

“Set Free From Religion”

Galatians 5

Sermon Series: “Set Free To Live Free”

Introduction: Did you know that religion is a bondage? It is because it promises salvation but cannot deliver. **I define religion as our attempts to earn favor with God by our own efforts and/or goodness instead of through Jesus and His finished work on the cross.** Religion cannot save or free us because the Law was given to condemn us and not save us. It was given to show us our need for Jesus (Galatians 3:19-25). Religion adds to our shame and guilt because it tells us what we ought to do, condemns us for not doing it, fails to provide forgiveness, and then really doubles our shame and guilt because we fall short when we try harder to do what we ought to do. Religion will keep you from God if you are trying to earn your way to Him instead of coming to Him through Jesus (John 14:6). If you are trusting Jesus for your salvation but being religious by trying to live the Christian life by keeping rules in your own strength, then it will keep you in bondage and keep you from enjoying and flourishing in your relationship with Jesus.

Main Idea: Faith in Jesus sets us free from trying to earn salvation through our own religious performance.

In this letter to the church at Galatia, Paul was dealing with a false teaching that had invaded the church by some people often labeled as “the Judaizers,” who were teaching that salvation was Jesus plus keeping the Mosaic Law, particularly by being circumcised. Paul is passionately defending the only true gospel (1:6-10), which is that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (2:11-21, 3:10-14), from their attacks. We cannot add anything to the gospel any more than we can take anything away from it and really have the gospel.

Then, in Galatians 5:1, Paul writes, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” **So, the point is to be made free by repenting of our sins and trusting Jesus and His substitutionary death and glorious resurrection. Then, we are to stand fast in that liberty by living in the power of the Spirit instead of going back to self-effort to try to live the Christian life.**

Faith in Jesus sets us free not only from trying to earn salvation through our own religious performance, but it sets us free to:

1. Live in freedom by grace through faith that expresses itself in love (v. 1-12). Verses 1-6 are about sanctification instead of salvation. They were still trusting Jesus for salvation but had gone to the Law for sanctifying grace. These verses are not saying we can lose our salvation, but they are saying that we will lose our freedom, and the benefits of knowing Jesus if we rely on the Law instead of the Spirit. God’s design for living the Christian life is not trying to keep a set of rules in our power but living by grace through faith just like we were saved by grace through faith. This produces love for God and people that empowers us to obey the spirit of the law with the right motives. Verses 7-12 are a warning against false teachers.

2. Serve others through love (v. 13-15). This is contrasted with two contradictory ways of living as a Christian. The first is lawlessness, which is misusing our freedom to indulge our flesh. The second is legalism, which is commonly seen by religious people fighting with each other. The words in verse 15 were used in classical Greek to describe “wild animals in deadly struggle” (Wuest).

3. Live under the control of the Holy Spirit(v. 16-26). This enables us to supernaturally overcome sin (v. 16-17), live in freedom (v. 18), and bear fruit that honors Christ (v. 19-23).

