

Slaves to Love

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[0 : 0 0] Well, do turn with me to Galatians 5, page 975 in the Church Bibles. The title tonight is Slaves to Love.

I wonder what you think the biggest problem in our church is. Don't worry, I'm not going to ask you to shout out. I'm going to tell you. Because it's the biggest problem in almost every church.

It has been from the beginning. It's the problem that Paul is talking about all the way through this last section of Galatians 5.13 through to 6.10. It's a problem that causes fighting and rivalry and character destruction.

It's a problem that results in sex scandals in the church. It's actually evidence of heresy and false worship of idolatry in Christ's church. It causes fallouts and jealousies and anger and rage.

It issues in pride and provocation and envy. And ultimately it destroys the church of Jesus Christ. And even more ultimately it results in eternal judgment, in corruption, not eternal life.

[1 : 1 8] What is it? Well, it's the problem of flesh. Too much flesh on show in the Christian church. Too much feeding of the flesh in the Christian church.

I'm not talking about the battle of the bulge, although some of us may be battling in that particular way. Nor am I talking about the current fashion for wearing shirts that are too short and don't tuck into your trousers and expose your midriff.

Perhaps that might be a bit of a problem too. Certainly getting a bit chilly for that sort of thing. Now I'm talking about something much more serious. Something much more unsavory.

Something deadly serious at the heart of the Christian church. The flesh or what the New International Version calls the sinful nature.

That's the problem. That's the real problem in the Christian church today, as always. Not our natural bodies as such. Not that. But the center of our fallen beings.

[2 : 2 0] The center of our human pride and self-willing. The arena of self-indulgence, of self-assertion. My flesh is my ego. It's what I've made myself, what I am.

Not what God has made me to be. And my ego, if allowed to, can wreak havoc in this congregation. And so can yours.

And unless we realize that, unless we prevent it, this human ego will bite and devour until a church is consumed and destroyed.

And that is a big, big problem, isn't it? And it's not fantasy either, is it? I doubt if there's any church ever, anywhere, that's been entirely free of problems of the ego.

Many, many churches have known pain and anguish and strife and bust-ups and fallouts. Not to mention the more public scandals of things like sexual sin and so on. And they've known them far too often.

[3 : 24] And it's not been entirely unknown in the history of this church either, of course. And it's because of the flesh. It's because of the human ego and the works of egocentricity and self-centeredness, the works of the flesh.

And that always results in ruptures of relationships between people. It's the very antithesis of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit are all things which restore relationships among people.

Restores us in right relationship with God. It's what the Holy Spirit does by applying the Gospel to us. And therefore, it puts us in right relationship with one another. That is the fruit of the Spirit.

It's the fruit of justification. It's the fruit of our salvation. And the flesh destroys that. It's the opposite, the antithesis. And we don't want that, do we?

We don't want to rupture and destroy the relationships in our church. So how do we avoid it? How do we curb the flesh?

[4 : 32] How do we stop it wreaking havoc in our Christian lives and in the Christian church? It's a big question, isn't it? Well, it was an important question in Galatia.

And it's an important question today. And there are many answers on offer. Many solutions being proposed. Today, we can find Christian books galore on the shelves, all about how to turn your spiritual failure into victory.

We can find new methods for doing church that will supposedly change everything and make it better. New ways of worship that will offer the answer to our lacking in Christian experience.

New blessings, new special experiences, seven steps to the successful church, or whatever it might be. They're everywhere, aren't they? But Paul's answer is much more simple.

His answer is simply this, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit and the freedom of life that he alone can give. You don't need anything more. Nothing can be added to the freedom that you have in the gospel of Jesus Christ alone.

[5 : 39] That's what you need. And that's what you need to stand on. Well, hang on just a minute, says Paul's opponents. That doesn't make sense. If the flesh, if our sinful nature is such a problem as you say it is and so powerful as we see it to be, surely freedom from all restraint and all obligations is the last thing we need.

Surely what we need is restraint and discipline and external regulation. By some sorts of religious authorities to help temper us, to temper the power of our flesh, our egos.

Surely what you need is the law. Surely what you need is the leaders, the bishops in Jerusalem. The leaders to shepherd you, to help you.

