

6. The Book of Galatians 2:20-21

Liberty From Law-Part 5

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier
(1-21-24)

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We are studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings—going through the book topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ.

The book divides itself into 3 main areas of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

I. **Liberty from Lies**—1:6-10

II. **Liberty from Law**—1.11-4:31

III. **Liberty for Life**—5:1-6:15

In our study we have entered into the second major section—“**Liberty from Law**”—which is really liberty from *religion and legalism* as a way of being made righteous in God’s eyes.

II. Liberty from Law

A. **The testimony of Paul**—1:11-2:10

B. **The transgression of Peter**—2:11-21

Galatians 2:11–18 (NLT)

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him to his face, for what he did was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile believers, who were not circumcised. But afterward, when some friends of James came, Peter wouldn’t eat with the Gentiles anymore. He was afraid of criticism from these people who insisted on the necessity of circumcision. ¹³ As a result, other Jewish believers followed Peter’s hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the gospel message, I said to Peter in front of all the others, “Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws and are living like a Gentile, why are you now trying to make these Gentiles follow the Jewish traditions?” ¹⁵ “You and I are Jews by birth, not ‘sinners’ like the Gentiles. ¹⁶ Yet we know that a person is made right with God by faith in Jesus Christ, not by obeying the law. And we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we might be made right with God because of our faith in Christ, not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be made right with God by obeying the law.” ¹⁷ But suppose we seek to be made right with God through faith in Christ and then we are found guilty because we have abandoned the law. Would that mean Christ has led us into sin? Absolutely not! ¹⁸ Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down.

Let's spend a little time reviewing verse 19 from last week before looking at verses 20-21—seeing that they all go together and form Paul's introductory comments leading into chapter 3.

Galatians 2:19 (NKJV)

19 For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

Notice that Paul didn't say "the law died", he said—"I through the law died to the law..."

This is something that Paul elaborates on in **Romans 7** where he talks about the time in his life when he believed that keeping the law would bring him life.

Because he had kept himself from all outward violations of the law (murder, stealing, blaspheming etc.), **he believed the law was bringing him life** (eternal life in heaven)—that is **until he stopped to reflect upon the final commandment of the Decalogue (Ten Commandments) which said, "Thou shalt not covet"** (Exodus 20:17).

You see all of the other **commandments dealt with outward actions**, which Paul believed he had kept—but **the tenth commandment dealt with inward attitudes or sins of the heart (lust, hatred, envy, jealousy etc.)**.

It was then that Paul realized he had broken the law of God many times in his heart which meant—the law wasn't saving him—the law was condemning him!

REFLECTION: Can you think of times when you may have violated the 10th commandment – "Thou shalt not covet"?

Which is why he said in Romans 7:10, "So I discovered that the law's commands, which were supposed to bring life, brought spiritual death instead." (NLT)

In other words, he is saying that—"The law 'killed' me (condemned me to eternal death in hell)—it was then that I died to the law as a way of making me righteous and earning me a place in heaven—and as such, I found a new and better way to live to God!"

>>> He realized there was only eternal life in Jesus who said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father (heaven) except through Me". (John 14:6) That's why Paul says here in v.19, "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God".

And again, the main thought that Paul is communicating is he died to the law as a way of being made righteous in God's eyes which allowed him to be married to Jesus for righteousness.

He talks about this in Romans 7:

Romans 7:1–4 (NLT)

¹ Now, dear brothers and sisters—you who are familiar with the law—don’t you know that the law applies only while a person is living? ² For example, when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. ³ So while her husband is alive, she would be committing adultery if she married another man. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law and does not commit adultery when she remarries. ⁴ So, my dear brothers and sisters, this is the point: You died to the power of the law when you died with Christ. And now you are united with [married to] the one who was raised from the dead. As a result, we can produce a harvest of good deeds for God.

Paul’s point is—just as you can’t be married to 2 people at the same time (polygamy under the new covenant is a sin)—you can’t be ‘married’ to 2 systems for righteousness—law and grace.

It’s either one or the other when it comes to being made righteous in God’s eyes—you can’t be ‘married’ to both of them at the same time—you can’t be saved by grace and then sanctified by the law (works).

REFLECTION: What does it mean to you to be saved by “grace”?

This, of course, was exactly what the **Judaizers** were going around telling people was the way to be made righteous in God’s eyes (a mixture of law and grace). That is why Paul goes on to say to start chapter 3:

Galatians 3:1–3 (NKJV)

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

Alright, we will look at these very important verses next time—but for the remainder of our time this morning let’s focus on verses 20-21 of Galatians 2.

Galatians 2:19–20 (NKJV)

¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The law is not dead but when a person is “in Christ” (saved) they are now dead to the law—in other words, the law has no more power over them. (Romans 7:2-3)

>>> You see the law only has power over those who are - alive!<<<

If a guy robs a bank, and while he is making his getaway, he has a heart attack and dies - the law doesn't drag his corpse into court to stand trial.

