



# World Christian Fellowship

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## Galatians

### Lesson 44-Christian Freedom

**Galatians 5:1**, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

Paul had preached the gospel to Galatia and the gospel was a gospel of freedom from the law and sin. It was a gospel of

Some of the Jews who were threatened by that and so they came in behind Paul into Galatia and everywhere they went they told the people to be saved you need,

- keep the law,
- keep the ceremonies,
- keep the rituals,
- get circumcised, and
- follow every tradition.

Else they would be displeasing to God and they could never come to know God unless they maintained their legalism. There was a real battle over this matter of what is Christian freedom.

**Galatians 2:4**, *And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage),*

Galatians chapter 4, an analogy between Sarah, who was free, and Hagar, who was a bond slave which we saw in the last lesson.

**Galatians 4:31**, *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.*

We are a people who are brought into freedom through salvation.

**Galatians 5:1**, *Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*

So, repeatedly Paul has mentioned the fact that we in Christ are free.

**Galatians 5:13**, *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.*

We who are in Christ do enjoy freedom. We are free in Christ. **John 8:32**, *And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

**John 8:36**, *Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

So, we are free, and we are truly free.

Romans chapters 6, 7 and 8 says that,

- we are free from sin,
- we are free from the law,
- we celebrate our freedom,
- our Christian freedom, and
- freedom in Christ.

It is a wonderful thing to be free in Christ, but the question that comes to mind which we have to deal with is just exactly what does our Christian freedom mean.

How do we enjoy our Christian freedom without abusing it?

Paul is very concerned that having announced through these first five chapters that we are free, that people understand what that freedom means and how that freedom is controlled. For freedom that is out of control is going to be lost and forfeited.

Freedom is a wonderful thing. Its implications are far-reaching.

**What does it mean to be free?**

**How do we express that freedom in a way that is pleasing to God?**

You will be amazed to see how much tolerance of sin there is in the church. You will also be amazed to see how people in high places in the church, prominent people, can fail into great sin and yet be ushered right back into a place of prominence as if nothing ever happened.

Every church and leaders must spiritually commit themselves to obedient to the Word of God.

There needs to be a commitment to a life of integrity and a walk of purity and holiness. It is got to start at the top order and filter all the way down. Until the church leadership gets its act together in terms of purity of life, there's little hope for the rest.

Paul gives us three things that freedom is not, and they act as the restraining principles to our freedom.

## **1. Self-control of the flesh.**

To say we are free in Christ doesn't mean we are free to give expression to our sinfulness.

There are people misinterpret saying that God is pleased when you sin, "Because it gives God the opportunity to express His grace."

Paul knocked down that misapplication.

**Romans 6:1-2**, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup> Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?*

Where sin abounded grace does much more abound, but that isn't license to more sin, that's to be thankful for what God has done with the sin that is there.

**What is it restraining our freedom?**

**What are the limits to our liberty?**

**Galatians 5:13**, *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 are not so free that you can allow your flesh to do whatever it wants.

**1 Corinthians 9:26-27**, *Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. <sup>27</sup> But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.*

Can you disqualify yourself in the ministry?

Sure, you can if you stand up to preach to others but in preaching to others you fall into sin, you become disqualified!

## What is the flesh?

- It is your fallen humanness,
- It is your unredeemed human identity.
- It is your earthy, mortal, physical body.
- It is your humanness twisted with self-centeredness and prone to sin.
- It is the unredeemed part of you.

When you were saved your inner man was recreated.

When you came to Jesus Christ, old things are passed away and behold all things became new.

Romans 6 says, you died, you were crucified and crucifixion results in death. The old man is dead. You have risen to walk in newness of life and the life of God dwells in your soul.

Now you possess the incorruptible, divine nature. The deepest truest part of you is a redeemed part, totally transformed and so linked to Jesus Christ that there is no way to tell where you stop, and He starts.

**Galatians 2:20**, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

What Paul is saying is the old I is dead, a new I lives but it isn't just a new I, it's also Christ, and I don't know where I end, and He begins because I possess the divine nature.

**1 Corinthians 6:17**, *But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.*

The deepest, truest part of you is redeemed and fit for heaven. It is a holy self. It is a new creation in which dwells righteousness.

The problem with you is that that

- new redeemed part of you,
- transformed part of you which has been made like Christ,
- which is righteous,
- which loves the law of God,
- loves purity,
- loves holiness, and
- seeks to do what is right is incarcerated in your flesh.