Not more freedom. It's constraint that you need. And of course that's been a powerful objection in the church ever since, hasn't it? That explains the pull of the hermit into the desert to monasteries to try and put restraints around himself on the flesh.

It's the pull of the Roman magisterium. People find in bringing themselves under the power and the authority of Rome and the Pope to stop us from going astray. It's the lure of the powerful sect leaders, which so often lead into sheer cultism and control of people.

[7 : 10] It's the lure of being held to account and restrained and helped to be holy because your flesh, your sinful nature is so strong. But no, says the Apostle Paul. No.

There's no power at all in that path. That is the path to slavery. That's not the path to help. That's not what you need. And experience bears that out.

I was reading this week. One of the commentators speaks about Jerome, one of the early church fathers, who was so distraught with the passions that he felt in his flesh that he took himself off to the desert to a monastery, but he found it was no help.

He said, My mind burned with passionate desires within my freezing body. The fires of sex seethed, even though the flesh had died in me as a man.

No help at all, you see. Think of the monastics. Think of vows of celibacy that are supposed to curb the flesh. Well, it hasn't stopped sex scandals galore, has it, in the Roman Catholic Church?

[8 : 12] That's why poor old Pope Benedict is having to make himself so unpopular by clamping down in the Catholic seminaries. But of course, clamping down with authority won't change the human heart.

Can't bring power against the flesh. There's no power in these things and these authorities because you're looking for power in things of this age.

And there's no power in this evil age, says Paul, either in religion or in irreligion. Nothing can curb the flesh, the human ego, the rebellious spirit.

There's no master, there's no guru in this age who can lead you in the way of perfection. Only the power of the new creation can transform the human heart.

Only the power of the new creation can bend the human will. Only the freedom that the gospel of Christ gives you can confer any sort of power at all for holy living.

[9 : 14] That's Paul's message. And only the mastery of the Holy Spirit in your life can lead you in that way. Well, how does that work?

How does that follow? Surely, if the gospel sets us totally free, so that we're forgiven our sins, our sins in the past and our sins in the future, surely that's a license for license.

Surely that does just let us loose in the flesh, doesn't it? Allows us to sin all we like, because, oh, well, we've got a blank sheet, we're forgiven. No, says Paul, absolutely wrong.

That's your problem. You haven't yet understood the gospel. You haven't understood how it works. You haven't grasped properly the implications of your justification, of your salvation.

God's justifying power in you to forgive you implies a new life, a new relationships. You're in a new relationship with God.

[10 : 18] Yes, you're forgiven. But the same faith that saves you from sin also delivered you from this present evil age. And it delivered you into the life of the new creation.

That's what chapter 1, verse 4 says. That faith has given you a new life. Do you remember back in chapter 2, verse 20?

Paul says, at the very start of your Christian life, the Son of God gave himself for your sins. That's forgiveness. But also he gave you a new life, his life.

His life in you by faith. These aren't two separate things. These aren't things that can be separated. You can't have forgiveness without a new life. You can't have Christ with his life in you by the Spirit without having forgiveness.

The two go together. Look over to chapter 3, verse 3, remember? What does he say to the Galatians? It's you began with the Holy Spirit.

[11 : 19] That's the very beginning. That's the forgiveness. That's the new birth. You were born again by the Spirit. How do you go on? Well, not any different way. You go on by the Spirit.

Not by any works or any experiences or any new authorities. You go on by the Spirit. That's the life of Christ in us by his Spirit. Paul won't separate that from the beginning of our new life in Christ.

That's the true meaning of justification by faith. It has implications. It creates in us and it demands of us a new relationship in Jesus Christ.

A new relationship with God and, therefore, a new relationship with his people forever. So, when Paul repeatedly cries, you're free, stand firm and be free, do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

He doesn't mean you're free and, therefore, it's a free-for-all. It's anarchy. You can live as you like. No. What he says is you're not freed from all obligations, but you are freed in Christ not to serve earthly masters, not to serve your own selfish ego.

