

**Galatians 5: 1-3; “Stand Fast in the Liberty”, Message # 31 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, A Bible Study conducted on October 1st, 2014,
by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.**

The New American Standard translation says: “I was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” Both translations are helpful. It was for freedom that Christ set us free; we are brought into the liberty of the sons of God. Therefore we should stand fast in that liberty. This last statement shows us that it is possible for a true Christian to lose his liberty because some other person has taken it away from them. This is what we want to discuss this evening. Let us consider together the liberty, the true and beautiful spiritual freedom that Christ has brought us into, and hopefully this will help us to be able to explain to many other people the intention of our Lord Jesus in His dying for our sins.

1st of all – We need to understand what the liberty is, which Paul is speaking of, here in verse 1.
2nd – We need to understand the spiritual uselessness of trusting in anything ceremonial to save.

1st of all – What is this liberty that Paul is speaking of, here in verse 1?

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” In the context of what Paul has written to us before, in Chapter 4, the freedom which Paul is speaking of is a freedom from the bondage of the law of God; a freedom which is brought to every believer in Jesus Christ. Christ has set every believer free from the law of sin and the law of death. How? Each believer in Christ knows and believes that Christ has fulfilled the law of God on their behalf; fulfilling all of its righteous requirements, and suffering under all of its just punishments. Look with me at Romans Chapter 8, verses 1 – 4. “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” “For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” These statements apply to those who are Gentiles as well as those who are Jews. The Jews, being those who were formally given the law, were formally under that Old Covenant law of ceremonial and moral works; not being able to justify themselves by it, but yet not being able to free themselves from its righteous requirements; they were not able to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law.

But this law of God, even though it was not formally given to all men on Mt. Sinai, is still applicable in God’s holy mind, to all men. Sin in any person is a transgression of the law of God. 1st John 3, verse 4 – “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.” The King James says: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” “And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” “Whoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known Him.” You see, it is not only Jews who are accountable because they have failed to keep God’s law, it is also all of us Gentiles. Each of us needs to understand that God is a holy God, and He expects all the people who He has ever made to keep His commandments. Man was created in His image and likeness and as such He does expect you to be righteous in all of your ways. But if we know anything of ourselves and our own heart, we are anything but righteous.

Look with me over at Romans Chapter 3, verses 9-12. “What then?” “are we better than they?” “Not at all.” “For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin.” “As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who

understands; there is none who seeks after God.” “They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no not one.” These verses clearly show us that this is the way that all men and women are by nature. They are not seekers of God to do His will, they are seekers of what seems good and right to them. But God charges this to them as their sin, not their wisdom. The reason that we are all sinners is because of Adam’s sin, but if we would head the right direction in God’s sight, we must confess that we confirm our sinnership in many ways. And so many people, realizing that they are sinful in a general sense, attempt to become religious to make up for their not having sought God, or having really found Him or come to know Him before their becoming religious.

But, the 1st and most basic principle of Christianity if you really understand the truth of God’s word, is that none of your religious works will ever save you from your sins; not even the best of them. This is where a good many people stumble. They think that trying to keep God’s holy law is the way to come to know God and be accepted by God. But look at Romans Chapter 3, verses 19 and 20 with me. “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Notice how the law speaks to those under the law. But it is not only Jews who are under the law. Even the Gentiles are under the law to God in terms of God’s expectation of their being righteous, and their guiltiness before Him because they do not fulfill His expectation of them. It says that the law speaks to those under it, and those under it are the whole world. So, therefore, no flesh, either Jew or Gentile can be justified, can be declared righteous by God, on the basis of their works.

Look down at Chapter 4 of Romans, verse 1. “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?” “For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” “For what does the Scripture say?” “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” “But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.’” You see, if there was some good thing, or list of good things that you are trusting in, to find acceptance with God, it would mean that you could boast that God owed them favor and acceptance because of it. You might be thinking that eternal life is something that God owes to you. You might be thinking that it is a debt that God would discharge to you as wages owed to you; that person who would be justified, or declared righteous, by their works. But there is no such man or woman. We are all sinners, and we all deserve to be punished for our sins, not rewarded for our righteousness.

