

The Great Emancipator

TEXT/INTRO: Take your Bible and turn to Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, Galatians chapter 5 and v.1. This letter of Paul's is tied for first place in the books of the Bible that I appreciate most. The other book is Romans. Both books make it unmistakably clear how the sinner, the ungodly, are to be made right with God, or better, justified before God. This is how the Reformers summed it up. "Justification is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, by the gospel alone, for God's glory alone." As my folks at Eastway know, that statement is called "The Five Solas," meaning "the five alones." And if you don't know or have forgotten what the word justification means, here it is, "God has proclaimed all who have faith in Jesus as righteous." Justification means that God has literally announced or declared or proclaimed that all who are in Christ by His calling are now and always will be right with Him. And you at Eastway know what comes next, **"Once justified, always justified."**

I hope you have a Bible handy and will read the verses we're going to examine this morning as I reference them. Gal. 5, v.1. ^{NAU}
Galatians 5:1 *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.* That yoke of slavery would be the law of Moses.

² *Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, (or any other part of the law as necessary for justification) Christ will be of no benefit to you.* It's a matter of who's going to pay for your sins, you or Jesus? If you answer anything other than Jesus, you're in trouble. Justification or salvation isn't Jesus plus the law. The gospel isn't Jesus plus good deeds you put on equal standing with His substitutionary atonement.

³ *And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that **he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.***

⁴ *You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.*

During the Civil War President Abraham Lincoln issued what promised to be the greatest proclamation ever from a head of state, The Emancipation Proclamation. It was intended to free the slaves and appease his constituents who mouthed their supposed desire to free the slaves living in bondage in the South. As it turned out, it did neither.

Many of the “freed” former slaves immediately flooded the North and found more of the same waiting for them there. The former slaves discovered unemployment instead of livable wages and living conditions as bad, if not worse, than they had known in the South. That reminds me of a sarcastic little idiom, “new boss same as old boss.” Northerners of that era despised the poor, ragged, uneducated Negro as much as their neighbors to the south did. Fallen, sinful man is the same wherever he’s found.

I see a parallel condition within the visible church being perpetuated by men and women who preach from our world’s pulpits each week. The parallel is the empty promise these self-called pastors offer their hearers of righteousness through good deeds. They offer their congregants liberty through law. They are as accursed as were the Judaizers of Paul’s day.

This past Thursday a voice came up on my iPad that I had never heard before coming from a preacher I had never heard before from a church I had never heard of before. The preacher sounded young and absolutely convinced about the topic he was talking about. He was preaching on pursuing holiness by using law and grace as though they were inseparable and even compatible. His lesson was so brief that I missed the info that would have let me contact him and I haven’t been able to find him again. I would’ve liked to discuss his theology with him to make sure he meant to say what he in fact was saying. His theology is what lies behind my sermon this morning.

He sounded like some of the students our seminaries have been producing over the last four decades. The so-called “conservative takeover” of our SBC seminaries produced as many Pharisees as they have solid men of God. I am glad the conservative resurgence happened

but being there when it happened at my seminary, I witnessed first-hand the hypocrisy and the deception coming out of the mouths of our then president and the students who almost worshipped him. Things are changing in our seminaries thanks to presidents who embrace grace over works. But the damage is done. Only God is to be exalted for our being justified.

This is my first observation,

God has graciously liberated us from bondage to His own law.

That sounds rather blasphemous to many who preach behind a pulpit each week. For instance, I once was a member of a Baptist church where one of the pastors said on a Sunday morning to a large crowd of people, “If you’re not tithing, you’re not saved.” Seriously! I heard him say that with my own ears. The apostle Paul would say about that man, “Let him be anathema!”

God has graciously liberated us from bondage to His own law.

