

Galatians Ch 5 vs 1-2

(STANDING FAST IN LIBERTY, LETTING GO OF LAW)

Last week we finished out ch 4 but for times sake I didn't get into a couple of different aspects of a couple of different vs that I wanted to take just a few minutes to speak about this morning. We took note of the fact that those who desired to be under the law, that being anyone who wanted to relate to God on the basis of law performance, or a legalistic approach to God of do's and don'ts really didn't hear the law. That is they don't understand the fullness of what it is that the law requires of them in order to be made right with God.

So we took a brief look at what the law states in summary, and in 3 points it says be holy, be perfect and be loving, and in all 3 God Himself is the standard by which we're measured up against. Not on a part time basis, but perpetually from the womb, to the grave and I mentioned to you that since sin was present with in us from the moment of conception it's impossible that we ever hit any of those marks in and through our own efforts this side of eternity. So to desire to be held to the standard of the law is to openly display your lack of understanding when it comes to the law.

Then what's the point of the law, we talked about that a few weeks ago and so you'll need to pick up that tape (Gal ch 3 vs 15-29). But Paul went on to develop the fact that Ab had 2 sons and so the question in the spiritual sense of the word isn't emphasized on whether or not you're a son of Ab. Because that's the given, the question is; are you of the lineage of Hagar or Sarah? One (that being Hagar) gave birth to bondage, and it was brought about by human ingenuity and human capability. The other (Sarah) gave birth to freedom not by human efforts but as a result of God's promise, Him showing Himself able and faithful.

Paul tells us that these things are symbolic, in other words though these were actual literal people and events, the way that there lives were lived out actually embodies for us 2 distinct spiritual truth's. and What they stand to illustrate to us is the 2 covenants the old and the new, law and grace, the Mosaic and covenant made with man through the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ The Mosaic leading to legalism, the covenant through Christ leading to liberty, the covenant given at Mt Sinai leading to efforts in the flesh, the covenant given through Christ leading to rest in the Spirit.

So we begin to see some sharp contrasts developing and surfacing, which is exactly what Paul desired to reveal to us, and we would be well with in the bounds of the text to break it down like this. Hagar (the bondwoman or slave)/Sarah (the free woman), the Old Covenant/the New covenant, Law with Grace, the fruit of the old covenant, Ishmael conceived after the flesh through the efforts of the flesh, man trying to do in his own efforts what it requires the Spirit of God to do only breeding trouble contention and striving. The fruit of the New Covenant, Isaac brought to fruition as the result of the miraculous working of the Spirit of God according to God's promise according to God's grace. and In the text the old covenant resulting in the earthly Jerusalem, which is in bondage, and the new covenant which speaks of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is free. Freedom through Christ, bondage through law, liberty in Christ, slavery through law and law brings about dry, barren legalism, and the new covenant fruitful grace. So those are some of the contrast that I wanted to point out to you last week but didn't get a chance to, now look at vs 28-29.

Vs28

We were born into the kingdom as a result of the miraculous working of the Spirit of God, born of the Spirit even as Isaac was.

Vs29

You find in Genesis ch 21 that when Isaac grew and was weaned (probably around the age of 3) which was a time of great joy and celebration for them, that Ishmael began to mock him and scoff at him or ridicule him. and We can see in this a 2-fold application as Paul says that's the way that it was then and that's the way that it is now, #1 as you begin to grow in the grace of God, you will find that there will be those people who come along side of you and harass you in regards to that. They will tell you that you're immature in the faith or that you take your salvation to lightly and that you need to be doing this and this or else you're carnal or weak. Because you consider the grace of God as sufficient for you, but they mock at you because you're not one of the "disciplined", the "chosen and enlightened", the "spiritual marines".

But there's something interesting with all that, because whenever someone is legalistic or judgmental or has a critical spirit, I know that they haven't gotten those attitudes from the Word, they've gotten them from the world. Because you see the more sin we're exposed to or the more sin that we're involved in, then the more cynical we become. What are you saying Jeff, listen, had Ab never gone down into Egypt, Egypt representing a type of the world a type of the flesh life in scripture, then he would've never wound up with Hagar because he acquired Hagar in Egypt.

