**Lesson – 11 Freedom in Christ**

**Read for your study:** [*Gal. 5:1–15*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+5:1-15); [*1 Cor. 6:20*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1Cor+6:20); [*Rom. 8:1*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+8:1); [*Heb. 2:14, 15*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Heb+2:14-15); [*Rom. 8:4*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+8:4); [*13:8*](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Rom+13:8).

**Memory Text: “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” (**[***Galatians 5***](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+5:13)[***:13***](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Phil+2:2)**, ESV).**

**Introduction:** Do you think the world thinks when a person gives their life to Jesus that they are free? Does the world think that our lives are about a bunch of: ‘you cannot do this and you cannot do that¨ rules? True freedom cannot exist without boundaries.

Elisabeth Elliot writes, “Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact freedom is not at all the opposite, but the final reward, of discipline. It is to be bought with a high price, not merely claimed. The [professional] skater and [race] horse are free to perform as they do only because they have been subjected to countless hours of grueling work, rigidly prescribed, and faithfully carried out. Men are free to soar into space because they have willingly confined themselves in a tiny capsule designed and produced by highly trained scientists and craftsmen, have meticulously followed instructions and submitted themselves to rules which others defined”. - **Elisabeth Elliot in All That Was Ever Ours. Christianity Today, Vol. 32, no. 16.**

Freedom is not free, with freedom comes responsibility, we have to decide what we will do with our freedom in Christ. All liberty is precious, but political and physical freedom, is freedom merely of the second order. Freedom of the first order is spiritual freedom, and this is transcendent. One can have freedom of the second order yet be spiritually enslaved. On the other hand, you can be deprived of your second-order freedom yet be spiritually free. This was, for example, the experience of Paul the Apostle when he was in chains **(Col 4:3 Gal 5:1).**

Christians have responsibilities that come with our gift of freedom. We have to decide if we are going to use the gift of freedom or abuse the gift. **Jesus said**, "If you abide in my teaching, then you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free... If the Son frees you, you will be truly free" **(John 8:31-32, 36).** This greatest freedom of all can only come from Jesus Christ. It is the only freedom that can be guaranteed, and Jesus is the only authority that can guarantee it. Let us dive into our study with this thought!

**Christ Has Set Us Free**

When we become free in Christ, we become slaves to personal responsibility. We do not shed our bondage; rather, we exchange it for a new kind. But the new bondage is self-imposed. It doesn’t have rules set by a master who owns our lives against our will. It has the rule of personal responsibility given by a master who loves us, and to whom we have voluntarily pledged our will. Thus Paul admonishes us in **Galatians 5:1** saying, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.’ Our call authorizes believers to lay claim to their freedom, and it challenges believers to use their freedom responsibly.

Liberty in Christ is not liberty to sin. We are not free to be fornicators, idolaters, or drunkards as Paul writes in (**1 Cor 6:9-11.)** If we have been purchased by Christ, he owns us, body and soul **(1Co 6:19-20).** Our liberty in Christ frees us from sin, but it does not free us to sin.

Many Christians do think they are at liberty to commit sin. That's why Peter warns: "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live rather as slaves of God" **(1Pe 2:16).** Similarly, Paul warns: "You, my brothers, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather serve one another in love" **(Gal 5:13).**

The author of our lesson points out that ‘we were powerless to save ourselves, but Jesus stepped in and did for us what we could not do (at least not without forfeiting our lives). He paid the penalty for our sins, thus freeing us from condemnation.’

**The Nature of Christian Freedom -**

**Question: What does ‘freedom in Christ’ really mean? How did Christ set us free?**

Paul wrote about freedom from the tyranny of sin 28 times in his letters making it very clear that given certain facts–which he stated–we are then responsible to do certain things. God gives us strength. He gives us life; but, not so we can waste it. We are set free to use our bodies to bring glory to God.

More than any other definition, ***freedom in Christ means the voluntary subjugation of free choice for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ*.** Only when we come to know this dynamic can we truly say we are *"free at last."*

As long as we struggle with our flesh, we live in bondage to our flesh. As long as we erect laws and rules, we live in bondage to those rules. When we seek the fullness of the sacrifice of Christ, we find the freedom that allows us to sacrifice our own wills back to the Father, and to all of His children. Only free-will sacrifice avails any benefit; hence, freedom is the basis of a meaningful discipleship in the Lord Jesus.

The exact wording ***"freedom in Christ,"*** doesn’t occur in scripture. However, **Galatians 5:1** provides its source: *"For freedom (liberty, AV) Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery"*(RSV). The Greek word translated *"liberty"* in the AV is the word for "free," shows up twice in v. 13 and several times in the analogy of Sarah and Hagar **(4:21-31).** Jesus declared directly: "The truth shall make you free" **(John 8:32)**. The truth of grace in Jesus gave freedom to those who lived in bondage to law and sin **(John 1:17)**.

