
A Cup Overflowing – A study of the Christian life

Lesson 5:

A Christian Life is...

A Freedom-filled Life

“It is for freedom...”

- “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”
- Does this sound like it was written by someone who had been shipwrecked, publicly flogged, imprisoned, slandered, maligned by people he converted, and deserted by friends?
- “Free” probably isn’t the first word that comes to mind.

Just like us

- Yet Paul was just like us.
 - When he came to Christ, he was made free.
 - Is that “freedom from” or “freedom to”?
 - It’s a little of both:
 - **From** the need to justify himself to his critics.
 - **From** the need to hide his dealings and motives from God or man.
 - **From** the harsh realities of life. (Free, but not exempt!)
 - **To** throw himself in utter dependence on God.
 - **To** admit he was weak and inadequate for the job he was called to do.
 - **To** relinquish his freedom in many things.

Free!

- We are free because we're forgiven.
- We are free to say "no" to legalism.
- We are free to say "no" to freedom.
- We are free from abusive emotions and anxiety.
- We are free to do what we want to do.

Free because forgiven

- “forgiven much” = “loves much”
“forgiven little” = “loves little”
- Does that make any sense?
 - You mean just because I grew up with parents who were Christians, just because I went to church 3 times a week as a kid, just because I never did drugs or ran around with the wrong crowd – just because I didn’t have a “conversion experience”, I don’t love Jesus as much as someone who *did* have “the experience”?

Free because forgiven

- “forgiven much” = “loves much”
“forgiven little” = “loves little”
- Does that make any sense?
- “There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Romans 3:22-24 NIV

Free because forgiven

- “forgiven much” = “loves much”
“forgiven little” = “loves little”
- Does that make any sense?
- “...all have sinned and fall short...”
- Did you ever consider the fact that part of God’s forgiving us is his *trusting* us?
 - Isaiah
 - Moses
 - Peter

Free to say “no” to legalism

- What is legalism?
 - “Strict, literal adherence to the law or to a particular code, as of religion or morality.” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*)

Free to say “no” to legalism

- What is legalism?

- “...literal adherence to the law...”
- “Keeping rules for rules’ sake.” (*The Holman Bible Dictionary*)

Free to say “no” to legalism

- What is legalism?

- “...literal adherence to the law...”
- “Keeping rules for rules’ sake.”
- Seeking justification by observing the law.

Galatians 2:15-16

Free to say “no” to legalism

■ What is legalism?

- “...literal adherence to the law...”
- “Keeping rules for rules’ sake.”
- Seeking justification by observing the law.
- “An attitude of strict and rigid adherence to Mosaic Law, expressed in Scripture as reliance on observing the law...
 - ...as a means to salvation, (Rom 10:2-3)
 - ...as a means of spiritual growth, (Gal 3:1-3)
 - ...as a criterion of acceptance in the Christian community. (Gal 2:11-14)”

Revell Bible Dictionary

Free to say “no” to legalism

■ What is legalism?

- “Legalism is an unhealthy stress – an emphasis – rather than a carefully defined position with a given number of creedal points.”

Jim McGuiggan

- No one teaches that we will get to heaven based on strict law-keeping.
 - Yet by our actions we sometimes *practice* legalism without *preaching* it.
 - It’s easy to do – our own U.S. legal system is based on strict law-keeping, so that’s what we see day-to-day.

Free to say “no” to legalism

- What is legalism?
- So, other than the fact that it’s not a scriptural concept, what’s wrong with legalism?
 - Legalism nurtures the view that *God’s kindness toward people hinges on their worthiness*, while the gospel insists that God’s kindness hinges on his own gracious character, despite the fact that humans are unworthy.
 - Legalism abuses and perverts God’s law by exalting it to central place. IOW, God is taken away and replaced by a code.
 - Legalists are characterized by their devotion to a God who has a profound difficulty in forgiving, rather than a God who is patient with us and anxious to forgive.
(Micah 7:18; 2 Peter 3:9)

Free to say “no” to freedom

- The same man of God who wrote, “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” also wrote, “I make myself a slave to everyone” and “It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.”
- Just because we have a freedom doesn't mean we have to exercise it.

Free from abusive emotions and anxiety

- This is distinctly different from being “free from abuse”.
 - “I’ll never be good enough to go to heaven.”
 - “I can’t talk to my friends about Christ because they know how I *really* am and they’ll think I’m a hypocrite.”
 - “After what I’ve done, I just *can’t* go to church this week. I don’t know when I’ll be able to show my face there again!”
 - “I’m so frustrated; every time I pray for forgiveness for _____, I go and do it again!”

Free from abusive emotions and anxiety

- This is distinctly different from being “free from abuse”.
- Five times in Luke 12 Jesus says “do not be afraid”.
 - And this is in the same chapter that he tells his disciples that men will plot to kill them, and will drag them before the “synagogues, rulers, and authorities.”
 - He also tells them “your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”

Free to do what we want to do

- The same God who gave Adam & Eve the choice of whether or not to eat the forbidden fruit gives us the same choice.
 - **BUT** A&E paid the price for their disobedience.
 - We can choose to be disobedient as well. Some of our sins will have physical consequences, even though we may have repented and received forgiveness.
- We can also do whatever we want to do, and as Christians, we *should* do what we want to do.
 - Paul wrote to the Romans that he wasn't always able to do that. (Romans 7:15-21)

“It is for freedom...”

