Lownes Free Church Sunday Morning – July 14, 2019

The Transforming Power of the Cross

*Galatians: How the Gospel Sets Us Free*

A Gospel Grace Reality Check:

Or, “Once free from a life of slavery, why would you reapply?”

Galatians 4:8-20

 Every culture has basic principles and rules by which it lives and relates to others. Here, Paul reminds the Galatians that those principles are external and restrictive. They tell us what NOT to do, thus holding societies of fallen people together and even keeping them from war. The Law of Moses temporarily served a similar purpose in restraining the sins of Israel. Gal. 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:8-11

 Jesus ushered in another way for His Kingdom, where His “laws” are written on the hearts of His children, a New Covenant which set aside the Old. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:13; 9:15-22 This does NOT mean believers are lawless, nor that our Old Testament is irrelevant! It DOES mean we are no longer under the demands of Torah in laws which divided Jew from Gentile: circumcision, keeping kosher, and observing Sabbaths and holy days.

 Let’s think through how Paul’s passionate appeal in Galatians 4:8-20:

***8Before you knew God, you were enslaved the rules of your pagan gods, laws meant to conform your outward behavior to their will. And now, even though you are God’s children (with His Spirit and His Law written on your hearts), you want to be enslaved again to an external Law, in this case, the Law of Moses, with it’s special days, and times? Was my grace-preaching in vain?***

***12I’m begging you, instead of returning to these temporal, outward principles, live as I do, a free son of God. Recall our relationship, and how you believed and applied the gospel, as though Jesus Himself was deliver-ing it to you! In fact, you were showing such grace-based love for me that you would have given your eyes to me if I had needed them! Am I now your enemy for telling you the truth about Jesus?***

***17No! Here is what’s happening: The Law-teachers make over you as I did, but not for your good and God’s glory. Their strategy is to shut you out of the “Law Club” so you will crave their exclusive membership of man-pleasers. (And remember that this is the issue! No one is persecuting Jews for living under the Law, but we are being persecuted as followers of Jesus, who don’t. It’s safer, then, to be a Christian as long as you are disguised as a Jew by your outward behavior. But to do that we must deny our freedom and our birthright as sons of God in Christ!\*) (See Romans 8:15-17; 28, 29.)***

 ***So my fear is that the work that I thought had begun in you (Christ’s image) will be aborted, and you will prove to be unbelievers after all if it turned out you were trusting in the works of Law rather than the righteousness of Christ***!

\*Note: This is what makes texts such as Romans 14, 15; 1 Corinthians 9-11 and the so called “warning passages” of the book of Hebrews so passionate. Especially while the Temple was standing, Jews were in danger of reverting to Law-keeping as a way of avoiding persecution that was happening regularly to believers in Jesus (Galatians 6:12). Once back in their former environs of Jewish Law, it was a short, fatal step for many to deny Jesus in order to return to normal life. In Galatians 4, Paul is concerned precisely because a true return to the Law means a rejection of Christ’s righteousness, and would be proof the Galatians had been merely temporary, “stony ground” believers. Matthew 13.

Freedom Principle #7:The Good News of Jesus Christ frees

us by internally conforming us to the very image of Christ.

***Applying the Principle: How does this freedom change us?***

**Christ’s own image being formed in us (v. 19) means that. . .**

 *God’s law of love is a real power operational in us.*

 *Although imperfectly, God’s children love Him and others. 1 Jn. 4:7-13*

 *God’s love lived out fulfills the Torah’s demands.*

 *Love was the intent of the Law all along. Romans 8:1-4; 13:8-10*

 *We dare not supplement the Law of Love with circumcision, dietary restrictions, or feast days.*

 *Whether acts of self-righteousness or attempts to please God, these laws belong to an outdated era. Hebrews 8:13; Col. 2:16, 17*

*Clinging to the divisive Torah laws damages our unity in Christ.*

 *Jesus died to break down these very walls.* Ephesians 2:11-22