

# The New Exodus Community - Galatians 5:1

by Michael Flowers

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a new Exodus community, living in freedom from the present evil age through faith in Jesus Christ, and serving one another through love.*

**Duration:** 32:26

**Scripture:** Luke 9:31, John 13:34-35, Acts 11:18, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Galatians 4:9, Galatians 5:3, Galatians 5:13

**Topics:** "Community"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal anecdote about his dog and a bone to illustrate the destructive nature of biting and devouring one another. He connects this behavior to the false teachings that were being spread in the Galatian churches, suggesting that they were causing division and harm within the community. The speaker emphasizes the importance of loving one's neighbor as oneself, quoting from the law to support this idea. He also highlights the practical ways in which the congregation can serve one another, using the example of volunteers in the church and the desire to create a loving environment for children.

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## Transcript

I started keeping a pen up here so I can take notes, you know, so. I never know what I'm going to think of. It's not on my notes, right? You never know what I'm going to say.

So pray for me. Lord, we need eyes to see and ears to hear. To hear the word of the Lord through the foolishness of preaching, as Paul says.

Yeah, that the word of the Lord would come through our weakness, through our confusion, through our foginess, wherever we may be this morning. Your word can pierce. It's the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

And come and make us new. Make us alive with your word. The living word of Jesus Christ speaking to our hearts.

Amen. Today we're going to talk a little bit about what it means to be a new Exodus community. We've been talking a lot about the new Exodus, the new Moses.

The new Moses being Jesus Christ. The new Exodus, right? Being Christ our Passover, who has been sacrificed for us. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus appeared to Moses and Elijah and he was

speaking to them about his, Luke's Gospel says, Exodus.

Speaking to them about his Exodus. And that's the Exodus that we've all been taken up in. We've been, it's a deliverance.

Paul in the first chapter of Galatians describes it as a rescue. A rescue operation from this present evil age. Not the present evil world.

There's a big difference. We've not been taken out of the world, but we've been placed in it to be in it, but not of it, Jesus is saying. And so it's the present evil age, the reign of sin and death.

That's why it's evil, because this present evil age is under the reign, the rule of sin and death. And that's what Jesus Christ, the new Moses, has come and delivered us through baptism. We've gone through the Red Sea, haven't we? Through baptism.

And he's taken us into the land. And what happened in the land? I mean, there was a lot of stuff going on in the land when they got into the land after they were baptized in the sea. Right.

What happened there? One of the things that they needed to do was what? Just live in peaceful existence forever. Who was in the land? Giants, those darn giants. You dealing with any giants this morning? You better be, because we wrestle not with flesh and blood.

Now, that last verse in Paul's address this morning is talking about the Galatian church wrestling with flesh and blood. If you keep on biting and devouring one another, it's animalistic language. Did you get that? It's like if you've seen a dog with a piece of meat and another dog comes and they go at it and who's going to get it? And it's vicious.

It's really vicious. Even a bone. That happened with my neighbor's dog about two weeks ago.

My neighbor, he was so great. He wanted to say, oh, bring your dog over. I want to like, you know, I want to like introduce him to my dog.

And so I said, cool, let's do it. And so I didn't realize that in the backyard, the previous neighbor, these were medical students. And so they didn't clean up the backyard.

The previous people didn't. And so there were all these old bones in the backyard. I didn't know that.

So I got back there and I let my dog out, who is, you know, a border collie, Aussie. And he grabbed one of those bones and then the other dog came toward him and then they went at it. And I had to pull him off because it was a bone.

Right. It's that bone. And that's the image that Paul is giving in this.

It's not good news, is it? The last verse that we read today, if you keep biting and devouring one another, you'll be consumed by one another. That is the result of what had happened in receiving the false teachers into the Galatian churches. Those who were coming from Jerusalem, perhaps saying that you need more than Jesus Christ to be redeemed and justified.

You need to be justified by the law as well. And so we're going to get into that today. But that's what we've been talking about since chapter one.

So I don't want to spend a lot of time on that. But that's a little background. This passage starts out today, though, for freedom, for freedom.

Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. What comes to mind, let's think about it a little bit, with the word freedom.

Talk to me. What does freedom mean to us? Freedom from? Freedom from guilt. Freedom from fear.

Freedom from fear. Yes, absolutely. Freedom from and I would say the law and we'll define that in a minute.

