

The Gospel Sets You Free

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[0 : 0 0] All right, good to see you guys. This is awesome. Love the new place. Those of you who don't know me, yeah, all right, let's take a moment for that. That's good, that's appropriate, all right.

It really is exciting. My name is Jesse, for those of you who don't know me, one of the pastors. I have the privilege of pastoring One Harbor Church here in Havelock, and it's been awesome. Man, I just so love this group that God has brought together.

I am so thankful for all your faces and all your stories, too, of what God is doing in your life. If you are new, we are so glad you are here with us today. We love having new guests.

New guests are the opportunity to make new friends and add to this amazing family that God is forming. And we're also obviously excited to be in this new spot. So it's new digs, but it's the same gig for us.

We gather together and we make much of Jesus. That's what we're all about, and making disciples and all that. So if you have your Bible, would you please turn to Galatians?

[0 : 5 7] We're gonna start in verse 10. We're continuing on. Second part of our series in Galatians. It's been amazing. And we titled this series, Galatians is the Gospel for All. But what we see as we move through this book, we're gonna see that, man, it's a gospel for all, but it's a book about fighting for our freedom in Jesus.

That's what it is. And so before the Beastie Boys told us we needed to fight for our right to party, we have Paul here in Galatians telling us we need to fight for our freedom that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. That's what we gotta do.

Because there are false gospels out there. There's false beliefs that sing their sweet intoxicating songs like seductive sirens, promising us everything, but in the end as we follow them and we listen to those voices, we end up dashed on the rocks.

We lose our gospel freedom. Now if you're new to Christianity, maybe this notion of freedom is a surprise to you, you're thinking, you know what, man, Christianity isn't really known for its freedom, Jesse.

You know, you guys tend to be kind of the cranky curmudgeons out there that are always telling people what they can't do, right? And Christianity, yeah, we are kind of known for kind of our picket sign type of things.

[2 : 0 8] You can't do this, you can't do that. And that's unfortunate because the gospel is good news. It's the good news that tells us and declares over us that we are set free.

And in the next part of Galatians, we're gonna see how freeing this gospel is. So verse 10, let's read it together. There will be verses on the screen behind me as well. For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God?

Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.

For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Let me read that first part again. For am I now seeking the approval of man or of God?

Or am I trying to please man? Here is an unexpected liberation from a horrible kind of slavery, and it's this.

[3 : 14] The gospel, what it does, it sets us free from people pleasing. Now, this is something we all have in common. You're probably sitting there and say, I'm not one of those guys. I'm not a people pleaser. Let's see.

Let's find out. Because I think we're all slaves to the approval of others. We run around trying to please people all the time, and even we can sit there and act like we don't care what people think, but man, deep down we do, if we're honest.

We all need approval. We dress for approval. We get into hobbies for approval. We go to church for approval. We consent to society's ethics for approval.

If you still don't believe me, let me present to you a pair of witnesses that will prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, how right I am. Their names are Mr. Social Media and Mrs. Selfie.

All right? Why are we so addicted to social media? Why are we so addicted to posting selfies? Think about this, guys. If we didn't crave approval, then sites like Facebook and Twitter and Instagram and Reddit, I mean, how many of these things do we need to be on, right?

[4 : 19] All these would just become another MySpace. And I just want to say this. If you're still nursing a MySpace account, we have an intervention room in the back for you.

We would like to take you to after the service, okay? Anyways, but most of these things, most of these things are outlets to fish for compliments. Like, even the self-effacing posts that we put up there are applauded for their authenticity.

And we can get addicted to that kind of, we can get addicted to any type of praise, right? Let me be honest. When I tweet, because that's the only thing I do, I'm like horrible at Facebook. Sorry, if you're like messaging me on Facebook, guess what?

You're never going to get that message returned back because I'm never on that thing. When I tweet, I find myself after a couple of hours wanting to go in and find out how many likes or comments or shares or pokes or hearts or whatever reactions there are out there to get.

I want to see how many I got. But why? Why are we like this? Why do you think we're so hungry to get a well done or a like from other people?

[5 : 24] Well, let me tell you, the answer is a little bit surprising. The Bible tells us that that's actually what we're made for. God created us God created everything.

It says he spoke and he said and then it was and it appeared and after he created, he looked at it and he declared something. He said, hmm, that is good. He blessed what he created.

After he made everything, he blessed what he created. When he formed man and woman from the dust, he looked at them and he blessed them. He said, this is very good, which is to say he looked at us and gave a good judgment.

He declared goodness over us. He said, you are complete. You're lacking nothing. You are enough. I delight in who you are just as you are. That's the story of the Bible from creation.

