

Live Free...in Truth

Galatians 5:7-12 July 13, 14 2013

Introduction/Recap

- If you've ever been taught American history, you've been taught how this country waged several wars over freedom. One of them, PP the American Civil War, was waged over whether states were free to secede from the union. The main issue that caused a divide in the states was also a freedom issue – whether slavery could continue in this country.
- Thankfully, the North won the war and slavery was abolished. However, following the end of the war, many now freed slaves continued to live in slavery – some for many years – even though they had been set free.
 - The problem was that though they had every right to live as freed men and women, they continued to believe they were still in bondage. You see many freed slaves were told by their former masters that they hadn't actually been freed, that the war never happened, or that the north had no right to declare them free. Because of these and many other lies of their former masters, many freed slaves fell victim to lies and continued to live in bondage, not living free in the truth.
- And this is exactly what happens with many believers today. PP Though Christ has set us free, though we have been emancipated from our former lives, the lies of our former master – Satan – continue to ensnare some of us and we continue to live in bondage.
- Two months ago, we started a mini-series on Galatians 5, called Live Free.
 - In the first sermon we studied Gal 5:1 “For freedom Christ has set us free, stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.”
 - In that verse, which is Paul's thesis statement for this whole chapter, we learned three things about what it means to live free PP timed pictures 1) that freedom is the liberation *from* something, not the license *to do* something, 2) that we cannot free ourselves – only Christ can free us, and 3) that once we've accepted freedom through Jesus we must stand firm and not submit again to the things that formerly bound us.
 - In the second sermon, PP we studied verses 2 through 6 and we learned three things that happen when we live by works (we are bound to rely on ourselves, we are required to keep the whole law, and we have refused God's grace) and three things that happen when we live by faith (we rely on God, we are renewed by the hope we have in heaven, and our lives result in love).
- Today we are going to be studying verses 7 through 12 as we learn the importance *truth* plays in whether we live free or live in bondage.
- So as you turn with me in your bibles to Galatians 5:7-12, let me pray.

- **Galatians 5:7-12** “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying *the truth*? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”

Verse 7-8 (Truth frees, Deception fetters)

- So after Paul explains what happens to us when we either choose to live free or live in bondage, he turns his attention to specifically address the situation with his Galatian readers.
 - And in verses 7 and 8 we see the first principle from this passage: truth frees, while deception fetters **PP**
- Notice that the Galatian churches were actually doing quite well for a time.
 - The Greek word for “well” here means to do something in a way that is worthy of honor and recognition
 - And Paul gives them that recognition, analogizing the Christian life to running a race.
- They had been given the truth by Paul and, for a time, they had been running free in that truth, obeying that truth, and bearing fruit in the truth
 - And notice that Paul uses a definite article here when referring to the truth...he calls it *the* truth, meaning there is such a thing as absolute truth
 - Jesus affirmed this when He said **PP John 8:31-32** “...‘If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know *the* truth, and *the* truth will set you free.’” And then later Jesus said in **John 14:6** “I am the way, *the* truth, and the life...”
 - The word of God contains the truth of the gospel. And as we abide in *the* truth, live it out, and obey it, we will know absolute truth and it will set us free....in fact the truth of Jesus Christ is the *only* thing that can set us free.
- Now that’s all well and good that we know that, and knowledge is very important, but the reality of the situation is that it doesn’t matter how well we know *the* truth if we don’t apply it to our lives and live it out.
 - That’s why **James 1:22** says **PP** “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, *deceiving yourselves.*”
- Unfortunately, Paul’s audience forgot this, because as quickly as Paul was praising his readers, he turns around and points out that they had been hindered from following the truth.

