

09.29.24

Galatians  
Chapter 5 - Christ Sets Free  
The Walk of Freedom (vs.24-26)

**Galatians 5:24-26:** Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Freedom. What a wonderful word. We have actually built a country on that particular word. The problem is that we have loved the creation rather than the Creator. Blessed be He, for the One who is the Creator, gave us freedom and He is the One that gives us freedom through the person of Jesus Christ. As Galatians 5 so clearly puts it, "It was for freedom

that Christ came to set us free. To set us free from what? I like John 8, those who were coming to Christ, and Christ says, "You come to Me, and you abide in My word, the truth will set you free." They go, "We haven't been in prison." But we are imprisoned. We're imprisoned in many ways, when you consider that we're bound by what others think, it causes us to act and react a certain way. There's oppression, there's a sense of expectations that are oftentimes on us by those that we perceive, and we would maybe even say, love us. Peer pressure comes upon us that we begin to acquiesce to those things. We're slaves to our appetite, right? I mean, there are times that we're so drawn that we just throw our hands up in the air as we've been talking about in the Book of Genesis, where Eve just goes, "Ok. I'm hungry. I'm going to eat." As Paul will write specifically in Philippians 3, that there are many whose god is their appetite. They're actually led around by those things, but Scripture is telling us that we're bound by these forces. I have seen people prisoners of their emotions. If you were to walk up to some people and say, "Just stop being anxious," they would look at you like, "How can I do that?" Because anxiety has so wrapped its arms around them, and they have so embraced it that it's

become a part of their lives. The same is true with anger. The same is true with all kinds of emotions that we have. The fear that comes into our lives that causes us to literally be isolated at times from people or causes us to stop doing certain things and to not go anywhere. Paranoia can literally shut you up in your house. The fact of the matter is that people are prisoners of these various things, and we become sometimes even incarcerated by the physical pains and maladies that we have. We can't move, we can't do certain things, and our thoughts are that we've become prisoners of those, and Scripture will say you're not prisoners of them. It is miraculous how God can use us in places that we feel that we are prisoners. I mean, Paul was a prisoner in Rome but not imprisoned. For God used his place there to really spread the word far greater than it had ever been spread before. And we know that God can use our maladies as in the case of Galatians, in which Paul had problems with his eyes. I mean, it's the whole reason why he stopped off in Galatia. It's the whole reason why he had that contact with the church. Our thoughts would be that it was a limitation, it was a boundary, but God said, "No boundaries with Us. You're free from those boundaries." And God begins to use

us in ways. If you have difficulties and you have problems, those are just doors in the life of believers. Those are not prisons. Those are not boundaries that God has given you. Those are opportunities that God has given you.

So, as we begin to realize that God is working in our lives and that literally flesh no longer is calling the shots. My flesh is no longer the one that telling me what I can do, what I can't do, putting me in a sense of bondage. One of the great passages of Scripture found in Romans 8 begins to talk about those things that cannot separate us. Let me just give you the list. The first he mentions is "tribulation". Tribulation is really dealing with troubles and burdens and afflictions that come upon us. He says, "That can't separate you from the love of God." He goes on, and says the distresses that we have, and I really think that when he uses the phrase "distress" within the passage, it's talking about pressures and anguish, really psychological pressures that come upon us. He goes, "That can't keep you from the love of God." He goes on and he says, "persecution," and that's the hostility and hatred of others, "famine" that's having nothing and a great loss, and in many cases oftentimes associated with the shame that we feel. There are times that we have done

things wrong, and we feel so ashamed, we feel like we can't do anything, we can't go anywhere, but God says nothing can separate you from the love of God and His forgiveness. God can actually create all things and cause them to be good, and how wonderful that is. "Nakedness, peril, sword," even the government can't stop you from following the Lord.

In fact, the passage goes on and says in Romans 8:37, "But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

Nothing could separate you from the love of God, and nothing could keep you from the great freedom that He has for you. There are things that will declare, and we'll say, "Well, I can't because I'm in the flesh." But God says, "Your flesh no longer has you in bondage. You are free."