We were made to hear the loving affirmation of our creator and our king resound in our hearts. But, it all went wrong and here's where it all went wrong.

- [6 : 27] we traded his truth for a lie that said we weren't enough. See, Satan's deception, when you go back and read it, he's intimating this little thing.
- Maybe there is even more than what God says you are. Maybe you aren't enough. Maybe you could be even more. And so, what happened? We ate that lie.
- Literally and figuratively. We ate that lie and it went into our souls and poisoned our hearts. And I could argue that every sin stems from this need for approval.
- It drives us to do what we shouldn't and to not do what we should. Let me give you some common examples. First, a spouse, rightfully so, desires affection but doesn't get it.
- And this approval deficit may build up over time or immediately drive them to find it somewhere else. Maybe it's with a real person. Maybe it's through pornography. Let me give you another example.
- [7 : 31] A boy or girl grows up with little to zero approval from their parental figures. So, they become promiscuous trying to find that approval through people that are willing to take advantage of their neediness.
- Or they join an accepting group. Sometimes that looks like a gang. Sometimes it's a social club. Sometimes it's even a church. And that group gives them the approval that they long for as long as they become just like one of them and keep the rules.
- Let me give you a third one. After years of believing they're never enough or don't measure up or always being put down, a man or a woman just needs to numb that pain.
- Just feeling like, man, this is so hard. I am just never enough. And so, they binge. They binge on food or they binge on alcohol or they binge on drugs for escape.
- That's what happens. And these all happen on a spectrum and in different ways. And if we thought about it, we would find ourselves somewhere in one or more of those scenarios if we're honest with ourselves.
- [8 : 42] But here's the good news, guys. The good news of the gospel is that we can be set free from this need for people's approval. We can be set free from the need to get our sense of value from others.
- And if you think about this, remember, we started out, God created, and he looked at the work of his hands and he said, it is good. Well, guess what, guys? In Christ, what are we?
- We are a new creation. We are the work of his hands again. And God looks at what he did in us, he did in your heart, how he saved you, forming and fashioning and recreating you, and he looks at it and he says, man, this is good.
- This is complete. This is enough. And that is the wonderful news that breaks into our hearts at salvation. We hear the highest, most important blessing that we really want.
- And that is the blessing of God the Father. He looks down and says what he said to Jesus at his baptism. This is my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.
- [9 : 54] Think about how God welcomes Christians into heaven. What does it tell us in the Bible? We come in and he says, man, well done, well done, good and faithful servant.
- He welcomes us and he blesses us, right? We are made for blessing. It's what we crave. It's what we want. And the beauty of the gospel is that it tells us we don't have to work to earn it.
- We start from blessing and work from that. Just like Adam and Eve. God created them before they did anything. It says he blessed them. The same with Jesus. Before he did any of his public ministry or did any signs and wonders, preached any sermon, God the Father blessed him from heaven, my beloved son in whom I'm well pleased.
- Guys, that's freedom. That is freedom. If you live to please people, you will always have to earn that blessing. Side note for parents.

Think about how un-gospel our parenting is some of the time. Maybe too much of the time. We can repeat the mistakes of our parents who disciplined us into people pleasing, right?

[11 : 01] If we only ever blessed them if they perform, if they do X, Y, and Z. So what we're disciplining them into is like, well, I'm not going to say I love you or I'm not going to say I'm pleased with you until you earn it.

And that's what pleasing people is going to do. You're going to have this drive that you have to do something or you have to have something or you have to be something to earn the blessing.

And then to get another blessing, you've got to earn it again and the cycle just never ends. It burns you out. It makes you bitter. And guess what? You die totally unsatisfied. But the gospel changes it.

The gospel stops it because Jesus earned that blessing for us. He did the work and we receive it by faith. We don't have to earn it. We receive it by faith. And guess what, guys? We remain in that blessing by faith.

We don't receive it once and they have to keep trying to earn it. Now, it's one thing if we agree, man, that's really good, Jesse. I like that. I think that's true.

[12 : 01] It's one thing to think that to be true or know it to be true. It's really hard to live in that reality. I'm going to be honest with you. There's a real struggle and I think we all struggle and we have to fight for our freedom in Christ.

And one of the big reasons that we struggle is that we know who we used to be. It's hard to imagine that God really forgives all of that.

Maybe that isn't your struggle. Maybe you do believe God forgives it all when that's awesome. Man, it's cool to live in that freedom. But maybe your struggle is that you live in fear of people finding out about your past.

But hiding from your past is just another form of slavery. Verse 13 of Galatians. Paul goes on to talk about himself in this way.

