

## Called to Freedom

### Galatians 5:1-15

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December 12-13, 2015

**The Big-Picture Truth:** Don't lose your freedom as believers; don't abuse your freedom as believers.

**I am free from keeping the law to win God's acceptance and love.**

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. <sup>2</sup>Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. <sup>3</sup>I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. <sup>4</sup>You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. <sup>5</sup>For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup>For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. Galatians 5:1-6 (English Standard Version)*

*What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup>but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. <sup>32</sup>Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works . . . Romans 9:30-32 (New International Version)*

**Application Tip:** As you prepare for your day each morning this week, contemplate this truth: "There is nothing I have to do to win God's acceptance and love."

**I am free to keep the law out of love for God.**

*For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>15</sup>But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. Galatians 5:13-15 (ESV)*

“Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin. It is an unrestricted liberty of approach to God as His children, not an unrestricted liberty to wallow in our own selfishness.” (From The Message of Galatians by John Stott).

The great church father Augustine taught that true freedom is not choice or lack of constraint, but being what you are meant to be. Humans were created in the image of God. True freedom, then, is not found in moving away from that image but only in living it out. The closer we conform to the true image of God, Jesus Christ, the freer we become. The farther we drift from it, the more our freedom shrinks. From a Christian perspective, then, freedom—paradoxically—is a kind of bondage. Martin Luther expressed this truth better than anyone since the apostle Paul in his 1520 treatise *On Christian Liberty* . . . : “A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.” (From “The Bonds of Freedom” in Christianity Today, October, 2012)

*Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.* 1 Peter 2:16 (ESV)

*The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet,” and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Romans 13:9 (NIV)

“In verse 14, he says that the summary of the law is to love one another! So Paul says bluntly that the Galatian Christians must obey the law. How do we understand this? Are we obliged, or are we not obliged. Essentially the answer is “yes.” In one way we are obliged to keep the law, but in another we are not . . . The obligation that is gone for the Christian is the obligation to obey the law to be saved . . . But now that we are saved wholly and freely by grace we are, if anything, more obligated to obey the law.” (From Galatians for You by Timothy Keller)

### **The two facets of biblical freedom:**

- I am free from the guilt of my imperfect performance.
- I am free to live a holy life out of love for God.

**Application Tip:** In one of your prayer times this week, ask the Lord whether you are experiencing both facets of biblical freedom.

**The balance of freedom is not easily retained.**

*You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?* <sup>8</sup>*This persuasion is not from him who calls you.* <sup>9</sup>*A little leaven leavens the whole lump.* Galatians 5:7-9 (ESV)