It is imprisoned in your humanness.

Our problem is going to exist because our new self, Romans 7, delights in the law of God after the inner man, longs to fulfill the law of God, wants to serve the law of God, but sin gets in the way.

Paul says it is not I, but it is sin, that dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. The real I long to do what is right, but the sin that dwells in my flesh pulls me down.

Paul always puts sin in the flesh and it's not in your new creation.

You are already fit for heaven in the new creation.  
You have already been redeemed in the inner man.  
All you are waiting for is the redemption of your body.

**Romans 8:23**, *Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

The full and complete part of your salvation for which we wait!

**Romans 13:14**, *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts.*

We have had that inner salvation and we need that outer salvation, that redemption of the body, where we get a body like His body.

**Philippians 3:20-21**, *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*

We receive a glorious body like His body.

So, we are still waiting for the redemption of our body, the redemption of our flesh, the salvation of the outer man to go along with the salvation of the inner man.

That will happen at the glorious liberation of the children of God. That is the full liberation when we are saved not only in terms of the inner man but when we are saved in terms of the outer man and exchange our vile body for a glorified body like Christ's.

But until that time we have this problem of the new man battling against this flesh.

It is not reigning sin anymore, for the reigning of sin is broken, but it is residual sin, it is residing sin and it finds its place in our flesh.

Paul says the tendency in Christian freedom is going to be to say that I am:

- saved,
- redeemed,
- forgiven,
- new creature,
- covered by grace and mercy, and
- my sins are cared for.

The flesh will play on that and want to exercise its freedom to sin on the basis of a promised forgiveness.

So, the tendency is then for us to say we are free and since all our sins are covered, we allow our flesh to give its expression and trust in God's promise of forgiveness.

That's true. God will forgive you. But that is an abuse of your freedom.

False preachers are guilty of preaching against freedom abuse.

**2 Peter 2:18**, *For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who <sup>[i]</sup>have actually escaped from those who live in error.*

They promise you freedom, do false teachers, that leads to corruption. Freedom should not lead to corruption. Freedom is given to us by the Word of God here that our freedom is controlled by the fact that it does not allow us to indulge the flesh.

It is not freedom to do what you want.

It is not freedom to do your own thing.

Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.

The supreme ambition of Christ was to please the Father, "Not My will but Thine be done."

**Romans 15:3**, *For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me."*

Paul tells us that the essence of Christian freedom is to be concerned about others.

Christian freedom does not mean we do whatever we want to do. It does not mean that we exercise ourselves in any way we want.

Paul compares this to be like the Christian soldier.

**2 Timothy 2:4**, *No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

There is still an obligation to hold the flesh in check, not to please the flesh but to please the Lord. We are responsible to do that.

Essential parameter for controlling and confining our freedom to God-ordained limits is self-control, not the indulging of the flesh.

If you think you can go out and do anything you want, you are abusing your freedom.

## 2. Through love serve another

Our society feels now that they are free to do whatever they want they are like the little god.

The same has found its way into the church, too, where people in the church are more concerned about self than they are about anybody else.

In the name of freedom, think they can do anything they want to do, and they really don't care how it affects anybody else!

**Galatians 5:13 &15**, *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.*

*<sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*

If you think you have your liberty just to devour other people, you are wrong.

Your liberty is to serve people.

It is not freedom that says, "I am free in Christ, I will do whatever I want, I really don't care how it affects you."

You have never been given liberty for the purpose of hurting someone else, no matter how weak that person is.

The word "love" there, by the way, is 'agape'.

It means "divine love," its most characteristic element is self-sacrifice.

You are to serve each other in self-sacrificing love. You are not to injure each other. You are to serve each other.

Essence of real Christian freedom is that paradox of freedom and slavery!

I am free to do what is right, I am free to serve the Lord, but my freedom is confined by the fact that I am not free to do anything that injures someone else.

Romans 14 Paul is dealing with a very common problem.

In a church where you have some that are strong and really understand their freedom, and some that are weak and don't.

If you are a Gentile and you are living in Rome and all your life you have been involved in paganism, and idolatry. You have gone to the pagan temples, you have offered your sacrifices to the idols, you have been involved in the drunken feasts and the orgies, you have bought the meat that was offered to idols, you have eaten the meat offered to idols. That was a part of your whole culture, the feasts, the festivals, the music, the idolatry, and the orgies.

