

Galatians ch 5 vs 7-15

We've been taking the time over the last couple of weeks to examine the balance between, legalism and love, slavery and son ship, and how it is that the balance is struck in our lives as it pertains to works, and how they play out practically in our lives and what it is that's to be behind those works. One way (that is through legalism) seeks to motivate us into "works righteousness" which is to say that the motive behind the things that I do or the reason that I do what I do is so that I can be made acceptable and elevated to a certain stature of righteousness before God.

But the problem is doing that or the motives behind that is that I'm in effect undoing the work of the cross saying that when Jesus said "it is finished" it really wasn't finished because in order to be made truly right before God I have to do this and this and I can't do that or that. and So in that position we make God out to be a liar, Him saying that it was a complete work us saying no it wasn't, and it's never good to be in the position of calling God a liar. But that's the fruits of legalism.

God doesn't desire a legal relationship with us, He desires a love relationship with us. He desires not that we trust in ourselves and in our own best efforts, because that at best will amount to filthy rags before the Lord. But rather He desires that we place our trust and our faith in Jesus Christ and if we do that then everything else will fall in line, because true faith produces and true work in our lives and a saving faith will always produce the Agape' unconditional love of God in our lives that doesn't seek to get it seeks to give, and so true faith will produce to true works, but notice where the balance lies in vs 6, faith works not by legalism, but by love. Love for God, and love for others as His love is poured out in my life.

That my friends is a totally different approach to works, one seeks to get, it's seeks self gratification, in righteousness and acceptance before God, the other seeks to give. Not looking to what's in it for me, but out of the overwhelming love that God has for me and has poured out into my life for others, I desire to show others the love of God by allowing God to love them through me in practical ways. and So out of the overflow of my love for God, I'm just looking for opportunity to serve the Lord, by serving others, faith works through love. But I'm not looking to my works to justify me or make me right in the sight of God, I'm justified freely by grace (not works) as I place my faith in Jesus Christ The works are just a natural by-product of abiding in Christ, even as fruit is a natural by-product of abiding in the vine.

I don't have to force them begrudgingly, as I said last week, I don't got to do the things I do, I get to do what I do, and it's the position of the heart that makes all the difference, and that's always what God is interested in. There's going to be plenty of people stand before Christ and count on their works to gain them acceptance into heaven. and They'll be saying Lord, didn't we cast out demons in your name, and prophesy in your name and do all sorts of wonderful things in your name, and Jesus will say depart from Me, I never knew you. Sure you may've drawn near to Me with your mouth and honored Me with your lips, but your hearts were far from Me. God's not into show, He's not into playing church, He's into transforming lives and taking people from the powers of darkness, and setting them free to walk in the light.

So it's not about honoring God outwardly, because you can honor God outwardly and still be calloused and indifferent inwardly, but if you honor God inwardly, in your heart, then the results will manifest themselves outwardly. The outward does nothing for the inward, but the inward does everything for the outward.

Faith works through love, and by this they will know that you're My disciples, not by your rigid legalism, by which you bind one another, but by your love one for another by which you serve one another. So these are the things that Paul has been instructing us in and will continue to instruct us in, and so I'd encourage you not to grow weary of hearing the message of liberty and love and the grace of God, but rather soak it up, allow it to be ingrained in you that you might be well equipped to guard against the subtleties of legalism and works righteousness for God. Because so often we can start off so right on, and then through some miscellaneous chain of events we receive some sort of out side (seemingly pious) influence and we become deceived. That's what had happened to them, and God understands human nature, and how that can happen to us, they had begun so well, but now they were being misguided and directed off course, and so we read in vs 7.

Vs7

Paul says man you started off so good, you ran well, you were on the right track; you were abiding in sound doctrine and walking in the Spirit. He's kind of reiterating here what he previously stated in ch 3 vs 3, having begun in the Spirit, are you now going to be mad perfect in the flesh, are you going to improve on the work of the Holy Spirit of God by the efforts of your flesh. You ran well, you began well, but unfortunately (and at the risk of repeating myself too much, but I believe it's necessary to be reminded from time to time so as to stir us up to sobriety) but Jesus never said well-begun, good and faithful servant, He said well *done* good and faithful servant.