We come to this passage and as we look in particular in verse 24, we realize that we're in Christ. The nominative case is used within the passage which is making reference to the fact that we have declared ourselves "Christ followers." Christ followers, that's what we're doing. We're walking in the footsteps of Christ. The question is, where do I begin?

You wouldn't think that he would start this way, but he says it begins with crucifixion. Christ will tell His disciples, "You're going to have to pick up your cross. You're going to have to follow Me. Following Me begins with crucifixion." Crucifixion seems like such a harsh word, doesn't it? I mean, it was more graphic to those that lived in that time in which crucifixion was used. It is clear that the flesh was made completely powerless in that particular situation, and really, to the degree of suffering, great loss and great pain. I believe the passage is telling us that we, in following Christ, have to be willing to suffer the pains of giving up things of the flesh. If you back up into Galatians 2, Paul will use this phrase as well within the text, referring to the fact that we've been crucified with Christ.

(Galatians 2:19) "For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God."

I like the fact that he conveys this in this way because he's literally telling us that "The Law brought me to a point of condemnation and really declaring to me, 'You'll never be good enough.' Well, that's the end of that story. So, at that moment, I died." I go, "Well, I'll never be good enough. There has to be another way." And God says, "There is, it's

Me.” And how wonderful it is to know that it's not by the works of righteousness or the deeds that I have done, but it's according to His grace, according to His mercy that He saved us.

So it reads this way,

“For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God.”

Let me just interject this too, the Law could never make us love God back. The Law could only make us jump through hoops and regulations and demands and be fearful and condemnation, but it can never make us love God with a heart.

(Galatians 2:20) “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”

It is the love of Christ that constrains us, and He moves us and it's by His sacrifice, His forgiveness, and His acceptance of me, His cleansing me from all unrighteousness that draws me to have new hope. I mean, why am I going to heaven? One of the questions that we ask people as they come to the

new members class is, "If you were to die today, and you were to stand before God and He would ask you, 'Why should I let you into heaven?' what would you say?" There's only one thing to say. You can't say, "By the works of my righteousness I'm comprehensively flawless." You must say, "Only by the grace of Jesus Christ that He died for me and paid the price for my sins could I enter in. Worthy is the lamb that was slain." And how wonderful it is to know that we have a God that loves us so. I now live in the love of Christ, the sense that He died for me and the Spirit of Christ now abides with me, because Paul has already established that the Holy Spirit that comes within me is literally the spirit of God's Son, which cries out, "Abba! Father!" and "Thy will be done, not mine." So, as we come before the Lord and we give our lives to Him, His Spirit breathes within us, and one of the first things that we are willing to do is to sacrifice for God. I've always thought it was interesting when talking to somebody about receiving the Lord and praying the prayer with them and seeing their response and hearing the reaction after they pray. Oftentimes they'll say things like, "You know what, I need to stop doing this. I need to do this. I need to make this right." And they go down a list and I'm

going, “Who told them?” But you can hear them crucifying the flesh because who would admit that they were wrong? That's crucifying your pride, isn't it? Who would say to themselves, “I've got to do something very difficult, very painful, but I know it's the right thing to do”? Why would they do that? But it's a crucifying, “I'm willing to die to these things.” And it's the Spirit of God that energizes us for that particular purpose.

(Galatians 5:24) “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh...”

If you look in the passage, he actually defines specifically what you're crucifying. You're crucifying the flesh “with its passions and desires.” Now, the word “passions” there is making reference to not only your personal affections, that is to say, the things that you would naturally love by virtue of your selfishness, but also afflictions. It goes to both ends of the scale. So, it's dealing with both affections and afflictions that I'm crucifying. The affections, the things that I used to love I don't love anymore, and the afflictions are no longer things that hold me back. I suppose at one time it was obvious Peter was afraid of being afflicted. In Acts 2, he's not afraid anymore. The Spirit of God freed him from the fear of

the afflictions that might come because of things that he does. When Jesus is talking to the disciples in John 15, He states to them, “The world has hated Me. It's going to hate you.” At that particular moment, I go, “Ok, maybe I'm joining the wrong club.” But He's literally telling them that they're going to be delivered in the next chapter to the synagogues, and people are going to deliver you to death. But as the Spirit of God comes upon them, there is no fear. In fact, as Acts 4 says, they began to speak the word of God with all boldness before the people. The passage is telling us that when we crucify the flesh, we crucify our affections, we crucify our afflictions, and we crucify our desires; that more specifically is aiming towards the forbidden stuff, the things that we know are wrong, but we still long to do them. We crucified that, it's no longer that which draws us.

