



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, June 26- July 2 (C) – Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Focus: *Freed to love*

word of life

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1 NRSV)

Read Galatians 5:1, 13-25

In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he responds directly to a critical question facing the early church concerning its mission. Was the gospel message of Jesus Christ for Jews alone, or for Jews and Gentiles? Paul is crystal clear. Jesus came for Jews and Gentiles, so all might experience a freedom given by Christ alone. “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1 NRSV)

The first century Jewish Christians were caught up in the promises made to Abraham and his descendents. Were the followers of Jesus only to be Jews? Where did that leave non-Jews who had faith and wanted to follow Jesus? The early church was burdened by a self-inflicted yoke of slavery created by them as they pre-determined the boundaries and parameters of God’s grace. Paul would have nothing to do with that. He refused to wear a yoke of slavery which limited God’s gospel message.

1. *What has Christ freed us from?*
2. *What has Christ freed us for?*
3. *Name some of the yokes of slavery we place on ourselves.*

Freedom can imply people do whatever they want and whenever they want, but that is far from the intended meaning. “For you were called to freedom brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:13-14 NRSV) We are freed to love our neighbors.

Paul further explains we are to live in the Spirit and not the flesh. For the flesh will keep us enslaved. Verses 19-20 describe a long list of characteristics of the flesh including strife, jealousy, dissensions, envy and the list goes on. Those things are not of God.

4. *Contrast a life in the Spirit and a life in the flesh.*
5. *Would you add anything else to the list of works of the flesh?*

Next Paul describes the characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit. “By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.” (Galatians 5:22-23 NRSV) Paul reminds us there is no limitation to bearing the fruit of the Spirit which is manifested in many ways.

6. *How effective is Paul when he contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit? Explain your answer.*
7. *What are the easiest and most difficult fruits to grow in your own personal life?*

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25 NRSV) There is a consistency of a message—a life in the Spirit is a life which produces good fruit.

Word among us

Finally, the day arrived! Finally, the speaker concluded the keynote speech. Finally, the diplomas were handed out to the graduating seniors. Finally, caps were thrown high up in the air at the graduation ceremony. Finally, the seniors were free! But, free for what?

1. *If you had the opportunity to speak to a graduation class, what might you say about freedom?*

Preparations will be made during the coming days for local July 4th celebrations. Many will pause to reflect on the remarkable freedoms of this country. But, what are we free to do?

2. *If you had the opportunity to speak at a local July 4th celebration, what might you say about freedom?*
3. *How might your words differ from speaking to graduating seniors?*
4. *How much are your words influenced by your understanding of Christian freedom?*

Paul writes, “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1 NRSV) And yet, it is easy to put on the yoke of slavery, whether it be a yoke created by our own insecurities, fears, or guilt. We can get caught up in the pressures of daily deadlines and schedules. We become enslaved to our own strivings.

But Christ has freed us from the power of sin, death and the devil. Christ has freed us at a price. Paul makes it clear. We are freed to love. Martin Luther often taught and preached on Paul’s passage from Galatians on freedom. His essay on “The Freedom of a Christian” includes these words, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” (Christian Liberty, by Martin Luther edited by Harold J. Grimm, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA 1957, page 7)

5. *What does it mean to be subject to none, but subject to all?*
6. *Describe a Christian who fully lives free in Christ.*

faith practice in daily life

Serve all people following the example of Jesus

After describing the fruit of the Spirit, Paul offers this simple thought, “There is no law against such things.” (Galatians 5:23 NRSV) How true; there is no law or limit to love. There is no law against joy, nor patience, kindness, generosity, or self-control. In Jesus Christ, we have been freed for love and for living a life which bears the fruit of the Spirit.

Left to ourselves, we enslave ourselves, and death takes hold. God invites us to live life as God intends for us, loving God with our whole heart and loving our neighbor as ourselves. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25 NRSV)

7. *What might you do to remind yourself to live by the Spirit?*
8. *How do you hope you bear the fruit of the Spirit this week?*

Prayer

Gracious God, send your creative Spirit to set us free to love and to bear fruit. Amen

last word

Select one fruit of the Spirit to nurture and grow this month.

Daily Faith Practices

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