

Galatians 5:1-15

Verse 1:

--Here we have a transition in the letter where Paul begins to exhort these Galatians believers in regard to the liberty they have as sons.

--This verse is really two sentences. First, a statement. Second, a command.

--The idea in the Greek is: 1) *For freedom did Christ set us free.* 2) *Stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of bondage.*

--Our freedom here is primarily freedom from the law and its curse. This is freedom of conscience to live as sons and daughters of God.

-- We have been set free to experience freedom in Christ! Freedom from the fear of keeping all the law, fear of the sense of never being able to measure up, fear of impending punishment and God's wrath.

--The opposite of the freedom he wants them to enjoy is entanglement **again** in the law. The **yoke of bondage** here is the same that Peter spoke of in **Acts 15:10-11: *Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.***

--We must **stand fast** because there will always be a challenge to be **entangled again!** We will all face pressure to relate to God based on something other than the work of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The danger is not necessarily a denial of God but an entanglement of God and other things.

Verse 2:

--**I Paul** is a statement of witness used five other times by the apostle (**2 Cor. 10:1; Eph. 3:1; Col. 1:23; 1 Thess. 2:18; Philemon 19**).

--Paul makes a dramatic and apostolic statement. Christ and circumcision cannot be entangled. He forces them to choose. Are Christ's death and resurrection enough to make Jew and Gentile right with God? Yes or No? You cannot say: *Yes with*. . . circumcision, church attendance, baptism, confirmation, holy days, communion, confession, dietary laws, tithing, prayer, etc.

--Do I have to become a Jew in practice to be a Christian? What about a Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Baptist, Calvinist, Calvary Chapelist, etc.

--Either the work of Christ sets us free to be full sons and daughters of God or it doesn't.

Verse 3:

--Here Paul repeats another truth. The law is also all-or-nothing. We like having a-la-carte religion but that doesn't work with God!

--Any lawkeeping means all lawkeeping. This is the other side of **James 2:10** which says any lawbreaking is all lawbreaking.

--Sometimes it can be confusing because people teach things like we don't keep the OT civil or ceremonial law but we do keep the OT moral law. This is wrong, as the Bible clearly states we are either free from lawkeeping or not. This verse clearly says we cannot pick and choose.

--The problem is trying to reconcile why we know it is still wrong to steal or lie or commit adultery. The answer is much simpler than we think. Christ set us free from the law by fulfilling it. Now, we keep Christ's commandments (**Mt. 28:19-20**) which are clearly found in the gospels, Christ's teaching through the apostles in the epistles, and the leading of the Holy Spirit for everything else not mentioned!

--So where there is overlap in the law and the commandments of Christ as well as His teaching through the apostles, we are not keeping the OT law as much as we are keeping Jesus' commands.

--If someone is trying to put us under a "law" you can simply ask: *Where do Jesus and His apostles clearly command this in Scripture?* *Infant baptism; only sing Psalms; etc.*

Verse 4:

--How do we seek justification before God? By law or grace?

--Once saved, how are we seeking to walk with God and serve Him? By law or grace?

Hebrews 12:28: Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

--We are **fallen from grace** when we begin to relate to God by working for salvation and live as a debtor instead of accepting freely His good gifts.

--This is the difference of why some people have joy walking with Jesus and why other people are miserable walking with Jesus. Do you think hard thoughts of God? Is He hard to live with or hard to please? If so, you are likely entangled with a yoke of bondage.

Verse 5:

--Paul says **we**—in contrast to the Judaizers—recognize the Holy Spirit as the source of power waiting and working in us. We are *waiting* for Him to finish the work of salvation and are not *working* to earn it for ourselves.

Verse 6:

--Circumcision makes no difference **in Christ**. *This is a lesson we see clearly by Paul's interactions with Timothy and Titus*

--Here we find the three strongest cords in the Christian life: faith, hope, and love. The Holy Spirit is constantly weaving these three strands together in our lives.

--There is some argument here between which comes first in terms of faith and love. It is kind of like the chicken and the egg—which brings about which? I think the answer is simply both are working together! *Daniel 3 illustration: **But if not. . .***

Verses 7-9:

--(7) Paul wants these Galatians to remember their good start. He then asks: ***Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*** The idea in the language is who *has cut into your lane* to slow you down? Hindered obedience is a sure sign of spiritual sickness.

--Many have a good start in Christ but find trouble along the way. *Many good OT kings*

--Has your pursuit of Christ slowed down? *Can be caused by a person we like!—Romance, Professor, Friend, Pastor, Co-worker, etc.*

--(8) Paul wants them to recognize this ***persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.***

--The word for ***persuasion*** in the Greek is used only here in the NT. It has the idea of something *treacherous* or *deceptive*. If Satan cannot get people to abandon the truth of God or their calling in Christ he will *persuade* us that the truth is something slightly different than it really is. In doing so he will cause us spiritual trouble and harm by: being entangled again in bondage, falling from grace, or being hindered in obedience, etc.

