

Stand Fast in Liberty

Galatians 5.1-6 ~ October 30, 2011

- **v1c ~ “Christ has made us free”**
 - RSV reads, “*For freedom Christ has set us free*”
 - Literal Greek reads, “*For freedom us Christ freed*”
 - Christ set us free for freedom

- **v1d ~ “do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage”**
 - Many Galatians were formerly pagan
 - But every culture has its “*yoke of bondage*”
 - Every culture “*earns*” righteousness by some form of “*works*”
 - “**entangled**”
 - III: The Long Walk
 - 7 men escape from a Siberian prison camp
 - Bear playing a dead tree like a musical instrument
 - Elk caught by his antlers in a dense undergrowth
 - Another was the 2nd verse in “**A Mighty Fortress is Our God**”
 - “*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing*”
 - We get ourselves into these messes . . .

- **v1a ~ “Stand fast” ~ “keep standing fast”**
 - Paul urges the Galatians to “*keep*” standing firm in liberty
 - It is a Present Active Imperative ~ an ongoing and continuous command
 - This implies that forces work against us
 - To “*stand firm*” requires ~ effort ~ energy ~ exertion

- **v1b ~ “in the liberty”**
 - D. L. Moody quote of former slave who was confused about her status
 - “*Now is I free, or been I not? When I go to my old master he says I ain’t free, and when I go to my own people they say I is, and I don’t know whether I’m free or not. Some people told me Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation, but master says he didn’t; he didn’t have any right to.*”
 - Christians suffer the same experience at times
 - We’ve been saved from sin (former master) ~ but he still exerts power

Xition: Another picture comes to mind when I hear “stand fast”

➤ **v1a ~ “Stand Fast”**

- To continue the Civil War theme, soldiers are told to “*stand fast*”
 - 1000 men screaming & running at you with guns ~ tempted to flee
- “**The Battle Belongs to the Lord**”, Petra
 - “*When your enemy presses in hard do not fear*”
 - “*Take courage my friend your redemption is near*”
- When the Egyptians had the Jews pressed up against the Red Sea
 - They were afraid . . . They wanted to give up and return as slaves
 - But Moses said, “**Do not be afraid. Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.**” ~ **Ex 14.13**
 - Paul tells the Galatians the same thing Moses told the Jews
 - “You’re free!” Don’t live like you’re not ~ **Read Heb 12.1-4**

➤ “**Live Free or Die!**” ~ **New Hampshire State Motto**

- In 1945 New Hampshire adopted the motto ~ “*Live Free, or Die!*”
 - 1809 letter General John Stark ~ “*Death is not the worst of all evils*”
 - July 31st letter excusing himself from 32nd celebration of . . .
 - Battle of Bennington ~ August 16, 1777
 - About 2,300 militia => 1,400 British, German, Loyalists & Indians
 - Decisive American victory (200k, 700c) => to success at Saratoga
 - Colonists energized ~ French joined ~ lost Indian support
 - A month earlier New Hampshire issued call for volunteers (July 18th)
 - Within 6 days 1,500 men volunteered (10% of men over 16)

➤ **v2a ~ “Indeed, I Paul . . .”** ~ Paul is passionate about liberty

- Freedom from the tyranny of the guilt of sin is serious stuff
- But freedom from the tyranny of all oppression stems from this

➤ **v2b ~ “if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing”**

- Compare to **v6** ~ “*in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails*”
- “So which is it?”
 - “*How can circumcision ruin our salvation (v2) yet be nothing (v6)?*”
 - “Either it is meaningless (v6) or it’s meaningful (v2) . . .”
- “*Why is the person getting circumcised in verse 2?*”
 - To be saved . . . To save themselves by their faithful actions . . .
 - I’ll talk about this puzzle again in a minute . . .

➤ **Xition: Keeping the whole law . . .**

- **v3 ~ “he is a debtor to keep the whole law”**
 - And Paul reminds them that getting circumcised is not nearly enough . . .
 - *“in for a penny ~ in for a pound”*
 - There are hundreds of laws they’ll need to obey to perfection . . .
 - Those that embrace law - of necessity - let go of grace
 - Salvation is not a **both-and** issue, it’s an **either-or**
 - And the path of law keeping requires perfection to avoid the judgment

- **v3b ~ “keep the whole law”**
 - This had always been the problem for the Jews
 - They were okay with keeping 80 to 90% of the Law
 - But no one was ever okay with keeping 100% of the Law
 - The Pharisees weren’t supporting their parents ~ it was corban
 - They were twisting Scripture to allow divorce for any reason
 - So you see it’s also **not the act of circumcision** that Paul detests
 - He had Timothy circumcised to minister to the Jews ~ **Acts 16.3**
 - Yet when the Judaizers in **Gal 2.3** tried for Titus, Paul said *“No way!”*
 - Legalism – Works righteousness – is what Paul opposes

- **v4 ~ “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace”**
 - This sounds a bit like *“losing your salvation”* so let’s discuss it
 - Paul doesn’t know any more than you or I do who’s saved and who’s not
 - What he does know though, is what saved people ought **not** to do
 - And when people are trying to earn their salvation
 - they’re **not walking by grace** through faith . . .
 - they’ve fallen from the path they should be on . . .
 - they’ve fallen from the path of grace
 - they’ve fallen from grace

- **We think our works / our efforts / puts God in our debt . . .**
 - We naturally fall into this way of thinking
 - A Pro Football wide receiver tweeted just after a game last year
 - “I praise you 24/7!!! And this how you do me!!! You expect me to learn?”

Xition: We think in these terms even when young . . .

- III: “No Charge” ~ Melba Montgomery (1974)
 - Boy hands Mom a bill in the kitchen
 - Mowin' the yard (\$), makin' my bed (\$), goin' to the store (\$)
 - **Total owed** - \$14.75
 - Mom turns paper over and writes ...
 - Nine months (NO CHARGE)
 - Nights I sat up with you (NO CHARGE)
 - Time and tears, and pain through the years (NO CHARGE)
 - **The full cost of my love** is NO CHARGE
 - We can be like this boy ~ God's gift is incomparable

- v5 ~ “we .. eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith”
 - This sounds like Paul is saying he's not righteous yet . . .
 - And that's true in part ~ the full experience of it . . .
 - We all wait for our ultimate righteousness . . . our ultimate salvation . . .
 - We don't work for it ~ we wait for it . . .

- v6a ~ “in Christ”
 - The believer is in Christ ... The unbeliever is not in Christ ...
 - This is the ultimate reality of all human existence
 - People are **passionate** about this world
 - Celebrities want fame
 - Politicians want power
 - Wealthy want more money
 - Environmentalists want to save the planet
 - Militant Muslims want to convert or kill all non-Muslims
 - What are Christians passionate about?
 - What are you passionate about?
 - Are you passionate about being “in Christ”?

“We stand fast in liberty when we stand fast in God's power and grace”

“When we humbly recall our sinfulness and His holiness”

- **Let's Stand Fast and Let's PRAY . . .**