[12 : 32] But, verse 13 of our reading, you're freed to do what? To serve one another in love. You're freed by Christ not to be slaves to works of the law or to works for your own selfish ego, but you are freed, look at chapter 6, verse 10, to work the good to all people, to do good to all and especially to those of the household of faith.

So, you see, in these verses that we're looking at, verses 13 following, Paul's going on to explain what he said in chapter 5, verse 6 that we looked at last week about the only thing that now counts.

What is that? Faith working through love. And what is that? Well, Paul says in these verses. It's two things. First of all, verse 13, it's serving one another in love.

That is, it's right relationships with one another. And in verse 16, it's walking in the Spirit. It's right relationship with God. And the first is a visible expression and evidence of the second.

And both of these are inevitable consequences of our salvation, of our justification by faith. These are the marks of true Christian freedom.

[13 : 50] There's nothing else that matters, Paul says. Nothing else. But these things. Serving one another in love. Walking by the Spirit. And we're going to look at these two paragraphs, 13 to 15, and then 16 to 18 next time.

Tonight, it's freed to love. Paul says in the second little paragraph, 16 to 18, it's freedom to fight. But there isn't time tonight to do both of those.

So we're going to look at this first paragraph, 13 to 15. Paul says we are freed to serve through love. True freedom means that we are willing slaves under obligation to one another.

We are slaves to love. We're freed, but we're slaves. Look at verse 13. This is what true freedom means, says Paul, just in case there's any confusion.

He says the gospel of justification by faith alone frees you from being slaves. It frees you from that yoke of slavery you're not to go back to.

[14 : 52] All the old obligations, the obligations of this world, all of those are gone. They have no hold over you anymore. You are to stand firm against that slavery.

But now you have new obligations. It's not a case of, oh, in the past you had to be obedient, but now you don't have to be obedient. You can do what you like. No.

Justification has implications. It makes demands. Remember chapter 5, verse 7? Paul wants us to obey the truth of the gospel. Remember back to chapter 2, verse 14?

He says you need to be walking in the truth of the gospel. Not just hearing it, doing it. And what is that truth? What is it that we're to be obeying?

What is the obligation on us? Well, in our verse, verse 13, he puts it twice, doesn't he? In the negative and in the positive. First of all, negatively. You're not to use your freedom, he says, as an opportunity for the flesh.

[15 : 54] The word means a military base of operations. You're not to use that as a training camp to launch assaults for your own selfish ego. It's not a leg up so that you can start satisfying yourself.

That means that you're a slave to yourself. That means you're doing everything for yourself. That is self-centered egotism. And of course, that can have many, many forms, can't it?

It may be seeking satisfaction through the sensual indulgences, all kinds of loose living, all that sort of thing. But it may also be quite the opposite on the surface of things.

It may be by seeking our assurance, seeking our status, by all kinds of religious indulgence. We can do that, can't we? And in many ways, that's worse. It can happen in a church, can't it?

When we do all sorts of things. But actually, what we're trying to do is seek recognition by what we're doing. We do that, don't we? We need to be needed.

[17 : 02] So we rush about doing good and apparently serving others. But actually, what we're really doing is serving ourselves so often. Serving our own ego to feel pleased with ourselves and to hope that others will look and see and say, Oh, what a fine Christian that is.

Or we need to feel that we're doing our own duty so we can feel satisfied that we've done our bit and surely God must bless us, God must be in our debt. Have you ever said that to yourself?

Think of all the things I do for this church. Does anybody ever notice? No one seems to appreciate it. Well, you see, that's serving our egos. I just don't feel valued in this church.

I've been coming for years and doing all these things. Look at everything I do. We may not say that, but we think it, don't we? But that's not serving one another in love.

That's serving the flesh. That's serving our ego. And that totally misunderstands the grace of God and the gospel. The freedom that grace brings is the opposite.

[18 : 07] It overflows in love with service to others, not seeking reward. And secondly, and positively, Paul says that is how we are to exercise our freedom.

To serve one another through love. Literally, in the Greek it says through the love. Well, which love is that?

Well, it's the love, that love, that showed itself most clearly and most excellently in Christ and his self-giving love. Chapter 1, verse 4.