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people.

[13 : 07] So extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born and he called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone.

Nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went up to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Man, Paul, he's been sitting in the gospel for 14 years.

And you know what? He's gotten to a place where he's living in freedom, man. This is how free he is in the gospel. He doesn't hide who he was. That's amazing. That's the power of the gospel when we hold onto it and we live in it and we live by faith with it.

The gospel sets us free from our past. Okay, Paul was a Pharisee. That's his past. There was no one more dedicated than these guys to the Jewish religion.

As a Pharisee, he was devoted to the law of Moses and for good reason. Israel had lost its power and place in the world because they failed to keep the law of Moses.

[14 : 13] They failed to keep God's covenant. And so the Pharisees became this zealous group to prevent that from ever happening again. They were vigilant.

Guys, they memorized the first five books of the Bible. Could you imagine like trying to pull that off? Like try to memorize a chapter of the Bible and that's like brutal. These guys knew Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy.

They could quote it to you by heart. They didn't want to allow any possibility that the law could be forgotten. Not one dot, not one iota, not one T cross.

They didn't want to lose any of it. And they taught it and they enforced it like Nazis. They added new rules and regulations to the laws that were already there just to make sure that God would be pleased.

And this zeal to be righteous by keeping God's law was their hope. It was their hope for the nation of Israel is the hope that that nation would be restored to its power and its prominence.

[15 : 13] And they were trying to earn their way back. They were trying to earn their favor with God through their own works. So no surprise that these guys are freaking out when Jesus comes and he's doing his thing because Jesus broke some of their rules, right?

Healing people on the Sabbath. Well, you're not supposed to work on the Sabbath. That's breaking a rule. You shouldn't be doing that, Jesus. Eating with sinners. No, no, no, no.

You're not, the clean is not supposed to mix with the unclean because if the clean mixes with the unclean, you become unclean. You're not supposed to mix with sinners. You're not supposed to eat with them. You got to keep your distance. Jesus breaking that rule.

And then, of course, the big one claiming that he was God's son. Well, that's blasphemy. That's a big no-no. Can't do that. Broke the biggest rule. Jesus was a threat. He was a threat to them.

And sure, he was doing miracles and they recognized that and they saw that he had authority and wisdom that they couldn't deny. But what they also saw was he was leading people into disobedience.

[16 : 17] Check out what they said. This is just after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. And people are following Jesus now because it's like, okay, that's a sign you can't deny. Raising someone from the dead, that's some power.

So it says in verse 47, is it 7 or 47? Sorry. Okay. So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, what are we to do?

For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone's going to believe him. And the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.

Man, those guys, they were nervous. They were nervous, man. Jesus was pulling them away from their camp. We're the rule keepers. We're doing it right. We're earning our way back into God's favor. He's going to restore them. And then here comes this Jesus guy and he's breaking all our rules and he's leading people astray.

We've got to stop this. These were the guys that disciplined Paul. This is the education Paul grew up in. This camp. And Paul went to the Harvard of Pharisee school.

[17 : 17] Okay. He was like Ivy League, magna cum laude, honors. He was the dude. He became the consummate Christian hater. He was proud to have been a part of the group that crucified Jesus and he did this out of misguided zeal.

But he was dedicated to purging Israel of these Christian heretics. He was about as likely a convert to Christianity as Osama bin Laden. Think about it that way. But that's the power of the gospel.

Right? Paul isn't hiding his past. He isn't like, oof, man, I just hope everyone forgets who I was. You know? He doesn't. And his past is bad.

He confesses, I persecuted the church violently and was out to destroy it. I mean, I don't know if there is anything more offensive than that.

He is writing to Christians. Part of his testimony is probably having to look some people in the eye and said, yeah, I was there to prosecute your son or daughter or your parent or father and they were killed because of me.

[18 : 25] But here he is talking about it. The part we all want to hide away and hope never gets discovered. And that's true freedom, guys. That is true freedom. The gospel, it frees us from our past.

And it never makes us hide from our past. And it's because of this. The gospel redeems who we were and what we did. Verse 15, Paul goes on to say, but, all these things that I used to do, but, but for God, but when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace was pleased to reveal his son to me in order that I might preach among the Gentiles.

I did not immediately consult with anyone, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away to Arabia and returned again to Damascus. Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days, but I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

In what I'm writing to you before God, I do not lie. Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia and I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ.

They only were hearing it said, check this out, he who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they glorified God because of me.

[19 : 56] True freedom, guys, isn't hiding who you were. It's celebrating God redeeming what you were. Paul is boasting here.

