

*Intro:* When we open the Word, here's the prayer... Collision! As we finish our series over the next four sermons, my hope for you is that you would grow in your understanding of the gospel, grow in your desire to live out the gospel, and grow in your desire to live out the gospel by loving one another. As we dive into the text this morning, I want you to think about the concept of running in your lane.

**“Run In Your Lane”**  
**Galatians 5:1-15**

Paul often compares the Christian life to running a race: 1 Cor. 9 – “run to get the prize” Phil 2 – “not run in vain.” The writer of Hebrews, which some believe is Paul, in 12 says, run the race set before us with endurance and joy, fixing our eyes on Christ.

Get the picture of an Olympic athlete... on the starting blocks of a 200m race (halfway around the track). Get off the blocks as fast as you can, run as hard as you can, and stay in your lane! Two great dangers...

As we work through the text this morning, we are going to see that . . .

**The Point: The cross calls us to run free for God through a life of love.**

*Read 5:1-15.* Paul brings his arguments home by speaking very practically about the kind of life we should live in light of the work of Jesus on the cross. These verses will teach us that we should be free from both legalism and licentiousness and free for loving one another. #1

**I. Run in the Scandalous Shadow of the Cross and Be Free from Legalism. (5:1-12)**

- Look in verse one (read) This verse both tells us something that is true for believers, but it also tells us something to do. There is a statement of truth and a command.
- First it tells us, “For freedom Christ has set us free...” We have a hard time understanding freedom because for the most part we can do what we want, when we want.
- Jesus Christ is the greatest Liberator the world has ever known. **Isaiah 61:1** says **“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to . . . proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.”**
- He sets us free to enjoy a life of freedom. Part of the reason we don't grasp our freedom deeply enough is that we don't see how desperate our plight was apart from his liberating power. We were prisoners and slaves.
- Many times we treat the consequences of sin as if we have been sent to timeout or grounded by our parents, really not a huge deal in the grand scheme of things BUT throughout Galatians Paul compares the consequences of our sin to being enslaved and imprisoned.
- This is why it is so important, once we've been freed from our bondage to sin, that we must Stand Firm, and *never* go back!
  
- Though the Galatians had been set free through faith in Christ, false teachers were saying they must be circumcised and keep the law in order to be truly righteous in the sight of God.
- To add anything to purity is to contaminate it. The Judiazers were not simply diluting the gospel. They were changing the substance altogether.

That moves Paul to once more go toe to toe with them with one final flurry of arguments. Remember, Paul got so heated because he was so concerned about the glory of God and the good of the Galatians. Both were wrapped up in the purity of the gospel.

1. He begins in *verse 2*.

- a. It's personal: "Look, I, Paul,... I'm telling you! Listen up!"
  - b. "if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you." "Christ will not profit you at all."
  - c. In the strongest terms, he calls them to not add anything to Christ. Jesus + Nothing...
  - d. It's vogue these days to take matters of doctrine and wave our hand at them. Oh, it's not a huge deal. They say this, you say that, but isn't everyone really saying the same thing. What?!? No, we are not saying the same thing. Asking if theology matters is like asking if your life matters!
  - e. Paul says, to rely on circumcision, or anything else, as that which will profit you is to totally undercut your need for Christ. He will be of no profit to you.
  - f. He goes on to say in *verse 3*.
2. "... he is obligated to keep the whole law."
    - a. Who can keep the law? Man, we can't get past the first commandment. Not one. Much less the rest of them.
    - b. Pic: You might be able to ace one exam, but try doing that on every assignment for your entire life. It's impossible.
    - c. Jesus kept the law perfectly, in our place, so that through faith in him, we might experience life.
  3. Then in *verse 4*, he seals his argument by saying: "You are severed from Christ"
    - a. IF you seek to achieve salvation through your work, you will be estranged from Jesus, (Isolated... removed..)
    - b. You will fall away from grace.
    - c. Paul is clear: you can't have it both ways! To step away from Christ as the sufficiency for our salvation is to abandon grace.
    - d. It's either righteousness by doing and obeying or righteousness as a gift.
  4. Look down at Verse 7... Shifting his focus to the false teachers Paul goes on to describe what is happening...
    - a. They have been cut off by false teaching.... They were running really well. Like a marathon runner, they were moving with speed and persistence, and then bam. An obstacle, a hinderance.
    - b. The false teaching doesn't come from God, Paul says in *verse 8*.
    - c. Then, in *verse 9* he says, just a little bit of their teaching will spread rapidly through the church.
    - d. And what becomes of these false teachers? Paul says they will bear the penalty, and he's okay with that as we see his sarcastic statement in *verse 12*, "Hey, they are telling you to be circumcised, why don't they just go the whole way and emasculate themselves!" Wow.
    - e. Whatever we say from this stage will never get stronger than the Bible. ☺

Paul wants them to embrace the scandal of the cross. We see this in *verse 11*. The cross is a stumbling block, a scandal, because it declares that all human attempts to be right with God are futile. The cross delivers the knockout blow to our pride.

- The gospel refutes works based salvation. Look at *verses 5-6*. It's faith alone in Christ alone by the Spirit alone... Verses 5-6, "Here's the gospel!" Through the Spirit, by faith.
- Legalism: What on earth is legalism? **Legalism is seeking to achieve forgiveness from God, justification before God, and acceptance by God through my obedience to God.**
- Put more succinctly: Legalism is **acceptance through performance.**
- We will always be tempted to define ourselves by what we do rather than who we are. God says, "Find your identity and sense of worth in who you are in me, a person made in my image."
- Legalists come up with ways, normally rules for themselves or others, to feel loved or accepted by God.
- **Legalism says, "It is Jesus Plus \_\_\_\_." The gospel says, "It is Jesus Plus Absolutely Nothing!"**

Trans: As soon as Paul delivers the knockout blow to legalism, he then encounters another perversion of grace, another enemy of the gospel, licentiousness. Look at *verse 13*. Paul now instructs us to . . .