Now you come to faith in Christ. Your life is totally transformed. You don't want to touch that stuff. You don't want to go near that. Everything about it is repulsive to you. Someone invites you over to have dinner and they are a Christian that would be in very awkward place to be in.

Same way a lifelong Jew who had come to a Christian home for a meal when you offer ham then it puts him a awkward position.

But you go ahead and do it anyway and violate his conscience and force him to violate his conscience, you're going to set him back. He can't handle that. He's weak in terms of understanding his freedom.

**Romans 14:1-3**, *Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. <sup>2</sup>For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.*

On the Special Day

**Romans 14:4-7**, *Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. <sup>5</sup>One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup>He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who*

*eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.<sup>7</sup> For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.*

If you are in an environment of people who do, then don't flaunt your liberty to the point where you offend those people. Learn to set your liberty aside for the sake of their growth and for the sake of demonstrating love to them.

**Romans 14:13-15**, *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.<sup>14</sup> I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.<sup>15</sup> Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.*

What about drinking wine?

**Romans 14:21**, It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles [\[h\]](#) or is offended or is made weak.

So, there are places where our liberty stops. Our liberty is a controlled and confined liberty. It is not freedom to indulge the flesh and it is not freedom to injure others.

A freedom that is self-indulgent and self-centered and selfish, a freedom that says I am going to do what I am going to do no matter is an abused freedom.

**Galatians 5:13**, *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.*

**Romans 14:15**, *Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.*

Freedom that is abused turns in to injuring others is just going to bring injury to itself. You destroy others and you yourself are going to be destroyed in the process.

### **3. Love the law of God.**

One of the misunderstood principles in Christian Freedom.

Some people think that when it says in the Bible we are free from the law in Romans 6, and you can read it right there, and Romans 7 it says, some people think that being free from the law means that we are no longer responsible to obey the moral commandments of God.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It has absolutely nothing to do with that.

### **What does it mean to be free from the law?**

It means to be free from trying to earn salvation through keeping the law.

It means to be free from trying to maintain God's standard of holiness without divine enablement.

If you don't know Christ and you don't possess the Spirit of God, you are trying to earn your own salvation by keeping the law. You are trying to be holy and righteous by human effort and that is an impossible thing. That struggle is a bondage that damns the soul.

When you come to Christ you are free from having to earn your salvation through law-keeping and you are free from trying to live up to God's standard by yourself.

It is not freedom from doing right, freedom from obeying God's moral commandment. It is freedom from the penalty of the law for an inability to keep its commandments, that penalty being paid in Christ.

When you put your faith in Christ, you die in Christ, you rise in Christ, therefore you have paid the penalty and you are free from the penalty.

The morals haven't changed, the ethics haven't changed, but you are free from the penalty of failing to keep them and most

importantly you are free from having to try to keep them in your own human strength.

**Galatians 5:14**, *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."*

We fulfill the law.

**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, <sup>4</sup> 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.*

For the first time we do what is right, we obey the Word of God. The righteousness of the law which we couldn't keep before Christ we can now keep after Christ has changed our life. The law is fulfilled.

**Leviticus 19:18**, *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.*

**Romans 13:8-10**, *Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> Love does no harm to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilment of the law.

Love is the fulfilling of the whole law.

If I love God,

- I won't make any graven images
- I won't take His name in vain,
- I will worship to glorify Him.

If I love my neighbour as myself,

I am not going to murder my neighbour,

I am not going to steal from my neighbour,

I am not going to lie to my neighbour,

I am not going to covet my neighbour's possessions.

The law is simply a list of things which will all be fulfilled by a truly loving heart. So what God is calling us to then is a freedom that is not a freedom from doing right but a freedom to keep the law of God.

**How can that be done?**

**Where is the energy for that?**

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

Now listen, when you become a Christian, instead of having an external set of rules to keep, which over defines everything, you have an internal personal presence which leads you into righteousness.

Before you were a Christian the laws were all there, but you had no ability to keep them.

Now that you are a Christian the law is still there but the Spirit of God in you enables you to fulfill the law.

So Christian freedom is not freedom to ignore the law, it is freedom to obey the law.

Before, you had no ability to do that. You were a slave to sin, a slave to unrighteousness.

Now you're free to fulfill the law of God in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

## **Conclusion:**

Our liberty is controlled by three things.

- ✓ Purity of life,
- ✓ Loving others, and
- ✓ Obeying God's Word.

Walk in the Spirit, walk according to the Word of God revealed. You study every day and you hear the Word of God every Lord's Day!