

48-05-01 The Heritage of Freedom
 freedom, law, July 4th, baptism
 Gal 5:1-6

In Christ we are set free from legalism for living a life of love.

INTRODUCTION: (read **text**)

–July 4th celebrates America's *heritage of freedom*: independence from English law—freedom to live under a new law.

–Galatia was peopled by Celtic invaders from Gaul, and thus were related to the Britons (a hunger for freedom marks the Celtic culture: it was in our blood and in our cultural mentality to desire freedom.)

–The Galatians were in danger of *returning to legalistic bondage* (escape from a legalistic observance of the law meant to live under another law, the law of Christ. **HOM.idea**).

I. The Freedom Won by Christ, v.1. *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.* (What did His cross purchase for us?)

- A. Freedom from servitude in sin-- **Joh.8:34a-36**, "everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."
- B. Freedom from sin's power-- **1Co.15:56-57**, The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (*The law draws a line that marks the limits of God's will. When we go beyond those limits, sin enslaves us. The law points to where we need victory... it doesn't bring it.*)
- C. Freedom from obligation to keep the law-- **Rom 7:1b-4,6**, ...the law has authority over a man only as long as he lives? For example, by law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man. So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code. (In this marriage metaphor, we're the wife wed to the law. The law doesn't die—we do, through Christ, so that we can be married to Him alone.)

TRANS: When we place faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into His death, which is what the Christian ceremony of baptism symbolizes. In union with His death we are emancipated from the slavery of sin. But in union with His resurrection, we are free from the law of sin and death. If we have found this freedom in Christ, to go back to law for our hope of salvation is the trap, the trap of *legalism*. **In Christ we are set free from legalism for living a life of love.**

II. The Failure of Legalism, v.4. *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

- A. Legalism is the Judaizer's doctrine: "*trying to be justified by law*" (OT laws, like circumcision, or new laws invented in NT times, like Jesus-only baptism, Sabbath-keeping, no dancing, etc.)
- B. Legalism fails in its evaluation of Christ, v.2b, *...if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. (The law can add nothing, because nothing can be added to Christ's "it is finished.")*
- C. Legalism fails to keep the whole law, v.3, *Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. ("But officer, I mostly kept the speed limit!" —doesn't work.)*
- D. Legalism is dangerous: v.4, *You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*

TRANS: Salvation, as Paul says in **Eph.2:8**, is "by grace... through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast." But this saving faith, the faith that joins us to Christ in His death and resurrection, raises us from dead works to a new life and a new law. **In Christ we are set free from legalism for living a life of love.**

III. The Faith Expressed Through Love

- A. Faith desires righteousness, but looks for it in Christ, v.5, *But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.*
- B. Faith in Christ evaluates all outward works properly, v.6a, *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.*
- C. Faith in Christ expresses itself in living out God's love, v.6b, *The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*
 1. A new law-- **Ja.2:8**, If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.
 2. A new identity-- **Ja.1:22-25**, Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does

not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does. (Bible, not a book of *legalism*, but of *life*, when you know Jesus Christ, Who is the *Word of Life*)

CONCLUSION:

–Outward works (baptism, communion, acts of charity, attending church) can all become forms of legalism, but they are meant to express the new personal relationship we have with Jesus Christ.

–Praise God! The battle for spiritual freedom has already been won for us by our Lord and Liberator, Jesus Christ. But Paul warns us of our human tendency to be lured back into *legalistic thinking*.

–Let's take Paul's admonition seriously, to "*stand firm*" in the heritage of freedom that faith in Christ gives us. **In Christ we are set free from legalism for living a life of love.**

Galatians 5:1-6 (NIV)

1It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

2Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

3Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

4You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

5But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

6For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.