So too, if someone is all pompous, or pious and full of pride, their legalist or fault finding and sin-sniffing, you can know that they've spent quite a bit of time in Egypt. But on the other hand if someone is loving and kind, tender and meek, forgiving and gentle, their goes a person whose been spending time in the Promised land, walking in the Spirit, abiding in the word enjoying the grace and the goodness of God.

The 2nd application would be that which wars with in our own members, how even as Ishmael persecuted Isaac and caused problems for him who was born according to the work of the Spirit, our old nature rises up and harasses us and causes problems for us. Ishmael the flesh didn't seem to have any problems until that which was born by the work of the Spirit came into being, even so our old nature doesn't (in our own minds) create problems for us until the new nature enters in as we yield to Christ and are born again as a result of the work of the Spirit in our lives. But for both cases the remedy is the same (Vs 30) Don't subject yourself to the influence of legalizers cast out that bondwoman. In the 2nd case crucify the flesh don't fellowship with it you can't maintain a relationship with the old nature and the new, one of them has to go and the bible tells us it's out with the old and in with the new (notice vs24 of ch 5 read).

It's impossible that flesh and Spirit, law and grace should compromise together and find mutual grounds to remain on; to the contrary they're mutually exclusive. Ishmael had to go, and he wasn't allowed back for an occasional visit just to reminisce about old times, he was permanently sent away never to return. Now do you think that that was something easy for Ab to do, it was probably one of the most difficult things that he ever did in his life apart from maybe being willing to lay down the life of Isaac in obedience to the Lord. But it was the only solution to the problem even though Ab loved Ishmael very much, but in a deeper sense, think of what it cost God to give up His *only* Son to bear the curse of the law that we might be free. Abraham's broken heart meant Isaac's freedom and in that same way God gave His Son and the giving of His Son means our liberty, that's why Paul says so passionately in vs 1 of ch 5.

Vs1

Paul says that we're to "*stand fast*" and that word that's been translated stand fast is from the perfect tense of the word meaning consistently, persistently, or continually be stationary, perpetually do not be moved. and The bible instructs us to be in this condition of standing fast in a number of different things, for example; in 1 Cor 16:13 we're told to "*Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.*" In Phil 1:27 in regards to the unity that's to be with in the body of Christ Paul tells us to "*stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*" In 1 Thess 3:8 we're told to "*stand fast in the Lord*"

Here we're encouraged or really commanded to stand fast or stand up right and steady in the liberty or the freedom by which Christ has made us free, be not moved from the liberating grace of God that has been given to us in Christ setting us free from the bondage of sin and of self. Paul says stand fast "therefore" and any time we see the word therefore it's just a simple way of writing down "in light of these things that we've just talked about" so when you see a therefore you have to back up.

So Paul is saying that in light of all the things that he's just written in his theological defense of justification by faith alone and the fact that we're children of the free woman and not of the slave, stand fast in that position of freedom. Don't waver, but rather move forward, growing in the grace and liberty that's in Christ, Paul would say, "*my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*"

In my studies of this passage I was reminded of when Jesus said, "*No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*" No what if I would've or maybe I should've or I wonder if I could've, we can't even be entertaining those thoughts we've got to remain steadfast and immovable, we've put our hand to the plow as it pertains to the grace of God and the liberty by which Christ has made us free, we've begun in the Spirit, now we can't be looking back and thinking well maybe I should be doing this or dressing like that to be made "really right" with God. No either Jesus Christ makes you "really right" with God or He doesn't and my bible tells me that He does and I am at peace with the fact that His Grace is sufficient for me, Paul says (read 2nd 1/2).

