

East Africa Yearly Meeting of Friends North (Quakers)

Young Friends Programme (YFP) 35th Annual Conference

Theme: Mark of Quality

Text: Galatians 6:17

Theme Song: Injili 74

Venue: Ndivisi Girls Secondary School

Date: 11 December 2024 – 15th December 2024

Main Speaker: Pastor John Apiya

Presider: Hophine Wekesa

DAY 1: SINCE JESUS HAS SET ME FREE, I WILL MAKE SURE THAT I STAY FREE AND NOT GET TIED AGAIN IN SLAVERY LEST I LOSE MY MARK OF QUALITY

Key Text: Galatians 5:1

"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Introduction

Freedom is one of the most cherished values in the world. People fight wars, protest, and even sacrifice their lives to secure freedom. Yet, there is a greater freedom—freedom in Christ—that transcends any earthly liberation. Paul writes to the Galatians to remind them of this spiritual freedom. But, just as it is easy to slip back into chains, the Galatians were at risk of abandoning the gospel's freedom for the bondage of legalism.

Paul uses the metaphor of a yoke—a heavy wooden beam used to harness animals—to describe this return to slavery. Imagine being set free from carrying a heavy burden only to willingly pick it up again. It makes no sense! Yet many Christians do this when they revert to sin or legalism. Today's message reminds us to cherish and guard the freedom Christ has given us.



Christ has opened the door to true freedom—step into His light.

Understanding Freedom in Christ

1. Freedom from the Penalty of Sin:

- Before Christ, we were condemned by our sins and destined for eternal separation from God. Romans 6:23 says, *"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*
- When Jesus died on the cross, He bore the punishment we deserved. This means we are no longer guilty in the eyes of God (Romans 8:1).

2. Freedom from the Power of Sin:

- Sin no longer controls us. Galatians 2:20 declares, *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."*
- This doesn't mean we won't struggle with sin, but we now have the power to overcome it through the Holy Spirit.

3. Freedom to Live in Obedience and Love:

- True freedom isn't about doing whatever we want; it's about living according to God's purpose. John 8:36 assures us, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*
- This freedom leads to joy and peace because we are aligned with God's will.

What Is the Yoke of Slavery?

1. Legalism:

- Legalism says we must earn God's approval by following rules and traditions. It shifts the focus from Christ's sacrifice to our own works.
- Paul warns against this in Galatians 3:3: *"After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?"*

2. Sin:

- Sin enslaves us by separating us from God and trapping us in destructive patterns. Jesus came to break those chains (Romans 6:14).

- Returning to sin after salvation is like a dog returning to its vomit (Proverbs 26:11).



Through Christ, we are set free from the bondage of sin.

How to Stand Firm in Freedom

1. **Stay Grounded in the Word of God:**
 - Psalm 119:105 says, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*
 - The Bible equips us to recognize and resist false teachings that threaten our freedom.
2. **Surround Yourself with a Community of Faith:**
 - Hebrews 10:25 urges believers to meet together for encouragement. Isolation makes us vulnerable to attack.
3. **Pray for the Strength to Resist Temptation:**
 - Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew 26:41, *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation."* Prayer keeps us connected to God's power.

Living as Free People

1. **Freedom Is Not a License to Sin:**
 - Paul warns in Galatians 5:13: *"Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love."*
 - True freedom results in righteous living, not self-indulgence.
2. **Freedom Empowers Us to Serve Others:**
 - Jesus modeled servant leadership (John 13:14-15). Our freedom enables us to love and help others without expecting anything in return.

Call to Action

Reflect:

- Are there areas in your life where you've willingly returned to bondage?
- Commit today to stand firm in the freedom Christ has given you.

DAY 2: THE MESSAGE OF PAUL TO THE CHURCH

Key Text: Galatians 5:1

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Galatians was written with urgency and passion. The Galatians had initially received the gospel of grace through faith in Christ, but false teachers known as Judaizers were persuading them to adopt Jewish customs like circumcision in order to be saved. These teachings undermined the gospel by suggesting that faith in Christ alone wasn't enough for salvation. Paul defends the purity of the gospel, emphasizing that salvation comes solely through Christ's finished work. This message is not just for the Galatians—it speaks to us today, as we too face distractions and teachings that may pull us away from the true gospel.