## II. Run in the Scandalous Shadow of the Cross and Be Free from Licentiousness (5:13a)

- Licentiousness – **L I C E N T I O U S N E S S**
- Legalism says, “I must work for God’s forgiveness and acceptance.” But Licentiousness says, **“God’s forgiveness and grace give me the license to live however I want.”**
- “I’ll go ahead and sin because I know God will forgive me”
- That’s what verse 13 is saying, “For you were called to freedom, brothers (repeating the idea of verse 1). Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,”
- “Flesh” refers to our former life apart from Christ, when we were ruled by our sinful desires. We still are being set free from those sinful desires that says, “I matter! I’m the deal. I’m going to do, not what God wants, but what I want, when I want.”
- Pic: Rachael Smith now has the privilege and freedom to drive on two sides of the road, the left side in jolly ole’ Britian and the right side in the USofA. Can you imagine if she took this license and drove 100, ran stop signs and stop lights, barreled through construction zones, and had a total disregard for others on the road. That would be *bloody* foolish! That would be wicked crae!
- Paul is saying, Christ freed us from sin, not to sin. All of us in here, in our sinful, wicked hearts have either thought or practically lived this way. We have said, “Oh, I’ll go ahead and sin this one time, because after all, Christ will forgive me.”
- That’s not the way a Christian should think! But, the sad reality is, you will think like that at some point, and if not you will at some point in your heart live like that. The logic is simple. I know I have forgiveness in Christ. God’s grace is unlimited. I’m going to sin, because I know I’ll be forgiven.
- You know what kind of picture the Bible gives of that mindset? Not a pretty one.
- **“Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” (Proverbs 26:11)**
- If that’s you, when that is you . . . what is revealed in that moment is that you either do not possess a very good understanding of the gospel or a very deep appreciation for the gospel.
- God did not save us to sin but he saved us that we might serve him and live for him.
- **“But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15-16)**
- “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.” He made us to reflect him as his image-bearers. Before Christ changed us, we did not reflect his holiness, but now we are free to
- The great church father, Augustine, was a fornicator and playboy in Hippo before he met Christ. He had many lovers and after God changed his life, he was walking through the city, and one of his old lovers spotted him... Compelled to try to seduce him, she went over to seek his attention . . . more forceful... throws herself in front of him. “It’s me, Augustine, it’s me.” To which Augustine replied, “Yes, but it’s not me.”
- The God of the Universe loves us?!? We should be humbled to the dust! And so eager to live a life that pleases him.
- When we recognize the glory of the cross, we will not want to go back to that which brings shame and destruction in our lives. Our confession now is this: Jesus is Lord! Whatever he says, goes! And we gladly follow him, wherever he calls us!

Trans. – So Paul has instructed to stand firm in the freedom Christ give from legalism and licentiousness, but what are we free for? (*Read 13b-15*)

## III. Run in the Scandalous Shadow of the Cross and Be Free to Love One Another (5:13b-15) (5:1-12)

Everyone is a player! Everyone has a runner’s tag... Let’s run. Let’s go!

- We have been set free so that we can live a life of love. What are the two greatest commandments? Mt. 22:37-40 If all of life is about glorifying God why doesn't he include both. 1) The whole book of Galatians is about glorifying God with our lives. Even this passage is saying how we live our lives reflects what we believe about Christ and the cross. 2) Loving our neighbor is proof of our love for God and stems from our love of God. This law is given by God, it's his good idea, so fulfilling it is a way we love Him.
- Love begets love. The cross was the greatest expression of love the world has ever known, and when we see Christ crucified, he will move us to love God and our neighbor with everything we have.
- **"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13)**
- **"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)**
- The fulfilling of this command should start right here. Let me ask you a personal question. Do you love this church? Do you really care about one another? Can people see that?
- When we gather as a church, there should be some excitement. Hey, I get to see \_\_ , and \_\_ , and \_\_\_\_ . In your interaction with others, let love be the priority
- How should we live this out practically? "through love serve one another." The greek literally reads: "But through love become slaves of one another." So we are free from our selfish desires so that we might truly serve those around us.
- **Martin Luther**, in one of his more famous writings entitled *The Freedom of a Christian* said: **"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."**

#### Application

- How can I serve you? What can I do to make your life more enriched today? How can I point you to God through my motives and conduct?

#### **PIC: Thanksgiving Meal Giveaway!**

-I think one of the greatest ways you can serve someone is simply to spend time with them. You can show the love of Christ be simply befriending them. I want to challenge you this weekend, practice loving someone else by spending time with them and getting to know them.

-You can show love by putting others ahead of yourself: Phil. 2:3 "Look to their interests before yours. The essence of love is seeking out what is best for the other. It is self-giving.

-This might mean going the extra mile: giving rides, cleaning... meeting needs when people are sick.

- Pray for them.

- Share the gospel with them. Speak truth... Evangelistic networking.. Praying for specific people... The greatest way that we can love someone is by sharing the gospel with them. If there is nothing more important than glorifying God and where people spend eternity, then we must be telling people how they can experience abundant life now and eternal life in heaven.

#### **Evangelistic Networking Slide**

- If you are focused on yourself, you will have a hard time loving others. If you are focused on yourself you will look a lot more like *verse 15*, then you do *verse 14*.
- The Christian life is like a race. Christ is the path to freedom and Christ is the goal of freedom. Run for him and run to him.

#### **Conclusion**

**Jn. 13:35, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

What an apologetic, witness.... To the veracity of the gospel.. God changes us... "Today salvation has come to this house."

Prayer.