This is sort of a picturesque type of a statement in that it paints an image or a picture in your mind, Paul says don't get tangled up again, you've just come out of the bondage of the world being a slave to the lusts of the flesh. He says now you've been freed in Christ don't falter now by becoming entangled or enslaved to the law and legalism. and He mentions here a yoke, which speaks of slavery, it's that instrument that binds the ox and forces him to serve with rigor, it's forced intensive labor and of course this statement concerning the yoke of bondage that the law places us under is reminiscent of what Peter shared in Acts ch 15.

You remember that this same issue was broached there and there were certain Judaizers and all who were compelling the gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the Law of Moses coming to them under the pretense that they were compelling them with the authority of the church in Jerusalem behind them. and So Paul and Barnabas went right up to Jerusalem and one of the 1st church counsels was held to solve or to settle a dispute or a problem with in the church.

You recall that Peter stood up and shared about what took place at the house of Cornelius when he went out to speak to them by the direction of the Holy Spirit. and He said to them, *“Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith (In other words they had no knowledge of the law and yet God still received them in response to their faith in Him). Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”*

So you see Peter used this same phrase in his evaluation of the law and how it relates to man, and he said hey, we as the chosen of God haven't been able to keep the law, so why in the world should we seek to place them under it when it's obvious that God doesn't differentiate between us and them on the basis of the law. and So listening to Peter there at the counsel, no doubt Paul is recalling how Peter illustrated the law and he's using it here in encouraging the Galatian believers to stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free rather than becoming entangled again into this *yoke* of bondage. You see when you receive Jesus Christ you are relieved of the yoke of slavery and you put on the yoke of Christ, which is in extreme antithesis to what we're reading here.

Jesus said *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* His yoke isn't bondage it's easy and that word *“easy”* means *“kind, and gracious”* He's not asking us to yoke up with Him so that we can pull ½ the load that's how we slip into legalism. I've got to do my part pull my share of the load, but that wouldn't be a proper understanding or a right division of the word of truth, the yoke the Lord holds out for us is one that binds us not to a work load but to Him. Jesus says come along side of Me, Hook up with Me and what? Pull as hard as you can, no, learn of Me; and what is it that you'll be learning, that He is gentle and lowly of heart, He's not a driving demanding slave driver He's gentle and meek and loving and so the more we learn of Him the more we'll find rest for our souls, spiritual peace and tranquility because His yoke is kind and gracious, easy and His burden is light.

You say that all sounds pretty good preacher but I'm seeking to draw near to the Lord and I feel like it's pretty heavy as a matter of fact I don't know if I can carry this load much longer, then you probably need to dump it off because you've taken upon yourself something that Jesus never intended you to bear. Maybe you've slipped into legalism and you need to repent because a love relationship isn't hard to bear, but let me tell you that a legal relationship is grueling.

That's why Jesus had such a beef with the religious leaders of that day, the Pharisees and the Judaizers like these men that Paul is dealing with now listen to what He said, He said "*they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders.*" So how do you know if you've shouldered the Lords burden it's light, it's kind it's gracious and rejuvenating to the soul, how do you know if you've gotten entangled into some self imposed legal trip or been entangled by others in a yoke of bondage, it's heavy, and it's hard to bear. You're constantly struggling and leading a life of self condemnation saying nothing about the kingdom and doing nothing for the kingdom because you sit in the constant light of failure being unable to meet this standard (whatever it may be). But where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, you're not choked and bound because as you yoke up with Him, He pulls the load; it's not a 50/50 deal, the bible tells us to cast all our care upon Him, for He cares for us. Not some of it all of it, He does the work we're to simply concentrate on Him and learn of Him, abiding in Him.

Again Christ died to set us free and make us sons not slaves. Now it should be noted that the freedom that Christ has died to give us isn't a freedom to do whatever we want whenever we want. It's not a freedom to sin, Peter said that we're not to use the grace of God as a cloak or a covering for vice or sin. Because we can toy with that thought in our minds of the fact that since we're not under law but under grace and that where sin abounds grace abounds more, well maybe I can do whatever I want because I'm free in Christ and God's grace is there for me, again a wrong division of the word of truth. and In reality the fact that we're under grace is that which testifies that we're no longer to be under the dominion of sin and subject to the lusts of the flesh and Paul deals with this concept knowing the way that human mind functions in Romans ch 6 lets turn there quickly together.

