

MOTIVATED: BY FEAR OR LOVE

We are almost to the end of Galatians. My hope for you is that you should have, moving forward for the rest of your life, a clear understanding of what the Gospel is. The word Gospel is not a junk drawer, I say that because there are a lot of things parading around as the Gospel that are not the Gospel at all.

REVIEW

In chapter 4 we learned that we did nothing to save ourselves, Paul even takes away that this idea that we even sought God. Saying that is was God who came to us. It doesn't have anything to do with us and everything to do with God.

You might argue, "No, I got saved because there was an altar call and went forward and repeated a prayer that the pastor said." Paul would argue that and say you were saved in your seat when the Holy Spirit compelled you to get up. The salvation actually took place in your seat in what the Spirit of God did in your heart. Because if salvation occurred because you repeated some words, that's witchcraft. That's nothing more than a mantra and God cannot be controlled with mantras.

We were slaves to the elementary principles of the world, meaning appeasing nature to gain favor. When they did the "religious things" for religious sake, it's equivalent to worshipping false gods.

You once were enslaved to demons via paganism, and I fear you're going to be enslaved to demons once again via religious observance. Those rituals and observances are not necessary for salvation which is what Paul mentioned all the way at the beginning of the book.

The two problems people often run into with the Gospel is "That's too easy. I can't JUST put my trust in God. Let me help God out." That's Jesus+.

What that plus is depends on the circles you run in...Jesus+ no dancing, Jesus+ no cussing, Jesus+ certain shows or movies or no TV or movies, Jesus+ party politics, Jesus+ a certain political cause... That is not the Gospel.

The other problem people may run into with the Gospel is sometimes called cheap grace. Where an individual recognizes that since God forgives no matter what, "Hey, I'm forgiven. I can do whatever I want." Like some spoiled child whose daddy will clean up what ever mess they leave

behind. This is people who will attend church services on Sunday but then live the rest of the week like it has no bearing on their life. That is also not the Gospel.

The rest of the book is basically the same sermon over and over again.

Today we are talking about motivations and whether we are motivated by fear or love.

Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

What is enslaving these new Christians? Two things that Galatians teaches that we are set free from: empty religion and fear-based behavioral modification.

Empty religion is just running through the religious motions without any of the joy of Christ. Its an obligation, its something you feel like you're supposed to do, but its not something you really want to do.

VIDEO: Homer asleep in church

Fear-based behavioral modification is you're afraid God's going to get you if you don't do this or that or go here or there. Its driven by fear of God and not a love for God.

VIDEO: Flanders not going to church

We have been set free from these things.

Galatians 5:2-6

2 *Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. **3** I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.*

4 *You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. **5** For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.*

6 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

Was circumcision wrong? Why does Paul object to it? Other than being a man who wants to keep a knife as far away from you know where as possible.

Its not circumcision specifically that Paul has a problem with, but any external action that is not actually a condition for salvation but is being masqueraded as such. Actions like this attempt to make Christianity an outside-in religion rather than an inside-out religion. That your outward actions change the condition of your heart and not that the condition of your heart determines your actions.

If you would rather not be under grace if you'd rather be under the law, then you don't need Jesus. But my brother in Christ, if you are going to make this about the Law, then you have to follow all of it. Perfectly.

VIDEO: HYDRAULIC PRESS

This is what the Law will do to you, it will crush you under its weight. You might be good today. You may not lie or covet today, but tomorrow your lazy coworker is going to get a promotion and you are going to want to covet, and then you are going to lie to your bosses so that you make sure to get the next promotion.

No matter how good you think you are, no matter how disciplined you think you can be, the Law is undefeated against humans who try to keep it perfectly save Jesus Christ Himself.

This is why Paul is so perplexed that the Galatians would trade the beautiful gift of grace, that freely acknowledges our failures. It acknowledges that we have failed and we will keep on failing, but it does this while covering our failings. Isn't that beautiful? Grace is such a beautiful comfort. The Law will never be a comfort. Grace says, "God paid the bill. You're Holy and spotless. You're beloved. The Law will never say this. The Law does nothing but condemn. It does nothing but point out your shortcomings. Grace does this, but it does this while covering them. It does this while taking care of the problem.

Galatians 5:6

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, **but only faith working through love.**

Being a virgin when you get married vs being promiscuous, a drug user vs a non drug user, grew up in church vs just finding out about Jesus, counts for nothing in regard to being justified before God. He doesn't look down on earth and see how hard you are trying and pick you because you are more deserving than someone else. That's not how it works.

Underline/highlight this next part **only faith working through love**

Galatians 5:7-8

7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? **8** This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.

This is crazy, because what he means by running well is that they were being obedient, they were obeying God's law. What's keeping you from obeying the law is the belief that obeying the law will make God love you.

Someone here is asking the question, "Matt is confusing me because sometimes he says doing good works is wrong and sometimes he says Christians should be doing good works. Which is it?"

My answer is "yes."

If you are doing good works to try to earn God's approval, because you think Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is not enough, its Jesus+. If you are doing good works because you live in fear of God and are afraid he's gonna get you if you don't do enough good things, you are wrong. Your motivation is wrong.

But if instead you recognize that you are incredibly passive in this salvation process, that God does the saving, that Jesus is enough and because of His love for you and the salvation He offers, you have fallen madly in love with Him. And as a result you do good things that make Him happy.