He gave himself for our sins to deliver us from this evil age. Chapter 2, verse 20. He loved me and gave himself for me. You see, to be in Christ, to be justified by his grace, means not just forgiveness, but Christ's risen life, his self-giving love in us.

And so our life spills over that love to others. Christ took the form of a servant and gave himself for others.

[19 : 16] And his life does that in us and through us, if he truly is in us. And so we're called to freedom from slavery, but we find ourselves in a new kind of slavery.

Verse 13 literally says, slaving for one another through love. We're free to be slaves. Slaves for Christ and slaves for Christ's people.

That paradox of freedom and slavery is put so brilliantly by Martin Luther. He says, a Christian is free and independent in every respect, a bond servant to none.

A Christian is a dutiful servant in every respect, owing duty to everyone. And that's what you are by your calling, says Paul.

That's a fact. Indicative. You are. And therefore, he commands us. It's an imperative. That's how you must be. Because that is what you are.

[20 : 15] You must be true to what you are. And in verses 14 and 15, he gives us two reasons as to why. Two motivations, if you like, as to why we're to be like that.

Again, a positive and a negative. First of all, positively, in verse 14, he says, be like that. Serve one another enough because that is your destiny. To live like this, he says, fulfills the whole law.

Because you're truly loving your neighbor as yourself. And that's what God has been after all along. That's what it's all about. That's what his law means. You're so taken up with circumcision, he says to them.

You're interested in food and Jewish calendars and all sorts of law. I mean, you've lost the plot. You've missed the big picture. Live like this, serving one another in love.

And only live like this, only living like that, really fulfills the law. Only living like that, really fulfills what is your destiny to be.

[21 : 18] God's holy, redeemed people. That's what he's saying here in this verse. It's your destiny. Now, I need to say a word or two about this.

And in particular about Paul speaking about fulfilling the law. It's an area of great confusion. We might ask the question, quite reasonably. How can Paul suddenly seem to be so positive about the law, when all the way through this letter he's been attacking the very idea of going back to the law of Moses?

That's the way of slavery he says. That's the way of disaster. How can he suddenly be so positive about the law? Well, some scholars answer by saying, well, Paul's completely confused.

Doesn't realize what he's saying. Well, that's plainly idiotic. Just shows that they're hopelessly confused. But many are confused and find it difficult to understand just what Paul's saying here.

So what can we say about this? Well, the key, the key is in that word fulfilled. What Paul is speaking about here is not the law in terms of its supervisory function.

[22 : 23] In other words, the mosaic, the Old Testament way of life. The law of Moses as a guardian, as a tutor, as a teacher, a jailer of Israel to keep her hedged in, to keep her separate and holy until Jesus came.

No, that role is completely finished. Christ has come. There's no place any longer for that. That's part of the old age. That's been Paul's argument all the way along. That's past.

That's not what he's talking about here. Now, what he is talking about is the place of the law as prophetic scripture. The law, as well as the prophets, promised a future and pointed to that future, pointed to the destiny for God's people.

It was a promise way, way back at the beginning that God's people would be a holy people. That they would be a treasured possession. That they would have a glorious future.

That they would be holy and just and pure in God's sight. And that promise, the promise of the law, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

[23 : 29] Through his work on the cross for his people to forgive their sins. And through his work in our hearts by his spirit to make us holy.

And so Paul is saying, living lives of self-giving, sacrificial service to one another. Living together in right relationship with God and one another.

That is the great goal of God's salvation. That's our destiny. God's law right back from the very beginning promised all of that.

God said right at the beginning, didn't he, in the law. I am the Lord your God. I am holy. And you shall be holy like me. Why did God call Abraham right at the very beginning?

Genesis 18 verse 19 tells us. That he may command his household to keep the way of the Lord. In righteousness and justice. In other words, that he might be the father of a holy and just people.

- [24 : 33] What was God's purpose in calling Israel as a nation? Well, Deuteronomy 26 verse 18 tells us this. The Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession.

So that you keep all his commandments. And he shall set you in praise and honor. You shall be a people holy to the Lord as he has promised. You see, that's God's promise.

And he will fulfill his promise to have a holy people. Because he's a God who keeps his promises. Think of the Ten Commandments. He says to his people, you shall not have any other gods before me.