You see the emphasis doesn't lie nearly as hard on how you begin the race, though we all know that that is critical, but the main emphasis is placed on how you end the race. and Paul commonly used this type of illustration to speak to us concerning our relationship to Christ, or our walk in Christ, now never is salvation referred to as a race, we don't run the race to earn salvation, we run the race because we've been given salvation, there's a big difference. and As we come into that love relationship with Jesus, you find yourself constrained to be open to doing your utmost for His highest at any given opportunity.

That's what Paul was talking about in 1 Cor 9:24-25 when he said, "*Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.*" Then he goes on to speak of how he disciplines his body, the flesh man lest when he preach to others, he become disqualified himself.

I love that concept, and with the Olympics right around the corner this illustration becomes all the more evident to us. Because you'll see people who have subjected themselves to unprecedented, unparalleled discipline, training (some of them) literally their whole lives for this one moment, their whole lives are wrapped up and consumed with one thing, they've got there focus set on one thing and they've refused to indulge themselves and place themselves in a position of compromise or anything that might hinder themselves from performing to their utmost ability and its all for one thing, the prize, the gold, the crown.

If after years of discipline they obtain that prize, their name gets written in a book, they place that little piece of gold in a case on their mantle and in 5-6 yrs no one remembers their name. and They buffet themselves knowing that theirs a chance that they might not even place, they may win nothing, yet they've counted the cost and considered it absolutely worth it just to aim for the mark of that upward call.

So Paul is saying hey, look at these people who are so willing to give all that they have for some temporary crown that just perishes in time, and even at that they may not even obtain it. But we aim for the prize of the upward call that's in Christ Jesus that is sure and it awaits us and it's reward is eternal, so if people in the world (not that their aren't athletes that are believers theirs plenty) but if they are willing to work so hard and strive so intensely for a temporal reward, how much more should we be willing to give everything we've got in aiming for that prize, that eternal reward that awaits us.

That's why Paul said in Phil 3:12-*"I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (and He says) Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."*

You were running so well, who hindered you, notice that he acknowledges that he knows that this lack of progress or diversion hasn't arisen from within them, there was outside influence. and We'll develop that further in just a minute, but Paul knows how they were disciplined and the things that they were instructed in because he's the one who taught them, he's the one that laid the foundation for them, who fired the gun that began their race.

This word "hindered" is in keeping with his concept of the race, it means "to be cut off" you were in your proper lane and someone cut you off and you've been diverted, or possibly hindered from progressing any more period. Because one thing is for certain and that's that the hindrance that's influenced your life is a hindrance from the truth, which is in reality a hindrance from Jesus Christ Himself because He is the embodiment of truth, He said I am the way and the truth, John 1:14 *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, (speaking of Jesus) and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."* Again John 1:17 *"For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

Paul taught that all that is necessary for salvation is to accept the gospel, to trust in Jesus Christ for the remission of your sin, believing on the finished work of the cross, and so to add or to take away from any part of the sufficiency of Christ, is to deny the truth. Any time you seek to add something to your life or to conform to some imposed set of rules and regulations in order to secure your salvation, you're rejecting the sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone for salvation and His ability to present you spotless before the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. So Paul can easily conclude,

Vs8

God doesn't lead you down a path that steers you from trust in Christ alone, that type of persuasion or this type of influence doesn't come from Him who calls you. and That's the problem with all the various cults, the Jehovah's witnesses or the Mormons who knock on your door and they try and sell you on all of these various concepts that they've acquired from reading all of their literature. But that persuasion doesn't come from Him who called you, notice it's a calling, God puts a call on your life, but then He doesn't persuade you to believe something that takes away from the person or deity or sufficiency of Christ.

You couldn't come up with all of the various absurd and bizarre concepts that they come up with unless you read their books. It's impossible that you can conclude the things that they do by simply reading your bible and waiting upon the Lord. Now they may twist some scripture up and lace through their books to try and convince you, but apart from their outside influence you can't arrive at their conclusions.

