

Free to Serve

Galatians 5.7-15 ~ November 6, 2011

- v7 ~ “**You ran well... Who hindered you...?**”
 - Paul again refers to the racing analogy ~ doubt he was an athlete
 - But he chooses these metaphors to connect to his readers ~ cultural
 - Paul reminds his readers they “were” on track
 - He “*implies*” that they’re off track now...
 - And he asks them, “*Who did this to you?*”
 - The NIV even phrases it, “*Who cut in on you?*”
 - Runners could cheat like this ~ cut others off ~ trip them up
 - He asks **who** here – and in v10 repeats **who, whoever**
 - “*Can anyone hinder you from obeying the truth?*”
 - To hinder is not to prevent . . .

- v8 ~ “**This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you**”
 - This ‘*persuasion*’ is a “*willingness to disobey*”
 - Paul says clearly that such a desire is never from God
 - Sometimes it is necessary to state the obvious
 - “*Why are you doing this? ~ God doesn’t want you to?*”

- v9 ~ “**A little leaven leavens the whole lump**” ~ “*quoted*” in non-NKJV
 - The desire to circumcise is the ‘*tip of the iceberg*’
 - The desire to be saved by outward conformity will grow
 - The function of leaven cannot be contained ~ it will continue
 - Acceptance of self-justification is like the first tiny weed in your garden

- v10a ~ “**I have confidence in you, in the Lord . . .**” ~ another thought
 - Paul knows these Galatians
 - He speaks from having a first-hand relationship with them
 - This is not a ‘*wishful*’ confidence ~ a smiley-face confidence
 - He believes they have heard and will heed his words

Xition: His authority and confidence allow him to pronounce judgment . . .

- **v10b** ~ “**he who troubles you shall bear his judgment . . .**”
 - Paul again speaks with authority ~ the enemy is wrong and will be judged
 - Not just anyone had Paul’s personal commission ~ but Moses did . . .
 - Korah’s Rebellion in **Num 16.3** ~ “**you take too much upon yourselves**”
 - Moses responds, **v5** ~ “**tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is His**”

- **v11a** ~ “**if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?**”
 - He was likely accused of being fickle or inconsistent
 - Paul had Timothy circumcised (**Acts 16.3**) but not Titus (**Gal 2.3**)
 - But he asks, “*If I believed circumcision, why am I being persecuted?*”

- **v11b** ~ “**Then the offense of the cross has ceased**”
 - What is the ‘*offense of the cross?*’
 - We must answer this before we go on . . .
 - Not the physical cross ~ (offense != curse)
 - Though **Gal 3.13** says “**cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree**”
 - Jesus was the ‘*rock of offense*’ ~ **Read Romans 9.30-33**
 - **Read 1 Cor 1.18-25**
 - The offense is the “**foolishness of the cross**”
 - The offense is the fact that man’s works and wisdom are worthless
 - This is not just about circumcision . . . It’s about works righteousness
 - “**ceased**” ~ **Any** addition to the cross renders the cross of **no offense**

- **v12** ~ “**cut themselves off**”
 - Paul’s use of humor here is shocking ~ though not vulgar
 - Some people believe **we must be serious** when we reference the Bible
 - III: Criticism of seminary students for “X” and cutting up Holy Bible
 - III: This Bible is only a book (drop Bible) ~ but what if I’m ordered to?
 - III: Story of Korean girl making that choice
 - III: Picture of Jesus overlooking child’s crib or bed
 - Let’s recognize and accept that the Bible contains rough humor
 - Isaiah mocks idolatry in **Is 40** ~ “**will not totter**”
 - Elijah taunts prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel
 - Let’s take seriously our service of the Lord . . . but not ourselves . . .
 - And let’s accept God’s use of humor ~ and not condemn people for it

Xition: After indulging in some humor Paul hits the main point . . .

- **v13a ~ “you . . . have been called to liberty”**
 - We spoke of this at length last week
 - All of what we spoke of last week is in Paul’s mind
 - He wants people to be passionate about their freedom

- **v13b ~ “do not use liberty .. to indulge the flesh”**
 - We are free . . . We can sin . . . “yet we’re free from condemnation”
 - **Read Rom 8.1-3**
 - Ill: Movie “Bolt” ~ cat has no claws ~ yet she pretends
 - The Church has authority as God’s government on earth
 - “What did God give the Church?”
 - “Was it a sword?” ~ NO... God gave us keys . . .
 - ◆ We’re doorkeepers . . . We invite people to enter . . .
 - ◆ We also show people the door and ask them to leave . . .
 - Yet we have only the authority God has given
 - Our actions do not condemn or justify
 - Our actions point at condemnation or justification

- **v13c ~ “through love serve one another”**
 - “through love” ~ not “in love”
 - Paul describes love as a means to achieve a desired end
 - Ill: Corrie ten Boom and Ravensbruck prison guard
 - **Read** excerpt of Hiding Place **pg 230** “I continued to speak . . .”
 - It was not “in love” that she extended her hand but “through love”

- **v14a ~ “all the law is fulfilled in one word . . .”**
 - Just as the law was broken through one action – one **selfish** action
 - The law was fulfilled through one action – one **selfless** action
 - The Jewish teachers lost the essence of religion in complexity
 - What was inherently simple – love – they built a complex system around
 - We can do the same thing . . .
 - We can be uncomfortable with the simplicity of salvation
 - We can want it to be safeguarded in some way . . . no riff raff . . .

Xition: Love your neighbor as yourself

➤ **v14b ~ “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”**

- “How do we love ourselves?”
 - For starters, we nearly always seek our own comfort
 - III: Hudson Taylor slept in attic room open to sky & snow – China too
 - We forgive ourselves quickly, thoughtlessly
 - Though angry with ourselves we’ll:
 - ◆ change positions to get more comfortable
 - ◆ scratch our nose when it itches
 - ◆ eat when we’re hungry . . . drink when we’re thirsty
 - ◆ we escape discomforts to our flesh habitually and consistently
 - ◆ III: Walking in to work (cold) ~ man in short shirt sleeves

➤ **v15 ~ “But if you bite . . . beware . . . lest you be consumed”**

- **Read v15**
- **“If we bite and devour one another”**
 - III: This is a gross picture . . . cannibalism . . .
 - III: “*Dawn of the Dead*” (1978) ~ shot in Pittsburg shopping mall
 - Filmed for \$650k ~ grossed \$55M
 - Hell is full ~ the dead walk the earth and eat the living
- There is an evil nourishment at work in what Paul warns against
 - III: Peretti books portray this well ~ “*This Present Darkness*”
 - III: “*Screwtape Letters*” portrays it very well
 - When we participate in gossip, back-biting, character assassination
 - We’re indulging an ‘*immoral hunger*’ within us. . .
 - Some hungers are moral ~ we’re to satisfy them
 - Some hungers ate immoral ~ we’re to starve them
- God teaches us the difference
- But we don’t always obey ~ just as the Galatians to whom Paul is writing

But God expects obedience from His children ~ and that at all times

Let’s do as God says and “**love our neighbors as ourselves**”

We’ve seen how: Completely, Thoughtlessly, Constantly, without Regret

We are free from condemnation

Let’s use our freedom to serve one another . . .

Let us pray . . .