(Galatians 5:25) “If we live by the Spirit...”

Another way of putting that would be, “if life comes by our faith in following the Lord.”

“... let us also walk by the Spirit.”

There's a familiar word that is used throughout Scripture dealing with walk and the word that is used oftentimes is

one that just basically talks about either walking, progressing forward, or in some cases dealing with one's way of life or conduct, but that's not the word that he uses here. He uses a very interesting word that is military like which is strange in the context of freedom. He uses a word which literally means to fall in line, to march in order. It has the wonderful picture of an orderly life that falls in line. More specifically, falls behind the line and marches in step with Jesus. In other words, freedom comes when you follow His steps; when you march according to the way that He tells you to march. I was thinking of this in a very practical way when I was thinking about the disciples, in particular the apostles as God sends them out, and they're having to deal with walking by the Spirit. How do you walk by the Spirit? The wonderful thing to me about much of Scripture is God will oftentimes give you kind of a tangible example and then He will give you a spiritual example. So, let me give you a tangible example of what it looks like to walk in the Spirit and then we'll broaden that to the spirituality of it all the way through our lives.

If you look with me in Acts 12 and let me say this, you have this interesting picture of Peter being imprisoned. Of course, we've been talking about being in prison. So, what's better

to describe being locked up than a real prison? What we also know is if you were to go back in Acts 5, Peter's already gone through this before. He's been locked up before and an angel comes, opens the doors, tells him, "Go back." And I think the one thing that I really appreciate, if you back up in Acts 5 to where the angel of the Lord comes and he begins to tell them, "Go out" and he frees him. This is in the context of the disciples and the apostles specifically were going out and they were healing people. They were seeing people come to know the Lord. In fact, the list is here in verse 14, "And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number, (Acts 5:15) to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them."

I mean, what an amazing moment that was. Of course, this upset certain people, and so they wanted to have him locked up, but people were coming from the cities. Scripture is telling us that they were free. They felt free to help. They felt free to care. They felt free to minister to people's needs. I mean, they felt free to help those tortured souls, according

to the passage, that were afflicted with unclean spirits. Galatians 5 says you're not free to do wrong. You're free to do good. This is what God has freed you for. So, wonderful things that are happening. Of course, the world comes, it goes, "We're going to imprison you for that."

(Acts 5:17) "But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy.

(Acts 5:18) They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail."

"There. Not free." "Oh, no, we're still free."

(Acts 5:19) "But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,

(Acts 5:20) "Go..."

"Go back. Start doing what you were doing." What is that telling us? They were free. "Don't stop. Continue to do it." And even when they were ultimately beat at the very end, they realize, "OK, I guess they can't continue to incarcerate us because of the fact that the multitudes are going to be stirred up and they're going to stone us. So, we're going to go ahead and free them." Of course they had the word from

Gamaliel that says, "Why don't you let him go? If it's of God, you couldn't stop it anyway." So, they let him go, but they go, "Eh, we've got to beat him at least." Some people aren't happy till they really cause a lot of pain, and your thought is, "Ok, so you cause pain, that'll keep them from ever praising God again." No, no, it's not going to keep them from doing that.

(Acts 5:41) "So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

(Acts 5:42) And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ."

So, man can't stop you from proclaiming His name. He can't stop you from rejoicing. He can't stop you from doing what He tells you to do, from doing good, and you can see the boldness, and after the afflictions, even though they've forbidden them, they're going to continue right on.

Well, in Acts 12, you kind of see an interesting parallel to this as well. Once again, Peter finds himself in trouble.

Troublemaker. So, Peter is proclaiming the Lord. Of course,

Herod finds out that by killing somebody that he goes up in the polls.

(Acts 12:5) “So Peter was kept in the prison...”

And Herod figured, “If one is dead, and I put one in prison, I'm going to be really going up.”