But the person who does not work, trying to be righteous so that God will show them His favor and give them eternal life, to that person who simply believes in Jesus Christ, God imputes to them righteousness; not their own righteousness, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Let’s think about this great truth of justification in relation to the liberty that we have been given by Jesus Christ our Lord. You are free from all the commandments of men, you are free from having to observe all the religious ceremonies instituted by men, you are free from the curse and condemnation of God’s law, and therefore you are able to freely choose to do and keep the commandments of God from the vantage point of having been set free from the law. Look with me over at Psalm 119, verses 97 and 98. “Oh, how I love Your law!” “It is my meditation all the day.” “You through Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies; for they are every with me.” My friends, this is not the statement of a legalistic man. This is the statement of a man who had come to love God’s commandments because he had been given grace; he had been

shown mercy from God, on the basis of the promise of God in relation to what He would do through Jesus Christ our Lord. Are you a person who loves the commandments of God because God has given you grace through Christ, or are you still trying to justify yourself before God on the basis of your works.

Look also over at James Chapter 1, verses 21-25. “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” What is the perfect law of liberty here? It is all of the word of God which lives in the heart of a believer in Jesus Christ. This word, or law, is accompanied by the grace of Christ so that the sincere Christian can, and does, make progress in holiness and righteousness as time goes by. He is seen as holy and righteous while he pursues holiness and righteousness, because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ which is imputed to him. The whole word of God he looks into, as looking into a mirror. He observes himself in it to see what kind of faith and obedience that he is rendering to God. He looks at all the commandments of God as that which he longs to keep perfectly. He knows that he does not keep them perfectly, but that the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ covers him. God sees him in Christ’s righteousness because the believer is trusting in him and not in himself. Therefore real progress is being made, and he is blessed in what he does. He has not become a forgetful hearer, but an effectual doer of the work of the commandment.

Now 2ndly – We need to understand the spiritual uselessness of trusting in anything ceremonial to save.

Verse 2 of chapter 5 of Galatians. “Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.” “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is debtor to keep the whole law.” Evidently some of the believers in the churches of Galatia had been told that even though they had believed in Christ, they still had to keep the ceremonial observance of circumcision in order to be in covenant with God. But this was totally unnecessary and indeed detrimental to their being saved. They were as much as saying that they needed something besides Christ’s work in instituting the New Covenant. They needed to add their own ceremonial circumcision as the sign before God and men, of their being a part of the covenant people of God. But Paul is saying that it was not this ceremony which brought them into saving relationship with God and Christ. It was faith in Christ alone. Receiving circumcision was the sign, in the Old Covenant times, of being a Hebrew in covenant with God; one who would receive His word and do what God was asking or commanding. But even that was done by faith in the promise of God and the Christ who was yet to come. You see this if you will turn back with me to Romans 4, verses 9-12. “Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?” “For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness.” “How then was it accounted?” “While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?” “Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised.” “And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.” (That is us Gentiles he is referring to) “And the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”

Ah, this is a truth which many need to learn in our day. It is not a ceremony like circumcision or baptism that saves a person from their sins; it is faith in Jesus Christ, whether it is in Old Testament times or New. In closing let us look over at 1st Corinthians 7, verses 17-19.

“But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk.” “And so I ordain in all the churches.” “Was anyone called while circumcised?” “Let him not become uncircumcised.” “Was anyone called while circumcised?” “Let him not be circumcised.” “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.” And what is the first commandment in keeping the commandments of God? Turn with me over to John 6, verses 28 and 29. “Then they said to Jesus, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’” “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.’” That is what is requisite to “working the works of God.” It is faith in Christ. Stand fast in that liberty in which you have been called, and do not be subject to the yoke of bondage; the keeping of the ceremonial law, or trying to live out a covenant of works.