

Study: Galatians 5:1-12—Don't Just Do Something - Stand There!

Slavery has a long and sordid history in the United States and elsewhere. In this week's study we will talk about freedom and slavery as metaphors for what our life is like with and without Christ. This is not being done to diminish the evils of slavery, but to highlight the great work that Christ has done on our behalf.

Opening

The word "freedom" means different things to different people. When you hear the word "freedom," what images or ideas come to mind and why?

¹ For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

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!

(Galatians 5:1-12 ESV)

FREEDOM!

When have you felt most free in your life?

Paul begins by challenging the Galatians to not submit again to a yoke of slavery - implying that before they were Christians they were somehow enslaved. Think back to when you became a Christian. What aspects of freedom in Christ were most significant to you?

Stand Firm

In verse one Paul's exhortation to the Galatians was not to take action, but to stand firm. Does this fit with your idea of freedom? How and how not?

- Is it easier for you to act or not act?

- How does your preference mesh with Paul's call to "stand firm" (i.e. in faith, to refrain from doing something)?

On What We Stand

Divide into three groups. Have each group look at one of the scriptures below and share with the larger group:

- The truth in which we need to stand firm.
- What it looks like to stand firm in that truth.

Group One:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23, ESV)

Group Two:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:8-10, ESV)

Group Three:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16, ESV)

Nothing or Not?

In verses two through four, Paul says that if you accept circumcision, then Christ is nothing for you and you are obligated to keep the whole law (the mosaic law). In verse six Paul seems to contradict himself and say that circumcision doesn't mean anything. How can both of these statements be true?

What are some actions that people today do to try and prove to God that they are good (or do so that they can be good)?

- How do those actions deny the cross?

Did Paul Really Say That?

Can you think of a time when you've shocked someone to make a point?

In verse twelve Paul makes a shocking statement. He says, "I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!" Do you think that Paul really means this or is he using hyperbole to make his point?

- What was it that motivated Paul to make this statement?
- How can we respond when we hear or see people being led away from the true Gospel?

What is our community application of this passage?