

James 2:8 ESV - 8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

When false teachings creep into a church it is not unusual to find the body divided. Paul's tender heart for this flock is evident in his statement in verse 15. He contrasts the expression of loving your neighbor with the damage done when church members fight amongst themselves. One of the best defenses against such behavior is to keep ourselves filled with God's love so that we can love others. What is it that helps you to be replenished with the love of God? What are some opportunities you might have this week to share God's love with others?

WRAP-UP

Jesus set us free so that we could live in freedom. But Paul tells us again in this passage, that when we rely on the law, we fall away from grace and lose that freedom. The Galatians began well, but false teachers were hindering them by sowing seeds of doubt in God's grace. Paul didn't let his discouragement turn to blame, but rather encouraged the Galatians through his confidence in them and directed his anger at the false teachers among them. He showed us the way we can in fact fulfill the whole law, and that is by loving others.

Memory Verse

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Galatians 5:13 ESV

PRAYER (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

Challenge-

As you read God's word this week take time to reflect on the love he has shown you by extending grace and freedom to you through the sacrifice of Christ.

"Live Free"

Galatians- week #10

INTRODUCTION

It is pretty hard to miss Paul's point in the letter to the Galatians. In chapter 5 he says, "I'll say it again." So, we should already know what's coming. How could they not understand? You can't have it both ways – either you rely on the law and following all the rules to earn you salvation, (which by the way is impossible), or you rely by faith on God's grace through Christ to save you. Everything about the Christian gospel is about freedom. Jesus' whole mission was an operation of liberation. In this part of his letter we begin to see Paul's frustration turning to anger over the way the Galatians were being robbed of their freedom in Christ.

Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Have you ever felt compelled to step in and protect someone who was being bullied?

STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

Maintaining Our Freedom

1. Read Galatians 5:1-4; 3:10

Galatians 5:1-4 ESV - 1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

Paul clearly tells us the Christ has set us free! That's great news. But what does he say it takes to stay free (v.1)? Paul equates following the law as a means of salvation to being both yoked and enslaved. It appears our freedom is fragile and can slip from our grasp if we don't stay alert and strong against the attack of the enemy. Then Paul spells it out three ways in verses 2-4. What are the three consequences of relying on circumcision, hence the law, to save you?

Clearly Paul leaves no room for the blending of law and grace. And dependence on any part of the law obligates you to all of the law as he stated in Galatians 3:10.

*Galatians 3:10 ESV - 10 For **all who rely on works of the law** are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone **who does not abide by all things written** in the Book of the Law, and do them."*

Resisting the efforts of the Judaizers required standing firm against their attack on the Galatians freedom. Maybe you have seen similar attacks on the freedom of believers by those who feel bound to following rules. How might believers today be challenged to prove themselves by observing certain practices? If your faith was challenged, what would you point to as the proof of your salvation?

Blame where Blame is Due

2. Read Galatians 5:7-9; 10, 12; Acts 20:29-32

Galatians 5:7-9 ESV - 7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

You can almost hear the exasperation and disappointment in Paul's voice when you read Galatians 5:7. He is not placing the blame on them, in fact he recognizes that they are victims of false teaching. Challenges will come to us in many forms. The Galatians knew they were saved by grace, but seeds of doubt were sown when they were told they also needed circumcision. How have you seen seeds of doubt sown in the lives of believers, perhaps through false teaching, or unexpected trials, or unmet expectations in someone's life that caused them to question God's grace? Despite his disappointment, Paul did not heap guilt on the Galatians, though that would be easy to do. Instead, how did he encourage them (v. 10)?

Galatians 5:10, 12 ESV - 10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ... 12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Paul's anger was aimed squarely at those who were doing harm to his brothers and sisters in Galatia (v.12). If you are a parent, you may have felt this way too. If someone leads your child astray, you might be tempted to focus your anger on your child who has disappointed you. But

a wise parent will, like Paul, encourage their child and recognize they are not the enemy. We need to recognize when our brothers and sisters follow false teachings, they are not the enemy, and shouldn't be attacked.

Acts 20:29-32 ESV - 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. 32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

In Acts chapter 20 we find Paul gave a similar warning to the elders from Ephesus about wolves and false teachers. Where did the threat come from? We are probably more alert to external threats than internal ones. Share with the group what you would do if someone from our congregation began teaching "twisted things" (v. 30). Do you feel prepared to recognize when something like this happens? How do you think "the word of His grace" can help equip you for the task?

Encouraged to Love

3. Read Galatians 5:13-15; James 2:8

Galatians 5:13-15 ESV - 13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

When we realize that God's grace gives us freedom from the law we might be tempted to indulge in doing whatever we please because, after all, we are not obligated to follow the law. What does Paul have to say about that (v. 13)? He uses a very interesting appeal in verse 14. The Galatians have been tempted to try to fulfill the law of circumcision, but Paul has explained they must fulfill the "whole law" if they return to any of the law in Galatians 5:3. How can they actually fulfill the "whole law" according to v. 14 and James 2:8?