

True Freedom 5

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[0 : 00] Well, let's pray as we come to this part of God's Word together. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you for your life-giving Word. And please help us to hear it clearly this morning and understand it well, that we might live as your faithful children.

And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. There is not much things greater than the love that a mother has for a child. It's the tender nature, it's the sleepless nights, it's the foregoing of pleasures, it's the clean, the cooking, the caring, the feeding, the washing of sheets in the middle of the night that have been spewed on and that kind of stuff.

For a mother not to love their child is a pretty sad thing. It's the same with a pastor and the love that they have for the flock, at least it's supposed to be, especially for those that he's seen come to faith.

Those he's seen come to a new birth in Christ, at the preaching of the Gospel. Children who he wants to see established and nurtured and finding their place in Christian fellowship and rising up and sticking with it and making it to the end.

That's the kind of thing that a pastor's heart is for their people. And it's with that kind of heart that Paul is writing to the Gentiles here, to the Galatian church, made up of Jews and Gentiles really.

[1 : 34] And he seems to say, oh foolish Galatians. You could say something like this, my dear crazy children, who believe the message I preached to you not so long ago, what are you doing?

See, there's a problem in the Galatians church. And so convinced and so concerned is Paul for them, and so convinced and so concerned is Paul for the honour of Jesus, that he simply cannot stop saying what he has to say.

Clearly, straightforwardly, and so lovingly to them. He has to. So if you see someone heading for disaster, there's a couple of responses you can make.

Basically two. One is you can just watch it happen. And one is you can do something about it. And to not do something about it is actually unloving.

And to do something about it is actually loving. And when Paul's addressing the Galatians, he's being specific about their error. And the question is, how will they respond?

[2 : 58] What will they do with what he tells them? See, when someone points out something to someone that's got wrong, there's always a question of how someone will receive that correction, isn't there?

The warning, the observation. I know that someone points out things to me that I've got wrong. I can respond in a number of ways. And my default way, my immature way, is generally like this.

To get defensive, to deflect, to deny, or to distance myself from that situation. I mean, there's nothing that I do wrong, is there?

I don't need any correction. How could I get anything wrong? But if someone loves me enough to point something out, then maybe I should pay attention.

And so I'm trying, with God's help, to consciously work at thanking people for their observations about things for me, before going into my default response.

[4 : 01] Being willing to consider what someone says to me, rather than resenting their input, and actually welcoming their input. You try it sometime.

With your wife. With your children. With your colleagues at work. Your friends. See how it goes.

I'm sure it will change things for the better. Let me tell you, it will. But unfortunately, our society is getting less able to do that.

Which is playing a part into the cancel culture that we now have. And there's lots of contours to explore what I've just said. But let's get to the passage now of Galatians chapter 3.

And we see how Paul addresses the Galatians for their folly. Last week we saw Paul had to rebuke Peter, because his actions were out of step with what he professed, with the Gospel.

[5 : 05] And Peter was guilty of creating a divide, right, in the people of God by his hypocrisy. By not acting in accordance with the truth of the Gospel.

By his actions, he was dividing the very people of God, that God had united to be one new people, one new nation in Christ Jesus. Those of Jewish heritage, one side of the restaurant, and those with Gentile heritage, on the other side of the restaurant.

That's basically what's going on. And by doing that, he was emptying the cross of Christ, by its power, of its power, to save people. Because the cross of Christ is actually about uniting people, breaking down the dividing wall, of hostility between people.

Now this week, we see Paul change his focus from Peter, and now he moves on to the Galatians themselves. And Paul was actually perplexed by their foolishness.

I think he becomes even more frustrated by their foolishness, which is understandable, if you see people making mistake, after mistake, after mistake, that you thought they'd got things right previously.

[6 : 23] I mean, come to chapter 4, verse 19. Have a look at it, chapter 4, verse 19. Chapter 4, verse 19. What's the problem?