- The word “hinder” here comes from a Greek word which also refers to a race, **PP** but this word refers to someone cutting across the path of another, knocking the runner off their stride, slowing them down or causing them to fall
 - The word was also used in a military context **PP** and referred to the practice of breaking up a road so as to render it impassable to prevent an oncoming army from moving forward
 - The lies of the enemy are designed to knock us off course or stop us from advancing.
- But recognize here that the enemy didn’t hinder them from *knowing* the truth, Satan hindered them from *obeying* the truth. **PP**
 - If you’re not a believer the enemy will lie to you to keep you from *knowing* the truth, but if you’ve become a believer then the enemy often times changes his strategy to hinder you from *obeying* and applying the truth, causing you to cease running the race well.
- Some of you may remember a British sprinter by the name of Derek Redmond **PP timed pictures**. Redmond was the reigning world champion in the 400 meter race when the 1992 Olympics arrived, and the favorite to win the gold medal. He breezed through the initial heats of the race, posting the fastest times of anyone. He was running the race well. But a funny thing happened in the semi-finals, it’s said that Redmond failed to properly stretch and prepare for the semi-final heat, and half-way through the race, firmly in the lead, he tore his hamstring, crashing to the track in pain. Though Redmond knew all that was necessary to properly prepare for the race, he failed to live out that knowledge and it caused him to crash.
- The enemy is fine having you *know* the truth so long as you don’t *obey* it and use it in your life...and the enemy will do whatever he can to get you to disregard the truth and live in the bondage of lies. To pull a spiritual hamstring and not finish the race.
- So a practical question to ask yourself right now is what truth do you know, but are not living out? Maybe you were running well for a time but have slipped and fallen
 - Maybe you’re allowing yourself to indulge in something when you know you shouldn’t
 - Maybe you’ve been compromising in something, maybe at work or in a relationship, even though you know it’s wrong
 - Maybe you’ve been rationalizing something even though the truth of scripture clearly says otherwise.
- Whatever it is you know, but are disregarding...identify those things – write them down in your notes, get someone to hold you accountable – and don’t allow yourself to be hindered anymore.

- Don't be fettered by lies, abide in the truth and it *will* set you free.

Verse 9 (Truth is pure, Deception is poison)

- Paul continues on in **verse 9** and uses a common proverb of that day when he says **"A little leaven leavens the whole lump."**, **see also 1 Cor. 5:6-8, Matt 16:6-12**
 - Paul's point here is that while truth is pure, deception is poison **PP**
- Paul moves from a race metaphor to a cooking metaphor. You see leaven was used to make the dough rise when bread was cooked, just like yeast is today.
 - So Paul is saying that just as a tiny bit of leaven will spread through an entire batch of dough and cause all of the dough to rise, so will a little bit of deception slowly consume and defile the truth.
 - Once we allow even a small lie to take root in our lives, it can distort and corrupt everything. Something very small, can lead to massive problems.
- We see this principle play out all the time in our everyday lives and throughout history.
 - **Most of us have heard of the Black Death, right? PP timed picture** A plague that killed half of the world's population in the middle ages. Well, it started with a bunch of infected fleas that were carried all over by rats. A tiny flea caused massive, global death.
- The point here is that small lies matter, and when we allow a small deception to poison the truth it can and will have huge consequences.
 - **PP Zechariah 4:10 (NIV) "Who dares despise the day of small things?..."**
 - So what small lies might you be believing that are poisoning your faith?
 - Maybe they are lies involving your self-image or self-esteem, or lies about how you'll be happier if you just had this, or lies about how you're not hurting anyone so why not. There are countless lies that we can fall prey to if we are not vigilant.
- Remember, the primary lie these false teachers were spreading was the need to do certain works (chiefly, circumcision) to attain salvation – today we call that legalism
 - Are there legalistic activities in your life that are acting as leaven, ruining the whole lump of your faith?
 - Too many intelligent and well-meaning Christians seem to have a blind spot when it comes to recognizing false teaching and the enemy's deception.
- Deception is a poison and we must not allow it to contaminate the purity of the truth of scripture....pay attention to the little things, and don't tolerate the small lies in your life!

Verse 10 (Truth brings hope, Deception brings hell)

- Now, if Paul had ended right there, the Galatian readers would've probably been pretty dejected.

