

BOOK OF GALATIANS

“A Yoke of Slavery”

Scripture Reading: GALATIANS 4:21-5:1

-) **SLIDES 1-6**. Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-10**. Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 11**. Today we continue in our expository study of the Book of GALATIANS. This is message #33. I have titled today’s message “A Yoke of Slavery” (v1).
-) For grades 1 thru 8, I attended a Catholic school. The first period every day was Religion Class. We were taught Catholic doctrine. I knew about God and Jesus. And I knew about this book called the Bible (although we never opened it or were encouraged to read it). I was somewhat familiar with a few Bible stories such as Noah and the flood, David and Goliath, and the parable of the Good Samaritan. Good triumphs.
-) **SLIDE 12**. A lot of time was spent learning about the saints of old who walked godly lives and did good things for other people. The pope was the hero of the priests and nuns, and it was their dream to one day kiss his ring at the Vatican and to climb the Scala Sancta (the sacred steps) on their knees.
-) I believed everything I was taught. After all, these are my teachers, and the priests wear robes, and the nuns wear habits and they have dedicated their lives to God.
-) I was also taught about heaven and hell. And Hell scared me. It scared me a lot. I actually could grasp some concept of eternity, and eternity was a long time. It was forever. (clock) And I would prefer to spend eternity (forever) in heaven rather than in the fiery pits of hell. Our religion book would have drawings of people burning in hell and it was scary.

-) But after hearing stories about all those good saints who were now living the good life in heaven and being around priests and nuns all day, how could I ever measure up to those standards?
-) Even as early as first grade I found myself falling in love with Susan Desmond who sat two rows over from me. And all the thoughts that went along with that love interest was certain to keep me out of heaven. I knew I was breaking some commandment. Again, how could I ever measure up to all those human beings that led and lead such godly lives?
-) One day, when I was about 12, a friend of mine stole a pack of his dad's cigarettes and him and me and another friend went into the woods to smoke some of them and then hide the rest for later.
-) The question was asked (as we puffed away) if you could have one wish come true, what would it be? The first kid said he wanted to own a Corvette. The other kid said he wanted to be a pilot and fly an airplane. When it came my turn to answer, I said I wanted to be guaranteed I would go to heaven when I died. If I could have that assurance, I would be free.
-) My two friends thought that was a pretty stupid answer. But it was an honest answer.
-) So far, up to this point in this wonderful book of GALATIANS, the apostle Paul wants the Galatians to understand the difference between slavery and freedom; understand the difference between law and grace; and to understand the difference between works and faith.
-) **SLIDE 13.** And when you put these terms together, you get this. And the reality of these actions and these beliefs is this: one brings death (slavery) and the other brings life (freedom).
-) For the first 40 years of my life, I lived in slavery. Why? Because I lived by the law. I lived by works. I had to earn my way to heaven by my good works just like those saints of old.

-) But how could I ever get there? And could I be assured that I would get there? And as I got into my teen years and then into my 20s and then married with children, this task of living by the law got more difficult. The pressures of the world were smothering me. The hopes of my wish being answered seemed to now be just an impossible dream.
-) We know the issue in Galatia was that false teachers were moving in and agreeing that faith in Christ was necessary for salvation. BUT circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law were also required. Paul has to step in and correct this.
-) For the remainder of our time, I want us to focus on the first verse in today's text (4:21), and the last verse in today's text (5:1), and then compare those verses to my story.
-) **SLIDE 14.** GALATIANS 4:21. We have already covered the truth that if one is to live by the law then one must obey the entire law. And we know this is impossible. I preached on this back on 2/7 with the message "*The Curse of the Law.*" But that's not what Paul is saying here. What is he saying?
-) **SLIDE 15.** If you want to under the law, then you must **LEARN** the truths it contains. The only part about the Law that these Galatians were concerned about, were the dos and don'ts. What must I do to earn salvation? What must I not do to displease God?
-) Then in verses 22 thru 31, Paul explains to them about the free woman and the slave woman (last week's lesson). The free woman had a child by faith and not by works. The promise of redemption is by faith and not by works.
-) Galatians, what do you not understand about this? I explained this to you five years ago when I brought you the good news of Jesus Christ. And you have forgotten already? Or did you not understand when I explained it to you then? Galatians, if you want to live by the OT, then listen to what the OT teaches.

