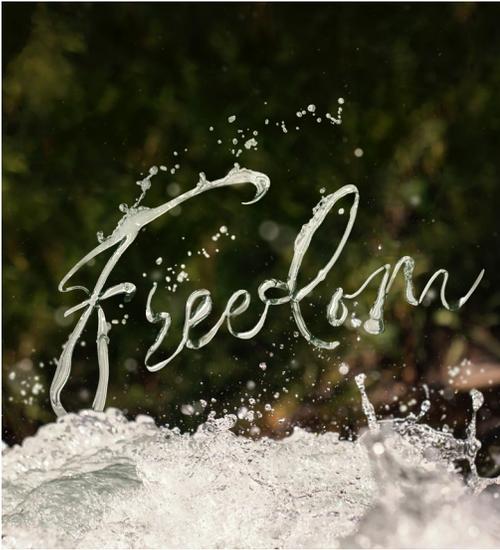




Sermon Growth Guide

October 30, 2022

Free to Love



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Freedom - Free to Love

Galatians 6:1-18

Key Verse: Galatians 6:2

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Big Idea: Walk in step with the Spirit and be **Free to Love**.

Foundations

This week we conclude our **Freedom** series in Galatians. We’ve observed the passionate plea Paul makes to these wavering churches to remain faithful to the gospel he preached, a gospel that places no bondage to the law.

Yet, the freedom Paul proclaims is unique. It is not unlimited liberty to do anything we desire; nor is it the removal of any conception of truth or boundaries. Freedom is living into the gospel of Jesus Christ, living with God’s Spirit, and living out God’s plans for our lives.

Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:20). The freedom Christ achieved for us means death to the tyranny of selfishness, and a new direction, led by the Holy Spirit (5:16-26), who points us to Christ. This is the way of freedom: walking in the Spirit, committing to Him and delighting in His fruit, which are expressions of the love and character of Christ!

Paul gets practical and pastoral as he wraps up his epistle, saying, “If someone is caught in a sin you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently...Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you fulfill the law of Christ” (6:1-2). The one way of freedom produces many opportunities to love one another. And while our freedom must be lived into, we have each other to lean on as we together walk by the Spirit.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, read Galatians 6:1-18. What is the relationship between verses 5:13-26 and what Paul discusses in 6:1-10? How do 5:13-26 impact how you obey 6:1-10?

Together, read Galatians 6:7-10 side-by-side with 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. What similarities do you find in Paul’s language and topic of discussion? What is his point about the relationship between stewardship of money and living into the flesh or the Spirit?

Applying God’s Word

Walking by the Spirit, and doing good works by His strength, are not the denial of the physical realm, material objects or delightful pleasures created by God for us to enjoy; walking by the Spirit means bringing them under God’s lordship.

How is God encouraging you to commit a particular relationship, resource (maybe time or money), or realm of your life (job, hobby, skill) to the lordship of His Spirit? As a group, share together some practical ways to commit these areas of our lives to the Holy Spirit.

Witnessing God’s Word

We live in a culture averse to commitment. Instead, we enjoy freedom of choice. What would it look like if we, as the church, modeled the fruit of the Spirit (what culture believes freedom of choice will ultimately bring) by commitment to the Christ and His Spirit? How would it change how your friends, your co-workers, your family, even your kids, viewed commitment to God?

God wants you to feel freedom. God wants you free. It is one of the first things God said to Adam and Eve, in our NIV translation anyway, “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden’” (Genesis 2:16). Just not that one. “You are free!” God said. Jesus wants you free. “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’ They answered him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?’ Jesus replied, ‘Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed’” (John 8:31-36). God wants you free. Free from what? From slavery to sin; from slavery to selfishness. From the tiny, ever-shrinking orbit of self-centered life. One of the elders here, David Zimmerman, wrote a book called *Deliver Us from Me-Ville*. Me-ville. Population: 1. Follow Jesus out of your personal “superbia,” your self-absorbed, private universe. There is **Freedom** out there. But we are not there yet.

Out here people still stumble and fall. “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves” (Galatians 6:1-3). Somebody needs a piece of humble pie! We are still in the far country. We are not yet fully free. How then should we now live? Watch out for one another. Love and restore one another. Bear each other’s burdens. This picks up right from last week. “Live by the Spirit.” Attach to the Spirit. It might matter more what you attach yourself to than how many options you can keep open. Walk in step with the Spirit and be **Free to Love**. If we

walk in the Spirit more, we will love more. If we love more, we will bear one another’s burdens. If we bear one another’s burdens, we will not think of abandoning a brother or sister in their brokenness, but we will restore.

If we love and restore the broken, we collapse every notion of spiritual pride or holier-than-thou. We know we could fall into the same pit easily. I’ve heard many church planters say, “I wanted to start a church that cared about the lost and loved sinners.” Yes! Unfortunately, they kind of mean, “not like First Pres downtown.” But we are that too, aren’t we? That is church. That is what it is about. Love and restore the lost. Care for one another. Care about the lost. Martin Luther wrote of this passage, “After Christ had redeemed us, renewed us, and made us his church, he gave us no other law but that of mutual love (John 13:34). To love is not to wish one another well, but to carry one another’s burdens—that is, things that are grievous to us, and that we would not willingly bear. Therefore, Christians must have strong shoulders and mighty bones, so they can carry their brothers’ weaknesses, for Paul says that they have burdens and troubles.” Maybe freedom is actually a commitment to love one another, the power to break free of self-centered lives.

“Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load” (Galatians 6:4-5). That’s not a contradiction to being ready to carry one another’s burdens. This is about comparison now. Comparison is a trap. It either leads you to pride because you think of yourself as better, or to envy because you think yourself worse. Forget comparison. You have a mission, you have a purpose, you have your responsibilities before God. Live for an audience of one. That’s what this means when it says carry your own load.

“Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share



all good things with their instructor” (Galatians 6:6). Glory to God! Amen! Amen! Yes, this is about paying your pastors. In fact, the church through history has seen this whole passage through verse 10 to be about money. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:7-10). That whole passage is a money passage. It’s about stewardship. How do I know? It starts with verse 6; pay your pastors! But this seed analogy is how Paul talks about money. Look over at 2 Corinthians, “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:6-8). We will come right back to that.

Galatians closes with final words and encouragements and blessings. Paul, who would ordinarily dictate his letters, picked up the pen himself. He reminded them of their freedom. You don’t have to do what those guys say. They just want to boast that they won you over to their camp. “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation” (Galatians 6:14-15). Boast in nothing but the cross. The cross is the gospel. The cross is our salvation. Nothing else matters, only this: new creation! New creation! “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has

gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). That’s all that matters in the end. So, there’s Galatians.

What if we applied this version of freedom to our lives? It’s not so much about keeping options open. It’s more about the healthy attachment you make, what you commit to, what you attach yourself to, attaching yourself by faith to Jesus Christ. I remember a sermon on Galatians when I was 16. The pastor Steve Thurman, said, “You’re free; but you’re not there yet.” Then he told this story. He and his son had plans to go scuba diving when his son turned 13. They trained and practiced. Finally, they went. Sure enough, his boy’s gear had a malfunction. Steve saw the panic in his son’s eyes. You can’t just shoot up to the surface either, or you could get the bends and die. Steve grabbed his son, held him tight, and began sharing his mouthpiece with him. One breath for me, one breath for you. Slowly they rose to the surface. You’re not fully free yet but hold on to Christ. Attach to Christ. Walk by the Spirit. It might matter more what you attach and commit to than how many options you keep open. Vital attachment. One day, you will be as free as in Christ you already are.

But today is Commitment Sunday! How about that to round out a series on freedom? But do you see now how it fits? It’s what you commit to in your freedom that matters. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:7-10). You reap what you sow. Sow to material things, you will get material rewards. They can be nice, for a minute, but they don’t last. They never last. Nice cars still rust. Nice shoes still wear out. Nice wine still just winds up...you know.



FREEDOM • Galatians 6:1-18 • Tim McConnell • October 30, 2022

But God has given us an opportunity to sow into eternal things, things of the Spirit. Things that last forever.

For 2022, we set a budget of just under \$7.5 million. As we have prayed and peered into 2023, to do what we believe First Pres is called to do we would like to set a goal next year of \$8 million. That's about 7 percent higher. We want to care for our staff who are feeling inflation, as we all are. We want to plan for worship and events without wondering if we can scrape the money together. We want to expand our reach toward children, youth and young adults. Many of you brought your commitments already. I want to ask you to consider a little more. It is about making a few healthy commitments. How about the ministry of the local church?

How are we doing at giving? Well, we stand out among churches in keeping our pledges. When we make a pledge, we pay that pledge, to the tune of 99 percent follow through. That's awesome. But do we give enough? The median income in Colorado Springs is \$70,000. We have 3,000 members. If we all tithe that's \$21 million. Wait, but only half of us work. Okay, \$10.5 million. Many of you tithe faithfully. You give 10 percent of your income, save 10 percent, and live joyfully off the other 80 percent. Those people are called "peaceful." These are people who sleep well at night. Unfortunately, it's 1 percent of Christians in the U.S. How many of us actually tithe? We receive from 1,500 donors. That's 58 percent of us, but 42 percent of our membership has not made a gift in the last five years. Just a small gift would break that seal and help us toward that 7 percent. We really celebrate new givers; that means somebody is taking a step closer to Jesus. If you do give, what would it look like to grow toward a tithe?

I know it's hard to hear that your church needs more from you. Especially as we are staring down inflation, recession, a housing crisis and the rest. Some of you are worried about your own jobs and

your own families. But in another way that's exactly when we lean in and carry burdens. It is exactly the time to learn to trust Jesus more, not less, with your provision. It is hard to feel generous when we all feel poor, but I want to put that in perspective too. According to World Bank, if you earn \$2,000 a year you are in the top 50 percent globally. An income of \$32,000 places you in the top 1 percent. A net worth of \$90,000 puts you in the top 10 percent of wealth on the planet. We are the wealthy. I love how World Vision puts it: "Do you have more than one pair of shoes? Do you have a choice of what to eat for each meal? Do you have your own means of transportation? Do you have more than one set of underwear? You are in the top 10 percent of wealth in the world." So let's try to keep a big picture. Let's try to dream big dreams for our church. Where do you want First Pres to be this time next year? What do you hope for your church? Dream big. Think clearly. Make a commitment to the work of the Lord. Bad markets come and go. Where will you have sown the seed?

Life isn't about keeping all your options open. It is about learning how to make and stick to good and healthy commitments. Look to Jesus. Can you believe He cares for you? What did Jesus give? What did Jesus hold back? In the end, it surely isn't about money, it surely isn't about First Pres, it surely isn't about the issue the Galatians were facing. In the end, "...what counts is the new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule—to the Israel of God...The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen" (Galatians 6:15-16,18).

