walk in the Spirit and then the lust of the flesh will not be fulfilled. Because the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other it will hinder a person to not do the things they wish to do (**5:13-17**).

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.studyight.org/com/jfb/view.cgi?book=ga&chapter=005>  
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>