You shall not have idols. You shall honor your parents. You will not be murderers and thieves and liars and so on. First of all, that's just promise. It is command, but God is promising.

I will make you like that. God's not saying, well, I wish you were like that. In fact, I'm hoping for the best, but who knows? I'm not very optimistic. Of course not.

- [25 : 38] This is a promise of a future reality. It's a certainty. This is the God of heaven above and the earth beneath. This is a God whose word never falls to the ground. This is the God who every word he speaks accomplishes that which he desires of it.

He's a holy God and he will have a holy people. How could he be satisfied with anything else? He says, he promises that he will come and dwell forever in the midst of his people.

But how can he do that unless they're a holy people? And that's God's great purpose. In all eternity to have a people holy. A people in right relationship to him.

And therefore, a people in right relationship to one another. And to the whole cosmos. The whole universe. That's the ultimate purpose of God. That's what he's doing. Just turn over one page in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1.

Just to see this very clearly. What's God's purpose? He tells us in Ephesians 1 verse 4. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world. Why?

- [26 : 46] That we should be holy and blameless before him. How does that happen? Look down to verse 9. He's made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose.

Which he set forth in Christ. As a plan for the fullness of time. To unite all things in him. Things in heaven and on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance.

Having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things. According to the counsel of his will. You see it's fulfilled in Christ.

That great promise. And what are we in Christ? Look down to Ephesians 2 verse 10. We are he says his workmanship. Created in Christ Jesus for good works.

Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. That's God's purpose. A holy people walking in holiness. Working his perfect will in their lives.

- [27 : 48] And what is that holiness in concrete terms? What are these good works? Well it's all the promises of the law.

It's the promise of a loving self-giving people who love God with all their heart and soul and mind and strength. Who truly love their neighbors as themselves. How is that ever going to happen?

Well it comes about through the perfect and holy righteous life of the Son of God. Now living in me by his Holy Spirit.

And living out through me that life of self-giving love. And the whole law. Every single desire of God for his people. Every right attitude.

Every faithful word and work. Was embodied most perfectly and completely where? Not in the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone. Although those were of course wonderful representations of God's holiness.

[28 : 46] Where was it embodied? Where do we see it? In clarity and in perfection and in bright shining light? Well in the life of Jesus Christ. In the life of Jesus the Messiah.

In whom all of this is fulfilled. That's the climax of the revelation of God. Of his holiness. Of his law. Of all his desires for mankind. We see it in Jesus Christ.

In his life. In his obedience. Even to death on a cross. And what does the gospel mean then? According to Paul. What does Christ's faithfulness and obedience even to death on a cross accomplish?

Well he's told us. For us. Not just forgiveness of sins. But a life of real holiness. Jesus. Jesus' own perfect law fulfilling holiness.

In us. So that the life that we now live. He says. Is the life of the Son of God. In us. By his spirit. The life I now live.

[29 : 51] I live by the faith of the Son of God. Who loved me and gave himself for me. And that was the great promise of the prophets. Wasn't it? That was the great promise of the new covenant. Just turn back to Galatians again.

And look at chapter 3 verse 14. What was the climax of it all? That we might receive the promised spirit through faith.

That was the promise they were all waiting for. What was that promise? Well do you remember Ezekiel's words in Ezekiel 36? I will put my spirit within you. And cleanse you.

And give you a new heart. Remember Jeremiah's words. His way of putting the same thing. I will write my law. Not on tablets of stone.

But in your heart. That was the promise. God's law written in our hearts. By his Holy Spirit. Fulfilled as the perfect life of love.

[30 : 53] The life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is put in us. By his Holy Spirit. He's writing himself. On our hearts. And that's what the spirit of Jesus does in us.

He brings Jesus' holy life into our hearts. And so he fulfills in us. All God's promises. All the promise that God gave way back in the law.

That at last he would have a holy. And a righteous. And a beautiful people. That is true holiness. And that's what we live out. As we live lives of self-giving love to one another.

And that's what we show the world. As we live like that. When Paul writes to the Corinthians. In 2nd Corinthians 3. He calls them. Letters of recommendation for the gospel.