- Thankfully, Paul continues on in verse 10 **PP** and tells his readers that truth brings hope, while deception brings hell.
 - **Galatians 5:10** “I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.”
- Immediately after letting them know of the dangers of the deception they were falling into, Paul gives his readers hope that they will come back to the truth, while also affirming the outcome of those who foster deception.
- I don’t know about you, but that is very comforting to me. There is always hope that we can walk in the truth no matter what lies we may have fallen victim to. **PP**
 - That’s because the truth doesn’t depend on the past and it doesn’t change with the future...God’s truth is absolute, and we always have the choice to accept it and live free in it, no matter what lies we may have been believing.
 - In fact, one of the lies of the enemy is that you don’t have a choice – that you’ll never be free. Friends, that is a lie! You *do* have a choice to live free in the truth.
 - The good news is that you don’t have to make that choice through your own strength! God will help you to live free in the truth.
- Paul makes this clear in this verse by saying his confidence is in the Lord – not the Galatian believers themselves....for we all know that left to ourselves every one of us would fail, we would all go astray after a lie.
 - But Paul’s confidence is in the Lord and the fact that the Lord will help us finish the race.
 - **Philippians 1:6 PP** “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
 - God will finish the work he started in us...that in and of itself is a truth that we can be strengthened by and encouraged with.
 - And we can have confidence in the fact that when we are having a hard time finding the truth, God will show us the truth and help us to live free in it
 - **John 16:13 PP** “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...”
- Remember Derek Redmond, the sprinter who tore his hamstring and couldn’t finish the race? **PP timed pictures** Well, as he lay on the track in pain, he decided – he made a choice – to get back up and try to finish the race. And as he hobbled to his feet and tried to walk toward the finish line, he was about to collapse again when his father came running out of the stands, put Derek’s arm around his neck and walked him right across the finish line.

- Friends, that is exactly what Jesus Christ does with us. Like Derek's father, our Lord will always be there to help us up when we have fallen into a lie, Jesus will always help pick us back up. **PP**
 - But listen, we are still responsible to make the choice to get up...we have to choose to stop lying on the ground – falling victim to deception – and get up and walk...not under our own power, but through the power of our heavenly father and the Holy Spirit who will help us cross the finish line and lead us into truth.
- But friends, Paul isn't all roses and smiley faces here...he makes clear that those who spread lies and who do not accept freedom in Christ – those who choose to stay down on the ground – will receive their due penalty. He's not trying to be an alarmist, he's simply speaking truth. And this truth – that those who are deceived are going to hell – is confirmed all throughout scripture...just read **Romans 1:18-32** and you get a clear picture of that.

Verse 11 (Truth will offend, Deception will oppress)

- It is this very truth itself – that hell awaits those who go astray after a lie – that leads to Paul's next point **PP** – the truth will offend, while deception will oppress.
- **Galatians 5:11** “But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.”
- Apparently, Paul was being accused of teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation, just like the other false teachers
 - While it is true that Paul did circumcise Timothy in **Acts 16**, nowhere in scripture did Paul come anywhere close to advocating any legalistic requirements for salvation
- So Paul asks the rhetorical question of why he would be oppressed and persecuted by the false teachers if he shared their same message? He wouldn't...so it's ridiculous to believe that he was in agreement with the false teachers.
 - So we see that those who spread deception will always attack the truth, and those who speak the truth...and the way the deceivers will do so is by trying to spread more lies!
- What this means practically speaking is that those who walk in the truth and those who are in bondage to deception can't function together in the long term, and ultimately truth speakers will be persecuted and oppressed.
 - **Ephesians 5:6-7 PP** “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore, do not become partners with them.”