He is boasting in God's powerful work in his own life. I went from Christian persecutor to gospel preacher. His story is the power of the gospel on display.

And if you are a Christian, you have your gospel story too. You do. You and I do. Our past is part of our gospel story.

And it's not meant to be hidden, it's meant to be heralded. Let me say without shame, you know what I used to be. I used to be a porn addict. I used to be a people pleaser.

I used to be self-righteous. I used to be an overly opinionated jerk. That's who I was. Sometimes God works slowly, so I'm not like fully out of this.

[20 : 55] God's, he's redeemed that Jesse, but he's still redeeming. He's still working some of that stuff out. But here's the fact. Here is the fact. When we boast in our weakness, when we boast in who we were, we put God's power on display.

I'm going to ask you this. What gets us to buy the latest Ab Blaster or Thighmaster or PX90 thing? It's the before and after pics, right? We don't sit there and like, man, I really need a good scientific explanation for how this exactly is going to work before I buy into it.

No. We look at the transformation and we think, man, that person looked just like me before. So I can go from that to that? That could be me.

Guys, our testimony in Jesus is like that. And if we don't point to our past, if we don't point to the before picture, man, it loses its potency. The power of the gospel, the power of our testimony loses its potency unless we're able to get honest and boast in our weaknesses and failures.

And that's what Paul's doing here. That's what he's doing. And guys, man, if you have no hope that this could happen, I hope Paul's story gives you hope. I'm pretty sure no one in this room murders Christians, right, as a side hobby.

[22 : 17] If Jesus can transform Paul's life, he can do it to you. All right? If you're stuck in addiction, hiding that part of your life away, hoping no one will ever discover it, Jesus can save you from that.

I get the whole addiction thing. Like I said, I was a porn addict. And even though it's still an addiction, okay? You both hate it and you love it.

You don't want to do it, but yet you love it while you're doing it. But afterward you're filled with self-loathing, which just drives you to do it again. That's the vicious, terrible kind of slavery that sin is.

But Jesus has the power to set us free from our addictions. The value that our culture places on us looking a certain way and behaving a certain way and wanting to put your best foot forward, it tells this man, hide your past mistakes.

Bury them. Never bring them up. And if you want to live by the culture, man, you should do that for good reason. Because when your mistakes are discovered, people are brutal out there.

[23 : 28] Look what happens on social media. Every time someone gets famous or has some success or steps into prominence, suddenly what happens is, man, we're going to dig into their past until we find some vindictive pay dirt.

And then we're going to make them pay. We are going to cut them down. Oh, they said this. Oh, they did that. We dig it up and we use information to tear people down.

Now, that may be the ethics common to our day, but that is never to be the ethics of the church. That is not how we are supposed to live. We aren't supposed to be the people who go digging around in people's closets hoping to find skeletons that we can turn and use as weapons against them.

when people like Paul share their past, we don't sit back and judge and wag our heads saying shame on them. Now, we do what the church did.

He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy. And they, the church, glorified God. The church, man, when we get the gospel, guys, this place is the place of real freedom.

[24 : 39] for everybody. I am an addict, or I was an addict, but Jesus. I am a prostitute, or I was a prostitute, but Jesus.

Man, I had an abortion, but Jesus. I've committed adultery, but Jesus. The church should be the safest place and the freest place on earth.

But guys, that doesn't come without a fight. That doesn't come without us intentionally fighting for that freedom. We contend for the gospel together, so others can live in freedom too.

Then after fourteen years, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me. I went up because of a revelation and set before them, though privately before those who seemed influential, the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles, in order to make sure I was not running or had not run in vain.

But even Titus, who was with me, was not forced to be circumcised, though he was a Greek. Yet because of false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery, to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

[25 : 57] And from those who seemed to be influential, what they were makes no difference to me, God shows no partiality. Those, I say, who seemed influential added nothing to me. On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised, for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles.

And when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

Only they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do. So Paul comes with this gospel, and it's challenged.

It would have been tempting for Paul to capitulate in order to keep the peace, with the guys trying to bring back the law of Moses, trying to take a little bit of the gospel, but integrate the law of Moses in with it.

He could have done that. But here's the thing, guys, while the gospel makes us gracious and humble, it makes us passionate and mean about the right stuff. Think about it.

[27 : 15] When someone's messing with your kids, you don't stand back and be like, I'm just going to be nice and compassionate. Now your love for them pushes you to rise up and to contend for them.

When someone is trying to come in and distort the gospel, at some point, it's time to stop being nice. Now I'm not talking about physically fighting people.

