

“Freedom in Christ”  
Galatians 5:1  
(Preached at Trinity, May 26, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. With the close of **Chapter 4** we’ve come to an end of the theological portion of the Book of Galatians. Paul now sets forth how the Gospel applies to every aspect of our life. The Gospel touches everything.
2. Paul has been zealously contending for the faith. The Gospel was at stake. He knew he had been entrusted with it. Paul felt the weighty burden of defending the truth. He knew he had been called and set apart as God’s herald.
3. He has argued from the personal experience of the Galatian Christians. He has argued from the prospective of Abraham and God’s promise. He has made it clear that we are saved by grace alone in Christ alone apart from the works of the Law. To return to the Law is to forsake the freedom given to us by Christ – the freedom from the condemnation of the Law—freedom from the Law’s demands that we could not meet but Christ fulfilled perfectly. Freedom from man’s rules and traditions.
4. At the end of **Chapter 4** Paul gives an allegory of the two mothers and two sons and two covenants. He concludes by saying, **Galatians 4:31 NAU** - "So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman."  
As the people of God and the children of promise we share the glorious liberty of Christ.
5. As we enter **Chapter 5** Paul warns his readers against returning to their former bondage. **Galatians 5:1 NAU** - "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery."
  - A. It is hard to place this verse. Is it the conclusion to Paul’s analogy of Hagar and Sarah in **Chapter 4** or is Paul using this statement to introduce the next passage. I think it would be accurate to say, “both.” It serves as a transitional statement.  
But it flows strongly from **Chapter 4**.  
We are not of the bondwoman but of the free. It was for this freedom that Jesus Christ came. He came to set us free.
  - B. Paul gives both an indicative and an imperative – a simple statement and a command.  
“It was for freedom that Christ set us free”  
“therefore keep standing firm”
  - C. In other words, because of all that God has done for us in Christ stand firm!  
Often Paul reminds his readers of *what they are* and then commands them to BE what they are.  
**Ephesians 5:8 NAU** - "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light"  
**Colossians 3:1 NAS** - "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."

6. In **Verse 1** Paul is commanding them, since God has set you free continue in your freedom. Don't be drawn back into slavery. Don't let anyone rob you of your liberty. This verse introduces the final two chapters in which Paul now gives ethical exhortations. Paul now exhorts his readers to live out the reality of their justification by faith alone.
- A. Timothy George comments, "If Galatians is the Magna Carta of Christian liberty, then Galatians 5:1 has reason to be considered one of the key verses of the epistle."
  - B. On one hand we have been freed from the condemnation of the Law and freed from the Law's impossible demands. Christ has fulfilled all righteousness, fulfilling all the requirements of the Law. Our good works can merit nothing regarding our salvation. We are saved by faith apart from the works of the Law.
  - C. On the other hand, what effect does this have upon your life? We have not been freed from God's command for repentance and holiness. Those who have been justified will seek to honor God through life in the Spirit.
7. **Verse 1** reminds us of how carefully we must protect the freedom bought for us through Christ. We are always in danger of being brought back under the yoke of the Law, either by well-meaning brothers who want to conform us to their unbiblical strictness, or by our own propensity towards legalism.
- I. First of all, we need to remember that all human beings are under bondage apart from Christ. Only Jesus can deliver us
- John 8:36 NAU** - "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."  
**2 Corinthians 3:17 NAU** - "where the Spirit of the Lord is, *there* is liberty."
- A. All are under the Law's condemnation
    1. All are responsible for the Law's demand for perfection  
**Galatians 3:10 NAS** - " For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."
    2. There is no freedom under the Law. The Law stands before the lost man as a terrible taskmaster making demands but offering no means for meeting the demands. It is like Israel in Egypt. The taskmasters demanded bricks but took away the straw.  
**Exodus 5:6-8 NAS** - "Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters over the people and their foremen, saying, <sup>7</sup> "You are no longer to give the people straw to make brick as previously; let them go and gather straw for themselves. <sup>8</sup> "But the quota of bricks which they were making previously, you shall impose on them; you are not to reduce any of it."
    3. This is why our freedom in Christ is such a glorious gift
  - B. The lost man is also in bondage to his own sinful heart. He thinks he has found freedom by denying God's right to rule over him - There is a terrible paradox
    1. He has declared himself free from God  
 The psalmist declared this in the second Psalm  
**Psalms 2:1-3 KJV** - "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*, <sup>3</sup> Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