Your mind has to be bent that direction through their literature and their books. You will never come to believe that there's no hell, by reading the bible, yet that's what the Jehovah's witness' teach, you'll never come to believe that Jesus is actually Michael the ark angel by reading the bible, but that's what they teach. You'll never come to believe that heaven is reserved for the elite 144,000 (not Jews but Jehovah's witnesses) and the rest of the Jehovah's witnesses spend eternity here on earth, but if you're not a Jehovah's witness you're basically snuffed out of existence, but that's what they teach.

The same is true with the Mormons; they say that Jesus and Satan are actually brothers, and I guarantee you'll *never* draw that conclusion by reading your bible. You'll never come to believe that you're on a quest for personal deity and godhood and if you do everything just right and perform all of the works required of you, that you get to become a god yourself and have many celestial wives and have all kinds of celestial sex by which you'll populate another planet over which you'll be their god, yet that's what they teach. But I am not at all worried about the things that you'll be confronted with or the conclusions that you will draw by simply reading the bible chapter by chapter, vs by vs. Those conclusions come from the watchtower or the book of Mormon, not the inspired word of God. You see this persuasion, these ideas, these concepts that deviate you from the person of Christ and place the weight upon you and are twisted and deceiving heresy don't come from God.

So the next time they begin to badger with these concepts tell them; hey, this persuasion doesn't come from Him who called you, they are ideas that have been planted in your mind by men, "no way God revealed these things to me, here I'll show you where in this book", hey you don't need the outside influence of man's books to thrive in an intimate relationship with God. Because many times you can receive tainted persuasion, and then you begin to entertain those concepts, because after all anyone who writes a book on something that makes them the authority on the subject doesn't it? and Before long you've been "hindered", you've been "cut-off" and you're no longer obeying the truth, and it might be something so miniscule at 1st, just 1 little nugget, "God wants all of His children to be rich, or never to be sick a day of their lives", but don't you know that only.

Vs9

Those of you who have done any cooking at all will thoroughly understand this, it only takes a little bit of leaven, only a little pinch of yeast (if you're cooking bread or something) to leaven the whole lump. Oh at 1st you might not notice its affect at all, but go away for a period of time and then come back and you'll see that what seemed to be such an insignificant amount of leaven has thoroughly infused, and affected, and infected, and influenced the whole lump, the evidence is everywhere and there's not one part of it that's been left untainted or untouched by the leaven.

When you study the scriptures, you come to find that leaven stands to illustrate for us, or becomes a type of sin or evil. That's why the Passover was the feast of unleavened bread, because it spoke of the work of Jesus Christ the bread of life that was with out sin, and you find in the book of Leviticus that they were to eat of the bread that was unleavened for 7 days, the # of completion, why because Jesus' whole life was completely with out sin and the work that He did was complete and finished.

In the book of Ex you find out that if there was any leaven eaten or even found in your house during that 7day period of time, you would be cut off from the nation completely. The concept of leaven being sin was carried over into the NT, Jesus one day in speaking to the disciples said beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and what was He speaking of, the bible tells us.

He was talking about their doctrines and their teachings, teaching as doctrine the commandments of men, Jesus was saying don't allow yourself to become infused and affected, influenced and infected by the religious teachings and doctrines of man, no matter how "spiritual" it may appear, because it's sin. It will corrupt you, that's what leaven does, it has a corrupting and decaying affect, and that's what sin does to you and me, it corrupts us, it decays us spiritually and sometimes physically.

In 1st Cor ch 5 Paul spoke of the leaven of sexual immorality with in the body of Christ, and how it can corrupt and destroy the body, because leaven spreads, it permeates, filters through and saturates everything it comes in contact with. and That's what was happening here, and here Paul is speaking of the leaven of legalism, sure it may seem like just a little bit, hardly noticeable, but it spreads, and corrupts and will eventually influence the whole body. When someone is on a legal trip, it can easily permeate and affect the whole lump, the entire corporate gathering in left unattended.