When a person dies the law has no more power over him or her -

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...

>>> When was Paul crucified with Christ (when did he die)? **when he received Jesus by faith as His Savior.**

In Romans 6 Paul taught that when a person receives Jesus as Savior, they are united with Christ and share in His death, burial and resurrection - how, **because they are in Christ.**

That's why Paul could say here, **"I have been crucified with Christ"** (the Greek is literally—"I have been and am now still crucified with Christ").

This brought death to the law which means it brought death to self-effort (religion) and a whole new way to live—which is why Paul goes on to say, **"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me".**

REFLECTION: How might you explain "I have been crucified with Christ"?

Jesus lives in Christians through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-18). **The Christian life is a supernatural life**—Paul said, **"I have been permanently (once and for all) crucified with Christ...nevertheless I live..."**

Christianity isn't rehabilitation or reformation of the old life—it isn't about pouring 'new wine' into an old wineskin! **It isn't turning over a 'new leaf' and trying to reinvent yourself**—it is death and resurrection and that is something no law or religion or personal rehabilitation program can accomplish—it's a miracle!

It's a miracle when it comes to us being saved—but it's also a miracle when it comes to living the Christian life on a daily basis.

There is a principle in Scripture that we need to be reminded of because right here in comes into play **"the battle belongs to the Lord."**

This is a principle that we all must remember when it comes to victory over whatever difficulty or problem we're facing—**the battle belongs to the Lord and He alone can give us victory**—so rely on the Holy Spirit's power!

>>> He doesn't want you to promise to 'try harder' or make some lame New Year's resolution to change by giving up drinking or smoking or looking at porn or whatever—trying to use the flesh to defeat the flesh.

He wants you to get serious about your walk with Him and surrender your life to the power of the Holy Spirit—that's the only way you'll know true and lasting victory in your life.

Again, that's why the Bible says that the Christian life is a supernatural life with supernatural power available to live it—but **only as we live it by faith.** It is faith that releases the power of God into our lives to be **saved**—“For by grace you have been saved through faith” (Ephesians 2:8).

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith...

REFLECTION: How can you get serious about your walk with Jesus?

But it is also **faith that releases the power of God into our lives to live for Him**—“*the just shall live by faith.*” (Habakkuk 2:4; repeated in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

Let's look at this, by looking at Paul's testimony as recorded in Romans 7. Paul talks about the **classic battle every believer in Christ faces** with their fallen nature when wanting to do God's will—

Romans 7:19, 22-23 (NLT)

¹⁹ I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. ²² I love God's law with all my heart. ²³ But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin [nature] that is still within me.

Romans 7 is a chapter of defeat and ends with a cry of defeat—“*O wretched man that I am!*”

Yet when we 'turn the page' and come to Romans 8—we find a chapter of victory that ends with a shout of victory—“***We are more than conquerors...!***”

➤ You say, “*What happened? How did Paul go from miserable failure to glorious conqueror so quickly?*”

>>> Well, in Chapter 7 Paul uses the personal pronoun “I” and “me” 46 times.

In other words, the focus of Chapter 7 is **self**—it was Paul's testimony of when he tried to defeat sin in his life through his own strength, raw determination, and hard work.

So, what we have in Romans 7 is **Paul addressing the utter failure of trying to use religion (the law) as a way of conquering over his fallen sinful nature!**

That's why it is a chapter of **defeat ending with a cry of defeat**—"O wretched man that I am!"

But in Chapter 8, a tremendously uplifting and victorious chapter, the key word is **Spirit**—as in Holy Spirit!

>>>The word Spirit is used 23 times in Romans 8—more than in any other chapter in the Bible!

That's why **it's a chapter of victory that ends with a cry of victory**—"We are more than conquerors (thru our relationship with Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit)." When it comes to living the Christian life—we need God's power or else **defeat, and frustration will beat the life out of us and cause us to want to give up!**

Listen to what Peter says:

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV)

³ as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.

The word '**power**' is the Greek word *dunamis*—the same word we get the English words '*dynamite*' and '*dynamic*' from—which is the same Greek word used in Romans 1:16 and Acts 1:8—

Romans 1:16 (NLT2)

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.

Acts 1:8 (NLT2)

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

The same power that saved us, is the same power that equips us for service but also is the divine power we need for living the Christian life on a daily basis!

In other words, **it is this power that gives us total victory over our fallen sinful nature and makes us all that God wants us to be—"more than conquerors."** (Romans 8:37)

So, with regard to the Judaizers (or any other person or group) who tries to 'marry' Christians to 2 systems of righteousness (grace and law)—Paul simply went on to say:

Galatians 3:3 (NLT2)

³ How foolish can you be? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect ['mature', 'sanctified'] by your own human effort [law]?

The bottom line is that (to say it one more time)—**the Christian life is a supernatural life**—not a glorified '*self-help*' program.