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

Next week...

- A Christian Life is *A Grace-filled Life*

Notes for *A Christian Life is Freedom-filled Life*

Slide 2:

- Galatians 5:1 (NIV)

Slide 3:

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- **Question #1 on class handout.** Romans 8:2, “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”
- So Paul gave an example of what Christ sets us free **from**, but there are elements of both. **Question #2 on the handout.**
 - **FROM** the need to justify himself to his critics, from the need to hide his dealings and motives from God or man, and free from the harsh realities of life. That’s **free**, but not **exempt!**
TO throw himself in utter dependence on God, to admit he was weak and inadequate for the job he was called to do, and to relinquish his freedom in many things.

Slide 4:

- We’ll discuss each of these as we get to them. Let’s not make any judgments on that last one until we get there!

Slide 5:

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- First of all – that’s not exactly a fair way to put it. A better way to say it would be that someone who has come out of a rebellious or perverse lifestyle into Christianity knows the pit of hell he came *out* of when he became a Christian. Someone like that is more likely to “feel more forgiven” than someone who grew up in a Christian home.
- Second – I didn’t say it, Jesus did (**Luke 7:36-47**).
- Third – there’s absolutely no reason to feel “at a disadvantage” because of not having been in the thick of wickedness.

Slide 6:

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- We're all in the same boat – we're all sinners. We're all in need of forgiveness, regardless of our lifestyle before coming to Christ. At the point of coming to Christ, it doesn't matter if we'd been guilty of 10 thousand sins or 10 billion sins. It doesn't matter how "bad" those sins were, or if they were mostly the "little white lie" type of sins. It doesn't matter because, as Paul said, "There is no difference...we all fall short." Each one of us has just an equally dire need to accept God's gracious offer of salvation.

Slide 7:

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- ***Question #3 on the handout.***
 - Consider Isaiah... He had "followed the crowd" into unbelief, and had trusted a powerful human king (the good king Uzziah) more than he trusted the true King. After Uzziah died though, Isaiah saw God on his throne and was convicted of his sin. (Isaiah 6:1-10). In spite of Isaiah's sin, when Isaiah repented, God forgave him and trusted him again. *And God does that same thing time and time again with us!*
 - Moses... Struck the rock, but was still allowed to lead the Israelites and act as their intercessor with God. Of course, he still had to pay the *consequences* of his sin, and wasn't allowed to enter the Promised Land. Moses exemplifies the fact that we can be forgiven, but we must still accept the consequences of our sin.
 - Peter... Denied Christ, but barely 7 weeks later delivered the first gospel sermon.

Slide 8-10: <none>

Slide 11:

- All of these definitions have at least partial merit in a discussion such as this. It seems though, that the best definition of legalism for our purposes in this lesson would carry the idea of ***trying to achieve justification or a superior moral state based on one's adherence to the law.***

Slide 12:

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- Jim's definition of legalism is not necessarily any better than any other, but it does show the way that we sometimes *practice* legalism even though we may not preach it. (He gives this definition in the book *Where the Spirit of the Lord is...*, in the chapter "Free from Legalism", pg 91.)

Slide 13:

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- Unfortunately, there probably won't be adequate time in this class period to discuss all these points.

Slide 14:

- 2 Corinthians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 9:19; Romans 14:21
- Let's be careful not to take this to the extreme, and in so doing reverse it! For example, Peter did just that in Galatians 2:12-14. Although he had the "freedom" to eat with the Gentiles, the act of *not* eating with them was not wrong in and of itself. It was *why* he chose to not eat with them that made it wrong.

Slide 15:

- Clearly we are *not* free from abuse – or from any other evil that satan chooses to fill the world with. What we *are* free from are the feelings of inadequacy and insecurity that are literally the "chains that bind", and are the tools that satan uses to keep us focused on our own inadequacy instead of on the sufficiency and Lordship of Christ.
 - Take these and add any number of similar emotions or feelings, and it's easy to see one common thread – **self-focus!** With regard to the first one, that's exactly right – you're *not* good enough to go to heaven, and neither is anyone else. Praise the Lord that we don't *have* to depend on *our* goodness to be justified. As to the second one, what better way to show that "Christians aren't perfect; just forgiven"? They should be able to see by your life where your eternal focus is. And so on, for the third & fourth, and however many we keep on listing.

Slide 16:

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- Are we to assume that these hand-picked disciples of the Lord Jesus were never afraid or never had any anxiety at all? Of course not – these are perfectly natural human feelings. There's nothing wrong with these feelings, but there *is* a wrong way to deal with them. If we let them "control our life", then obviously there's something else in control (at least as far as our actions are concerned) besides the One who is truly in control. We should use our anxiety as an opportunity to speak to the Father, to lean on him for peace, and to allow him to deliver us from the anxiety. This is not necessarily easy, but like most things it gets easier with practice.
- This isn't an indication that he was merely *willing* to give them the kingdom, but that it *pleased* him to do so! The word used carries both the notions of God's will and his pleasure

Slide 17:

- We are literally free to do whatever we want to do! God gives us the choice – we can obey or we can choose not to obey.

There is another sense in which we are free to do what we want to do...

Slide 18:

- So, whenever you think about our freedom in Christ, remember that it is this very **freedom** that allows us to *choose* to be **slaves** to God (Romans 6:18-22).

Slide 19: <none>