“... but prayer for him...”

I don't guess anybody figured that prayer would be an object or something that would cause any hindrance.

“... but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church...”

I like this whole scenario because of the way that Peter is guarded because of the way the angel rescues him. To me, it's a perfect picture of walking in freedom. So, let me give it to you. Peter is in prison, they have him between two guards, and everybody's kind of sleeping. So, you have a guard here, a guard here, and they're sleeping and they're sleeping. I guess they weren't snorers, or maybe they were, and it didn't matter. They're all just their cozy and one of the reasons why the two guards are there is “It's bad enough you have the prison doors, but this guy's escaped before. It's

not going to happen again.” The angel comes to Peter while he's sleeping and taps him, and I don't know if some of you, easy to wake up, slow to wake up. Peter is probably slower and so he taps him and he's groggy, but he goes, “Ok.”

(Acts 12:7) “And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, “Get up quickly.” And his chains fell off his hands.”

I don't know if that made a lot of noise or not, but apparently the two guys are still sleeping.

(Acts 12:8) “And the angel said to him, “Gird yourself and put on your sandals.” ...”

I mean, the angel is actually having to tell him to get dressed, “Ok, do you have your robe?” Yeah.

“... “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.””

Pretty simple order, isn't it?

(Acts 12:9) “And he went out and continued to follow...”

Now, what's interesting about this is Peter's still in a daze, “Oh, what's happening?” We know that because it says in verse 9,

“And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.”

Maybe he thought he was dreaming or sleepwalking, but that's what he thought, and the angel just said, “Follow me.” I mean, there are times where the Spirit of the Lord begins to direct and I'm going, “What am I doing?” But you know it's what God wants you to do. You could just hear the voice. You can just feel the unction and you're not knowing all of the ends and the outs of it, but the Spirit of God is moving, He says, “Follow Me” and you know that God is telling you to walk in His steps. I mean, you're not following God if you're not like Jesus. So, let's just clarify that, but you begin to walk in His steps, and you become free. God begins to free you.

(Acts 12:10) “When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city...”

Then the angel goes, “Ok, you're on your own from here.”

(Acts 12:11) “When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and

rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.””

Of course, he goes to the church, knocks on the door of the house. Little Rhoda comes to the door, and she goes, “Who is it?” She realizes it's Peter, and instead of opening door, she goes back, and she goes, “Oh, Peter's at the door.” But everybody goes, “No, it can't be Peter. We've been praying for him. Can't be Peter.” That's faith for you, isn't it?

(Acts 12:16) “But Peter continued knocking...”

I can just see him out there, “It's me! It's me!”

“... when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

(Acts 12:17) But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had led him out of the prison...”

One of the great things about our testimony is that we're just simply sharing with people how the Lord let us out of prison. I mean, the sorrow, the anxiety, the pain, the suffering, the fears, all of the things, the emotions, my desires, the cravings of my appetite; how He freed me from being concerned about what everybody else thinks; how He

freed me from the guilt in which the Law condemned me and said, "You're never going to make it. You're never going to be good." And He freed me from that. I mean, think of all the things that God freed us from, and that's fundamentally, our testimony. It's the most powerful thing that you could actually say to people to convey just how wonderful He is and the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you ever confused about "How do I share the gospel?" All you have to do is share what He's done for you. I mean, as simple as a blind man, "Once I was blind; now, I see." That's not a complicated testimony, but it's very real and it is that which conveys a sense of Spirit and somebody that has actually experienced this firsthand. Powerful are the testimonies of people that are speaking firsthand of what is true. People cannot argue with the truth of reality in your life and how God has worked, and I would always start with that wonderful truth. Paul says in Galatians, we live by the Spirit now, and the transformation that happens. "Let us also walk by the Spirit. Let's fall in line according to these things." He's literally saying we've stopped listening to the flesh and all of the things that it's telling us to do. We're not listening to that anymore. We're listening to the word of God. Remember,

the Spirit of truth reveals all things that Christ said. So, we no longer live by our feelings or emotions, or what everybody else is saying. Everybody's an expert anyway, but we're not listening to that stuff anymore. We're listening to, "Thus saith the Lord," and we can hear the voice of God going, "Now, I love you, son, and this is what you need to do. Keep in step. Keep walking with Me this way. You want to get out of prison? Follow Me." See, we don't think of getting out of prison as falling in line, but by falling in line, we get out of prison because the fact the matter is that we're listening to so many voices, and that's what imprisons us. That's what confuses us. It's a life that is very confusing. So, the Spirit of God goes, "Ok. I'm going to get you out of this, but you're going to have to follow Me." And you begin to walk.