Big misunderstanding is what we're going to get at. Are we free? Are we free from law? Are we free from the law? The context of what Paul's talking about in his whole argument is the Sinai project, right? We've come to Mount Zion, the writer of Hebrews says. We've not come to Mount Sinai.

We've come to Mount Zion. And we didn't really preach on it, but it's the heavenly Jerusalem that Paul refers to with Hagar, the analogy that he's using in the previous chapter, ending chapter four. He uses this analogy of Hagar and Sarah.

Sarah being a symbol of the heavenly Jerusalem, Zion, and Hagar being a symbol of Sinai, where the law was given in Arabia. And it's a very odd analogy that he's drawing, but that's what's going on there. And he says, we've been set free from the slave woman.

Speaking of the law that was given on Sinai, I have to go back and read that. I'm not making this up. It sounds heretical sometimes, right? But this is Paul and he got him into a lot of trouble and a lot of misunderstanding about grace, like, you know, it's like, oh, wow.

Grace, that means I can do what I want. I'm free to do whatever I want. OK, freedom.

What comes to mind? Freedom from shame. Yeah. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

I like that one. Space is where you can grow and thrive. Mm hmm.

Freedom to make choices for the good or from from the good. Mm hmm. So we're free to be transformed, to make choices, to be transformed.

Very good. This is called the land of the free. Really? And the home of the brave.

You know, many of us are upset. The church is divided. And so we can look at freedom from a political point of view, right? You know, that's what America is all about in the Western world is freedom politically.

That's that's important, but that's not what Paul's getting at, is it? OK, so he's talking about in this context and there's many ways that we could actually look at freedom if we were doing a series on it. But if we're stuck in Galatians, we're going to stay with that context where we've been freed from chapter one, this present evil age. That's one thing that we've been freed from.

We've been freed from the reign of sin and death through the resurrection, the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And we've been freed because we share in his victory now. It's not our victory.

It's his victory that we participate in. And that is a very practical reality to know that and to contend for that, where everything in us feels differently. Everything is, you know, when you wake up and the fog is in the

room or, you know, you go to work and you go, oh, no, this is happening again or whatever the battles are, whatever the battles are.

We stand firm and we wrestle not with those battles on this ground. And we can get in those kind of skirmishes and wear ourselves out. And that's a diversion because we wrestle not with flesh and blood biting and devouring one another, but we wrestle with principalities and powers and heavenly places.

That's what Paul's talking about. That's what's behind all of the conflict and all of the anxiety and the fear and the shame and everything that's been talked about today and mentioned. That's what's behind it.

There's unseen forces that have been in rebellion, even when Adam and Eve is in the garden, right? The serpent was there. There had already been a fall before the fall. I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, Jesus said.

Yeah, so freedom. It can also be associated with individual autonomy, independence, right? And self-expression, the old mantra in the sexual revolution when I was growing up was what? Free love, free love. Now, the gospel talks about free love, but it's a different kind of free love, right? It's a kind of love that doesn't bring us in to curve upon ourselves.

But this kind of love is self-giving. It's self-giving. It's life generating and it's and it's in Christ Jesus.

This love has been demonstrated for us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. And we participate now in that love because God's not dead. He is alive as our children sing.

And it's more than just I feel him all over me. We have been brought into him. You know the song.

God's not dead. He is alive. God's not dead.

He is alive. I feel him all over me. But what about it when you don't? That's the question.

Yeah. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. So that's a climactic statement because Paul's been talking about slavery and freedom throughout the whole, well, at least chapters three and four.

And it appears that most of the members in these churches, these little churches throughout Galatia were not standing firm. And they had been disrupted and they'd gone into divisions and they were biting and devouring one another, having begun in the spirit. Do you want to end in the flesh is one of Paul's questions for them.

They've received another gospel stating that baptism in Christ is not sufficient. It's not sufficient to be full members of the one people of God. They need to be circumcised and organize their lives around the Jewish calendar, which is really based on the movements of the planets.

Right. It's not based on Christ. Like our calendar is based on Christ.

That's the difference between the Jewish calendar. Now, our calendar has been viewed and celebrated through the lens of Jesus Christ. So it's no longer based on the moon and the stars and the harvest and all of that, because now Pentecost that was a feast of harvest is now a feast of souls.

Right. It's it's the coming of the Holy Spirit. So it's all been transformed.