Actually lets pick it up in ch 5vs 20

Vs7

that's what we're dealing with now the type of liberty that we have in Christ is that which not allows us to sin but rather frees us from the bondage of sin and gives us victory over sin.

Vs14

So this liberty that we have in Christ is not the liberty to do whatever we want to do in the flesh but it's the liberty not to do whatever we want to in the flesh. When we were in the world we didn't have a choice in the matter the flesh had it's way in our lives, probably one of the best examples of that would be found in a person who's an alcoholic. That's also a prime example of how deceiving sin is because many times the person will deny that he or she's enslaved to the addiction. To every one around them it's obvious it's openly displayed to friends and family members and yet the individual with a problem denies it fully, and yet they continually find themselves at the bottom of the bottle. Or at the end of a line or an empty syringe or another sexual partner or pornography name your poison, but the end result is the same, slavery. No choice in the matter you're driven after the desires of the flesh, but when we receive Jesus Christ He liberates us, sets us free from that bondage and the life we live we live to Christ, yoked to Him standing fast or standing firm, steadfast in that liberty by which Christ has made us free. Now Paul issues a warning

Vs2

Now he's not rejecting circumcision in and of itself as a physical act, he's addressing the motive behind the act, why is it that you do what you do. What is the implication behind your doing that which you are doing, what are you saying by this, so if you are circumcised ritually for the purpose of becoming righteous before God, as if you're going to gain a higher standing or a completed righteousness in the sight of God by doing this act, or you're banking your acceptance before God based upon this act that you do, and again it could be anything, baptism, a dress code, the keeping of the Sabbath, a self imposed moral ethic or whatever; reading so many chapters a day or catching so many studies a week, (not that those things are bad, they're an awesome thing) but is that why you're accepted before God because of those things, no is that what makes you right with God going to church, no in this case it's in regards to the act of circumcision.

Paul says that if this is the position of your heart and you're counting on these things to make you right and acceptable to God then Christ will profit you nothing. and Again not to over emphasize it but it's not that high spiritual standards are wrong as a matter of fact I believe that it's healthy for us to be continually challenged to raise our standards in godliness, but the problem creeps in when we begin to listen to those whispers of the enemy saying, my you lead a pretty clean and sharp life. I mean you do all these things and don't do all those things, you're really spiritual and we think yeah I am really spiritual and we begin to equate our spirituality and our righteousness before God based upon the things we do and don't do.

Then we begin to look at others in the light of our personal standards and if they're not meeting up to our standards then they're blowing life. Be careful, a person can quit smoking, quit drinking, quit cussing and going to certain movies and still not be spiritual, the Pharisees had about the highest moral standards of anyone who walked the planet and yet they crucified Jesus Christ (We know that in reality it was our sin that crucified Jesus Christ and that it was out of His love for us that He laid down His life, but I think you understand my point.)

The only thing that makes us right and acceptable before Jesus Christ is faith in Jesus Christ and having His righteousness imputed to us as we are yoked to Him, abiding in Him standing fast in the liberty by which He has made us free. When you begin to look to these other things, then Christ will profit you nothing, everything that He has done will be of no value for you, and that's a pretty serious indictment against the person who leans on law or works performance for righteousness because Jesus is the way the truth and the life and no man comes to the Father but by Him.

What are you saying Jeff, I'm not saying anything, I'm simply telling you what the bible says. Well where does the balance lie surely we don't just set around idle, no there's plenty of work to be done and we'll see how that comes into play in our lives next week. But we have to remember that it's by grace that we're saved and found righteous before God through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. We need the benefit, or the profit of Christ, with out Him we don't make it, so I'd encourage you to allow the Lord to search your heart and minister to you that you might repent of legalism if that need is there, because the yoke that Jesus bore on His shoulders as He carried the cross to Calvary is all sufficient. Let go of legalism and grab hold of grace.