

**The Book of Galatians**  
**Lesson 9 - Galatians 5:1-15**  
**Gospel Living**  
**“Christian Freedom”**

We now move into the final section of the letter in which Paul makes the practical application of Christian liberty to the lives of believers. “Your doctrine of grace and liberty is dangerous!” Paul’s enemies argued. “Why, if Christians are free from the Law, they will live wicked lives! We need the Law to control them!” So people have argued down through the centuries, little realizing that grace, not law, is the greatest teacher and “controller” in the world.

Paul admonishes us to stand fast in our Christian liberty. If we step back into legalism, we risk entanglement and bondage. How well the Jews of Paul’s day knew what legal bondage meant. Circumcision was the seal of the old covenant, so Paul warns the Galatians that to turn back to the old covenant is to rob themselves of the blessings Christ had purchased for them. Christ cannot profit the sinner who rejects grace and trusts law, nor the saint who seeks to live by law instead of grace. “Circumcision” stands for the entire Mosaic system. People who put themselves under the Law become debtors to the whole system.

“*Fallen from grace*” (vs. 4) does not mean “fallen from salvation.” Paul is not writing to people who have “lost their salvation” because such a thing is not possible. “Law means I must do something for God; grace means that God does something for me.” How wonderful it is for the Christian to enjoy the liberty of grace!

How did such false teaching get into the Galatians lives? Just the way yeast (leaven) gets into good meal. Leaven is always compared to that which is evil. The false doctrine was planted as a little bit of leaven in the church, but then it grew and infected the whole body. The Galatians had run well up to that point; now they were being hindered in their Christian walk.

Paul closes this section with the reminder that liberty is not license. “*You should love your neighbor as yourself*” he says. We fulfill the law when we live in love. The Christian who says, “I have liberty to sin!” understands nothing of the cross or of God’s grace.

**Read Galatians 5:1-6 and answer the following questions**

1. The first part of 5:1 seems almost too obvious to require saying. What is Paul's point?
  
2. What pressures would the Galatians have to resist in order to "stand fast"?
  
3. What is the "*yoke of bondage*" that Paul talks about in 5:1?
  
4. What result does Paul say are the consequences if the Galatians let themselves be circumcised? (Gal. 2-3)
  
5. Some people thought they could be made right by keeping the law without any need of Jesus. What two things happen when one seeks to be justified by the law? (Gal. 5:4)

**Read Galatians 5:7-12 and answer the following questions**

6. What sports analogy did Paul use for following the gospel? How do you relate to this analogy in your personal walk today?

7. What saying did Paul use to illustrate the danger of the false teachers? What did he mean by this? (Gal. 5:9)

8. What strong words did Paul have for the Judaizers?

**Read Galatians 5:13-15 and answer the following questions**

9. How is your Christian freedom different from the freedom your sinful nature and the world wants you to claim? (Gal. 5:13)

10. What would be an abuse of our liberty in Christ?

11. How does God want us to use the freedom He has given us?

12. What is God's guiding principle for freedom? (Gal. 5:13-14)

## Great Word about Personal Freedom in Christ

On the face of it, it seems strange to identify Christianity as an enemy of freedom. After all, Christians have historically stood up for the poor, the oppressed, the captive, and the underprivileged. Likewise, liberation from ignorance, disease, and political oppression have invariably resulted wherever Christian faith and principles have been adopted. Why then, would some view that faith as repressive?

Perhaps part of the answer lies in the problem of legalism. Whenever Christianity is made into a list of do's and don'ts, it becomes intolerant and restrictive. Instead of enjoying an intimate relationship with a loving God, the legalist is obsessed with rules and regulations as if God were a celestial police officer just waiting to catch us out of line.

The real question, of course is: What kind of people are we? What is our character? Christians try to mold their character after the pattern of Jesus. He was the most liberated man that had ever lived. His ultimate standard of behavior was: what does my Father want me to do? Did that code stifle His freedom? Hardly. He was free of covetousness, hypocrisy, fear of others, and every other vice. At the same time, He was free to face himself, free to tell the truth, free to love people with warmth and purity, and free to surrender His life to others.

True Christian freedom is Christlike freedom. There is no hint of legalism about it. It accepts absolute moral standards that are well known and well proven, and it takes its inspiration from the most liberated human that ever lived, Jesus of Nazareth. What is stifling about that?