Faith in Christ is the true path to righteousness. The law points to our need for grace, but only faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation and a transformed heart

1. Faith Over Ritual

Why Faith Matters

Paul reminds us that we are justified before God not by our works, but by faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16). Salvation is a gift from God, and no human effort can add to Christ's work on the cross. Faith connects us to God's promises, just as Abraham's faith was credited to him as righteousness (Genesis 15:6). Through faith, we access God's promises and become heirs of His blessings.

The Limits of the Law

The law serves a purpose: it reveals our sin, but it cannot save us. As Paul writes in Romans 3:20, "No one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law." The law is

like a mirror—it shows us the dirt on our face but cannot cleanse it. Only Christ can purify us from our sin.

2. True Freedom in Christ

Freedom from the Law

The Judaizers insisted on circumcision and adherence to the law, but Paul emphasizes that Christ has set us free from these burdens. Through His sacrifice, we are liberated from the long list of laws that cannot save us (Galatians 5:1). Christ has fulfilled the law, bringing us true freedom from sin and the futility of trying to earn our salvation.

Freedom to Serve

Faith in Christ brings true freedom—not the freedom to sin, but the freedom to serve. As John 8:32 says, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." This freedom is not for self-indulgence, but for serving others in love. Paul calls us to use our freedom not as an opportunity for the flesh, but to serve one another humbly in love (Galatians 5:13).

3. The Role of the Holy Spirit

A Mark of the Christian Life

When we place our faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. The Holy Spirit is a mark of our new identity in Christ, empowering us to live according to God's will. The Spirit convicts us of sin and helps us live a life pleasing to God. As Paul writes in Galatians 5:16, we are called to "walk by the Spirit," allowing the Spirit to guide and empower us to live out our faith.

Living by the Spirit

Obedying the Holy Spirit is key to living a victorious Christian life. The Spirit helps us to avoid the traps of legalism and selfishness and empowers us to follow Christ's example of sacrificial love. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, He transforms us, helping us live out the freedom Christ has given us.

4. The Power of Love

Love as the Fulfillment of the Law

In Galatians 5:13-14, Paul reminds us that the entire law is summed up in the command to "love your neighbor as yourself." Love is not merely a feeling; it is an active choice to serve and care for others, especially within the body of Christ. When we love, we fulfill the law because love seeks the good of others, just as Christ's love for us was sacrificial and unconditional.

Overcoming Obstacles with Love

We may face criticism or challenges from others, even from within the church. However, Paul teaches that love enables us to overcome these obstacles. Jesus Himself said, "You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14), and His command was to love one another. Even when facing difficulties, we are called to love, serve, and forgive one another, just as Jesus did.

Conclusion

Paul's message to the Galatians is clear: we are saved by faith alone, not by works or rituals. Faith brings us true freedom—freedom from sin and from the futile attempt to earn God's favor through the law. This freedom enables us to serve others in love, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to live for Christ. As believers, we are called to live out the freedom we have in Christ by loving one another and serving God with our whole hearts.

Let us hold fast to the true gospel, living in the freedom Christ provides, and demonstrating His love to a world in need. May we continue to walk in the Spirit, serving and loving others, just as Christ has called us to do.

DAY 3: THE LAW VERSUS FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS

Key Texts: Galatians 2:15-16, Genesis 15:6

Introduction: The struggle between law and faith has been central to God's relationship with humanity. For centuries, the Israelites followed the law, believing it was the key to righteousness. But when Christ came, He fulfilled the law and established a new way to God through faith. Paul's message to the Galatians remains clear: salvation cannot be earned through the law, but is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ. This truth is crucial, even today, as many try to earn God's favor through their deeds, rather than resting in His grace.

1. Faith: The Foundation of Righteousness

- **Abraham's Example:**

Abraham was declared righteous, not by his works, but by his faith in God's promises (Genesis 15:6). Faith, not the law, is the foundation of a relationship with God.

- Abraham's righteousness was based on belief, not actions. This shows us that righteousness is not something we can earn, but something God gives when we trust Him.

- **Living by Faith:**

Faith requires trusting God, even when circumstances seem impossible. Whether facing financial struggles or health crises, we are called to trust in God's promises. Faith believes that, even in uncertainty, God will fulfill His word.