All of the Jewish calendar has been transformed in Jesus. And so, yeah, we sanctify time by celebrating these various feast days, but it's because it's in Jesus. It's not the type in the shadow that was awaiting the fulfillment.

It's all been fulfilled. And so they were trying to bring them back into that calendar and food laws. And Paul says that if you submit to their counsel, verse two, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

Wow, that's having begun in the spirit. These were baptized folks. And all of a sudden, Paul is saying, if you go there, Christ will have no advantage.

Why? Verse three, he answers the question. Once again, I testify to everyone who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the entire law, the entire law for Gentiles. That would be three trips to Jerusalem every year.

And that would cost a fortune for most people because you had to go to Jerusalem to celebrate those three specific feasts. And it was centered around the temple and the sacrificial system, which has been done away with in Jesus Christ, our Passover, who has been sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast.

And so to say that Christians must go back and the temple was still standing. This is no gospel. It's another gospel, he calls it.

Verse four, you who want to be justified by the law. Here's the problem. See, if you want to be justified by the law, this is what it does.

It cuts us off from Christ. Paul is saying, verse four, you know, it's almost like circumcision language. You know, it will cut you off from Christ.

And then he says, you have fallen from grace. You have fallen from grace. I was let that stand for what it says.

I mean, there are there are systems out there that say that's impossible. But Paul is saying you have fallen from grace if you do that. And Christ is no advantage and you are cut off from Christ.

OK, verse five, we'll move on. For through the spirit, here it is. By faith, verse five, we eagerly await for the hope of righteousness.

OK, we're we're in this already not yet tension that Paul is talking about. This is the kingdom of God. You know, we were praying by kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

In a sense, it's here, but it's not fully here. It's righteousness, peace and joy. Paul says, Romans 14 in the Holy Spirit, in the Holy Spirit.

So it's through the spirit. By faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. Between the first and the second advent and then verse six says, for in Christ, Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything.

The only thing that counts is faith, working through love, faith, working through love. The faith that he's talking about would be the faith that he would mention. We live by faith, not by sight.

And so this is not another use of the word faith, the faith. It's not meaning creedal assent or a list of doctrines. That's another way to use the word.

But then that's called this is the faith that's been handed down. Right. But now he's talking about something very living and alive and dynamic.

And he's saying this faith, a living trust in a living person. It's a living trust in a living person, Christ, the faithful one. This faith is alive.

It's alive and it works through love. This kind of faith is a relationship, really, and it's what brings us into relationship. It's the connecting point.

Faith is a relationship based in a communion of eternal love. Faith is a relationship based in communion with eternal love between the father and the son and the Holy Spirit. And see, the Holy Spirit is that outpoured love that Paul is talking about here.

This is love, not some sort of concept, but it's living love. It is God himself. God is love and our faith works through God.

It's not just acts of love, but our faith works through God himself in the communion of love. If you want to go that deep into the love of God, oh, that you would know this love that surpasses knowledge. Right.

And so it is an empowering, living love that faith connects with and it's the Holy Trinity. And so our communion is a relationship of faith in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. He's the faithful one and he gives us that faith to trust his faithfulness.

Faith is a gift, isn't it? Can't muster it up. It really is. It's a divine gift.

It's given the gift of faith. Repentance is a gift. Grant them repentance that leads to life, Paul said in the book of Acts.

Let's go down to verse 13. You were called to freedom. Here's that word again.

You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence. But through love, become slaves to one another.

Wow. What are you saying, Paul? What are you saying? Does becoming a Christian mean I'm just going to be continually being taken advantage of by the demands of people that I have to always say yes to? I don't want that kind of slavery, we might say, right? Is that what this is inferring? Is this what we're called to is to never say no, to never have boundaries, to never have a relationship where you can talk things out? No, no, it's not that. It's not that kind of codependency that it's trying to produce, right? If Jesus wants anything, he wants healthy relationship.

But how do we serve one another and maintain healthy relationships? How do we serve one another through love? First of all, we're called. We're called to this kind of freedom. It's freedom from the law, the law so that we can actually live in communion with God.

And that word called is the same as church, really. It's ekklesia, church is called out. And this is we were called.

We were called out once. And it's freedom from the reign of sin and death, from the present evil age into the age of the kingdom. We're called away from being curved in on ourselves.

This is what he's saying. Don't use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence. St. Augustine had a way of defining sin as one who is curved in on himself.

