

## Freedom

### Galatians 5

#### Intro:

- Intro myself and how I got to Summit and Summit College
  - And I absolutely love what I do. My life was changed in college and I get to see students lives change over and over again.
  - And my kids are growing up thinking that college is where people go to love Jesus! So that is a win!
- Intro to college
  - And just so you know God is really moving on the campus right now! We are seeing an openness on campus to the gospel that we have not seen for years
  - And our prayers is that students will come to know Jesus on campus and then be sent out to make disciples all over the world
    - **Story - John and Luke**
  - And all of this is because a college student came to know Jesus on campus. And our prayer is that we will see this happen again and again and again
  - One thing you can be praying for us about is we have on campus Easter services coming up over the next few weeks!
  - We are having 5 different Easter services on college campuses across the triangle and we are praying for 1500 college students to show up to hear the good news that Jesus is alive!

#### Intro 2:

- But I am not here to talk about college students today...today I want to talk about **freedom!**
- Specifically what does it mean to be free in Christ
- If you have your Bibles we are going to be in Galatians 5!

- Now as Americans we love freedom! And specifically we do not like to be told what to do!
- I mean our whole country is based on some king in England trying to tell us what to do and we were like...nope I am not paying taxes on my tea we are going to start our own nation
- But this is not just true of us as a nation this is also true of us as individuals
- None of us like to be told what to do!
- I mean this starts off when we are young
  - **Ex - my mom telling me not to put a key in the light socket but doing it anyway**
- So we love freedom and we love doing what we want when we want
- So today I want to press into this idea of freedom and what does it actually mean to be free?
- Pastor JD touched on this topic last week a little bit so I want to double click on this because here is what I have found
- **Most of us don't actually live like we are free..**
- So my hope is that after today we will not only understand what it means that we have been set free but we will walk in that freedom as well!
- So if you have your Bible we are going to be in the book of Galatians...specifically Galatians 5 and we are going to be looking at a few different verses in this section
- Now we have been in the book of Exodus and we will be back there next week but we are taking a brief break to zoom into one of the major themes of Exodus which is freedom

#### Context:

- Now to give a little context to Galatians

- The apostle Paul had planted churches in Galatia - which is modern day Turkey - and he is writing a letter back to them
- And while he was gone a group of people came in called the Judaizers...and the main thing they are teaching is Jesus AND \_\_\_\_\_
- That to be a Christian you need to put your faith in Jesus AND be circumcised
  - Which I will let JD explain in more detail when he comes back
- They were saying you have to believe in Jesus and you have to follow the law to be right with God
- And Paul does not like that...his whole point is that it is not Jesus AND it is Jesus ONLY!
- It is by faith in Jesus not obedience to the law that we are made right with God
- And Paul has been hammering that home for 4 chapters until we get here in Chapter 5 and he says

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

#### **Enslaved to sin:**

- The first thing we see in this passage is that Christ has set us free!
- Which leads to the question...free from what? In order to be set free you first have to be enslaved
- So what has Christ set us free from
- Now the Bible explains that we are enslaved to several things
- The first is that we are enslaved to sin
- Sin is simply anything that disobeys God
- In John 8 Jesus says "everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin"

- What he is saying here is that if you continually practice and commit sin it will eventually enslave you...
- We see this all the time:
  - Maybe it starts off that you are just casually having a drink when you get home or you are out with friends but it leads to drinking every night to take off the stress of the day which then leads to addiction
  - Maybe it starts off as just scrolling through your phone and seeing pictures you shouldn't but eventually you find yourself enslaved to pornography
  - Maybe you felt hurt by someone and it started off with a little bitterness but now it has overtaken you
  - Or maybe you are looking through your social media feed and continually taking in what other people have and you become consumed with wanting more and envy
- What we see is that eventually we are not sinning because we want to but we are enslaved to it...it has overtaken us
- Sin usually starts out as something fun but it ends in slavery and bondage

#### **Enslaved to performance:**

- But not only are we enslaved to sin but we are enslaved to **performance**
- Specifically in this passage this is what they are talking about being enslaved to the law
- Now Pastor JD hit on this last week so I am not going to go into a ton of detail but the law is what was handed down to us by God through Moses...specifically the 10 commandments