He says. They are written not with ink. But with the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone. But on tablets. Of the human heart. You see.

[31 : 54] What Paul is saying. Living like that. Is our destiny. Letters. Speaking of the glory of Christ to the world. God's law was always given.

So that his people. By living holy. And joyful lives of obedience. Would shine God's glory to the world. That's why he gave his law. Again and again.

Of course. God's people failed. Failed so miserably. Instead of praising God's name. People scorned God's name. The reverse. Of the third commandment. We were teaching the children this morning.

When God's name is scorned. Because of. The vile behavior of his people. But in Jesus. All of that was at last. Gloriously fulfilled. It was at last.

Gloriously exhibited to the world. The true witness. Of the glorious holiness of God. In the human flesh. And that says Paul. Is what you are redeemed for.

[32 : 52] To shine the glory of Christ. To the world. To shine Christ's glory. To the cosmos. To the universe. Forever. Like open letters. Proclaiming.

The wonder and the glory of Jesus Christ. That's our destiny. And one day. When. When at last we lose these bodies of flesh. When finally we're.

We're rid of. Of all the residual sin. All the dregs of this present evil age. We will shine like that. The bride of Christ. His church. Will shine. Forever.

And as Paul says in chapter 6 verse 9. We shall reap eternal life. If we don't give up. And that will be. True worship. Restored. That will be.

All the right relationships. Restored in the universe. Between God and his people. And between his people. And all. Creation. But until then.

[33 : 50] Until then. Says Paul. We are to live that destiny. Out now. In this world. We are to be. A beacon. Of the holiness of God.

Of God's. Great purposes. Forever. We are to shine that out. Now. That's what we are freed for. Now. That's what the Holy Spirit is for.

Not for crazy gimmicks. But so that the love. The self-giving love. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can live through us. And among us. And shine out from us.

To shine out from. The fellowship of God's people. To the world round about. To bring light in the darkness. Through love. Serve one another.

For the whole law. Is fulfilled. In this one word. Love your neighbors. As yourself. An old. Old command. But now. With a new power. Now.

[34 : 47] With a new horizon. In Jesus. Remember what Jesus said about it. In John 13. 33. A new command I give to you. That you love one another. Well it's not a new command.

Is it? It's an old. Old command. But wait a minute. That you love one another. As I. Have loved you. That's new.

That's new. And deep. And extraordinary. And powerful. Isn't it? New in substance. New in. Not in substance. Rather. But in intensity.

It's that love. It's through that love. That self-giving love of Calvary. That we are to serve one another. You remember Jesus goes on to say to his disciples.

And they'll know. That you are my disciples. Because of your love. Well they'll know all right. Won't they? People will know if they see that kind of love.

[35 : 49] Because it would take the community by storm. Wouldn't it? It would shake the cynicism and the skepticism. Of the world all around us. To the core. If. If. If.

If. If. The church. Of Jesus Christ today. Truly was. Serving.

One another through love. If the world saw and witnessed. And had. Contact with a community like that. It would shake the earth. Fulfilling the law.

Fulfilling. Deuteronomy 4 and 7. Where God said. If you live like this. The nations round about. Will save what a wise and understanding people this is. For who like them.

Has a God so near to them. We fulfill Jesus words. In Matthew 5 16. Where he talks about his people. Fulfilling the law. As people see our light shining.

[36 : 45] And praise our heavenly father. And give glory to our father in heaven. That. You see. Is the power. Of radical holiness. It's a power for mission. It's the power of radical.

Spirit filled. Christian living. To serve one another through love. It's the love that gave up. Everything. For us at Calvary. And Paul says. That's your destiny.

That's what the gospel sets you free for. That's what your life now is all about. That's the only thing that counts. It's the only way to live now.

And. It's the only way. To live. So as to reach our ultimate destiny. The eternal life. That we long to reap. Because that is living. So as to sow to the spirit.

Paul's clear in chapter 6. Verse 8 and 9. It's sowing to the spirit. That reaps eternal life. Any alternative to that radical love.

[37 : 43] He says in verse 8 of chapter 6. Is sowing to please the flesh. It's sowing to please our selfish egos. And that leads only to corruption. So Paul is clear.