Yeah, its the same stuff, the same good deeds but the motivation is different. That's the key! God cares about the condition of your heart, He cares about your motivations and your reasonings.

Faith that He not only forgives us but delights in us in spite of our constant failures. It doesn't produce love unless we have faith that this is actually true. Do you actually believe this is true. Like you right now, not a better version of you later, do you believe that God looks at you and sees you as holy and blameless, even though you know you are anything but.

Dana loves me just as much first thing in the morning...as when I'm dressed up for an expensive date.

Do you believe that God delights in you even though you know there aren't a lot of reasons for Him to do that. Faith in that, leads to a love that begins to motivate our behavior. Love is a powerful motivating tool.

Love for Dana made me change my music preferences, movie and TV shows. Jack read Twilight books for the sake of love.

There is a joy that comes in service motivated by love that isn't there in something motivated by fear. If I'm doing things around the house because I'm afraid that if I don't Dana will come home from work and start kicking over the tables and turning into the Hulk and scare our grown children, do you think I will have any joy in that work? No of course not. But if love drives that service, do you think I mind? What's driving me is the smile I will see on her face when she comes home and the house is inviting and clean. Nice music is playing and a glass of wine is poured and waiting for her. I ENJOY THAT! I actually delight in doing that.

What hinders our growing and holiness is trying to earn the love and favor of God by becoming trying to become holy ourselves. That's not how it works. You can't do it on your own and the more you try to own it the less you will actually be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

This next part is going to get super serious. If you thought Paul was harsh before, buckle up sister, cause you ain't ready for this.

Galatians 5:9-12

9 *A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 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. 11 Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!*

He warns us that it only takes a little tiny bit of Jesus+ to ruin the whole thing. Just a little bit of do this. Just a little bit of get that. Just a little bit of add this will pervert and rob from us the motivation of love to follow Him. It doesn't take much to move us from a motivation of love to a motivation of fear.

And then Paul says what he's been saying all along only more graphically, if you are going to hold yourself to the Law, you have to go all the way. If circumcision is what makes you holy then go the whole way and just cut it off so you can be totally holy.

Paul's like I'm done playing with you. You are teaching this but cant even do it. You are the teacher but you can't even master the curriculum.

Galatians 5:13-15

13 *For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

He's spent most of the time addressing the Jesus+ people and now he addresses the other group. Yes you have freedom but that doesn't mean you just do what you want to gratify yourself.

Through love serve others. This is the same language He used before.

Now how do we know what our motivation is? That part gets tricky, it gets murky. What is our motivation in our service to God and in our pursuit of holiness? This is important because we just spent this whole sermon talking about how if your motivation is fear than you're outside the Gospel. So how can we tell what our motivation is? This passage sets the litmus test: how do you view other people? Don't use your freedom to serve your flesh but instead serve one another.

The Gospel of Jesus sets us free to celebrate other people! To make much of other people, to celebrate their gifts. When other people excel, we get to celebrate that. When other people grieve, when they fall, we get to come alongside them and grieve with them.

When you are walking in fear then other people's success is a threat to you. And their failure, if we're being honest, makes us happy. Motivation by fear pits brothers and sisters in Christ against one another. We don't celebrate each other we compete against them for God's love and attention. Not co-heirs but competition.

So lets get to the bottom of these questions in our hearts, what motivates me when I serve God and pursue holiness.

If you find yourself wanting to be holy, running to God, screwing up, running away, fixing yourself, running back to God, you are in the middle of a fear based religion that doesn't understand that God has already decreed you as holy and blameless.

And through His adopting work, He has already declared you are His child and He delights in you is proud of you and loves you and you are co heirs of all that He has forever in eternity with Him.

Motivated by Fear or Love

GALATIANS 5:1-15 ESV

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2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. **3** I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. **5** For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? **8** This persuasion is not from him who calls you. **9** A little leaven leavens the whole lump. **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.

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. **12** I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **14** For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." **15** But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Small Group Discussion Questions

Verse 1 opens with a striking command: "*stand firm*" and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery. As you read through verses 1–6, what are the two paths Paul lays out? What does he say is at stake for those who choose circumcision as a means of justification?

In verse 4, Paul uses the jarring phrase "severed from Christ" and "fallen away from grace." He's not talking about losing salvation carelessly — what is he actually describing? What does it mean theologically to fall away *from grace* as a system of relating to God?

Paul says in verse 6 that in Christ, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only "*faith working through love*." How does that phrase hold together justification and works? What does it tell us about what genuine saving faith looks like in practice?

Verses 7–12 get sharp — Paul talks about a little leaven leavening the whole lump (v. 9) and even wishes those agitators would "emasculate themselves" (v. 12). What is Paul so alarmed about? Why does he treat this particular false teaching as so corrosive rather than just a theological disagreement?

Verse 13 is a pivot: "*You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh*." How have you seen Christian freedom misused — either into license on

one side or back into legalism on the other? Which temptation do you personally find more subtle or dangerous?

Paul lands on "*love your neighbor as yourself*" (v. 14) as the fulfillment of the whole law. In light of everything he's argued about freedom from law, why is love the right summary rather than just a new rule to follow? What would it look like for you to be in a community that "serves one another through love" (v. 13) this week in a concrete way?