--(9) Leaven is clearly false doctrine or teaching as Christ declared in **Mt. 16:6-12**. The idea here is that the character of the whole is affected by a little. Satan is devious. He doesn't need to convince us to abandon the whole thing. He just needs to get us a little off target and let the skewed trajectory take its inevitable course.

Verse 10:

--Here we see Paul's love hoping all things. In the end, Paul's trust was not in himself, or in the Galatians, but ***in the Lord!*** If you fear your own discernment—good. Trust in God's care for you!

--Also, he wants to clearly declare that ***he who troubles you shall bear his judgment!*** There is no respecting of persons with God—He will deal seriously with all false teachers and wolves in sheep's clothing. *There is a difference between being tempted and being the tempter! Men are tempted but devils tempt.*

Matthew 18:7: *Who to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!*

Verse 11:

--I think that Paul is saying that if he was preaching circumcision he wouldn't be facing persecution from such as these Ishmael-like false teachers.

6:12: *As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*

Acts 6:11-14: *Then they secretly induced men to say, 'We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.' And they stirred up the people, the elders, and scribes and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. They also set up false witnesses who said, 'This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that his Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.'*

--Even today, preaching circumcision (or good works) is not an offence to man. Preaching the cross is!

-The basic attitude in America is: If you are a nice person, you love others, you're a civil neighbor, you're not a bigot, or racist, or religious hypocrite, then how could God not accept you?!

-The cross says: We are all sinners by nature, actively resisting the truth of God, rebels against God, enemies of Him and His purposes, and justly going to hell for our wickedness.

--The cross puts all human pride to death because it says we belong on that cross instead of Christ but Christ is there instead of us. Do we believe both sides of the message?

Verse 12:

--Either excommunication or castration as the ultimate holy work (Cut it all off then!).

--This is not Paul going overboard. Paul doesn't want those that **trouble** multiplying. Neither should we, because eternity is on the line!

Verses 13-15:

--**(13)** Having proven we are free from the law, Paul now strikes a balance between slavery to the yoke of the law and slavery to the lawlessness of the flesh. The Christian is always walking a balanced line between legalism and license. *People tend to react to abuses on either side*

--The Greek word for **opportunity** (*aphorme*) has the idea of *a base of operations*. Is our freedom in Christ a base of operations for our flesh or for service to God and others?

--We are free from the OT law but we have Christ's commands, the apostles teachings, and the Holy Spirit. What type of life and freedom should those lead to?

--Take note of how the Scriptures define our freedom in Christ:

Romans 6:18: And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:22: But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

Romans 8:2: For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

1 Corinthians 7:22: Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

1 Corinthians 9:19: For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.

1 Peter 2:16: As free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God.

--What is the point? Is Christian freedom really just a new type of law or slavery? That is certainly how the world thinks of Christian life! Just one big religious drudgery!

--We are set free from the law, not to do whatever we want, but to know, love, and serve our Savior. That is what we were made to do! Only the Christian is truly free because only the Christian is being conformed into the image God was pleased to impart in creation. *Do we think of a fish on the land or a bird in the sea as free?*

--Freedom is not how the world pictures Christian life because they think life comes through the expression and satisfaction of their sinful self Vs. Living and being what God made us to be. Freedom is found in living a life of love to God and man—which often looks like service.

--So here is a critical question: *Are Christians free to please themselves without displeasing God?* Has God given me the freedom to do what I want with my life as long as I am not breaking any of His obvious laws? God forbid!

--Why not? Very simply, because God did not set us free so that self could remain *first*. That self-first thought process is the cloak that hides the abuse of our freedom in Christ. We need to repent of our self-life and shed that cloak. In that previous question, you will notice that personal desire is before divine pleasure, and that will never do. We have been set free to do what God created us to do—please Him.

****Romans 15:1-3: We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproach You fell on Me.'****

--(14) What does that selfless life look like? It looks most clearly like love! Love to God and others. Love is the chief governing principle of the new life in Christ Jesus.

--The Bible clearly states that love is the condensed summary and real life practical aim of the law. (See: **Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:39**)

****Romans 13:8+10: Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law...Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.****

--Why do anything religious if you don't want to love? Why get circumcised? Why get baptized? Why go to church? The concern or care we have for ourselves should extend to all others in our sphere of life. We are to use our freedom to love and serve one another.

--How? Only the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do so!

****Romans 8:3-4: For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin; He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.****

--(15) This is the self-destruction of the self-righteous.

--The actions of biting and devouring one another—likely springing from divisions and factions created by false doctrine—are the opposite of true godliness and love. *How many friendships, groups, and churches have fallen apart because of backbiting?!*

--True believers should even be able to disagree in love!

****John 13:34-35: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.****