Abraham's faith was counted as righteousness, a powerful example of trusting God's promises, even when circumstances seem impossible.

2. The Law vs. Faith in Christ Jesus

- The **law** consists of binding decrees given by God, which include:
 - **Ceremonial laws** (Leviticus 1:1-11),
 - **Civil laws** (Deuteronomy 24:1-22),
 - **Moral laws** (Exodus 20:1-17, Mark 12:29-32).

While these laws were necessary to guide the people of Israel, they were never meant to justify anyone. **Faith** in Christ, however, is the only way to be justified and made righteous. The law exposes sin but cannot save—it merely points to our need for grace (Galatians 2:15-16).

- **The Judaizers' Error:**

The Judaizers, who insisted Gentile Christians adhere to Jewish laws like circumcision, missed the point. True salvation comes through faith, not through rituals or race. We are all equal in God's eyes, and faith in Christ is the only path to salvation (Galatians 3:27-29).

3. Is Circumcision Necessary?

- **Old Testament Significance:**

Circumcision was a physical sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Genesis 17:9-13, Romans 4:11). It symbolized obedience and purification. But as time passed, God called for a **spiritual circumcision** of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 4:4). God desires a transformed heart, not mere ritual observance.

- **Circumcision of the Heart:**

True circumcision is not of the flesh but of the heart (Romans 2:28-29). God values a **changed heart** more than outward appearances or rituals. Abraham was blessed before he was circumcised (Romans 4:9-10), showing that God's promises come through faith, not outward actions.

4. The Abrahamic Promise and Faith

- **God's Call to Abraham:**

In Genesis 12:1-4, God called Abraham to leave his homeland and trust in His promises. Abraham followed in faith, and through him, God made profound promises:

- **Blessing and greatness** (Genesis 12:2),
- **A blessing to others**—those who bless Abraham will be blessed, and those who curse him will be cursed (Genesis 12:3),
- **A blessing to all nations**—through Abraham, all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:3c),
- **Protection and reward** (Genesis 15:1).

- **Faith Leads to Blessings:**

Abraham's faith opened the door to God's promises. Similarly, we are blessed by faith, not by works of the law. The power to live a transformed life and receive the Holy Spirit comes from faith in Christ, not from fulfilling religious rituals (Galatians 3:5).

Conclusion:

The law points out our sin, but it is **faith in Jesus Christ** that justifies us and leads to salvation. Just as Abraham was declared righteous by faith, we too are called to trust in God's promises. Circumcision, rituals, and outward observance are not what save us—what matters is a transformed heart, living by faith in Christ Jesus. This faith, rooted in the promises of God, leads us to true righteousness and freedom in Christ. Let us rest in His grace and trust in His faithful promises.

DAY 4: FREEDOM AND THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Key Text: Galatians 5:22-23

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

Introduction

Imagine a tree planted by a river, flourishing because its roots draw constant nourishment from the water. This image represents a life filled with the Holy Spirit. Just as a tree produces fruit naturally when it is healthy, so too does a believer produce spiritual fruit when they are rooted in Christ.

Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. He emphasizes that freedom in Christ leads to a Spirit-filled life that manifests in godly character. This message challenges us to evaluate the kind of fruit our lives are producing. Are we demonstrating the characteristics of someone truly transformed by the Spirit?

The Works of the Flesh

- Paul lists destructive behaviors in Galatians 5:19-21, such as envy, immorality, and idolatry. These are symptoms of living apart from the Spirit.
- The works of the flesh not only harm us but destroy relationships, block our fellowship with God, and hinder our witness to the world.



A withered tree illustrates the barren life of living according to the works of the flesh.