That's why Paul said back in 1 Cor 5:7-8 "*purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and (notice, here it is) truth.*" Because God's not the one that convicts you to be legalistic, that's mans influence. Paul goes on

Vs10

Now I'm not going to dwell too long on this vs, but Paul is saying that after reasoning this through in the light of what I've just shared I'm certain that you'll reconsider what you're doing and repent. That is if you seek to truly follow the Lord, Paul's confidence wasn't in them, it was in them *in the Lord*. and There's a difference, most people I wouldn't trust any farther then I could throw, but in the Lord, I can place my confidence in them, that is, in the Lord in them. But, Paul says, he who troubles you, shall bear his judgment, and this ought to strike the fear of God into any teacher of the word of God who teaches it on any level. He who teaches you these things that are contrary to the truth of the word, even if it's mixed and mingled with the word will bear his or her judgment.

I don't care if it's children's ministry, if it's junior high or the youth group, if it's a home bible study, a family devotion, or being articulated from the pulpit. If you're teaching things contrary to sound doctrine, be it your opinion or some persuasion of man, you will be held accountable accordingly. and I would refer you back to ch 1 vs 8-9 in light of this as a cross-reference. That's why James said, "*My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*" and I'm not saying that you shouldn't share the word, or men that you shouldn't have devotions with your families, but what I am saying is that you need to be careful to be "*diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" Let's move on

Vs11

Paul is simply saying that if he were preaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation, then the Judaizers would leave him alone, but since he doesn't, he suffers persecution. The persecution he suffers is that which is due to the offense of the cross. The message of the cross is an offense to mankind, it says that the culmination of the best efforts of anything we could muster up before God, get their just reward upon the cross. So it's an offense to mans morality, telling him that his own moral fiber and good works can't justify him. It's an offense to the will of man because it calls for unconditional surrender; it's an offense to the pride of man, because it shows the exceeding wickedness and sinful state of the human heart and forces man to humble himself before God by means of the cross. and It's an offense to the very person of man because it says, you can't measure up through your life, you must be "born again" by the work of the Spirit.

The cross is an offense to every other religion on the face of the earth; it says you don't get to heaven through Hinduism, or Buddhism, eastern mysticism, or any other "isms". It says that Muslims or Moslems don't make it or be there any other teaching that stands in opposition to the cross of Jesus Christ You won't see them on the other side, you say Jeff you're liable to offend a lot of people by taking that position. Hey, it's not my opinion, it's the word of God and the offense is that of the cross.

Paul said "*I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*" The message that Paul preached was the message of the cross, Jesus said, "*If anyone desires to come after Me, (that is, go where I am going, be where I am) let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*"

Finally notice Gal 6:14 (read) that's just a taste of the offense of the cross, but if you love people you're going to be willing to risk the offense at the expense of losing them for eternity. Better to temporarily offend them and to see them embrace the cross and gain them eternally, then to say, "well, I didn't want to offend anybody" and watch them as they stumble like an ox to the slaughter right into the pit of hell when the whole time you had the answer.

Vs12

Or literally castrate themselves, hey if circumcision is going to make you righteous before God, then why stop their, just go for it, be made really righteous and just castrate yourself. You say that's absurd, so is legalism, that's the point he's making, and that's as far as I'm taking this vs.

Vs13

We've dwelt on the liberty that we have in Christ the last couple of weeks so I'm not going to repeat myself here I'd refer you to Romans 6 and 1st Peter 2:15,16. Paul says but through love, serve one another, again faith working through love, grab last week's study.

Vs14

For times sake I'll wait to comment on vs 13 and 14 a little more next week

Vs15

What's the opposite of serving one another in love, living self- assertively, looking out for #1, backbiting, bitterness, envy, and malicious intent. and It's unfortunate that these types of things go on in the body of Christ, yet it does. and Again I'm out of time so maybe we'll look at this just a little more in depth next week, but let me just give you a piece of advice, you're either "in the vision" (listen) or you are in division. A divisive and contentious person whose speaks ill of other people, only invites reproach upon their own life, it's the plank in my eye, while I'm seeking to get rid of the speck in yours.

That's why Paul said in Eph ch 4 (and we'll end with this) lets look at it together. Vs29-32 So maybe someone has wronged you, I'm sure sorry about that, but guess what, you've wronged God. and Yet He's forgiven you in Christ, So if you've been forgiven, then even as Christ forgave you, forgive one another.