

30. The Book of Galatians 5:1 (Topical)

Liberty For Life-Part 1

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We have been studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings going through the book topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is **liberty**—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ.

The book divides itself into 3 main areas of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

I. **Liberty from Lies**—verses 1:6-10

II. **Liberty from Law**— verses 1:11-4:31

III. **Liberty for Life**— verses 5:1-6:15

In our study this morning, we find ourselves entering into the third main division of the book—“**Liberty for Life.**”

The Key Verse of the Book is Galatians Chapter 5 verse 1—

Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)

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.

One writer said, *“In some ways it is easier to live as a slave than to make right use of one’s freedom (e.g., Israel in the wilderness wishing to return to Egypt).”*

Wiersbe—

“Sad to say, there are some people who feel very insecure with liberty. They would rather be under the tyranny of some leader than to make their own decisions freely. There are some believers who are frightened by the liberty they have in God’s grace; so they seek out a fellowship that is legalistic and dictatorial, where they can let others make their decisions for them. This is comparable to an adult climbing back into the crib. The way of Christian liberty is the way of fulfillment in Christ. No wonder Paul issues that ultimatum: “Do not be entangled again in the yoke of bondage. Take your stand for liberty!”

Yes, take your stand for liberty—only be sure you understand the biblical concept of liberty lest the liberty you give yourself over to puts you back in bondage!

As Americans, we celebrate and hold tightly to the freedoms that are our rights guaranteed to us as American citizens under the founding documents of our constitutional republic.

The Declaration of Independence states: *“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”*

Those words mean different things to different people. Many define *freedom* as—the freedom to do whatever they want, whenever they want, and no one is allowed to stop them.

That might be the world’s definition of freedom—but it’s not God’s definition.

You see God knows that total freedom to do whatever a person wants will ultimately lead to bondage and destruction—He knows that freedom can only remain true freedom when it’s got limitations attached to it.

One author illustrated this well—

“And there is nothing as ugly, empty and as emotionally devastating and physically destructive as sexual promiscuity. Fire in a fireplace is beautiful, it’s warming and pleasant to look at—but outside of the fireplace it’s destructive and devastating—it can ruin lives and cause death. The same is true with sex—it is God-given and beautiful when it’s God-guided and God-governed.

But when it is not, when it is allowed to run wild it will ruin lives, destroy families, do irreparable damage to the children and even result in death.”

Proverbs 6:20–29 (NLT)

²⁰ My son, obey your father’s commands, and don’t neglect your mother’s instruction. ²¹ Keep their words always in your heart. Tie them around your neck. ²² When you walk, their counsel will lead you. When you sleep, they will protect you. When you wake up, they will advise you. ²³ For their command is a lamp and their instruction a light; their corrective discipline is the way to life. ²⁴ It will keep you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of a promiscuous woman. ²⁵ Don’t lust for her beauty. Don’t let her coy glances seduce you. ²⁶ For a prostitute will bring you to poverty, but sleeping with another man’s wife will cost you your life. ²⁷ Can a man scoop a flame into his lap and not have his clothes catch on fire? ²⁸ Can he walk on hot coals and not blister his feet? ²⁹ So it is with the man who sleeps with another man’s wife. He who embraces her will not go unpunished.

Turn to:

1 Corinthians 10:23–24 (NKJV)

²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s *well-being*.

When Paul says, **“All things are lawful for me,”** he does not mean *all things* in the absolute sense—he is speaking here only about those things that are morally *neutral*. The context of Paul’s statements in 1Corinthians was eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol.

The act of eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol was morally neutral—it didn’t matter to God (under the New Covenant) whether a man ate it or not. But the issue that Paul was addressing was not the right to use our liberty—but the love to restrain our liberty in Christ.

In other words, even though certain things might be permissible for me to do, if a younger or less mature Christian saw me doing it—if they were stumbled by my actions—then even though God has not forbidden it, out of love for a fellow Christian I’m not going to do it.

1 Corinthians 10:23 (NKJV)

²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify.

Freedom in the Christian life is not the freedom to sin—it's the freedom not to sin!

Many unbelievers say things like, *"The reason I'm not a Christian is because of all the rules—I don't want anyone telling me how to live, I want the freedom to do what I want."*

The people of this world are slaves of Satan and yet they think they're *free*. They look down on Christians for being the slaves of our 'religion' because they claim—we're not free to live the way we want. They say things like, *"Stupid Christians, Bible thumpers, always going to church, they can't have any fun...poor dumb Christians—I'm free!"*

What they're really saying is, *"Poor dumb Christians—they're not free like me! They can't get cirrhosis of the liver; they can't get AIDS or gonorrhea; they can't get addicted to meth and go to the Betty Ford Clinic...I'm free!!"*

John 8:36 (NLT)

³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you are truly free.

Only the child of God is truly free—free not to have to sin.

Galatians 5:1 (NASB95)

¹ It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Paul is saying much the same thing in 1 Corinthians 6:12—

1 Corinthians 6:12 (NKJV)

¹² All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

Again, when Paul says, **"All things are lawful for me,"** he does not mean all things in an absolute sense.

For instance, it would not be lawful for him to commit any of the sins he had just mentioned in verses 9-10 of 1 Corinthians 6—

1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (NLT)

⁹ Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality,¹⁰ or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God.