Well, let me tell you what the problem is. And we'll get to it further on in the passage as well. They have foolishly been led astray, they are getting things wrong about the Christian life.

Now, the danger, the error for them is this, that thinking that you live the Christian life, you live as God's new nation of God's people, differently to the way you started, right?

You live in God's family differently to the way you started. That's the big problem going on for them. Now that's foolish. And no one likes being called a fool.

However, there is a place for it, and a way to say it, and a time to say it. And here it is. You foolish Galatians. Have a look at verse 1 there.

[7 : 39] O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? You unintelligent, dull-witted children, who has bewitched you? That's literally what it's saying. Brought you out of the influence of evil.

Who has given you the evil eye? How has some spell come over you? Which spirit is at work in you? It was before your very eyes, your very own person, that I preached Christ Jesus, and Him crucified to you, absolutely clearly.

I preached that the crucified Jewish Messiah, Jesus, is the one who died for your sins, and you believed it. See there, verse 2?

How did you receive God's Holy Spirit? Well, it's the Holy Spirit that brings you to confess and repent of your rebellious lifestyle against Jesus.

That's what the Holy Spirit does. And then you confess Jesus Lord. Did the Spirit come upon you by hearing with faith? By works. Doing the Jewish things of the Jewish law.

[8 : 48] And the answer is no. No, you crazy people. You didn't become Jews before you received the Holy Spirit and confessed Jesus Lord. On the contrary. Or did God's Spirit come upon you by hearing with faith?

And the answer is yes. By hearing with faith. That's how it came upon you. Now, just to be clear for everyone here, all those who confess Jesus Lord have the Holy Spirit.

We receive Him when we believe. Else, we wouldn't have believed. 1 Corinthians chapter 12 says, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 3. No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. And Romans chapter 10 verse 9.

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised from the dead, you will be saved. It's by hearing, by hearing of the crucified Christ which leads to faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus.

[10 : 03] That's how you started. That's how you were saved. Nothing's changed in 2,000 years, brothers and sisters. Nothing's changed. Let me tell you.

Now, verse 3, having begun by the Spirit at work in you, bringing you to faith, are you now being perfected, that is, or being finished, being topped up by the flesh?

That is, having started your new life as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, do you finish it off? Do you top it up by works of the law? Do you need to add Jewish law to be saved?

And the answer you expect is, you tell me. No. No. You were rescued from the present evil age by the sacrificial death of Jesus who is Lord.

And verse 4, did you suffer so many things in vain, pointlessly, if in actual fact your suffering for the sake of belief in Jesus was not necessary, if that's the case.

[11 : 05] Suffering for Jesus is part and parcel of being a citizen of the new age, but living in the present evil age. There is a conflict, a constant conflict going on.

You read about their encouragement to persevere through suffering at the very beginning. Come to Acts chapter 14, verses 19 to 22.

Come to Acts chapter 14. This is when the gospel came to them. Acts chapter 14, verse 19. I know you're scrolling your phones or flicking your pages, but that's good.

Acts chapter 14, verse 19. So this is when Paul's bringing the gospel to that region of Galatia and here is Paul's stoned at Lister as the title of it.

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposed then he was dead. But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city and on the next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe.

[12 : 18] So this is in the region of Galatia, right? When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch. Listen to this.

Strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

At the very beginning, when they became followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul told them, it's not going to be easy. John Howard moment, I guess. It's the very thing that Jesus promised in Mark chapter 8.

In Mark chapter 8 verse 34, Jesus says this, calling the crowd to him with his disciples and said to them, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel will save it.

For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? If you're going to be a follower of Jesus, it means dying to self. There's not much option if you take up your cross.

[13 : 33] There's only one thing going to happen next, isn't it? It's going to be hard work. It's going to be death to self. It's not necessarily going to be pleasant. So, come back to Galatians chapter 5.

Galatians, you started off well. You suffered for the gospel, right? Don't make it in vain. And verse 5, did God do mighty works in you and do things among you because you obeyed the Jewish law or by hearing with faith?