You could see that in a very spiritual way in the lives of the apostles as well in the Book of Acts. Let me show you a couple of examples of this because they're very interesting. The first I'm going to choose is a very unique one because, well, it comforts me in a very strange way, and the way that it comforts me is that Paul's a sinner, too. I'm not trying to rejoice over his sin, but it is comforting that we all fail and

fall. So, in Acts 23, Paul's been arrested. There they go again. He looks intently the Council, and he's very bold and really comes off a little bit arrogant. The reason I say that is he begins to state his credentials, and that's as far cry from what he states in 1 Corinthians 2, where in 1 Corinthians 2 he says, "I came to you knowing nothing but Christ crucified. I did not come with superiority of speech." And as he states in Philippians 3, "All the things that were gained for me I count as dung. It's a waste." But not here. In this text, he kind of starts off and he goes, "Let me tell you how good I am."

(Acts 23:1) "Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.""

Ok, that's true, and he probably had taken that, "It ain't bragging if it's true" route, but anyway,

(Acts 23:2) "The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth."

(Act 23:3) Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! ..."

And “whitewashed wall” was really a bad thing to say, especially to authority. It’s basically saying that you're worthless, good for nothing. You just look good, but you're a worthless individual.

“... Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?”

Wow, it's a reproof and a rebuke, to who? This is the problem, to authority. Now, what's interesting about the passage is clearly at this juncture, Paul didn't know that he had become high priest, but when he does find out as the cry is in verse 4,

“But the bystanders said, “Do you revile God’s high priest?””

Now, we know that Paul's the one that writes Romans 13, “All authority is ordained by God, and if you resist that authority, you've opposed God.”

(Acts 23:5) “And Paul said, “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.’””

Paul corrects himself and uses Scripture to correct himself. The point of the passage is, now, as he's walking in the Spirit, and of course, there's an interesting point here, that many

of us fall in and out of that. That's why Scripture says, "Be being filled by the Spirit," because it's very easy for us to put ourselves in this, and it's very easy for us to react rather than let the Spirit of God lead us in path of life. We react to what people say and often with great hostility and anger. I mean, the question is when this happened, when he was slapped in the face, what was his first reaction? Vindictiveness, anger. You can hear it. "You're going to get yours." And it's so human, isn't it? God says in his heart, "You're not going to let flesh call the shots anymore, are you, Paul?" And as Paul will write to the Corinthians, "We're taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ." How many times have I felt like, "We're going to kill him. We just have to kill him. Sorry, nothing personal." Instead of thinking, "What is the Spirit of God telling me?" And instead of aligning myself with the word of God, we react to what happens. Our emotions have put us in bondage, and we're imprisoned by our emotions and God says, "No longer." You now are being subject to the way of Christ, and you submit your wills to His and you begin to walk in the way of life, and when Paul changed to living Scripture rather than living emotions, he began walking the life of Christ. It's such a wonderful and a

very simple picture, but the passage is revealing to us just how easily we go away from that path.

In Acts 9 as well, if you look with me, you can see Peter dealing with, well, strangely enough, would it be a surprise to you that he had prejudice and bias? Well, that would be of the flesh, right? I mean, Scripture says, “We recognize no man according to the flesh anymore.” Which is telling me that if I'm following Christ, it doesn't matter who they are, doesn't matter what their background is, I don't see that; I see the heart and I judge according to not appearance, but according to righteousness, as Jesus will tell us to do. In Acts 9, Peter begins to be led by the Spirit of God in his walk and going to particular places, and as he goes, God begins to lead him. If you come towards the end, it tells us,

(Acts 9:31) “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace...”