- They may be able to coexist for a time, but in the end the deceivers will always look to remove those who speak and believe in the truth
- You might be thinking Matthew, I can coexist just fine with unbelievers. Well, that's a good thing, **Romans 12:18 PP** says "if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."
 - Of course, there will be times when it just is not possible...because if you're actually running the race of truth you are going to offend someone.
- And don't fool yourself, the persecution in this country is only going to get worse as we continue to slip into moral decay, relativism, and tolerance.
 - Because the reality is that the message of the gospel is offensive to those who would rely on their own strength to save them, they don't want to hear it and are offended by those who would point out the lies they believe.
 - And if the message of the gospel doesn't offend someone, then it's likely that God's holy standards will.
 - How many of us have seen posts on Facebook **PP** or other social media attacking Christian viewpoints as offensive or bigoted? It happens all the time.
- That's why Paul says the truth is offensive, that it's a hindrance or stumbling block....deceived people don't like the truth
 - This Greek word here for offense **PP**, "*skandalon*", referred to a trigger that was meant to trip an animal and set off a trap
- The truth is going to trip up those who would trust in their own good works to save them or who want to live by their own standards.
 - People's pride and selfishness keep them offended and tripped up by the truth and living ensnared by deception
- In fact, scripture says that pride is the hallmark of those who have been deceived
 - **Psalms 40:4 PP** "Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!"
 - Proudful people are deceived people...and pointing out that deception will offend that pride.
- So the practical question we need to ask ourselves is this: was there ever a time you failed to speak the truth to someone because you were afraid to offend them? Does that happen often to you? Are you more concerned about what other people think or what God thinks?
 - Friends, the truth should inspire boldness because it is *the truth*, and we can boldly proclaim that to the deceived world. Of course, we need to speak the truth in love without judgment or condemnation, but we still need to speak the truth.

- Deception inspires fear and oppression ... and in a Christian fear causes a weak witness to the world. But if we seize onto the truth we can boldly proclaim it and show those who have been deceived the life that they can have if they would just let go of their pride and walk free in the truth.

Verse 12 (Truth should be taken seriously, Deception should be severed)

- And that boldness is how Paul closes this section of scripture when he shows us that **PP** truth must be taken seriously, while deception must be severed.
- **Galatians 5:12** “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”
- I’d say that’s a pretty bold statement! Paul isn’t messing around here. He really doesn’t like these lies that are being spread. He is taking the truth extremely seriously, and suggesting the necessary action to deal with it.
- Now, Paul isn’t really wishing that they would go so far as emasculating themselves...but he is pointing out the folly of their argument when taken to its logical end.
 - You see there was a well-known occult group in the Galatian region known as the Cult of Cybele whose priests and followers would castrate themselves to show their devotion to their goddess.
 - So Paul is referencing a well-known religious cult and stating that the false teachers who were spreading the deception that circumcision was required for salvation were no different than that cult.
 - Paul’s point is that if legalism and rituals and circumcision are what make a person right with God, why stop at circumcision— go all the way!
- But Paul is also suggesting the answer to how we deal with deception in our midst...we must cut it off...get rid of it, sever it from our thinking. Because it *will* lead us astray if we allow it to remain
 - **Galatians 3:1-3** **PP** “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”
- Believing a lie is like falling under a spell – being bewitched – it steals your mind and thoughts and ultimately controls your actions
- We have a choice as to what we believe...don’t be a fool like the Galatians and believe the lies! Don’t allow deception to bewitch you into continuing to tolerate lies in your thinking.
- If you were here last week for Pastor Tim’s sermon we learned that this is exactly what Nehemiah did when he learned Tobiah was living in the temple; he kicked Tobiah out – he severed him from all influence in the temple and Tobiah was never heard from again.

- Friends, this is the same response we need to have with deception. We cannot tolerate it in our midst because it will bewitch us, and infect us, and completely deceive us from walking free in the truth.
- We need to recognize the lies and then sever them completely out of our thinking so that we can live free in the truth.

Conclusion

- Listen, Christian brother and sister, you have been set free by Jesus Christ **PP** and you can continue to run free in His truth.
- But like those civil war slaves, we have an old master constantly whispering lies to us trying to get us to live like we are still in bondage.
- And if you have yet to accept true freedom through salvation in Jesus Christ, let me invite you stop living in bondage to the deception of the enemy.
 - Christ has proclaimed our freedom. He is the great emancipator. He has broken the bondage of the devil, the slave driver of this world.
- Throw off the chains of deception; stop the lies from spreading in your life and celebrate the hope you have in the truth of Jesus Christ; don't be afraid to boldly live out the truth, and always be sure to sever the lies when they subtly creep into your thinking.
- Let's live free in *the* truth. **PP No picture, just text** Amen. Amen.