Well, it definitely wasn't by Jewish law keeping because Paul, what did he preach to them? He did not preach to them Judaism. He preached to them Jesus and him crucified.

And what came first? Faith, not works. Just like Abraham, what happened first for him?

He didn't become a Jew first. Got to get that clear. Abraham became a believer first. What happened to Abraham first was faith, trust, relying on the promises of God.

[14 : 53] So, the problem then is this. Instead of having started out by faith, they now attempted to live in the new creation of God's people getting caught up with works of the law that people are actually bringing amongst them.

Peter led them astray at one level by his actions. Now, the law, we know, is absolutely obsolete now in terms of salvation.

It's like you've had super fast broadband and you're going back to dial-up. You don't do that. It's like they've got nuclear fission and they want to go back to coal power stations.

You don't do that. To challenge the people you love about the foolishness they are in and the danger they're in of getting caught up in things that are going to lead them way astray, it's not being hostile to them.

It's being loving, kind, generous. It just might not feel like it at the time when you're corrected.

[15 : 56] And so, Paul sets them straight by showing them the foundations and we're going to go into these foundations now, established in the Old Testament, none less, for our salvation, for our righteousness and he's going to show and prove and present that they actually started and finished by faith.

That's how it works. So, the Old Testament foundations, have a look at them with me in verses 6 to 14. First of all, Galatians chapter 3, pick it up in verse 6 to 14.

First of all, all those people are justified by faith.

First of all, Abraham is credited righteousness by faith. It's Genesis chapter 15 verse 6. Abraham has no... We're going through Abraham's life at UniChurch at the moment.

If you want to catch up what's going on, come to UniChurch and we're into Galatians... into Acts... Genesis, sorry. Genesis... Genesis 21 this evening. But anyway, Genesis chapter 15, he's got no children but he believed in God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

[17 : 13] He was declared okay with God. His standing with God went from 0 to 100% okay with God. He was once wandering, sinful, Aramean.

and that's who Abraham was and then God called him and changed him. God put a deposit into his account, credited his account.

You know when you go to your bank account you usually see stuff coming out, right? Well, in Abraham's account he was credited 100% righteous with God.

It was God's deposit into his account. and then God called him and changed him. He made this deposit into his account so Abraham's credited with righteousness by faith long before the law came which we'll get to next week.

That's step one, right? And so the Gentiles now are blessed with Abraham by faith. This is Genesis chapter 12 verse 3. Second step.

[18 : 19] Those who believe, who have faith in the promises of God are sons of Abraham. Now what's that mean? Sons means just like Abraham.

That's what it means. Remember when Jesus was talking to Zacchaeus? Now Zacchaeus was a Jew, right? When Jesus is talking to Zacchaeus who is a Jew who is a descendant of Abraham, right?

Jesus said to him today salvation has come of this house since he is also a son of Abraham. Jesus doesn't mean that Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham by lineage, no.

He's a son of Abraham because he's come to faith just as Abraham had come to faith. So those who believe, who have faith are blessed just like Abraham was blessed with being credited righteousness.

so as part of the new creation of which all who are faith are in. That's what it is. So being justified in the same way as Abraham was justified by faith.

[19 : 27] Okay? Which is the promise of Genesis chapter 12 verse 3. The great blessing is to receive the good things from God. That's what blessing is. Becoming a member of God's family.

The one new nation, one God's people made right with God by trusting in the finished work of Jesus. That's the point. And this plan is for all people before Israel existed.

It was always by faith from beginning. Gentiles including Abraham who became Israel's patriarch were always made right with God by faith.

That's what it is. So the good news then comes that righteous standing with God comes through trusting in the promises of God. That's how being right with God began.

That's how it started. The flip side is, this is the problem, the law while being good can't save us.

[20 : 32] Just like rules and regulations can't fix a nation. You can't fix youth crime in Queensland right?