You see in verse 14. It's living for your destiny. That's the positive motive. Or. Verse 15. It's living for your destruction. It's a negative side.

It says if you don't live like that. You'll wreck the church now. And ultimately. You'll reap only corruption. It can't be any other way. Can it?

You see. Because where ego rules. There only ever is chaos. Isn't there? Verse 15. There's biting and devouring. There's consuming and destroying.

It's every man for himself. And that's what happens. We've just seen these pictures on television. Haven't we? Of New Orleans. They're fresh in our mind. The anarchy. The chaos.

[38 : 40] The devouring. The consuming. The destroying. The chaos of lawlessness. When people live for themselves. Every man for himself. And Paul says.

That's the way it is. In the church of Jesus Christ. If you're not living. To serve one another. Through that deep. Self-sacrificial. Self-giving love.

And we know that's true. Don't we? Church history. Is replete with examples. And Paul says to us tonight here. In St. George's Tron.

He says. You don't want to see that happening. In your church. Don't let that happen in your church. Don't let it happen in your families.

Or in your small groups. Or in your fellowship with Christian friends. Don't let the flesh. Ruin. Our church. Don't let it spoil our destiny together.

[39 : 35] Don't let. Egos rule. No use. Us having. Lovely floodlights. On our tower. To shine our building. To show it to the city.

If there's no light. Flooding out from our lives together. Is there? It'd be hypocrisy. Jesus says to us tonight. Be realists. Don't kid yourself.

Into thinking. That the flesh. Is all safely. Hidden away. Under wraps. Don't kid yourself. Into thinking. That your ego. Isn't desperate.

To make a contribution. To the disruption. Of this fellowship. Your ego is there. It's ready. It's waiting. To jump out. And assert yourself. Just has to have the opportunity.

And my goodness. Church life. Gives us so many opportunities. Church meetings. Sharp words. With one another. After a service.

[40 : 31] Somebody's let us down. All kinds of ways. All kinds of places. The rule. Of our egos. Can get a.

Look in. And we need to be realists. Says Paul. Don't. Do it. Serve one another in love. I think it's especially.

Good that we're reading this. At this time. When we've got big issues. Coming before us. As a church. Something big. Like a building project. My goodness. Isn't that a great place. For the egos.

To get in. For us to begin to bite. And devour one another. And Paul says. Watch out. Or you'll consume one another. You'll destroy your church. If egos are ruling. New things happening.

New initiatives beginning. All sorts of things. Paul says. Watch out. Don't. Let. Let. Let. Your egos. Rule. Only one thing.

[41 : 31] Can keep. Our egos down. And silent. Paul says. It's that love. That love. The self-giving love of Jesus. Filling our hearts with joy.

Filling our hearts with joy. In the gospel of Jesus Christ. The son of God. Who loved us. And gave himself. For us. That love. Spilling out. In self-giving.

Service. One to another. To our brothers and sisters in Christ. It's an overflow. But it's also a command.

Paul says. Through love. Serve. One another. If we do. We're fulfilling. Our destiny. And the power of holiness.

At work among us. Will proclaim the glory of Christ. To us. And to this city. But if we don't. Says Paul. We'll be destroying.

[42 : 30] One another now. And in the end. Ultimately. We'll reap only corruption. And judgment. So Paul says. You were called to freedom.

Do not use your freedom. As an opportunity. For the flesh. But through love. Serve. One another. As the Americans would say.

It's a no brainer. Let's pray. Gracious God. Our father. We give thanks.

For. Your great love. With which you have loved us. For the love. That was poured out. At Calvary. For our salvation. And we ask.

Lord. That that love. Would be evident. In our lives. Spilling out. In radical. Self-suppressing. Service.

[43 : 30] Of our brothers and sisters. Together here. May we day by day. Slay. Our. Egos. Refusing. To allow ourselves.

To assert our own rule. And rather. Rejoicing. In being slaves. To Jesus Christ. Slaves. To that love. Help us.

We pray. That we may walk. In. Your spirit. Keeping in step. With him. And so. Bringing glory. To our savior.

In whose name. We pray. Amen.