- And we are enslaved to the law because we can never measure up to it...we try and try but we keep failing again and again
- And earlier in Galatians it says “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all the things written in the book of the Law and do them”
- And we are enslaved to the law because we can't measure up and the result of that is separation from God

### Enslaved to performance:

- But not only are we enslaved to performance in trying to measure up to the law...we are enslaved to performance in all different areas of our lives
- For many of us that is our career...we are always trying to get ahead, to get the promotion, to make more money...and what happens is we don't just want to be successful but we need to be successful...our whole identity depends on it
- Or in school you don't just want to do well but you are stressing out, pulling all nighters, trying to make the grade...because you are enslaved to your GPA
- Or I see it in parenting...you are obsessed with doing everything right for your kids and measuring up to an impossible standard of perfection...you have to make sure they are in all the right activities, that they are eating all the perfect foods, that they have all the right play dates...and you feel this constant pressure to measure up
- And what happens is these things like your career or parenting which might have started out like joy...eventually turns to a burden
- Because we are enslaved to our performance...and we live our lives exhausted and defeated because we feel like we can never quite measure up

- And a life of exhaustion and burden is not a life of freedom but slavery

### Enslaved to Satan:

- But not only are we enslaved to sin and performance...but the Bible says we are enslaved to Satan himself
- Which I know you can be thinking...ok Wes you went too far with this one..yes I might work too much but you won't find me doing a seance out in the woods or something weird like that
- And here is the thing...we often think the world works like this
- You have God over here and you have Satan over there...and then you have this neutral area of the world where all of us live
- And God is trying to pull us toward himself and Satan is trying to pull us his ways
- But here is the problem...there is no neutral ground
- The Bible teaches you are in one of two camps...you are in either what Colossians 1 calls “the domain of darkness” or “kingdom of light”
- Ephesians 2 says before Christ we are all “following the prince of the power of the air”
- That before Christ we were under Satan's influence...we were following after his ways
- Specifically we are under his control because we are following his main lie which is:
  - You can't trust God...you know know what is better for your life than him
- And following that lie has led us to slavery not freedom

### Living in slavery:

- The Bible says we are not born free but enslaved
- We are just like the Israelites in Egypt

- Everyday they would wake up being in slavery and under a crushing burden of working for Pharaoh with no hope of change...and there was nothing they could do to
- And that is how the Bible describes us...we were enslaved to our sin and enslaved to our performance and there was no hope of us being able to free ourselves

### **Christ has set us free:**

- And the good news of this verse and the Bible is that **Christ has set us free**
- That Christ has stepped in and done something in the past which allows us to experience freedom
- Now the word the Bible often uses for set free is **redeem** - which just means to buy, to purchase, or to set free
- **Chuck E Cheese**
  - Now you have experienced this if you have ever been to Chuck E Cheese
  - You go around and spend all this money playing games like whack a mole or whatever and you get tickets
  - You then go to the counter with all your tickets you got and you trade in/redeem your tickets for some stuffed animal or fake gold necklace or something You exchange...you give them your tickets and they give you the prize
- We the reality is Jesus saw you and me in slavery to sin, Satan, and the law
- And he was willing to pay the price
- See Jesus life was the ticket and you were the prize
- Jesus came and lived the sinless perfect life...always obeying his parents, never lying, never lusting
- And he perfectly obeyed the law...he measured up to what was required

- Jesus paid the price to set you free by dieing on the cross for you
- On the cross Jesus the Son of God was treated like a slave so that slaves like you and me could be set free!
- **For freedom Christ has set you free!**

### **What are you free from:**

#### **You are free from performance**

- Listen to me...you do not have to perform for God
- God's love never has been nor ever will be based on your performance for him but actually it is based on his performance for you on the cross 2000 years ago
- It is so freeing to know that everyday when you wake up
- God is not going to love you more if you read your Bible, if you go on a mission trip, if you share the gospel....or whatever it is for you
- I mean this has been so freeing for me personally...I used to think of God more like a military captain than a heavenly father
- I would struggle because I lived my life like God is mildly disappointed with me
- But honestly coming here to Summit helped me realize...God is not disappointed with me...he has never expected me to perform for him
- He came because he knew I couldn't measure up