I'm not talking about making physical threats. That's not God's way, but here's how we do it. We confront, we contend, and we keep holding fast. I purposely said here, we, not I.

Paul came to make sure his gospel wasn't distorted. He didn't come in secret like the other guys did. He didn't secretly slip in like a spy.

He was bold, and he came to the leadership. He came to the apostles. He says, here is my gospel. I know you guys have the gospel that you got from Jesus. Here is my gospel.

[28 : 12] What do you think? I want to say this, guys, beware the person who shares their disagreement with everyone, but to the person that they disagree with. Wolves don't come through the gate where the shepherds stand watch.

Wolves operate in the shadows. Paul wasn't like that. He came to the leaders. He was willing to find out if the last 14 years of his life was a waste.

Now that is humility, and that is desire for truth, and it is also a recognition that these leaders in the church of Jerusalem had a gospel that they were proclaiming too. But Paul knew this, I can't have my gospel and they have theirs.

There's only one gospel. Like we talked about last week. There is one gospel. There's not versions. There's no other gospel. There is only one gospel. And we find out what happens through this whole scenario.

Sure enough, there is indeed only one gospel. Paul's gospel was brought to these other apostles and they said, you know what? Man, it's the same thing. We perceive this grace that God has given you, Paul.

[29 : 16] And they extended the right hand of fellowship. They said, you know what? You are one of us. You're not against us. You're for us. And they sent him out proclaiming the one gospel that brings freedom. And guys, this is what we do.

We contend for the gospel so that others can live in the freedom only it can bring. As the band comes up, I want to ask this.

If you're here, not a Christian, man, we are so glad you're with us. And I want to ask you this question. Are you tired of living in slavery? Living in slavery to your past?

Living in slavery to what people think? Always having this sense of shame? Not being enough? I want to offer you this. Only Jesus. Only Jesus can set you free from your past.

He can redeem it. It's amazing. He took Paul's knowledge of those five books of the Bible. Bible. And he leveraged that. He leveraged that.

[30 : 17] He took that and he said, you know what? Bam. I'm going to show Paul how all of those things pointed to Jesus and then Paul became this amazing missionary spreading the gospel everywhere.

Jesus can redeem your past. Even if you think and you can't see how that can happen, he can do it. Every single person in the room that is a Christian can tell you that that is true.

Trust in him. He came and died for your sins. He died for your past. You don't have to hide it away in shame. You don't have to try to become a better person before you come to Jesus.

No, he says come as you are. Come just as you are. And I want to invite you today to accept that offer. Put your faith in him and live in his freedom.

If you are here and you are already a believer, you believe in Jesus, you have been saved, man, guys let's be warned. It is easy to slip back into slavery.

[31 : 21] To slip back into rule keeping, to slip back into caring about what people think, trying to earn God's blessing. And I want to say this to you, man, some of us have a past that we are hiding. We are not living in freedom from that.

We can't imagine that the church, the people in the church would still love us or accept us if they knew that thing about who I was and who I used to be.

And I'm here to tell you that you know what? So many of us have brought some ugly stuff into the light. And here is the same thing we all experience.

It feels when we do that, it feels like this massive burden has been lifted. church, we need to be the safest place for people that they can come and they can trust us with our past.

We need to be that place. And we need to realize that, man, we're going to become that place when we are more free for ourselves to boast in our weaknesses, not hide from it.

[32 : 27] Let's be that, man. Let's boast in our weaknesses because boasting in our weaknesses is boasting in the power of God. God, as we come and take communion, it's a reminder that we were too weak to save ourselves.

Jesus died on the cross for our sins, for our past, to redeem it, and to repurpose it for his glory. His body was broken, his blood was shed to heal our past.

And so we come and we take with faithfulness, thankfulness. And as we come with thankful hearts, I also want to invite you to bring at this moment your tithes and your offerings.

And we do that, it's from the same place of thankfulness. There's three ways that we can give. You can give online or through the app. There's also giving buckets at the communion tables. And I want to say this about the giving piece.

If you're a guest here today, man, no pressure to give. This is a privilege for those of us who call One Harbor Church home. Would you pray with me? Lord, as we consider these things, as we consider the freedom that we have in you, Jesus Christ, it is pretty amazing.

[33 : 35] It changes the game. Nothing out there, nothing that we have experienced or lived in this life offers us this kind of freedom. Lord God, we, I pray for all of us in the room that we would be freed from trying to earn a blessing, trying to earn job well done, and we would step into the freedom, we would step into the grace that this gospel tells us, is that you look on us and you delight in us and you say, I am well pleased.

make that so real to our hearts today. Amen.