Understanding the Fruit of the Spirit

1. **Love:**
 - Love is selfless and unconditional. It reflects God's love for us (1 John 4:7-8).
 - Example: Loving someone who has wronged you, demonstrating forgiveness.
2. **Joy:**
 - Joy is not dependent on circumstances but comes from the assurance of God's presence (Nehemiah 8:10).
 - Example: Rejoicing in God's faithfulness even during trials.
3. **Peace:**
 - Peace comes from trusting God fully (Philippians 4:6-7).
 - Example: A calm heart during uncertain times because you trust God's plan.
4. **Forbearance (Patience):**
 - Patience is enduring difficult situations or people with grace (James 1:2-4).
 - Example: Waiting on God's timing without complaining.
5. **Kindness and Goodness:**
 - Kindness is compassion in action, while goodness is moral integrity.
 - Example: Helping a struggling neighbor or standing firm in truth despite opposition.
6. **Faithfulness:**
 - Faithfulness means being dependable and committed to God and others (Lamentations 3:22-23).
 - Example: Remaining loyal in marriage or consistent in ministry.
7. **Gentleness:**
 - Gentleness is strength under control. It reflects Christ's humility (Matthew 11:29).
 - Example: Responding to criticism without anger.
8. **Self-Control:**
 - Self-control is the ability to resist temptation and make godly choices (Titus 2:11-12).
 - Example: Choosing not to indulge in harmful habits or words.

How to Cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit

1. **Abide in Christ:**
 - John 15:5 teaches that staying connected to Jesus is essential for bearing fruit.
2. **Submit to the Holy Spirit:**
 - Galatians 5:16 encourages us to "*walk by the Spirit*" to overcome the desires of the flesh.
3. **Feed Your Spirit Daily:**
 - Spiritual growth requires regular prayer, Bible study, and fellowship.

Call to Action

Evaluate the fruit of your life:

- Are you reflecting the characteristics of the Spirit, or are you controlled by the works of the flesh?
- Ask God to fill you with His Spirit and help you bear abundant fruit.

DAY 5: THE SPIRITUAL WAR AND THE PROMISE OF VICTORY

Key Text: Galatians 5:16-17

"So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh."

Introduction

Every believer is engaged in a spiritual battle. This war is not fought with weapons but within our hearts and minds. Paul describes the conflict between the flesh—our sinful nature—and the Spirit of God within us.

This struggle is a reality for all Christians. Even Paul admitted in Romans 7:19, *"For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing."* However, the good news is that the Spirit empowers us to overcome the flesh and walk in victory.

Understanding the War Within

1. The Flesh:

- The flesh represents our old, sinful nature. It pulls us away from God and toward selfish desires (Galatians 5:19-21).
- Example: A temptation to gossip or hold a grudge, even when we know it is wrong.

2. The Spirit:

- The Spirit is God's presence within us, guiding and empowering us to live holy lives (John 16:13).
- Example: Feeling convicted to apologize or pray instead of lashing out in anger.



Choose the path that leads to light and life: walk by the Spirit.

3. The Conflict:

- These opposing forces create tension, but the Spirit gives us victory as we yield to Him.

Keys to Victory in the Spiritual War

1. **Depend on God's Power:**
 - Victory comes not from our own strength but from God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6).
2. **Put on the Armor of God:**
 - Ephesians 6:10-18 describes spiritual armor, such as the belt of truth and shield of faith, that equips us to stand firm.
3. **Renew Your Mind:**
 - Romans 12:2 emphasizes the importance of aligning our thoughts with God's Word.
4. **Resist the Devil:**
 - James 4:7 assures us that when we resist Satan, he will flee. This resistance requires steadfast faith and prayer.

The Promise of Victory

1. **God's Grace Is Sufficient:**
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds us that God's power is made perfect in our weakness.
2. **The Holy Spirit Will Guide Us:**
 - John 14:26 assures us that the Spirit will teach and remind us of God's truths.
3. **We Are More Than Conquerors:**
 - Romans 8:37 declares our victory through Christ.

Living Victoriously

- Walking in victory means daily submission to God, trusting in His strength, and actively resisting the enemy.
- Share testimonies of individuals who overcame significant spiritual battles through faith and reliance on the Spirit.

Call to Action

- Reflect: What areas of your life are still under the influence of the flesh?
- Commit: Ask the Holy Spirit to empower you for victory in the daily battles you face.

Final Reflection and Application

Across these five days, the theme of freedom in Christ has been explored deeply. Remember:

- Christ has set you free; live in that freedom.
- Guard your freedom by walking in the Spirit and rejecting the works of the flesh.
- Bear the fruit of the Spirit, which reflects God's transformative work in your life.
- Embrace the promise of victory, knowing that God equips you to win the spiritual war.

This concludes the series, but the journey of living out these truths continues. May God strengthen you as you walk in His freedom and fulfill His purpose for your life. Amen.