(Acts 9:32) “Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.”

Why did he come there? It doesn't say, but he seems to be walking in freedom.

(Acts 9:33) “There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.”

(Acts 9:34) Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed.” Immediately he got up.

(Acts 9:35) And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.”

Now, we know that God wants us to do good, and we know that he was free to do good and God empowered him as such, but God was doing something greater in Peter's life because as he took one step and the next step; God is going to place people in front of you. Scripture says as you're going, make disciples. It's actually the command. So, as you're going, wherever you're going, begin to make learners of Christ; talk to them about Christ. As you begin ministering, wherever you are, God begins to open up doors and He begins to lead you because you're walking in the footsteps of Christ. Scripture says that He went about doing good; went about building up, helping others, healing others, right? It's a concern, it's a care for others, and you're doing it in the name of Christ; doing it for the glory of God. You're walking in the path of Christ. You think you're going to miss His will? Not a chance. What's wonderful about this

particular incident is that he does this one act, and now everybody's starting to talk about it. He's starting to travel into a particular town called Joppa. Now, Joppa is fairly close to Caesarea. Just to give you a little background, we won't go into anymore beyond that, but it's pretty close to it. So, he starts heading to Joppa. Well, on the road, of course, Joppa's heard that this guy can do miracles. A girl by the name of Tabitha, who seemed to be a very lovely individual, serving God's people very sacrificially, dies and the people in Joppa just happen to hear that Peter was kind of in the neighborhood. Then, God begins to lead. Then they say, "Why don't you come to Joppa? There's somebody here that we need your help with." So, he goes into Joppa, and he goes to the room, and he prays over the body, and she lives. He's now in Joppa. How did he get in Joppa? People sent for him, "You've got to come into Joppa." So, he goes because he knows that by doing what God wants him to do, God's going to lead him. As He leads him, he finds himself in the very place that Jonah was while he was running away from God, and the whole picture possibly of Jonah came to mind as he's looking out over the Mediterranean, and he's perceiving that, "Wow, had he just gone, he wouldn't have

gotten swallowed by a fish and then, be regurgitated and all that messy stuff happened. I need to listen to God.” Now, while he's probably thinking about being regurgitated by a fish, he finds himself in a tanner's house, and you know what that smells like? Probably regurgitated fish because you have all these dead bodies and all this smell. So, he's smelling this, right? It's while he's smelling this, he's talking to God and he's probably thinking a little bit about Jonah, and “I don't want to run away from God. I want to do everything that He says” that God sends down this blanket of all kinds of animals in a vision.

If you look with me, the way it reads is,

(Acts 10:10) “But he became hungry and was desiring to eat...”

And God goes, “I’ve got something for you.” And God sends him this real turn off. So, He sends down this blanket and it says,

(Acts 10:11) “... the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,

(Acts 10:12) and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures...”

“Slimy things; reptiles” is probably another way of putting it.

“... and birds of the air.”

Which Jews, they don't touch that stuff. It's unclean animals.

(Acts 10:13) “A voice came to him, “Get up, Peter, kill and eat!”””

“That's what you're going to be eating today.” And Peter says, “No, not me.” Now, what's going to have to happen is this, Peter is going to have to crucify his appetite and he's going to have to crucify his prejudice, but both are going to happen in the Spirit. I mean, how powerful is prejudice, right? How powerful is that? How powerful is your appetite? But the third time this would go down, God says, “If I told you to do it, you'll do it, won't you?” And Peter goes, “I have the Spirit of Christ in me. I have to. I want to.” That's the Spirit of Christ that will go beyond. I mean, how many times have missionaries and I've been there myself, gone in foreign fields and they go, “I bought something for you to eat.” And you've got to think spiritually? You can't think physical. Physical has to die and says, “It doesn't matter what it tastes like. It matters how it affects them.” And you begin to walk in Spirit, but the Spirit of God is so powerful

