

Galatians 5:1-15

“Freedom in Christ”

1. Begin with prayer and read Galatians 5:1-15 [5 minutes].

2. Review briefly the previous lesson on Galatians 4:8-31 [5 minutes].

3. Discuss how Paul sounds the call to living in freedom in Christ in Galatians 5:1 [10 minutes].

- A. Paul proclaiming the thesis statement for chapters 5-6 in Galatians (so pay attention! Themes in chapters 5-6 will continue to connect with 5:1!)
- B. First, Christ has truly set us free: verb describing this freedom in aorist tense, a single past action now completed; (implication: you are free, so live like it! See Gal. 2:14)
- C. “Paul’s initial sentence is even stronger and more emphatic in Greek than how it comes across in English. He literally says, ‘For freedom Christ freed you.’ Both the noun and the verb are the word ‘freedom’; freedom is both the means and the end of the Christian life! Everything about the gospel is freedom. Jesus’ whole mission was an operation of liberation.” (Tim Keller, *Galatians for You*, 131)
- D. Second, continue to live in freedom in Christ: stand firm, being watchful and careful (implication: you can’t lose salvation, but you can lose freedom without diligence)
- E. Third, don’t give in to the temptations of living by law instead; ESV translates NLT “tied up again in slavery to the law” as “submit again to a yoke of slavery;” helps us connect with Jesus in Matt 11:29-30 (ESV), saying “take my yoke upon you” and “my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (implication: everyone bears the yoke of someone or something, so choose to bear Jesus’ yoke and not anything else)
 - *Think about some contemporary enemies of the freedom we experience in Christ. How do we stay vigilant and alert? How do we not succumb to them?*
 - *If Tim Keller is on target when he states, “Everything about the gospel is freedom. Jesus’ whole mission was an operation of liberation,” then in your life, where do you sense the need for Christ’s freedom the most right now?*

4. Discuss how Paul sums up the joys of trusting in Jesus and the failures of trusting in self in Galatians 5:2-12 [15 minutes].

- A. Back and forth comparison/contrast between living by law and living by freedom of the Spirit, with Paul highlighting flaws of the law and blessings of the Spirit
- B. Very clear: if counting on circumcision and related components to do the trick, then you will be in trouble; will never measure up and will find yourself as anxious, guilt-ridden, and rudderless as you were in your pagan days: see 5:2, 5:3, and 5:6

- C. Is 5:4 a “lose your salvation” verse? No, Paul’s history with the Galatians is they initially responded well to the gospel rightly preached and taught, and thus this “Jesus + something else” is a false teaching with radical inconsistency they must repudiate
- D. False teaching often runs through faith community like wildfire; analogy with leaven in 5:9 apt, as it takes just a little false teaching to mess things up for community
- E. Graphic call for self-mutilation by false teachers plays up circumcision image and on Paul’s emotional commitment to Galatians
 - *Why do you believe so many people hold that Christianity is primarily a religion of dos and don’ts, of rules and regulations? Where is this coming from? What can we do to respond with the gospel message?*
 - *Think of a time you have seen or experienced the results of false teaching causing great difficulties for a community of faith (a small group, a class, a church, etc.). How did it resolve? What do you think could or should have been done to address the issue?*

5. Discuss how Paul re-emphasizes and broadens the call to living in freedom in Christ in Galatians 5:13-15 [10 minutes].

- A. Reiteration of call made in 5:1: live in the freedom Jesus provides
- B. Then clarity: don’t use freedom in Christ as excuse to “satisfy your sinful nature” (5:13b NLT); but, “use your freedom to serve one another in love” (5:13c NLT)
- C. Easy for many to perceive grace and the freedom it affords as the get-out-of-jail-free card of the moral life: “I love to sin; God loves to forgive; what a perfect match!”
- D. Many parallels between Galatians and Romans: note similarity of qualification in 5:13 with more in-depth explanation in Romans 6:1-23
- E. Interesting that Paul’s call for freedom is for freedom to obey the summary of the law offered in 5:14, from Leviticus 19:18; not freedom to do what we want, but freedom to do what God wants; law is being obeyed from different premise and starting point
 - *Some see the message of grace embodied in the following: “I love to sin. God loves to forgive. What a perfect match!” What’s wrong with this scenario? How would you describe the true message of God’s grace working in human lives?*
 - *Talk about how the freedom we have in Christ is not freedom to do whatever we want, but freedom to do what God wants. When have you experienced this gospel freedom in your life recently? Describe its impact on you.*

6. Close in prayer.