-) Even the purpose of Mosaic Law was to drive one to faith because obeying the Law was an unobtainable goal (3:24).
-) So, how does this verse relate to my story? Two things. One, I could only relate to law (works) because that is what I was taught. And you only know what you are taught.
-) So, I could never say, "*O yea. The nuns taught me that I could never keep the law so it would drive me to faith and faith alone in Jesus Christ.*" I never heard that. That's a Protestant statement and that was never taught in my Catholic school. So, I can't rely on looking to past teaching.
-) And two, their teaching on salvation was all about works. Do this. Don't do that. Obey the commandments. And Mike, if you can be good enough like one of the saints or Mary the mother of Jesus (she was perfect), then you'll make it to heaven too.
-) But you see, that's my dilemma. I couldn't be good like one of the saints. I understood my failures. And the older I got, the more I understood how far short I was to ever being a saint.
-) Let's look at the next verse.
-) **SLIDE 16.** GALATIANS 5:1. This verse needs no explanation.
-) **SLIDE 17.** When you are free in Christ, you no longer wear a **YOKE** of slavery. Let's get back to my story because it also applies to the Galatians.
-) Why did I make that wish that day? Answer. Because I was so burdened by the weight of my failures. The thought of missing out on heaven and burning in hell for eternity was more than I could handle. I was wearing a yoke of slavery.
-) Slavery to a system that I could never live up to. I was steeped in sin, and I knew it, but I also knew that no amount of good works or confession to the priest would absolve me and turn me into to some saint. Why? Because I would just do and think and say the same sinful things all over again.

-) I was bound and chained in sin. I wore a yoke of slavery. What kind of hope was there for a wretch like me?
-) Then one Wednesday in April of 1994, Jim, a friend at work, shared the gospel message with me. After his interrogation of why I should be allowed in heaven and my responses of all my good works over the years, the four most important sentences that changed my life were spoken.
-) I asked, "*So, Jim, if all these good works of mine don't get me into heaven, what will?*" He responded by saying, "*Mike, the works has already been done by Jesus Christ. He did for you what you could never do for yourself. Just believe in His finished work on the cross and His resurrection from the grave.*"
-) Beech Grove, I stand here before you this day testifying that at that moment on that day the yoke of slavery was removed. The weight of worry about my eternity was lifted. I was no longer a prisoner to the chains of sin. I had been set free. And if the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.
-) Let me get dead serious with all of you here this morning. If you think that you must contribute in any way, shape, or form to your salvation, either by lighting candles, or praying rosaries, giving to the poor, observing holydays, being faithful to Sunday obligations, or climbing the sacred steps at the Vatican (this list goes on), then you believe a false gospel and you are hopelessly bound for the pits of hell.
-) Take off that yoke of slavery and replace it with the freedom in Jesus Christ. Have the assurance of knowing without any doubt that you will make it to heaven when your day comes to depart from this earth because you trusted in Him and His work and not you and your work.
-) It's funny. I am now FB friends with those same two kids I was with when we made our wishes while puffing away on our cigarettes in the woods that day so long ago.

-) I am happy to report that the one kid who wished for a Corvette now owns a 2019 Corvette. And the other kid who wished to fly had a career as a commercial airline pilot for American Airlines and now flies for a private company. And me? My wish came true too. Heaven will be my eternal home.
-) **SLIDE 18**. MATT 11:28-30. Jesus Christ and Him alone has removed the yoke of slavery and replaced it with His promise of rest for my soul. The threat of eternal damnation in the fiery pits of hell is no longer a threat to me. My soul is now at rest.
-) I need to ask. Is my story your story too? Are you burdened by not knowing where your eternal destination lies because you feel you may not be good enough to get in? Well, no one is good enough to get in. Trust in Christ and Christ ALONE. He doesn't need your help to get you into the kingdom. Explain.
-) To God be the glory!

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