

**Free to Run**

Now I think the youth involved in this were fantastic, and I think to some extent the point has been made and we can all go and have fika. But i want to add a challenge this morning.

because we have been talking about freedom in Christ for a few weeks now, and this has been the subject of this whole letter, and as many letters go, Paul sets up the subject, identifies the problem, tells them what they need to do (mainly turn away from their mistakes) and then requires a response from them.

**Time to respond**

As we go into the last few weeks of Galatians, in the last 2 chapters, Paul is requiring a response from this church. He is saying that something must change, because this way you are going will not end up well.

So I want to challenge you this morning, especially if you have been following the track this term. What response is Jesus asking of you? What do you think he is saying? Are there ways in which you might be keeping yourselves under this burden of slavery that verse 1 talks about.

**5:1 SLIDE**

**In Youth Group and Youth Church**, we have been focusing the last month on this verse, and trying to open it up a bit more.

And important word here is 'again'. Don't let yourselves 'go back'. Which means that there was some kind of a backtrack here. And we don't know the full reasons of WHY they had started to believe the teaching of these false teachers... maybe it was impatience, maybe they had been hurt, or maybe they took their eyes off of the prize started to focus too much on what others were doing, then weren't so sure again of their salvation and freedom that was won for them.

SLIDE

I tried to bring this out in the drama we just saw. Each prisoner was put in prison. They had a history outside, and had been put away in chains for a while. And they had gotten comfortable.

1 wasn't too comfortable and looked forward for a way, but when it came to it, she couldn't and felt she didn't deserve what she was given.

2 was too comfortable that she was just happy to sit that and had given up hope of freedom, or didn't even want it.

3 had been hurt a lot, and although she didn't like being in chains, she felt it was better than facing her pain and working to forgive them.

Now some of you might recognise some of your own story in these situations when you look at being free in Christ.

Each of the 3 prisoners had to respond to the keys. They were not alone in the cell, others were there. They were challenging each other... none of them really got it right, and it took Jesus' words to really set them free. (for those you didn't get it, the Warden was actually Jesus...)

### **Self Help**

You see, when we are in situations when we get trapped, we often just try to find our own ways to deal with it, and don't really listen to what Jesus has to say. Sometimes we even try to put words in Jesus' mouth to think that it is Him talking. And that is what they were trying to do before He arrived. And it was along the right lines.

A response was still being asked of them. They had to choose to live free. Live in the freedom that was being set out for them.

So going back to the 3 characters... what was special about them? What was their responses. And Prisoner 3 in particular.

3. had been out there... she was the one who was too stubborn because she had lived in freedom, but didn't live it fully. She was being held back by unforgiveness.

## Forgiveness

Now reading through the verses for this week you will notice it doesn't really include anything about forgiveness. But I included that in there because that is something very common that we get trapped by, and stops us living in this freedom, or being free to run and enjoy life. So I am going to spend a few minutes on this.

Now I know that in script it might seem that I got it the wrong way around, saying that we can forgive because we were forgiven, as the scripture says the following:

SLIDE

### **Matthew 6:14-15**

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

### **Luke 6:37**

...Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

### **Colossians 3:13**

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

But what I am getting at, is that when we struggle to forgive, we struggle to see how we can forgive, and we need encouragement to forgive others. It can be all too easy to hold people in that place of not forgiving them, maybe to make them pay, or to remind us that we have been hurt so we need to remind ourselves of why. **But we need to look to Jesus to see how easy forgiveness is. Then we can forgive so we can receive that forgiveness from Him.** Prisoner 3 was reminded of that after Jesus forgave her when she said sorry at the end of the film there... and it released her.

### **Sack Image SLIDE**

A friend who had some history with this gave me this image a few years ago.

And he said that when we fail to forgive people, or we don't deal with hurt or pain, we put the people don't forgive, or the issues in a big sack that we carry around... person by person, issue by issue.. go into the sack, until it is weighing us down so much, and we can't even move.

Image of a sack, and each pain, fear and unforgiveness is a weight... they cannot run with it.  
(Demonstration)

SLIDE We cannot be free to run with all this in our sack weighing us down. The Galatians were stopping themselves being free with their issues of status and law, and worries of circumcision weighing them down...

SLIDE They need to drop the sack, and empty it out, let everything go so that they are free to Run in Christ. Just as much as we need to forgive people to let them go.

There is always something holding us back. Always something that keeps us enslaved. And we need to be honest, because we aren't perfect. But each time we free ourselves, and empty that sack, we are just that much lighter to run, and can focus on the next thing to free ourselves from.

### **SLIDE What defines you? (Coming to the end)**

Now you see what their problem was, was who or what it was that they were letting themselves be defined by.

They were letting their chains define them.

Their guilt and shame, their past.

their fear, and their pain.

Other people's actions towards them.

Their unforgiveness.

If we go back to the passage, we can see that the people in the church were letting their Jew or Gentile status define them. That's why they were believing these false teachers, because they were letting themselves be defined by the wrong thing and justified by the wrong thing. Their status.

SLIDE

But in verse 6, Paul says that Jesus doesn't put value in status. Jew or Gentile, I don't care. I love you all, and I free you all if you live in me. The only thing that matters is your faith, expressed through love.

**Faith Expressed through love**

SLIDE Maybe another challenge this morning is to how you might be expressing your faith. Because this is important. To be free in Christ, we must put our faith in Him. That's what matters, not our status, but who we put our faith in. Then we are justified, and made right with God (doing what being under the law can't do- that's impossible).

But how to we express that to others? How do we show our faith? How should we? Through love. Love is the foundation of our faith, Love is why He set us free, Love is why he created us, and Love is why He give us good plans form our lives, and wants relationship. And love is Why He died for us.

And maybe expressing faith in love is just letting people know the truth that they are loved.

I can talk all day about love, and how much He really does love us. We don't have all day, and I know the fika is waiting.

**Main point. Don't let it define you. Let Christ define you. Then you will be free to run.**

SLIDE

So Paul is saying, don't let yourself be defined by your Jew or Gentile status. If you do, then Christ is of no use to you. v4, your jew status does have value. (offensive to jews, yes)

Don't let your guilt and shame define you (In christ you are forgiven).

Don't let your fear define you (In christ, you are loved, and with perfect love).

Don't let other people's actions against you define you. (In Christ, you are forgiven, so you must forgive others.

Let Christ define you... Then you can run free.

It comes down to our identity. Put your identity in Christ, then you will be free in Christ. Put your identity in other things, and those things will keep you prisoner.

That's what the prisoners had to do, first stop defining themselves by the past, their's and others mistakes, and then let Jesus set them free. Only then were they able to walk free, and even run free. Because they didn't have all their baggage weighing them down.

Because the only thing that counts is faith expressed in love.

Now, I understand there might have been quite a few heavy points here, and I think it really is important that we respond here. I am going to ask the boys to play some music in just a minute, and give us time to really focus on what we might need to respond to. And there are a few ways in which we can do that this morning.

1. You can light a candle as a physical symbol of a prayer, and maybe even envisage the chains going up in flames as you ask God to set you free.
2. At the front, there will be some people to pray for you if you like. Of course anything you say in confidence here.
3. or you can sit, and spend time asking God to help free you from which ever chains you may be still in. Or even thank him for setting you free. You might want to ask someone near by to pray for you if you are comfortable with that.

Which ever way you chose, use this time to respond to what God might be saying to you in this series.

Blessing:

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit be with you all. (Amen)