Timothy George comments saying, “Outside of Jesus Christ, human existence is characterized as bondage—bondage to the law, bondage to the evil elements dominating the world, bondage to sin, the flesh, and the devil. God sent his Son into the world to shatter the dominion of these slave-holders.”—**Timothy George, Galatians, p. 354.**

**The Dangerous Consequences of Legalism (**[***Gal. 5:2–12***](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+5:2-12)**)**

**Question: What are the dangers of legalism?** “Paul’s doctrine of grace is dangerous!” cried the false teachers in Galatia. “It replaces law with license.

Those first century false teachers, known as Judaizers or legalists, were not the only ones afraid to depend on God’s grace. In many churches today we have many who are afraid to depend on God’s grace. There is a continuing misunderstanding of the doctrine of grace.

Paul reminded his hearers that if one is circumcised, that is, if one is trying to please God by something that he does himself, he is required to keep the whole law. What are the implications of this? If you try to please God by things that you do, you are no longer accepting the righteousness by faith that God has offered you free of charge. There are dangers of legalism:

* The first consequence of trying to earn God’s favor by submitting to circumcision is that it obligates the person to keep the entire law.
* They will be “cut off” from Christ. A decision to be justified by works involves at the same time a rejection of God’s way of justification in Christ. “You cannot have it both ways. It is impossible to receive Christ, thereby acknowledging that you cannot save yourself, and then receive circumcision, thereby claiming that you can.”—**John R. W. Stott, The Message of Galatians (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p. 133.**
* It hinders spiritual growth. It means ‘to breaking up a road or destroying a bridge or placing obstacles in the way of an enemy, to halt his advance.”—**The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 978.**
* Finally, circumcision removes the offense of the Cross. How? The message of circumcision implies that you can save yourself; as such, it is flattering to human pride. The message of the Cross, however, is offensive to human pride, because we have to acknowledge that we are dependent completely on Christ.

The Christian who lives by faith alone is not going to fall into license or legalism, Paul explains. Instead, he will be led by the Spirit of God to obey all that God has commanded. He will be governed by faith and not by the flesh. He will look to Christ for his source of power and not try to find the power within himself. He will recognize that all self-effort is doomed to frustration and disappointment.

**Liberty Not Licentiousness (**[***Gal. 5:13***](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+5:13)**)**

We have been talking about the grand ideas of freedom and slavery, love and selfishness. The ancient Jews believed that they needed to please God. And they recognized that in Jewish history when their nation stopped pleasing God, they got into all kinds of trouble. So, they decided to create for themselves a lot of rules to make sure that they pleased God. Now, that is fine so long as you are applying those rules only to yourself. But, they were never happy with that. They created many rules which they then wanted to apply to everyone around them. There were rules for dress, for diet, for leisure, for every aspect of living, and especially for how one was to observe the Sabbath. Their rules became a burden that was impossible to bear.

[**Galatians 5:13**](http://mobile.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Gal+5:13) marks an important turning point in the book of Galatians. Paul acknowledges that the Galatian Christians started the race well. They started the Christian life trusting in Christ’s righteousness and basking in the warmth of God’s grace. But someone cut in on them and caused them to slip and fall in their obedience of the truth. So, he turns the subject to Christian behaviour.

**Question: How should a person who is not saved by works of law live?**

Paul tells his church to overcome this burden and ‘serve one another in love’ for the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command, ‘Love your neighbour as thy self.’ **Galatians 5:13-15**

**Conclusion:**

What happened in Galatia can happen to us as well. Whenever, Christians impose standards of achievement or behavior upon others, the heavy burden of legalism sets in.

Legalism in the church can be about all kinds of things, like clothing styles, length of hair, worship style, food you eat, type of music you play in the church, types of Bible version you use, chewing gum in church, how many verses you memorize, how many hours you spend in prayer, how much you give to church missions—and the list could go on and on.

The legalist brings great danger. Even though they may look good, and what they are doing is good, what they have done is add to salvation. But this brings us to a truth, from which we cannot back down that Salvation is always God’s work and God’s work alone. God’s work of salvation is complete and adequate. It successfully meets your every need. When God saved us, He provided our every need.

**So, the admonish that comes is to** ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’ ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’… While it is true that our busy activities will not in themselves ensure salvation, it is also true that faith which unites us to Christ will stir the soul to activity (MS 16, 1890).”—**Ellen G. White Comments, The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6,** [**p. 1111**](http://www.ssnet.org/qrtrly/eng/11d/helps/lesshp11.html#BC61111)**.**

**God Bless You!!!**