

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON FREEDOM

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Gal 5:1

In context, this freedom refers to the freedom from having to obey the Law to obtain right standing with God (emphasis mine). Put it simply, we do not have to do anything to be right with God except believing that Jesus died on the cross to redeem us.

Having been freed by Christ, the Galatian Christians then embarked on three very different paths:

1. Stay free and live by the Spirit of God
2. Stay free and live by the flesh
3. Go back to slavery by obeying the law

What could explain how the people chose three very different options?

What is the will of the One who freed us?

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON FREEDOM

WARMING UP

1. Bible trivia. Believers are to put off the yoke of slavery and put on another yoke. What is this yoke and where can you find the passage?
2. Bible trivia. The apostle Paul described himself as a slave. What was he a slave to?

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Galatians 5:1-5 - Freedom and slavery

3. What were the Galatians to do with the freedom that Christ has given them? How was it possible for them to lapse into slavery?
4. *For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.* Does the passage mean that the Galatians were not yet righteous? What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Galatians?

Read Galatians 5:7-12 - Beware of wrong teaching

5. How did Paul feel about the Galatians believing a lie? How does one detect wrong teaching?
6. A little yeast works through the whole dough. Why did Paul quote this saying?
7. What was Paul's response to the agitators?

Read Galatians 5:13-15 - How to live the freed life

8. What are the outcomes of living in the flesh?

MOVING FORWARD

There are many lessons from today's passage and here is a critical one.

Lest we forget that the Jews were and still are the chosen of God. They were (are) God's covenant people through His promise, were circumcised as a sign of the covenant and they were recipients of God's laws. However, the reality of living with God was gradually replaced by hollow rituals for many of them. One reason for their zealous adherence for God's Law was because God demanded perfection in their obedience. So much so that when the ultimate Reality (Jesus) came, some of the Jews could not see Him. Even the Jews who came to His saving grace insisted that the Gentiles must also obey the law (by undergoing circumcision) arousing Paul's anger.

It was a case of ritual replacing reality.

Coming to church, singing, and partaking of the Lord's Supper are rituals for modern-day believers. Rituals reinforce the reality of our relationship with Christ but must not replace it.

Spend some time reflecting on your walk with Jesus.

LIFE TOGETHER

The church is not just a community of people but a community of people who are led by the Spirit of God. Elsewhere in 2 Corin 3, Paul reminded us that when the Spirit of God came into our lives, the veil was taken away and we can see and reflect God's glory. And the Christians who are led by the Spirit are being changed into His glorious image. What a thought!

Pray for one another that we forsake running our own lives and yield our lives for that marvellous transformation.

BRIEF PERSPECTIVE ON FREEDOM

Leaders Guides

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Most of them are my own thoughts, so take that with a grain of salt. Let the Word of God lead you to truth, not these notes.

WARMING UP

1. Bible trivia. Believers are to put off the yoke of slavery and put on another yoke. What is this yoke and where can you find the passage?

In Matthew 11:28-30, we are exhorted to be yoked with Christ. Christ' yoke is easy and His burden is light and in being yoked with Him, we find rest for our souls.

2. Bible trivia. The apostle Paul described himself as a slave. What was he a slave to?

In 1 Corin 9:19-23, Paul declared himself to be a slave to all. Although a free man (from the law of God), he identified with all so that he may win them over for Christ.

INTO THE PASSAGES

Read Galatians 5:1-5 - Freedom and slavery

3. What were the Galatians to do with the freedom that Christ has given them? How was it possible for them to lapse into slavery?

They were to stand firm in the freedom Christ gave them (verse 1) and they were to use their freedom to serve one another (verse 13). If they practise circumcision, it will be a sign that their faith has been replaced by the belief that they needed to do something to attain right standing with God. They lapsed into slavery when they move in their own strength and trusted in their own judgement, instead of believing God.

4. *For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.* Does the passage mean that the Galatians were not yet righteous? What was the role of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Galatians?

Sept 8, 2013 || *Brief Perspective on Freedom (Galatians 5:1-15)* || William How

Galatians were righteous the moment they declared their faith in Jesus. It is like someone who has just won the race but it will be sometime before the medal presentation to declare him winner. The Galatians can be confident that God will declare them righteous. The Holy Spirit who was given to the Galatians is a deposit guaranteeing their inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession (Eph 1:14)

Read Galatians 5:7-12 - Beware of wrong teaching

5. How did Paul feel about the Galatians believing a lie? How does one detect wrong teaching?

Paul showed a wide range of emotions, from confrontational to being perplex to persuasive. There are many biblical warning of false teachers and Jesus enlightened us by getting to look at the fruits of their lives (Matt 7:15-20). It would help us understand why some of the Galatians were biting and devouring each other (Gal 5:15) and conceited, provoking and envying each other (Gal 5:26).

6. A little yeast works through the whole dough. Why did Paul quote this saying?

Because he liked bread? Yeasts are living organisms that secrete enzymes to break down the starch present in flour into simple sugars. They can asexually reproduce very rapidly and the by-products - alcohol and carbon dioxide - run through the entire dough and produce the effect we see. The effect of wrong (innocuous) teaching can be devastating.

7. What was Paul's response to the agitators?

Paul threatened them with God's judgement and taunted them to emasculate themselves.

Read Galatians 5:13-15 - How to live the freed life

8. What are the outcomes of living in the flesh?

Disharmony, disunity and acts of all kinds (see Gal 5:19-21)