#### **You are free from your past**

- I think this is huge and another way we are stuck in bondage
- So many of us have things in our past we are not proud of (myself included)
- And we get stuck in those things...and we feel like we have to make up to God because of what we have done

- But here is the reality...Jesus came for you knowing everything you would ever do...there are no skeletons in the closet.
- He knew the worst things about you and he still came for you
- Which is so freeing to know that Jesus knew everything about our past and still choose to set us free
- **Example:**
  - Think about the woman the well in John 4. Jesus came to her knowing her past, knowing she had 5 husbands...but knowing all that he still offers her living water
  - Think about Peter...Jesus came and found him after he denied him
- Listen, your past did not make Jesus run away from you but toward you...and he wants you to be free from letting your past define you
- He doesn't define you by your past and neither should you
- So we are freed from both what we have done and what we do now!

#### **Stand firm:**

- So Jesus has set us free from performance and our past what should we do
- Paul says "stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."
- This is a military term
- It means yes Christ has set you free but you have a role in continuing to stand firm and fight
- You are called not to lose ground and specifically he says "do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

#### **Juneteenth:**

- Unfortunately I did not know about Juneteenth celebration until around 6 years ago
- But if you know what happened on June 19th, 1865 federal troops rolled into Texas stating that all slaves in the state of Texas were free
- Which is obviously a great thing...people who had been enslaved their entire lives were set free
- But sadly this declaration came two and half years after the Emancipation Proclamation
- What that means is for two and half years slaves in Texas were denied their freedom
- They were still living as slaves when they had actually been set free
- So we celebrate Juneteenth to remember the actual date of freedom from slavery in our country
- But this is also tragic because there were people who had been set free but were still living in slavery!
- But I bring this up bc sadly many of us are aware that we have been set free but for some reason we keep living in slavery
- That even though Christ has went to the cross to free us from our sin and performance we submit ourselves again to the yoke of slavery...specifically to the yoke of performance

#### **Preach to yourself:**

- Now a yoke is what they would put on oxen in order to plow a field and it was a heavy burden
- And here he is saying don't put back on the heavy burden of performance of trying to obey the law to earn God's approval
- Jesus actually says in Matthew 11 that his yoke is easy and light not burdensome

- So how do we put on the yoke of Jesus and not the yoke of performance
- How do we stand firm in our freedom...we fight by preaching the gospel to ourselves daily
- So what I started doing was praying Matthew 3:17 over myself everyday
- In Matthew 3:17 is Jesus baptism when after Jesus comes out of the water the Father says over him... "this is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."
- Now the Father says this over Jesus before he does any ministry...he hasn't healed the sick, raised the dead, or preached the gospel
- And this is huge...**the Father declares his approval for his son before the performance**
- Jesus ministry is just living out the identity that has already been declared over him
- Freedom is living out of your identity not living for an identity
- And if you are in Christ every morning the father says over you...you are my beloved son or daughter with whom I am well pleased... before you do anything
- **And that is what it means to stand firm...to continually fight to remind yourself of the truth that you have been set free from performance**

#### Free for:

- **But that is only half of what it means to be free!**
- See when we think of freedom we often only think of it as freedom from something
- So some people hear a message like this and thinking...wow I am free from performing...God doesn't love me for what I do
- That is amazing...I can do whatever I want!

- And that is often how we think of freedom...freedom means we can do whatever we want
- But we know that when everyone does whatever they want it doesn't bring freedom but chaos and bondage
  - For example, would you ever vacation in a country that didn't have any laws?
  - No...because you know that country will be full of chaos
- And this is not just in countries it is true to our lives as well..if we all just lived and did whatever we want without any restriction it would lead to chaos in our own lives
- **And not only that but our desires often contradict each other:**
  - **Example** - I have had 7 knee surgeries and 3 hip surgeries over the past few years! And I also like to play basketball. (I am not that good at it but I like to do it all the same). But I also love my wife and have 3 amazing kids that I want to run around in the yard with and play with them. But my doctor told me that if I want to do that with my kids I need to stop playing basketball all the time. So now I have 2 conflicting desires...I can either be free to play basketball for a few years or I can enjoy the freedom of playing with my kids but I can't have both. So I have to choose. So I obviously chose playing basketball... kidding I choose my kids.
  - And now my replacement is swimming which to me is basically drowning for 30 minutes. So I am not actually free but one of these desires has to win out
- The reality is we have to choose...we can't just do whatever we want
  - We want to save up to buy a house but we also want to go on fun vacations now