Does that mean that God has a problem with His own law? No, may it never be said. And here’s why I say that,

Did you know the law of God was given to make our sins even worse than they already were? Seriously. Read this in Romans 5, ²⁰ *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more,*

²¹ *so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 5:20-21 NAU)*

That is so not what most Christians would ever in their wildest dreams think was behind God’s giving the law. Most of those who are in Christ are totally oblivious as to why the law was given to the Jews in the first place and then held over the heads of the entire world populace as God’s standard of holiness and judgment. ¹⁹ *Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; (Rom. 3:19 NAU)*

4

And this, ¹⁹ *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, (Gal. 3:19 NAU)*

And this,

⁵⁶ *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; (1 Cor. 15:56 NAU)*

In mine and Beverly's neighborhood we requested of our police department that more speed limit signs be put up on our street because some of the drivers who drive up and down our particular street have been driving like they're out on Albemarle Road or the Charlotte Motor Speedway rather than in a residential area. We have one neighbor I call "Mustang Sauly" because he drives a really loud Mustang and he's one of our local speeders. The speed limit hasn't changed since forever, but now no one can drive on our street without coming up on a speed limit sign telling them the speed limit is 25. We still have the occasional offender but not because they haven't been warned. The speed limit was originally set up as 25 because drivers were driving carelessly and thoughtlessly. ¹⁹ *Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, (Gal. 3:19 NAU)*

Most of the laws in our nation were added because of some kind of offensive behavior by our citizens, some kind of transgression or crime against other of our citizens. God's laws cover every transgression fallen man has ever committed and will commit.

²⁰ *The Law came in so that the transgression would increase. And that's where we have a different purpose for our neighborhood law. We want the transgressions to decrease.*

And that begs the question, "Why in the world would God ever want the transgressions to increase. Doesn't He hate sin?" Of course He does. So here's why. Transgressions that increase make the transgressions more visible and more offensive even to the human eye. Increasing transgressions are designed by God to make us seek Him for deliverance from the death penalty that goes with them. God is going to some day pour out His wrath on this world and He sincerely doesn't want anyone to face it. He sincerely wants all to hear and believe the

gospel and be saved. That isn't going to happen but not because God hasn't posted signs all over the place.

Read this,

²⁴ *Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.* God designed the law to make our sin appear so utterly sinful that we would cry out to Him for help. The law was never intended to be the way to be saved or justified. It was intended to make sin really, really ugly and as dangerous as COVID19. The law of Moses exposed our deadness and our sinfulness and even exacerbated our sinfulness.

Notice this, beloved, God's will from the beginning of time was that we would be justified by faith since that is the only way fallen man can be justified. We're born dead in our trespasses and sins and the dead can't do anything about their own salvation. And if you have ever wondered if man has free will, the answer is no, not until God gave us life and light and faith. The dead are slaves to sin and can't do anything but live under slavery to their sins.

And if you have ever wondered how humans can make all the decisions we make like buying a car or a house or choosing which career path to take or which person we marry without free will, we do all that while living under the power of the prince of the power of the air, without exception. **Ephesians 2:1** *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,*

² *in which you formerly walked **according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.***

³ *Among them we too **all** formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*

(Eph. 2:1-3 NAU)

And then Paul uses two of the most powerful words in all of Scripture, "But God!" ⁴ *But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*

6

⁵ *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),*
(Eph. 2:4-5 NAU)

And there it is, “**Love lifted me.**”

I close with this, **Galatians 5:1** *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal. 5:1 NAU)*

No matter what law in the law of Moses or in the ordinances that followed that some pastor or teacher tells you you must keep if you want to be made right with God, flee. That one is deceived and deceiving.

Here’s the gospel and why it’s such great news. God the Father did through God the Son, for us, His enemies, what was and is impossible for us to do for ourselves and that is obey Him perfectly, live without sin, keep the law perfectly, all on our behalf, and pay for our sins by suffering and dying as the spotless Lamb of God.

the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,
²⁹ *so that no man may boast before God.*

³⁰ *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,*

³¹ *so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." (1 Cor. 1:28-2:1 NAU)*

In Jesus’ name, amen.