Ephesians 3:20 (NLT2)

²⁰ Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

REFLECTION: What does it mean to you to be “*more than conquerors*”?

The idea of God’s ‘*mighty power*’ at work within us—is a reference to Jesus Christ who lives within us thru His indwelling Holy Spirit. (John 14:18)

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

The power to live the Christian life doesn’t come from a *principle* or a *program* but from a *Person* - Jesus Christ!

He won the victory on Calvary’s cross—He vanquished principalities and powers (the devil and his demons) thru His death and resurrection. Since we, as Christians, are in Him - all the victory and power we need to live the Christian life comes thru Him - we just need to ‘look to Jesus’ by faith to live His life thru us.

As Paul said, “The life which I now live in the flesh [in my physical body] I live by faith in the Son of God...”

It is *faith* that releases the power of God into our lives to be saved and to live for Him - not hard work and self-effort as we rely on the strength of *our* flesh rather than on the power of God’s Spirit.

Of course, it all starts with us receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior which causes us to be ‘*born of the Holy Spirit*’ and brings us into a deep abiding relationship with Him.

Understand that the knowledge Peter is referring to in 2 Peter 1:3—“...as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him*” - understand that to have the strength to live the Christian life each and every day only comes thru the knowledge of Jesus.

But further understand, that this isn’t a superficial knowledge—it is a deeply intimate and experiential kind of knowledge—as when a man and woman ‘know’ each other physically in marriage.

There are a lot of people who attend church and have even grown up in church that only have— a superficial head-knowledge of Jesus Christ.

They know the historical and doctrinal facts about His life, death and resurrection—but they have no first-hand experiential knowledge of Him because they aren’t connected to Him thru the Holy Spirit—in other words they aren’t born again!

When Peter speaks of the *knowledge* of Jesus that brings the power of God into our lives to live for Him—he uses the Greek word epignōsis.

Epignōsis is a word that speaks of a knowledge that is deep, genuine and experiential - as opposed to a knowledge that is *superficial* and *theoretical* (i.e., ‘head-knowledge’).

The only way a person can gain *this* knowledge is by receiving Jesus into their heart at which time the Holy Spirit comes and takes up residence within them.

>>> And as such, the Spirit of God begins to fill them with the knowledge of God as they read and study His Word—fulfilling the promise of Jesus that when the Holy Spirit comes inside a believer in Christ—“*He will lead them into all spiritual truth.*” (John 16:13)

Many Christians continue to be deceived into thinking that there’s some information for living the Christian life that they’re somehow lacking in their relationship with Jesus—information not found in the Bible.

A ‘*secret spiritual principle*’ or some ‘*mysterious esoteric knowledge*’ that if they only had access to—they would be instantly catapulted into spiritual power and victory—as the Gnostics taught.

REFLECTION: How does having the Holy Spirit reside in a person’s heart change them?

But Paul, in Colossians 2:8, called that “**high-sounding nonsense**”—the result of Christians not having a “high-view” of Scripture.

A big part of that is not believing that the Word of God is **sufficient** for all things that pertain to **‘life and godliness’** (becoming a mature, godly, fruitful Christian).

Sufficiency simply means that **everything we need in the way of truth to be saved and live our Christian lives is contained in God’s Word**—it certainly doesn’t need to be supplemented with any so-called ‘*wisdom*’ that comes from the world:

1 Corinthians 1:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ ...Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

James 3:15 (NKJV)

¹⁵ This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic.

When it comes to an instruction manual for victorious Christian living—the Bible is complete—it is sufficient!

Psalms 19:7-10 (NKJV)

⁷ The law of the LORD [‘the Word of God’] *is* perfect...

“**Perfect**” is the translation of a Hebrew word meaning, “*whole, complete or sufficient*”—it conveys the idea of something that is comprehensive, so as to cover all aspects of an issue.

“...the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by **faith** in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Ephesians 6:17 says that if we want victory over the devil we need to ‘put on the whole armor of God’—but especially to take up ‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.’

(I have known many Christians who never read the Word in daily devotions and only open it on Sunday’s when they come to church—and many of those don’t come to church on a regular basis—no wonder they are so defeated in their daily lives!)

Galatians 2:21 (NKJV)

²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness *comes* through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

Galatians 3:21 (NKJV)

²¹ Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.

If our works could get us into heaven, then grace would be unnecessary, and God sent His Son to a needless death (“If it is *possible* let this cup pass from Me”).

If a law or a religion could have been given that would save sinners other than Jesus going to the cross to die for us - God would have given it.

Romans 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

“Yes, I’m saved by grace—but I still need to go to church, keep the commandments, live a holy life—if God will really love me and bless me in my walk with Him.”

REFLECTION: What does it mean to put on the full armor of God? How does one do this?

That is a subject we will take up next in looking at the topic—“**Freedom from Law.**”

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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