



World Christian Fellowship

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Galatians

Lesson 47- Freedom that works

Galatians 5:13-16, *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! ¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

A different view we take against the antinomianism.

Christ paid for that sin in His death,
His life has been credited to our account.
He lived a perfectly righteous life.
God credited His life to our account so don't worry about how
you live is their view.

Yet we have the responsibility to live according to that truth.

The Bible is crystal clear about one thing, that if a person loves
God, he keeps God's commandments!

Last week Bible study on the letters to 7 churches we looked at the letter to Ephesus from Revelation 2:1-7. Rebuked for lack of loving the Lord Jesus Christ.

What did we understand?

If you can define a Christian, then he/she is a person who loves God and obeys His word.

Let me add little more to that, if someone loves God, he not only obeys God, but he obeys God with eagerness.

- He obeys God motivated by love.
- He desires to honour God.
- He desires to worship God.
- He wants to bring glory to God.
- He longs to see the will of God.
- He longs for the Word of God fulfilled.
- He loves God.

True Christians love God.

What is the opposite?

A person says that he/she loves God but doesn't obey the word of God.

Very simple.

Here is an extreme statement:

- ✓ You either love God or
- ✓ You hate God.

There is no middle ground.

God sets this clear truth in Mount Sinai. You are either a lover of God or a hater of God.

Exodus 20:1-6, *And God spoke all these words, saying: ²“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³“You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

Loving God is manifestly demonstrated in keeping His commandments.

If you do not keep His commandments you are identified as one who hates God.

Deuteronomy 5:8-10, *'You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁹ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ¹⁰ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.*

God judges with divine justice and divine vengeance *"those who hate Me."*

Deuteronomy 32:41, *If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me.*

Now the people who may say that, I don't hate God but if you do not obey His commandments then you hate God.

John 15:14, *"If you love Me you will keep My commandments."*

Christian freedom is not freedom to be indifferent toward the will of God. It is not freedom to be disobedient to God.

Loving obedience is the mark of a true Christian.

Psalms 119:176, *I have gone astray like a lost sheep; Seek Your servant, For I do not forget Your commandments.*

A new kind of Christianity that is becoming very popular, and the idea of it is to accommodate the current culture of sin.

Sinners want freedom to do what they want to do. They reject authority, they believe they have a right to whatever behaviors they choose to do, and they also have a right to be free from anyone's condemnation of those choices.

What they don't understand is that they are under bondage.

John 8:34, *Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin."*

The sinners think that they are free in sinning, but the truth is they are in bondage.

They will take God, they will take Jesus, they may take the church and some form of Christianity if it does not require them to abandon what they desire. So, there are always going to be corrupted preachers who are eager to accept people on their terms, not on God's terms.

They would proclaim that there is no need for,

- Repentance,
- Self-denial,
- Pursuit of godliness,
- Holiness,
- Purity, and

➤ Sanctification.

2 Peter 2, Peter described the false teachers very graphic terms. Please take time to read, let me read only 2 verses.

2 Peter 2:18-19, *For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹ While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*

So, what does the Gospel corrupters preach?

We don't judge you; we accept you as you are.
You are free to be whoever you want to be.

Promising them freedom when they themselves are slaves of corruption.

What do you hear these days in the Christian preaching?

God accepts you as you are; and you can come.
Jesus will give you everything you want, fulfill all your desires.

To become a true Christian, you become a follower of Jesus Christ by denying yourself and taking up your cross. That means

you deny yourself to such an extreme degree that it could cost you your life.

Becoming a Christian in reality is becoming a slave! We looked at in 2 Sundays before about that in John 15.

It is slavery. It is the blessed, rewarding, joyful, fruitful, peaceful slavery, because it is a slavery of love.

The Word of God says that we are free.

The book of Galatians helping us to define that freedom.

In Christ we have been freed from that bondage to do what is right.

Not only to do what is right, but to love what is right. To fulfill the righteous deeds that which we now love.

We have made a detailed study on the book of Philippians 2:12-13 about 5 studies please watch it.