- a. He has declared autonomy and liberty
  - b. “bands” and “cords” refer to materials to bind someone – fetters and ropes. They see obedience to God’s Law as a bondage – irksome and burdensome.
2. What they don’t realize is that their rebellion against God has placed them under infinite bondage. This is because God’s Law stands as an absolute. No one can escape the absolute demands of the Law.  
**Galatians 3:10 NAS** - "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them."
  3. No one can resist the rule of God.  
**Psalms 2:4-5 KJV** - "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. <sup>5</sup> Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."  
    - a. The psalmist describes God’s reaction first as laughter – not hilarity but of mockery and contempt
    - b. God’s laughter then turns to wrath – man will be terrified at God’s anger - “and vex them in his sore displeasure.”
- C. This is also the problem with man-made religion  
Man has always tried to forge his own way to God
1. Religion apart from Christianity is it’s nothing but a further expression of our rebellious heart.
  2. God says trust my Son alone. Serve Him alone. Lost humanity answers in various ways but the end is the same, “I Will Not!”
  3. With works based religion the lost man says, “I will do it my way.” It is the same ancient rebellion. “You will not rule over me. I will have my own way, govern my own life.”
  4. This is what the Judaizers were doing. They were declaring that Christ wasn’t sufficient. They had found a better way than God’s way. They were saying that a better way was to have Christ plus circumcision and the works of the Law.
  5. Paul spoke of this in **Romans 10**  
**Romans 10:2-3 NAU** - "I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. <sup>3</sup> For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."
- D. Jesus Christ has set us free!
1. We are free from trying to earn our own salvation. And we are free from the curse of the Law. We now have the liberty to live to the glory of God
  2. Jesus Christ has met all of the Law’s demands. For those who trust Him His righteousness has become their own  
We are free!

- II. Our freedom in Christ continues to cause great confusion for many  
There continues to be great confusion regarding the Law and the Gospel. And this confusion has caused many of the problems of modern Christianity.
- A. On one hand there is the danger of hyper-liberty or antinomianism
1. Some fall into the camp of Dispensationalism – that the Law was for Israel, not for the Church
  2. There are some who insist that since we are under grace the Law no longer has any place in our lives.
    - a. Christ has fulfilled the Law and thus the Law no longer exists for the Christian.
    - b. They insist that we are no longer burdened by rules and regulations
  3. These fall into various camps. This is the reason the Sabbath is rejected by so many today. They claim the Ten Commandments were for the Old Covenant.
  4. This has always been a danger. Liberty does not mean autonomy from obedience from God’s Law.  
**Galatians 5:13 NAU** - "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh"
  5. We are free *from* sin and at the same time at war *with* sin. Our liberty never confuses this.
- B. But there is another extreme
1. There are many today who would never look to the Law as a means of working for their salvation but they still set up endless rules that they use to bind the consciences of others.
  2. These people have strict rules and regulations about how they think people should live. Lloyd-Jones called it a “morbid scrupulosity”  
They have strong opinions and freely share them with others. They can be highly censorious condemning all who do not conform to their rules
  3. We can set up endless rules and regulations as if they are ordered by God  
We must be careful that we do not bind men’s consciences with traditions that the Law of God does not command.
  4. There have been many such issues that have plagued the modern church in the last 50 years  
There have been disputes over the issue of alcohol consumption.  
There have been disputes over dancing, watching TV or going to movies, length of men’s hair, playing cards, wearing makeup  
There have been disputes over music style, instruments – the use of the organ was a huge issue in Spurgeon’s day.  
There have been disputes over particular versions of the Bible  
**Children**  
There have been disputes over homeschooling  
Disputes over whether a mother should nurse her baby or how long a mother should nurse her baby? (is there a law?)  
Disputes over whether a family can choose to limit the number of children they have? (is there a law?)  
Disputes over whether or not a church should have a nursery or age segregated Sunday School.

5. We must guard our hearts on these things either to ensnare others or to be ensnared. The word Paul uses in **Verse 1** for “subject” is unusual. Within its semantic range it carries the idea of anger or holding a grudge.
  - a. It is found only three times in the NT
    - Mark 6:19 NAS** - "And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death and could not *do so*"
    - Luke 11:53 NAS** - "And when He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects,"
  - b. As we consider these passions it is easy to understand how we can be ensnared.
  - c. This is the meaning of Paul’s use of the word here. It carries the idea of being loaded down or burdened.  
His command: Do not be loaded down by what God does not command and be careful not to load others down with your ideas.

#### Conclusion:

1. In Christ we are free but there is a wonderful balance in the Gospel.  
In Christ we are free from the curse of the Law but we are never at liberty to sin. The Law has not been abrogated and we have no right to disregard it. We have a desire to honor Christ with our lives.
2. We must never allow anyone to bind us with things that God does not command.
3. True freedom brings us to rejoice in our service and love to Christ and to love and serve one another.  
Or as he says in **Verse 6** - "faith working through love."