- We want to be present with our kids but we also want to scroll on our phone
- We want to be people of prayer but we also want to stay up late
- See freedom is not just doing whatever you want because we all have competing desires
- **True freedom is not just doing what you want to do but doing what you were designed to do**
  - A fish has the choice to get out of water onto land. But he was not designed for that. He would not survive there. For him true freedom comes from staying in the water!
- And you were designed and created by God to love him and obey him
- Look what Paul says in verse 13

**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."

#### **Free to love:**

- What Paul is saying here is don't abuse your freedom
- God did not free you to do whatever you want and to indulge your selfish desires
- No God freed you from the power of sin in your lives so you can be freed to actually love and serve others
- What is interesting is this word "**serve one another**" is actually the word slave
- Here Paul is saying...**God has freed you to be a slave**
- Paul is saying you are no longer enslaved to performance but you are enslaved by love which is much different
- **The best example I can give of this is marriage:**

- When my wife and I got married we promised to love, sacrifice, and serve one another no matter what
- Now I could hear that and say...well she is all in so I can do whatever I want
- I can never help out around the house, I can go just play golf all weekend, I don't have to take her out on dates, I don't have to help out with the kids...I can just do what I want to do because hey she will forgive me
- But I don't do that...why? Because I love her
- I am constrained by love not obedience
- I freely choose to serve her...not because I have to but because I want to
- And that is what happens when you understand what Jesus has done for you...you don't serve him because you have to...but because you want to
- When you understand that Jesus the Son of God became a slave so you a slave could be treated like a son or daughter...it changes you
- It frees you to love him and love others

#### **Free to obey:**

- And not only are we free to love but we are free to obey God's word
- **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments"**  
John 14:15
- See we obey God because we love him and we obey God because we know that is where real freedom is found
- CS Lewis says "**Obedience is the road to freedom...**"
- That when we obey God and live the way he has called us to live it actually leads to freedom not bondage
- Here is what you need to believe...**God is never ripping you off!**

- He always wants what is best for you
  - He is never withholding good from you
  - It can feel like...God why can't I have sex before I get married?
  - Why can't I do whatever I want with my money or time?
  - Why does it matter how much alcohol I drink or why can't I talk about people if I want to?
  - It can feel like God is restraining us but in the long run he is actually freeing us:
    - **Example: - swim or a fence**
  - And the reality is those things bind you and keep you from enjoying intimacy with him and the freedom that he has already purchased for you
- But here is what I want you to know:
  - **I have never met anyone who in the long run regretted obeying God!**
    - Because in the long run it led them to the life of love and freedom they wanted
  - **I have met lots of who regretted doing whatever they wanted to do...because it did not led to freedom but bondage**
- So if you want to live a life of freedom, if you want to live a life of love... that comes through obedience to God's word

### How to walk in freedom:

- So let's get practical for a second...how do we walk in freedom?
- Maybe you are saying...ok Wes I see that Christ has freed us from performance and he has freed us for love and obedience
- But how...how do I do this...I want to be free from sin and performance in my life...how to I walk in this
- Well a few quick things

### Resolve you want to be free

- This might seem obvious but if you are content playing with sin instead of killing sin you will never be free
- Jesus said if your hand causes you to sin it is better to cut it off or if your eye is causing you to sin it is better to gauge it out
- What he is saying is you have to be willing to take drastic steps because you have decided you want to walk in freedom from sin
- Until you have resolved you want to be free from sin and you don't care about the consequence you will never be free
- One sin that really enslaves people is pornography
  - A recent survey of Christian college students involved in college ministries in the US found that 90% of guys and 50% of girls admitted to regular porn use
  - **My personal story**
- But it wasn't until I resolved that I wanted to be free at all costs
- The reality is to be free often means you have to put lots of restrictions in your life
- So you have to resolve...I don't want to live a life of gossip, bitterness, substance abuse, anger...I want to be free

### Be honest with others

- The next thing you have to realize is that you can't be free and have secrets
- You have to choose
- If you want to live in freedom then you have to be honest with others