You can't fix it by new rules and new regulations. If you could it would be fixed by now. What you need is new people.

law. The law while being good actually leave those under its rule condemned and cursed. So that's what he's saying here in verses 10 to 12.

The law actually leaves us accursed. No one keeps all the law is the point. That's Deuteronomy chapter 27 verse 26. The law actually leaves us cursed.

Why? Because no one keeps all the law. That's what Deuteronomy 27 verse 26 requires.

[21 : 36] No one can keep the law completely. And so those who rely on the law are judged by its law as law breakers. That's what it is.

And so stand condemned by the very law that you were trying to actually be pleasing God with. No lawyer will be able to convince the just judge God himself otherwise.

God's standard of righteousness is not 50-50 75-25 85-15 99-1 it's 100% righteousness.

Perfection. You need to keep the whole law all the things written in the book of the law perfectly. Now the Old Testament at one level is in view but predominantly the first five books which is the Torah which is the law and specifically Deuteronomy Moses gave three long sermons in the last one he sets out blessings and curses to the nations Deuteronomy chapter 27 Deuteronomy 28 and he says cursed be in Deuteronomy 27 verse 6 cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law and do them I don't know if you play cricket I don't but I've watched enough on TV to know what goes on right the idea is that what happens when you play cricket if the ball hits the stumps right and you are outside the crease you're out that's the bottom line right it doesn't matter if you're out by a long way or a little way you're out by metres or millimetres doesn't matter the verdict is given you're out the verdict is the same for everyone who tries to find salvation by keeping the rule of law relying on law to be right with

God the verdict is already in we are guilty it's over because no one can keep it all perfectly and so by the law a person stands condemned all who rely on the law are condemned guilty cursed facing death facing being cut off from God forever and so shut out of the presence of God forever that's what the Old Testament teaches however you see in verse 11 verse 11 now it's evident that no one is justified that is declared right before God by the law for the righteous shall live by faith now that's Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 4 that's not the Torah part of the Old Testament that's what it is but it's the part of the Old Testament that the descendants of

[24 : 50] Abraham found them in outside the promised land towards the end of the Old Testament era exiled in Babylon condemned by God for their demonstrated unfaithfulness in having no desire to uphold the law that's where they were it's almost the end for God's people there's only a few of them left there's not many of them around there's only a remnant of them once was a great nation and yet and yet while the Babylonians are puffed up thinking we've defeated this nation in their pride and their power the prophet Habakkuk speaks and says Babylon will be humbled and God's people will be rescued and it'll be the righteous who live by faith those who are of faith with the ones who are lifted up and rescued simply by being faithful to the

Lord trusting in his promises and just in case you didn't get it we go back to Leviticus chapter 18 verse 5 but the law is not of faith rather the one who does them shall live by them verse 12 we're back into the heart of the Torah now to be shown that the law is not by faith the law gives rules and regulations to live by the law teaches how to live appropriately in the land of God's people completely different to those around about you Leviticus chapter 18 you see a whole lot of prohibitions against improper and perverted sexual relationships that's what Leviticus 18 shows up the law doesn't make you righteous it just shows you how to live and how perverted you can be and the bottom line in the end the law condemns me everyone who relies on it but and here's the great news here's the great exchange but

Christ redeemed us in verses 13 to 14 picking up Deuteronomy chapter 21 verse 23 at one stage we all stood condemned because we were living in disobedience to the law of God most of us not even trying to obey it even oblivious to it possibly still are but it's the little words that make all the difference Jesus the king himself right redeemed us that is that's the idea of purchasing buying back you purchase something that's been forfeited that's the idea of redeemed he pays the price that we could not pay so that we can go free we're redeemed brought back into the family of

