

Galatians
“Living Free”
Main Teaching: 1:10-6:10
B. 3:1-4:31 Reasoned Grace
3. 4:1-31 Liberty verses legalism

4:8-18
“Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 8-11 No reverse gear

III. Vs. 12-18 Where’s the love?

I. Intro.

Religious rituals have a fascination that to some lasts a life time. Festivals, ceremony and church liturgy has captured hearts where emotions are stirred by the music, church décor and even the look of the facility. Many of those traditions that aroused religious feelings still do so but the truth that the tradition pointed too has long ago been lost and what the focus of worship and truth is now is just the façade of symbols and ceremonies. The sad truth is that it is quite possible to observe and practice a ritual and completely miss the truth. People that do so will be satisfied with the performance thinking that this is God and miss the opportunity to have an ongoing relational encounter with the living God. The Galatians were being persuaded to follow the sign at the cost of what it pointed too. Jesus didn’t come and say, “*I have come that they may have religion!*” He came and said, “*I have come that that they may have life, and have it more abundantly!*” Last time we looked at this passage we looked at Paul’s three appeals the first of which we looked at two weeks ago, they were:

1. Vs.1-7 **He explains their adoption:** We have entered into our adoption by being born again but once we did we entered into the family of God as full adults able to enjoy our complete inheritance.
2. Vs. 8-11 **His concern over their regression:** They had cashed freedom in for bondage and this having escaped the bondage of false gods.
3. Vs. 12-18 **His heart that they would come back to the simplicity of a relationship:** Paul reminds them of how their heart towards him had changed because they had embraced legalism instead of obedience for love's sake.

II. Vs. 8-11 No reverse gear

2. Vs. 8-11 **His concern over their regression:** They had dropped out of the school of grace for the nursery of the law. From the wealth of the gospel to the poverty of the law! They were doing this by adopting special observances of days, weeks, months etc. It wasn't wrong to celebrate those times it was wrong to think that having done so they obtained a special standing before God.

Vs. 8-11 Paul says based upon this truth that we have become heirs we have a choice to make: Live as heirs or live under the law. Why would a person who has become an heir to the King want to go back and live as like the beggars we once were? It's one thing to live like a beggar because you don't know that you are an heir and it's a whole other matter to choose to do so when you know you are an heir. Wiersbe wrote, "*One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a 'second childhood' of Christian experience.*" These elements of the world are:

- Weak because they offer no strength

- Beggarly because they bestow no riches

All they can do is bring us again into bondage. The false teachers demanded the observance of days, months, seasons and years as if this would lead them into a higher plane of spirituality. But all these weak and beggarly elements of legalism did was bring them into bondage. Paul didn't object to these observances for he kept them himself. He objected to the Gentiles taking them as a means of salvation. We can have a living, free, relationship with God as a loving Father based on what Jesus did for us and who we are in Him. Or we can try to please God by our best efforts of keeping the rules, living in bondage as slaves, not sons.

III. Vs. 12-18 Where's the love?

2. Vs.12-18 **His heart that they would come back to the simplicity of a relationship:**

Paul reminds them of how their heart towards him had changed because they had embraced legalism instead of obedience for love's sake. Saint's works and effort always has as one of its casualties love for others. When our standard is our obedience then we must continually compare ourselves to the very ones we are called to come alongside of to love. One of the telling characteristics of false teaching is that its focus is towards the church to win them to their way of thinking. Their outreach is to those who already attend not to those who don't. They want the sheep to follow them not the lost to follow Christ! That is what Paul says about the Judaizers as well. The true servant of Christ reaches the lost and desires to bring them into a relationship to Jesus not get followers to join them. Because the Galatians had lost the truth about their salvation they had lost the joy of it as well and were now engaged in the work that couldn't satisfy.

Vs. 12 Paul wasn't standing before the Galatian Christians, saying "*Look at how perfect I am. Don't worry about following Jesus, just follow me.*" He simply wanted them to follow him as he followed Jesus. On a side note: Can we say to others be like me? If the Christian life is as we proclaim it to be than we ought to be able to say this. Paul had lived his life in legalism as they were now attempting to do he knew its appeal and failure. He wasn't speaking to them out of being personally hurt by them; he was motivated only by love.

Vs. 13-16 It seems based upon this passage that Paul travelled to this region because of some physical infirmity. Yet even though Paul was weak physically the Galatians still received him and would have given their own eyes if they could have. Physical infirmity and illness were regarded by Jews and Gentiles alike as a symbol of divine displeasure or punishment, there would have been a natural temptation for the Galatians to despise Paul and reject his message. Paul marveled at those who had displayed such love towards him before they knew him would now show such hatred for him simply because he spoke the truth against the lie they had believed.

Those that have the privilege of teaching God's word must only be judged upon the truthfulness of their words not upon their performance.

Vs. 17-18 The legalists were talented at gladly handing and demonstrating love but their motive was to seduce them into false teaching. There have been many false teaching groups who practice overwhelming love and support initially to prospective members to gain control over them then they indoctrinate them into the same kind of self righteousness and class distinctions that they practice. The zeal of these kinds of churches is a zeal for the group above a zeal for Jesus even though they do so with a pretense in the

name of Christ. Any church that becomes exclusive and proclaims to be the “*one true church*” or of higher standing than other churches will soon make demands upon its own members to keep them in bondage and control. These groups start out with excessive love, then trout out special insightful teaching that they only have and once the person is in begin to lay on them heavy demands. And if the member doesn’t go along then they are ostracized form all including family. Had these so called churches started with the latter they would have no followers.