And we would just say today that that's navel gazing, right? Right? You ever use that term? It's very deep when you start that, you know, it's never ending. I've gotten caught in those navel gazing sessions. Have you? You know, introspection is good, but it can become very, very damaging to be overly introspective when it causes you to be turned in on yourself and self-absorbed in a sense.

We can get caught in that. And Paul is saying in verse 14, for the whole law is summed up in a single command. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

And he's quoting from the law to make a case that this is the summation of the law. And if you do this, this is what God is looking for. And, you know, our confessional every Sunday really gets this.

Most merciful God, I confess that I have sinned against you. Thoughtward indeed. By what I've done and left undone, I haven't loved you with a whole heart and I haven't loved my neighbor as myself.

When we pray that we're covering the whole law and we're asking, Lord, have mercy on us. We failed. We failed in this.

And so we come to your mercy and graciousness and forgiveness. We come to our great high priest who sets us free. Love your neighbor as yourself.

OK. And so now Paul is tying and he's doing what Jesus did in John 13, where love is being tied with the towel. Monday, Thursday, everybody know what Monday means? Monday, Thursday.

You know what that is? It's a new commandment. And it's the Thursday that Jesus gave the new commandment when he washed the disciples feet. And he says, I'm going to give you a new commandment.

I want you to love one another as I have loved you. Love one another as I have loved you. Greater love is no man than this, than one who lays down his life for his.

So now Paul is tying from Jesus. And yet John was written 30, 40 years later. OK.

Probably in the 90s. This was probably written in the 40s. And Paul is saying that serving and loving go together.

Right. And we need to serve one another through love. This is how we know what love is.

First John 3, 16. You got it. Everybody knows John 3, 16.

For God so loved the world. First John 3, 16 says this is how we know what love is. It answers almost extrapolates.

John 3, 16 takes it further. It takes it from the father's love now to the love of the church. This is how we know what love is.

That Jesus Christ laid down his life for us on the cross. Right. That it was self-giving love.

And we ought to lay down our lives for one another. This is how we know what love is. You know, it's like you go visit someone who has been laid up in their house and they've been ill and everything's piled up and nothing's cleaned.

And you go over to visit them and you just say, well, let me know how I can help you. No, it has a little bit more initiation than that. Right.

It has initiation. It has self-giving. I mean, let me wash the dishes for you.

They're piled up and let me pray for you. And is there anything I can go to the store for? It's that kind of practical thing. Right.

That's what we need. And that's out there. Think about in here.

Let's let's talk about how we serve one another in here. I counted up just this week how many volunteers all of you guys serve so well, how many volunteers it takes just to do a liturgical service in the morning. Anybody want to guess? Set up, tear down and everything in between every Sunday.

Twenty two. I didn't think you'd go that high. I mean, you know, when I counted it all, I mean, oh, well, I'm surprised it is twenty two people.

Twenty two people, three readers. Worship team set up, tear down readers, prayer team. I mean, just tons of stuff.

And I'm not counting any clergy stuff. That's all volunteers, readers, everything is twenty two people every every Sunday. And you guys are doing it.

You're serving that way. And some of you have been serving that way for four years, almost four years now. It'll be four years in September.

And there's points in trying to grow as a little church plant where there can be stress points, ideally to plan a church. All of the statistics say go out with seventy five people. Man, that would have been great.

You know, we are seventy five people now with kids. But it's taken four years to get there. We started with four through twelve, moved out of my house and here we are.

And you know what? We can become weary and well doing. I mean, in the next chapter, Paul is going to talk about that and we'll do that next week. Don't become weary and well doing.

How, Lord? You know, OK, we'll talk about that next week. But man, I just want to commend you, all of you and all of you who have been here for the long haul. I mean, Derek and Jessica were in my house and then many of you arrived in the second location.

Ted and Sherry were in the house. Others forgive me if I'm not. Yeah.

And was in the house. So we've been we've been doing this for a little while and praying for healthy growth and for God to send us people. And to keep away those he's not calling.

Right. That's that's a prayer. We pray.

It's not an unloving prayer. It's it's the most loving prayer we could pray because it wastes other people's time. And so, Lord, make make that courting time very, very strategic.

Now we've grown with more kids. How many volunteers do we need for kids every every Sunday morning? Yes, that's the right answer. That is the right answer.