There we explained very clearly,

- We love what is right,
- We desire to fulfill what is right,
- To enable to fulfill what is right we have the Holy Spirit inside of us.
- The Holy Spirit inside of you enables you with power to do right.

If you love God, then you love His law.

Loving the law of God is loving God, because the law of God is the very nature of God.

God is the sum of all His righteous virtues which are expressed in His law. It is impossible to love God and resist His law.

It is equally impossible to resist His law and say you love God. We are the ones who are free.

We are going to see 4 points how our Christian freedom works.

1. Freedom is not for the Flesh to oppress/ war against Spirit.
2. Freedom to serve to one another.
3. Freedom to fulfill the law at the maximum level.
4. Freedom to avoid conflicts/ arguments

1. Freedom is not for the Flesh to oppress/ war against Spirit.

V13, *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another*

You were called out from the tyranny of the law,
out from under the curse of the law,
out from under the penalty of the law,
out from the external symbols of the law.

The ceremonial ritual regulations given to Moses:

- Circumcision,
- all the festivals,
- feasts, and
- all the externals.

You are free from all of those externals, so you don't have to go back to that.

The Jews had come to Galatia and said they were believers in Christ, but they cannot be a Christian unless they keep the laws, the externals that Moses gave to the people of Israel. Main contention was that unless you are circumcised you cannot be Christian.

These Judaizers were saying that you were pagan, first you must become a Jew by adhering Moses external Laws then only you can be Christian.

Paul was saying that you don't have to become a Jew to be Christian because you are free from the bondage of the law, the curse of the law, and the penalty of the law.

All those things were shadow Christ is the substance.

Colossians 2:16-17, *So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.*

The Holy Spirit shows Peter in Acts 10.

Acts 10:13-15, *And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." ¹⁴ But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." ¹⁵ And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."*

The shadows are gone, the substance is here.

The flesh is our unredeemed humanness, the sin that remains in us until glorification. We are free now for the first time, as we read in Romans 8, to fulfill the law. The law once condemned us because we violated it and could only violate it. Now we can fulfill it by the power of the new creation and the Holy Spirit.

You have the freedom to oppose the flesh. So do not turn your freedom into an opportunity. "Opportunity" is a military word for "a base." Don't let your flesh be the base of operation.

Just for a moment look at the teaching of Faith and Prosperity Gospel teaching!

Name it! Visualise it!! Claims!!! Have it!!!

Speak those things which are not, and Jesus will do it for you!
What a shame!!

V 17, For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

You are a believer, the Spirit lives in you, and the flesh is warring against the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh.

These are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

There is a war going on in you. It is a fight against your flesh. It is a fight toward righteousness, purity, holiness, godliness and it is empowered by the Spirit. But there is present the flesh. Therein lies the opposition.

What is it that the flesh wants?

Galatians 5:19-21, *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

If you are living in the illusion that you have added Jesus to your life and living only for the fulfillment of your own flesh Paul wants you to know that you will never ever enter the kingdom of God.

People who practice the deeds of the flesh as the pattern of life will never enter the kingdom of God.

So, our freedom is limited.

Our freedom is limited by two things.

1. Anything that God forbids
2. Anything that God requires.

We must do what God requires us to do and not do what He forbids us to do.

Christian freedom does not mean freedom to be indifferent to the will and Word of God, or to be disobedient.

It is the freedom to obey!
It is the freedom to pursue righteousness.

You have become a slave of righteousness and it is a willing, loving slavery, because you have such a loving Lord who lavishes you with all these blessings through His Spirit.

Even more limit on our freedom there are a lot of things that are not in the Bible.

Certain habits and behaviours are not in the Bible.
The Bible doesn't say things specifically about certain forms of entertainment.

The Bible doesn't say anything in particular about certain things that people do recreationally.

The Bible doesn't say anything in explicit terms about whether you should drink or not drink.

The Bible doesn't say whether you can go to a theater or not, whether you should indulge in recreation at this level or that level, or whether you should take a vacation, etc.

The Bible doesn't talk about categories of behaviour that are neither righteous or unrighteous. But life is full of those kinds of decisions that we have to make.

What do we do?