- And listen I know it is scary but also there is nothing more enslaving that secret sin
- Psalm 32:3 says “For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- As long as your sin is a secret you will live in bondage but as soon as you confess it...you are on the road to freedom
- You are only as free as you are honest
- So I am not saying you have to share all your issues with everyone but someone needs to know what is going on
  - Maybe someone in your small group or come share with a pastor
  - But a weight will be lifted when you get it out in the open
- Specifically to guys because we love to think we can handle it on our own...but listen you can't and you were never meant to
- Andy Crouch says, “We're meant to have people in our lives who are so close to us that nothing can impress them and nothing can shock them
  - **Ex - Josh and Dave**
- Who is someone in your life that you can go and be honest with...who can help you on the road to freedom?

### **Walk by the Spirit (come vamp around here)**

- Look at what the very next verse Paul talks about with freedom
- **16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.**

- This is important because not only has Jesus freed you for obedience but he empowers you to obey as well by his Spirit
- A lie we often believe is that we can't actually obey God
- That we can't live in freedom because sin and temptation are too difficult and too overwhelming
- And I totally get it because it can be a struggle
- **But don't buy the lie that you can't obey God and walk in freedom!**
- It is no accident that Paul follows up his section on freedom talking about the Spirit
- Because God has given you his Spirit to empower you to obey and walk in freedom
- Look at Ezekiel 36:26-27 with me
- **26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules**
- After you trust in Jesus he puts his Spirit within you that will cause you to obey his word
- God has given you the Spirit of God to empower you to obey the Word of God
- So you don't have to buy the lie that you can't obey God...don't buy the lie that you will always gossip, or always look at porn, or always be afraid to share the gospel
- Or don't believe that if you have went too far with your boyfriend and girlfriend and have had sex that you can't obey now...it is never too late to obey God and he has given you the power to do it by the Spirit

- Listen to me...**you have been set free by Christ and you are empowered by the Spirit...you do not have to live in bondage any more you can walk in freedom!**
- So you do not have to forever live in bondage to pornography, or comparison, or bitterness, or laziness, or passivity, or you name it
- You can walk in freedom because you have been given the Spirit of freedom

### Conclusion:

- So church **“for freedom Christ has set us free”**
- **So my question is are you living in that freedom?**
  - Are you living free from performance?
    - Are you standing firm knowing that God is pleased with you because of Christ performance not your own
  - Are you living free from the enslaving power of sin?
    - Have you resolve you want to be free
    - Are you honest with those around you
    - And are you walking by the Spirit’s power
- **And for some of you my question is...have you even been set free yet?**
  - Listen Christ has done everything necessary to free you...but you have to receive it
  - You have to receive that he is the Son of God who became a slave and you have to commit to living for him
- Whoever you are and whatever God is doing in your life today my prayer is that all of us will walk in freedom today.
- And so I want to invite you to a time of prayer

Bullpen:

**Christ has set us free:**

- And the good news of this verse and the Bible is that **Christ has set us free**
- That Christ has stepped in and done something in the past which allows us to experience freedom
- Look at Philippians 2:6-7 “**who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the form of a servant.**”
- The word servant can be translated slave
- And what we see is that Jesus who had ultimate freedom freely gave that up and became a slave. So that you and me who were slaves could be set free
- Jesus left heaven where he had complete freedom and angels surrounding him listening to his every command.
- And he came to earth in the form of a man
- And he freely lived the perfect life...always obeyed his parents, never lied, never lusted , never cheated,
- And he always obeyed the law perfectly fulfilling everything that was required
- And the day before he goes to the cross we find him washing the feet of his disciples. Something only a slave would do
- And then we see him arrested, beaten,stripped naked and is nailed to a cross so hard he cannot move
- And he dies the death of a convicted criminal who had all this freedom taken away
- And it seemed like that was the end...that the enslaving chains of sin and death had wrapped around him...but as we will celebrate in a few weeks that was not the end
- That 3 days later Jesus forever broke the chains of sin and death and he rose a free man

- He defeated the enslaving power of sin and Satan
- And when we rose from the grave he rose with you freedom in hand
- **Jesus who was free became a slave so you and me who were slaves could forever be set free!**