that it helps you overcome the very things that have had a hold on you. Peter is reflecting upon this vision and clearly as time goes on, we realize the whole reason why God got him here was so that he would go to Caesarea, to the Roman place in which the soldiers, then maritime soldiers are sitting, and this is where Cornelius. He's a guy that loves the Lord. He's a Roman soldier, not a Jew, and God will send Peter, who, even in Galatians, still has difficulty with the Gentiles. He'll go to this Gentile Roman soldier, see the hand of God in their lives and say, "I most certainly know that God is not a respecter of person. Therefore, I'm following Him. I will not be a respecter of person." I can't tell you how many times I quoted that verse, "We recognize no man according to the flesh anymore." How many times do I have to? I have to quote it all the time to myself, because I'm subjecting myself to the will of God; not to my flesh or my prejudice. We all have that flesh and appetites that come in and try to tell us what to do. How did he get to the place in which these guys would then come and get him? Come to his house at the place where he stayed at the tanner's house in Joppa and then bring him to Cesarea? All this is God leading

and God directing. Why? Because he has subjected himself literally to the will of God.

The passage ends, if you look with me in Galatians 5,

(Galatians 5:25) “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk...”

Or I would say, fall in line behind the person of Christ.

(Galatians 5:26) “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.”

“Boastful” is literally empty glory. And really, what he's talking about with this whole sense of challenging one another, arguing with one another, is where we spend so much of our life fighting over stupid nothing. I mean, Paul will even talk about in Romans 14, don't go around passing judgment on other people's opinions and how much of debate and how much of argumentation. God has given us something to free people, and we focus on these trivial things that just separate people. I mean, we begin doing nothing; we begin to fight over nothing; we begin to talk about nothing; we compete. “Challenging one another” is really dealing with competing with one another. Have you ever fought over a little trophy going? Paul says, “That's nothing. What are you fighting over nothing for?” People's

whole life oftentimes revolve around nothing because it's not eternal. That's why Scripture says we live by the Spirit. Life comes from the Spirit. We are focusing on incorruptible things, not corruptible things.

Now, let me just close with this, if you look with me in 2 Timothy, as Paul begins to encourage Timothy in particular to focus on things that are lasting and not involve himself in conversation that is destructive.

(2 Timothy 2:11) “It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him;

(2 Timothy 2:12) If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us;

(2 Timothy 2:13) If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.”

Clearly at the very beginning, he is emphasizing, what? Life, living with Him, investing in something that endures. (Verse 12)

(2 Timothy 2:14) “Remind them of these things, and solemnly charge them in the presence of God not to wrangle about words, which is useless...”

Vain, empty glory. What are you fighting for? Why are you competing against one another? Why are you wasting your time?

(2 Timothy 2:22) “Now flee from youthful lusts...”

Which youthful lusts would have a tendency in this context, not dealing with as much morality, but it's dealing with the sense of the youth pursuing position and by virtue of arguing and debating. You know how sometimes young people like to argue?

“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”

Verse 23 actually tells you the context,

“But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels.”

We have the gospel. We have something valuable. We have something that frees people. We have a message worth proclaiming and we're spending our time on nothing, and God says, “This isn't free. That's not freedom. The only thing you're doing is putting people back into bondage again.” We have had opportunities through the years to have groups

meet for all kinds of reasons, and we even have a picnic once a year out on the grounds, but we always try to focus on the word of God because we have found that if you just leave too much empty space out there, people will start talking about all kinds of things that are worthless. That's why we always encourage if you open your house, want to have a Bible study, focus on the word of God. It keeps you from going all kinds of directions that are just destructive and about nothing. God has given us freedom and has given us the wonderful opportunity to free others. We should walk in that.

### **Closing Prayer:**

Father, we come before You today and desire a change in our lives as we come and follow behind our Lord and Savior. We realize that freedom to do wrong is not freedom. It just puts us in greater bondage, but as we use our freedom to follow You, we find ourselves truly free.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed, I'm just asking you to examine your own heart, and ask a simple question, "Am I walking in the freedom of Christ? Have I begun by crucifying the flesh, by giving up those things that so easily put me back in bondage? The emotions that I hold on to, the feelings that I have, the prejudice that are a part of my life, the appetites that I have that have allured me away from the Lord. Have I crucified those?" Scripture doesn't say that it's always going to be easy. In fact, it uses the word crucifixion for a reason, but it is the path of freedom. He will set you free.