- If you are an antinomian, then you have no problem at all. All matters for you is your life and your happiness.
- But if you are true Christian then you must ask yourself these questions.

1. Will it be spiritually Profitable?

1 Corinthians 6:12, *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*

Not all things are beneficial.

Not all things are to my spiritual advantage.

There are a lot of things that are lawful.

There are a lot of things that you could do.

But will they be spiritually profitable? Because everything in the believer's life needs to be spiritually profitable. We desire spiritual benefits and spiritual blessings as they come to us come full of joy and peace.

2. Will it build me up?

1 Corinthians 10:23, *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.*

Christians are looking for something that builds them us up, something that strengthens us.

Not everything is going to build you up spiritually.

3. Will it hinder my faith race?

Hebrews 12:1, *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,*

We have all these people giving testimony to the blessing of the life of faith listed in the chapter 11.

The word “race” is **agōn** from which we get “agony.”

It’s an effort, it requires endurance.

This is a lifelong marathon we are engaged in. This is a very hard and long race. In order to run this race effectively there are two things that you need to eliminate.

- a) Sin
- b) Encumbrance

What is this encumbrance?

The Greek word is 'ogkos', it means "bulk." It is something that is unnecessary weight.

What would be the obvious question will be?

Will it weigh me down?

Do I need to carry this?

We don't see a hundred-meter sprinter with an overcoat.

We don't see an athlete going out to run a marathon carrying a suitcase.

That is the unnecessary bulk/ weight.

Is it something that sucks my energy, that lowers my eyes from looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of the faith?

Is it something that reorders my priorities?

Is it something that eats up my energy uselessly?

Is it something that fills my mind of things that have no value like watching stupid videos, and reading stupid literature, and filling your mind with things that have no value?

Why would you want to run the race of endurance carrying around that kind of baggage?

Paul puts it nicely in the letter to Corinth.

1 Corinthians 9:24, *Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.*

4. Will this likely to start a habit?

1 Corinthians 6:12, *All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.*

In doing this, am I going down a path that is going to create a habit? All these habits consume time and money.

Like not being able to shut off your cell phone.

I don't want to start a habit that sucks my attention and my energy and my focus. This is to be brought under the power of someone, or under the power of something other than the Spirit of God.

I don't want to become a slave to anything except my Lord and righteousness.

5. Will it be consistent with Christlikeness?

1 John 2:6, *He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.*

Would Jesus do this?

Would Jesus be involved in this?

Galatians 4:19, *My little children, for whom I labour in birth again until Christ is formed in you,*

6. Will it Glorify God?

1 Corinthians 10:31, *“Whatever you do, whatever, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

Christian is not saying, “How much sin can I get away with?”

The Christian says, “How hard can I run in the direction of righteousness?”

How devoted can I be toward godliness, purity, and holiness?

How can I eliminate out of my life anything pulls me in the wrong direction?

Freedom in Christ is far from freedom to sin.

Galatians 5:16, *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

Galatians 5:24, *And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

If you are Christ’s then you are not trying to figure out how much damage you can do, you are trying to figure out how much you can run toward righteousness.

So, we have freedom, but freedom to oppose the flesh.

2. Freedom to serve to one another.

V13, *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.*

Through love, **agapē**, the highest, noblest, sacrificial, humble love. This is the highest of all loves, reflecting selflessness.

This is the kind of love that our Lord demonstrates.

Philippians 2:5-8, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

Not only do I have to ask all these questions about me, but I have to ask all those questions about the people around me.

Will this behavior build them up?

Will this be profitable to them?

Will this hinder them in the race?

Will this be an encumbrance to them?

Will this be for them an example in Christlikeness?

Will this be for them to glorifying God?

The word “serve” here, *douleuō*, you are a slave to others.

Everybody is your master in some sense.

You are a slave to righteousness even though you are free.

You are a slave to Christ who is your Lord and Master even though you are free, and you are a slave to others.

1 Corinthians 8:9-13, *But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. ¹⁰For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? ¹¹And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? ¹²But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

Liberty to eat the meat. The fact that it’s offered to an idol doesn’t matter, because an idol is nothing.

