

UNLOCKING FREEDOM: A STUDY OF GALATIANS #11
FREEDOM-FAITH GOES TO WORK
GALATIANS 5:1-12

GETTING STARTED

You are leading a bible study and the conversation turns to the subject of Christian freedom. This leads to a tense exchange between one member that tends to be the legalistic morality-police type and another member who tends to regularly engage in “questionable” behaviors without a hint of guilt or self-reflection. What would you say to resolve this conflict?

DIGGING IN

Based on what we’ve learned so far from Galatians, what is the offense or scandal of the cross (v.11)?

Hint: “The good news of Christ crucified is still an offense to human pride. If we preach this gospel, we shall arouse ridicule and opposition. Christianity will not allow us to sit on the fence or live in a haze; it urges us to be definite and decisive, to choose between a religion of human achievement and a religion of divine achievement.” John Stott

Why might someone say that the gospel of grace that comes through faith rather than through human effort leads to laziness and loose living? How would you answer that charge?

In this passage, we begin to deal with the difficult issue of understanding how our faith relates to our obedience. Paul writes (v. 7), “You were running well. Who hindered you from *obeying* the truth?” Here he connects *faith* in the truth of the gospel with works of *obedience*. In verse 6, Paul used the phrase “*faith working through love*.” How are faith and love connected or related to one another? How does faith *work* (literally, *faith energizes love*)?

Why is faith in the good news about Jesus the foundation of our obedience? How might this be related to our being the adopted sons and daughters of the King of the Universe (Galatians 4:6-7)? Why should we obey God and serve others?

LIVING IT OUT

The Tale of the Carrot and the Horse - Charles Spurgeon

Once upon a time in an old kingdom, there was a gardener who grew an enormous carrot in his garden. Now this man loved his sovereign, so he came and presented the carrot to the king, saying, ‘This is the best carrot my garden will ever grow. Receive it as a token of my love.’ Now the king discerned the heart of love and devotion and saw that he wanted nothing in return. This moved the king and he then gave the gardener far more land than he currently had for his garden, so the man went home rejoicing. Now a nobleman at court overheard this conversation. He thought to himself, ‘If that is the response the lord makes to such a small gift, what will he give in response to a great one?’ So the next day he brought the king a fine horse, saying, ‘This is the best horse my stables will ever grow. Receive it as a token of my love.’ But the king discerned the nobleman’s heart, and in response he just received the horse and dismissed the giver. When the king saw the look of confusion on the man’s face, he said, ‘The gardener’s gift was a gift, indeed, out of love, but you are just trying to make a profit. He gave me the carrot, but you have given yourself the horse.’ Now do you see what this teaches? If you know God offers you his salvation freely, and there is nothing to do but to accept the perfect righteousness of his Son, then you can feed the hungry and clothe the naked just for the love of God and for the love of people. But if you think you are getting salvation in return for these deeds, then it is yourselves you are feeding, yourselves you are clothing.”

Does your life more closely resemble the heart of the gardener or the heart of the nobleman?

What is the problem with addressing a person’s behavior without addressing a person’s heart and faith?

What truth from this lesson has been most helpful to you personally?

These sermon notes are produced each week for further study and discussion in our small groups. If you are interested in joining a small group, please contact Leslie Ann Yell at smallgroups@chathamchurch.org or 545-9589.