**Galatians 5.1-12 (“For Freedom”)**

(Wednesday 10th June 2020)

We have been thinking about how Paul reacted to the serious division that was occurring in this community, between those who were behaving in a way which was, in effect, saying that Gentile Christians must embrace the Jewish faith, particularly in those Jewish practices that separated them from the world at large, i.e. circumcision and table fellowship. Even Peter was beginning to fall into that camp as was Paul’s missionary companion, Barnabas.

Paul’s central argument was that now everything has moved on

 ***“we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in (of) Jesus Christ”***

The Jews saw themselves as accepted by God - God’s chosen people - because of the Covenant he had made with them. Keeping the Law (“works of the law”) was very much a kind of badge of their covenant membership. In particular keeping those parts of the law that made them distinctive.

But now all has changed - the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has changed all that. He had opened up a door for all to enter into that fellowship with God - Jew and Gentile together. To follow the path that the “Judaizers” were advocating would be a huge step backwards ***“if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing”*** (2.21)

Paul has put forward his key arguments and now is winding up his letter with this great cry of what really has now come about through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. **They are now free from all that “law stuff”**

***“For freedom Christ has set us free”***

It’s almost a rallying cry. Things have now been moved on. God’s plan

for the salvation of his whole creation (a creation trying to operate independently of its creator) is now completed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus

The promise that began when God called Abraham - ***“I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing … and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed***” Genesis 12,2-3) is now completed.

He believed that they had understood all that and were proceeding along just fine. But then came along those who wanted to add things, which, in effect, were actually moving them backward in the outworking of their faith journey. Paul is filled with utter contempt for the ones doing that, ***“*I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!”** (5.12)

 They have been given a freedom in which they should now reflect something of the love that God has shown to them in just what the cost of that freedom was that he paid.

How does this story impact on you and on your journey of faith?

Does the call of “**For freedom”** resonate with you? Seems so appropriate in “Lock down”! But of course, it automatically leads on to a responsibility to reflect something of the great love that we have received. **It’s not for hoarding!**

**Prayers**

(just a few thoughts!)

* Let’s remember those who are suffering from Covid infections at this time and also those who are close to them.
* Pray for those recently bereaved.
* Pray for folk who are still finding this “lockdown” so difficult to handle and for those who are worrying and trying to care for them.
* Let’s remember those known to each of us who are suffering from other chronic ailments and who are finding it difficult to get their normal care and support.
* Please pray for the teams who are working towards finding a therapy and a vaccine.
* Continue to hold in your prayers those in the NHS who are still very much the “front line”: and for their families who must continue to worry about them.
* Pray for those we know who are not well at this time. Continue to pray for Rebecca.
* Remember our government leaders and the scientists who advise them. They clearly need our prayers.
* Pray that the world-wide response to the killing of George Floyd in America will lead to an acceptance of each other as “A person for whom Christ died”, irrespective of any skin colour.