If there is a new, young believers who have been saved out of idolatry and you are eating meat offered to the idol that was their capture, and they have been liberated from that, that would offend them.

Don't eat it. So now your liberty is not only limited by those things that matter for your spiritual growth, your liberty is limited by those things that matter for somebody else's spiritual growth.

You don't want to go against that brother's conscience. Now you are limited by what somebody around you expectations are and what might offend them.

1 Corinthians 9:1-2, *Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord?² If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.*

1 Corinthians 9:19, *"Though I am free from all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more."*

Now Paul is talking about freedom not to offend a believer, but freedom not to offend a nonbeliever. Now this means that if I am a believer, I am concerned to live my life in such a way that it will benefit other believers, and even benefit nonbelievers. I don't want to do anything in my life that would do damage to a nonbeliever that I want to win.

Paul pictures going to dinner at an unbeliever's house.

1 Corinthians 10:27-28, *If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.²⁸ But if*

anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness."

You had a new Christian with you, you went to the house of a pagan, he brings out meat and he says, "This is the best meat in town. We get it over at the pagan temple. They offer it to the gods. It comes out of the butcher shop, and it's really great meat. The new believer gasps, this young Christian who's been saved out of the damning reality of having worshiped that very idol.

So now you are in a dilemma.

Who do I offend?

Do I offend the Christian brother, or do I offend the unbeliever?

Pragmatism would tell you, "Offend the brother, don't offend the nonbeliever,"

You have got to win the nonbeliever.

The Bible says, Offend the nonbeliever. Don't eat. For love's sake don't eat.

1 Corinthians 10:29-30, *"Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by*

another man's conscience? ³⁰ But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for the food over which I give thanks?

If you do eat and you offend the brother, the unbeliever will conclude it's better to be a nonbeliever than a brother, because they take more care about me than they do about each other.

John 13:35, *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

Love the brother and say no to the nonbeliever and let him see that this is a union of love. This is something he will know nothing about.

Put love on display!

Make whatever sacrifice you need to make.

1 Corinthians 10:33, *"just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so they may be saved."*

He is saying that not eating and offending that nonbeliever is the pathway for salvation for him, because he is going to see the love that you have for one another. That is something he had known nothing about.

You obey the law of God because you love it.

Even where there is no law of God regarding certain behaviors you run in the direction of what edifies, builds you up, gives you strength, and becoming like Christ. You are determined not to live a life that would be a stumbling block to another believer to do something that if that believer felt free to do it might destroy him.

Romans 14:12-13, *So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.*

Romans 15:1-3, *We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.² Let each of us please his neighbour for his good, leading to edification.³ For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."*

What does Christian freedom mean?

It is freedom to oppose the flesh and freedom to serve others.

3. Freedom to fulfill the law at the maximum level.

V14, *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."*

Quoted from **Leviticus 19:18**, *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

Apostle Paul says basically that this love fulfills the law.

Romans 13:8-10, *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.*

The problem with the law was, the law was an external force, and the heart was wretched and couldn't obey.

Now the law has gone inside and the power of the Holy Spirit and the love that is poured out in us allows us to love our neighbour.

So, when you live a life of love for others, that is limiting your freedom.

When we walk in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is love, and everything flows out of that.

Galatians 5:22, *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*

Romans 5:5, *Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

4. Freedom to avoid conflicts/ arguments

To avoid destructive conflict.

When people think they have every right to do what they want then they through their life leaving a trail of broken lives.

V 15, *But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*

Bite, the Greek word '*daknete*,' used of crocodiles or poisonous snakes.

"Devour" means "to gulp down."

If you are like an alligator or a crocodile travelling through life chewing on people and swallowing them.

The love lessness of sin.

The love lessness of indifference literally causes conflict everywhere. Where there is love and where there is sacrificial service, conflict disappears.

Fighting and devouring, that's simply disobeying the commandments of God, that's not being loving.

So how is it possible for us to live like this?

V 16: *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you’ll not carry out the desire of the flesh.”*

You are no longer under the external control of law and a threat.

You are under the internal control of the Holy Spirit and love.
Love that drives you in the direction of sanctification.