



Galatians 6:1–10

10th Message

John Hanneman

September 3, 2017

# TRUE FREEDOM: FREE TO CARE

*SERIES: GALATIANS: JOURNEY FROM LAW TO FREEDOM*

While hurricane Harvey hit Texas last week, other storms continued to blow across our nation, storms of protest and counter-protest, storms of hate, potential violence, division, and name-calling. Much of what we see, read, and hear is what the apostle Paul terms in the book of Galatians. “biting and devouring one another,” provoking one another. Sadly, these types of attitudes and actions can infect God’s people in various ways. But as we all know the church is called to be a something different, to be a place of love and care. This is what we want to talk about this morning in our last study in the book of Galatians.

Next week we’ll begin a four-week series on key family values here at PBCC that inform how we function. We will also have a week devoted to Freedom Sunday at the end of September as we consider the ministry of IJM and others involved in the issues of sex trafficking and other forms of enslavement. But today we will conclude our summer series, #free2live, where we have focused on living under law as opposed to living in freedom.

In Galatians, Law is associated with slavery, immaturity, sin, flesh, and control, while freedom is associated with Christ, promise, gospel, grace, new creation, and Spirit. For the first few weeks, we talked about Paul’s theological arguments, which he traced through Israel’s story, along with the promise of Christ, and the work of Christ that has given us the gift of being the beloved of God. But in the past couple of studies we have focused on Paul’s practical applications of freedom in chapter 5. Here is how Paul began chapter 5: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Gal 5:1 ESV). The yoke of slavery is the law, living the Christian life by external rules and regulations. Paul then goes on to say in verse 13:

**For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Gal 5:13–14 ESV).**

Love is the goal for which we have been set free. Love is what fulfills the law. Christ has not set us free to do anything we want but rather to live a shared life with others.

Paul then addresses the means by which we carry out love, which is through the Spirit and not the flesh. The flesh is unable to produce loving relationships. Flesh and Spirit are opposed to one another. We can’t fulfill the law through self-effort and performance. But since we are in Christ and indwelt with the Spirit, we are to walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, live by the Spirit, and keep in step with the Spirit. We are to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and, as we will see today, sow to the Spirit. As God’s people, we are set free from the ego self, the prideful

self, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to cultivate fruit-bearing community where we don’t bite and devour, provoke and envy.

Now, as we come to chapter 6, Paul expands on what love looks like in a Spirit-controlled community. Basically, after Paul talks about the Spirit, he picks up on 5:13 and describes love in action. Love is not just a vague feeling. True freedom is the freedom to care, the freedom to serve, love sacrificially, regard others as more important than yourself, and be a self-denying servant like Jesus. With freedom come responsibilities and opportunities. Paul addresses several things. His first orders of business are restoration and forgiveness.

## Restoration and Forgiveness

**Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (Gal 6:1)**

The situation is that a fellow believer has been caught in transgression. The word “caught” doesn’t imply that they were found out. Rather, he or she was surprised, taken hold of, overtaken by sin. Paul doesn’t identify the sin. It could be any transgression. Sin is simply sin without categorization.

How does the community respond to this person? Not by excluding or excommunicating the person, which is often the response of religious people. Rather, the one who is spiritual, i.e. the one who is walking and living in the Spirit, seeks to restore this person. The word “restore” is used in the gospels in reference to mending fishing nets. In the book of Ephesians, it is the word translated “equip” when Paul talks about certain spiritual gifts being given to equip the saints for the work of the ministry. In other words, restoration carries the idea of putting something to useful service or to its intended purpose. When we restore furniture, or a piece of art, or a vehicle, we make it fit, return to an original condition.

The way this happens is with gentleness and humility. Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit. We are not to be forceful or pushy. We act humbly, because we know that anyone can be tempted and fall into sin, including ourselves. We don’t view ourselves as better than another.

Early in my Christian life, I was not keeping in step with the Spirit. Two brothers came to at different times. The first came forcefully, and it had no effect. The second came gently, and I changed the situation immediately. All I needed was a gentle nudge.

“Forgiveness is an immensely creative act. Condemning is simply reactionary, responding in kind to an offense. Condoning is simply lazy, avoiding the difficulties of dealing with what is