Again, when Paul says, **"All things are lawful for me,"** he does not mean all things in an absolute sense (some use this to justify why they can live sinful lives because they're saved by grace...)—he is here speaking only about those things that are morally neutral.

But he goes on to say—**"All things are lawful for me—but all things are not helpful."**

Paul is saying that all morally neutral activities are lawful for me—but not all of these things are profitable or helpful in achieving my goal to run my race for Jesus so as to win.

1 Corinthians 9:24 (HCSB)

²⁴ Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize.

You see in Paul's mind life was all about serving God and finishing well in our race for Christ. And everything we do and get involved with as Christians needs to be held up against that goal.

Evaluate your life to determine how much time and money you spend on things and ask yourself—how much of it is going to things, that may not be sinful (they're morally neutral)— but they're really not helping you to finish your race (life and ministry) well for Jesus.

Look, we all need some time to relax, visit with a friend, take in a movie and, if you're a guy—to watch a ballgame. But for a lot of Christians men's sports have become an obsession that takes them away from church and their families for inordinate amounts of time each week.

"But the big game is on!"

Look folks, there is always a 'big game' on in some sport, on some channel, at some time during the week—if not in baseball, then football, basketball, golf, soccer or water polo! There are a lot of things that are not sinful but can become too important to us and consume too much of our time and money and do nothing to help us in our walk and service for the Lord.

You have the freedom to choose any one of a number of things to do on Sunday morning, or Wednesday night, or on small-group nights that are not inherently sinful (they're morally neutral). But instead, every week you chose to come to church and small-group to further your understanding of God's Word so as to grow in your walk with and service for Jesus—good choice!

**You put spiritual things before relaxation
or some other activity that you could have engaged in.**

You opted to use your liberty to profit you in your relationship with Jesus instead of squandering it on things that have no eternal value.

Paul, the Apostle said, *"All things are lawful for me but not all things are expedient or profitable, they will not help me run my race for Christ."*

It would be like showing up to run in a race wearing long underwear, a snowsuit, a heavy pair of boots, with a big backpack full of junk foods, video games, camera—how well do you think you'd be able to run that race loaded down with all that stuff!? (Relate to us)

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Corinthians 6:12)

I could have a glass of wine with dinner—but if another Christian saw me, they might be stumbled or encouraged by my actions to have wine with their meals even though they really don't think it's right to do.

Romans 14:19–23 (NLT)

¹⁹ So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up. ²⁰ Don't tear apart the work of God over what you eat. Remember, all foods are acceptable, but it is wrong to eat something if it makes another person stumble. ²¹ It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else if it might cause another believer to stumble. ²² You may believe there's nothing wrong with what you are doing, but keep it between yourself and God. Blessed are those who don't feel guilty for doing something they have decided is right. ²³ But if you have doubts about whether or not you should eat something, you are sinning if you go ahead and do it. For you are not following your convictions. If you do anything you believe is not right, you are sinning.

Now please understand, Paul isn't just concerned about us stumbling another Christian by exercising our freedoms in Christ. He is also concerned about us using our freedom in such a way that we actually lose it by being brought under the control of something.

I could drink some wine, but it could result in bringing me under its control so that I no longer have freedom not to do it. It might not be sinful in and of itself—but if it robs me of my freedom in Christ and enslaves me then I should stay away from it.

Let me give you 3 tests to help you determine if you should be involved with something that is considered a morally neutral 'gray area.'

These come out of 1Cor.6 and 1Cor.10—

1. **The Utility Test**—will it profit me spiritually and be helpful in my race for Christ.

1 Corinthians 6:12a (NKJV)

¹² All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful...

2. **The Authority Test**—will it enslave me or bring me under its control.

1 Corinthians 6:12b (NKJV)

¹² ...All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

3. **The Charity Test**—will it hurt or cause another Christian to stumble.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (NKJV)

²³ All things are lawful for me...but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.

Now, back to Galatians 5. The context of Paul's opening admonition in verse 1 is transitional—it is transitioning us away from the bondage to the Law to the liberty that is ours in Christ.

Galatians 4:28–5:1 (NKJV)

²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. ²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is now*. ³⁰ Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "*Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.*" ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. 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.

In light of all that Paul has said in chapters 1-4 now comes the application and admonition—*“Stand constantly against legalism.”*

It takes constant vigilance to guard against sliding back into the bondage of legalism once grace has set you free.

“Yoke of bondage”

The farmer uses the yoke to control and guide his oxen, because they would not willingly serve if they were free—religion is all about control not freedom. Someone who is legally made free in Jesus can still live in bondage—they can be deceived into staying in slavery to legalism (comment on legalistic churches).

The great evangelist D. L. Moody illustrated this point by quoting an old former slave woman in the South following the Civil War.

Being a former slave, she was confused about her status and asked:

“Now is I free, or is I not? When I go to my old master he says I ain’t free, and when I go to my own people they say I is, and I don’t know whether I’m free or not. Some people told me that Abraham Lincoln signed a proclamation, but master says he didn’t; he didn’t have any right to.”

Many Christians are confused on the same point.

Jesus Christ has given them an “Emancipation Proclamation,” declaring them free from slavery to the Law (religion)—but their “old master” tells them they are still slaves to a legal relationship with God.

They live in bondage because their “old master” has deceived them.

Of course, our old master, the devil is going to try to tell us that we haven’t been set free—but don’t listen to his lies—know, believe and act on what God has told you in His Word.

Galatians 5:1 (NLT)

¹ So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).