God verse 13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us for it is written here's the quote cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith Paul's quoting Deuteronomy chapter 21 verse 23 and when Paul speaks about a tree he's speaking about the cross no doubt about it Paul in Acts chapter 13 verse 28 and 29 speaks about the tree being the cross that is what it says in chapter 13 verse 28 and 29 of Acts chapter 13 though they found in him no guilt worthy of death they asked Pilate to have him executed and when they carried out all they'd written about him they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb the idea of trees cross right

Jesus bears the curse that we deserve for our failure to obey him that's what happens Jesus bears the curse say it again so that I deserve right for my failure to obey the law to obey him and in so doing the curse that I deserve the wrath of God that I deserve the condemnation that I deserve for not being obedient goes upon the Lord Jesus Christ that's the great exchange in my place he who knew no sin became utterly sinful for us 2 Corinthians chapter 5 verse 21 and it's we it's us it's not you

[30 : 08] Paul's saying including himself in this everybody is caught up in this it's both Jew and Gentile and he did this so the blessing promised to Abraham around 1800 years or so before could come to the nations as promised and so now the spirit that was promised the new covenant as promised has come even to the Gentiles to the Gentiles and Joel 2 28 and it should come to pass that I'll pour out my spirit on all flesh your sons and your daughters shall prophesy your old men and dream dreams young men shall see visions even on male and female servants in those days I'll pour out my spirit it's come true so salvation has always been by faith from first to last and always will be looks like this here's a bit of a slide for you try and nail it together now you've got

Abraham somewhere about 1800 BC not quite sure where but somewhere maybe there justified declared okay with God how?

by faith 430 years or so later comes the law right with Moses and we have those prompt those things Deuteronomy 21 Deuteronomy 27 Leviticus 18 and then before Jesus comes in the 6th century or so before Jesus you've got Habakkuk 2 the righteous live by faith and then Jesus turns up and then it's now we receive the spirit by faith as we move into the new covenant era the ages of the spirit and so it's always been by faith that we are saved trusting the promises of God and it will always be that it's by faith until the Lord Jesus returns that's Galatians that's us the point is that the Christian life is one of faith from first to last we begin by faith we continue by faith until we die we live by faith we don't add anything to it okay well the question is how do you respond to correction of any kind when our foolishness is pointed out it's a confronting question a very confronting question so where might be the danger of getting caught up and finding ourselves being led astray from the way that we came into the family is the question to ask that's to assume that we are all in the family to start with it may be that today there's something here that they have been hoping to get right with

God by doing good works and keeping rules and regulations you go oh okay I get it now I get it now sincerely believing in the Old Testament and trying to keep the Ten Commandments and obeying the thinking that made me okay okay I get it now that never saved anybody and you can see that you were sincerely wrong you might have been sincerely trying to obey the rules but sincerely misguided and wrong in doing so in fact foolish the appropriate thing to do is to say God thanks for showing me it's lovely to know please forgive me for that foolishness thanks that Jesus died for me I live with him as my Lord my God and I trust him till I die that'd be the appropriate response wouldn't it kneel before the cross and believe that he's borne the curse for you and so be blessed just as

Abraham was declared right with God now right now and be certain of it well let me ask others here when I sin which I do all too often I wish I didn't glory is coming when I won't what's my knee jerk response when I sin try harder not do it again make up for it by doing something if I can possibly do it try and please him by doing something by works of some kind no we begin by faith we will finish by faith we confess our sin and trust him to forgive us and repent as well obviously yes that's right trusting in the promises of God and so continue to be credited with righteousness or when someone points and has the courage to point out your error your sin your theological understanding your folly how will we respond deny defend deflect distance whatever the situation brothers and sisters let us be careful not to make the Galatians foolish mistake by moving on to anything else other than faith as to way to live as

[35 : 49] God's new nation for that would be utter foolishness let's pray now father in heaven thank you for your word that's been written down for centuries for us to know and to read and to understand and we do pray that you help us to keep growing in the likeness of Christ that we continue to trust him now and always and that we might live lives bearing the fruit of the spirit that all might see for we pray in Jesus name amen