And that's one of the reasons why we started praying the corporate prayer. Just God, thank you that you've made us responsible, you know, for our family. So what I want to do is encourage you because you guys are serving so well.

And and if you feel like you're getting burned out, come to me and please let me know. I don't want you to be burned out. You don't want to be weary and well doing.

But where the stress point is right now is our children. We've got to get over that hump to where when families come with children, they're not scared away because we don't have our act together. We're not saying we have our act together.

We're trying. Right. But we're not sometimes in certain areas.

We're not ready for primetime, you know, that we're not ready for primetime. And that's why the wisdom is don't start. Don't even open up until you have 75 adults.

We have 70. We have about 63 adults. And some of which, you know, 15 of those 63 adults have only been here since May.

We've we've picked up about 15 folks who are checking the church out. It can become a challenge. And so this family talk today.

Right. And so I just want to start the conversation because I want the whole family to be involved in this. How do we serve one another in love? How do we serve our children better? We've got about 10 folks that are committed to serving now.

Five people every week. Right. That means you're in you're serving every other week.

If we could get at least a minimal of 20, we need 10 more people, 20 people serving alongside the 10 that are leading. Then that would on a perfect month of four Sundays be that no one would be in there any more than once a month. Right.

If you had 20 and it takes five, four times five is 20. Pray for us because this is a stress point and it's a good stress point. This is good.

This is not a bad thing that we're going through. This is growing pains. This is a family, you know, families have to sit down and talk and have to, you know, just what can we do? How can we do this better? How are you feeling? All that kind of stuff.

And so we just want to open up that conversation, especially with our kids. You know, no one's overly scheduled for setting up, tearing down, reading and all of that. If you have to give up reading to go to a greater need, I would say do it.

Don't let being a reader keep you out of serving the kids. Don't let prayers of the people keep you out of serving the kids. And I want you to be praying about this.

This is not a guilt trip at all. We only want folks in there that really want to be in there, that are called to be in there. But there are times where we have to pitch in when the house is on fire, you don't sit down and pray.

Am I called to go? And, you know, you just do it, right? There's certain things that you just do when there's a big need. And then as church grows, the pressure gets taken off. But, you know, new people coming in, we don't put them in with our kids immediately.

We get that we have relational values and where we want to get to know people who are here and know people who serve. And there's some areas of service that take less relationship than others. But our children, we're going to go to background checks and the whole deal.

We've known each other for years. We've had good trust. But as new people come in, we want to incorporate them in.

We won't have the years to wait. And so we have to do background checks and all of that. All of us will go through background checks.

I will go through background. I had to go through a background check to be a priest. You know, I don't know how I made it.

But it shows you how good background checks are. So anyway, that's just the discussion I wanted to bring up this morning. I didn't plan on it.

But yesterday I just felt like what's a real practical application of this word serving one another through love. OK, praise the Lord. We love our kids, man, and we want to be able to do that better.

We want to be able to love so that they know they're well taken care of and that we're all doing this as a family. We're not just relieving stress. We're really answering the call to serve as a family instead of a consumer congregation, you know, where I come to get my needs met.

I come to get fed. If that's it, you'll get really frustrated with us. You will get fed the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But faith must work through love. Maybe St. Aidan's could be known as like the best church for children in the area. Wouldn't that be amazing? How do we do that? How do we do that? That would be ensuring our future.

And, you know, when we felt called to plant the Anglican Church, we felt like we want to see this church long after I'm dead and gone. With a building and with structures and with programs that are life giving, not just programs for programs, but life giving structures so that we can be a part of that great glory in the city of preaching the gospel and demonstrating it. Join up because we're still planting.

We're still a church plant. See, God causes the growth. Paul said, I planted a Paulist watered, but God caused the growth.

I mean, there's no way that you can put that seed in the ground and go, I command you to grow. Now, you know, I looked out at my pepper plant, you know, this week and it was like wilted, you know, and then I let my dog out this morning. I'm going, why is my pepper plant wilted? Why is why is it wilted? I watered it and it looked great two days ago.

And then I let my dog out this morning and I saw Nick. Can you? He's peeing all over my pepper plant. Now, you know, I said I got to Google this because maybe that's good.

Does anybody know? It's not good. I didn't think it was. I'm going to go kill that dog.

No. Killed the rabbit. Yeah, right.

You don't want any of my peppers. Right. I can't give them away.

Oh, my gosh. Oh, well, let's stand together.

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