

The Gospel According to Galatians

Scripture Text: Galatians Chapter 5

Christian Freedom as Sons in the Spirit, Part II

Rev. Charles R. Biggs

Summary: *In Christ we are children of God. We have been redeemed from the curse and condemnation of the Law to be freed to serve Christ and our neighbor wholeheartedly, and thus uphold, fulfill, and keep the law by the empowerment and enablement of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

IN Christ, we are called to live as those who are free to serve by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us and writes the Law of God upon our hearts. In Christ, there is faith expressing itself through love and service which is the fulfillment of the Law.

Paul makes clear that we have freedom as sons, because those who are in Christ are “children of promise”:

²⁸ **Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.** ²⁹ But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." ³¹ So, brothers, **we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.**

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:1** For freedom Christ has set us free [**Christ has set us free (indicative reality)**]; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery [**Imperative: stand firm in Christ, and do not submit to a yoke of slavery- - don't go back to trying hard, or law, in order to achieve salvation apart from Christ. The "yoke of the Law" was something Jews were proud of placing upon their necks (see Paul's boasting in Phil. 3:3-14) and Jesus calling all to come to him because "His Yoke is easy".**].

Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-29:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ²⁹

² Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you [**Nullify God's grace in Christ; Christ will not be a Savior to you**].

³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law [**If you are trying to keep part of the Law, then you must keep all of it perfectly, Matthew 5:48**].

⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. [Paul stresses the two mutually exclusive ways of salvation again; justification by the law and justification in Christ; if our way of salvation is justification by law, then we have fallen away from the grace of God held out in Christ alone]

⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. [Paul goes back to what he said clearly in chapter 3:1-3, that there is the way of the Spirit by faith, and the way of the flesh that opposes this. Notice the “already not yet” here. We already have righteousness in Christ alone, but we still by faith and the Spirit anticipate the actual fruits of righteousness in our lives, and the full righteous, glorified standing we will have in the New Heavens and New Earth when all things are renewed by God’s Spirit]

⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only **faith working through love**. [The fruits of our justification and salvation are through faith ‘working through love’; This is the love of God to us that motivates us to live gratefully and lovingly, increasingly each day by His grace and His Spirit. We must not forget that the Law has been written on our hearts by the Spirit of God, and thus by his grace, he enables us to uphold and keep the Law through loving obedience to our Heavenly Father, not perfectly, but by faith. Our faith is expressed and made known through our love.]

⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! [Paul is again furious with those trying to deceive the Galatian Christians. They are wanting to see the “fruits” of the Law performed, rather than the “fruits of the Spirit” performed by faith that flows out of gratitude to the right standing before God as sons. In other words, **they want to see fruit as much as Paul, but the wrong kind of fruit: a fruit that is self-produced, and merely external behavior to the Law, whereas he is commanding them to believe and work through love because the Spirit dwells within them and the Law is written on their hearts and thus they have the ability to love and live the law**, although not perfectly, and this is in no way meritorious before God.]

¹³ 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. [Christians are set free from the bondage of the Law, in order to truly live the Law as Spirit-filled believers by faith. Do not use the freedom as an opportunity to live for the flesh, but to love one another.]

¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. [Paul says that the whole law is fulfilled in the reality of loving our neighbors as ourselves, not walking according to the desires of the flesh, but walking according to the Spirit, who enables the Christian to live the Law of God (remember that Jesus summarized the Law as loving God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves).]

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:17-6:2:** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

6:1 Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

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Introduction

Theme of Worship Service based on Sermon Text: This Christmas and Advent Season let us remember that Jesus was born to live *for us* the requirements of the Law; Jesus was born to die *for us* under the condemnation of the Law; Jesus was born to set us free and make us loving sons. As we have learned in the first part of our Galatians study, in Christ ***we are children of God.***

We have been redeemed from the curse and condemnation of the Law to be freed to serve Christ and our neighbor wholeheartedly, and thus uphold, fulfill, and keep the law by the empowerment and enablement of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

IN Christ, we are called to live as those who are free to serve by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us and writes the Law of God upon our hearts. In Christ, there is faith expressing itself through love and service which is the fulfillment of the Law.

We enter into that special season where the entire world is reminded of Christ's birth in Bethlehem. God became flesh and dwelt among us.

We think of how we can express love and forgiveness to one another.

We must not forget the message of Galatians this Christmas:

Christ was born in the fullness of the times to set us free from bondage to sin and slavery to ourselves, to free us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves.

God united himself with human flesh (divinity and humanity in one person) in order to serve, to live for us, to die for us, to be raised for us.

In our walking in the Spirit, we “incarnate” Jesus Christ to others. That is, we show forth his love and grace to others by making love real through imperfect humanity.

Remember Paul’s words in Galatians 4:4-7:

^{ESV} **Galatians 4:4-7:** But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Jesus was born to live *for us* the requirements of the Law; Jesus was born to die *for us* under the condemnation of the Law; Jesus was born to set us free and make us **loving sons**.

What a joyous time of year!

But sadly and unfortunately, many live every Christmas depressed and rotting inside because things just are not right. They sense there should be love, joy, peace and the other fruits of the Spirit, but they cannot produce them.

Christmastime often makes us all a bit self-centered and selfish actually, it makes us fleshly. Let us remember that the freedom of loving that Christ has enabled and empowered us to live by His Spirit in us is a possibility this Christmas season- - **for the Christian united to Jesus Christ and filled with His Spirit!**

But let us take our eyes off of ourselves, and look to Jesus, walking by his Spirit and loving God and our neighbor as ourselves.

Martin Luther wrote truthfully yet paradoxically:

“A Christian man is the most free lord of all, and subject to none, a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to every one.”

John Stott comments on this paradox of the Christian life:

“It is a remarkable paradox. For from one point of view Christian freedom is a form of slavery,- -not slavery to our flesh, but to our neighbor. We are free in relation to God, but slaves in relation to each other.” (pg. 142).

TRUE CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AS SONS (CHILDREN)

Summary: In Christ we are children of God. We have been redeemed from the curse and condemnation of the Law to be freed to serve Christ and our neighbor wholeheartedly, and thus uphold, fulfill, and keep the law by the empowerment and enablement of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

IN Christ, we are called to live as those who are free to serve by faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit who lives within us and writes the Law of God upon our hearts. In Christ, there is faith expressing itself through love and service which is the fulfillment of the Law.

Review from part one:

- a. **“Position leading to Performance”**- Indicative and Imperative in the Apostle Paul must be emphasized here so that we do not lose in the imperative the emphasis and centrality of the indicative!

Remember the indicative and the imperative!

Indicative Reality in Christ

- i. You are justified by faith alone.
- ii. You are sons of God in Christ.
- iii. You are sons of promise (like Isaac).
- iv. You are set free to live God’s Law in Christ by His Spirit.
 1. Freed from the Law as a way of justification before God.
 2. Freed from the Law as condemning us so that we might live it as the revealed will of God.
- v. We have been crucified with Christ! (and therefore our old man is dead and so we should live like it!):

^{ESV} **Galatians 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ.* It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:24** *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

Galatians 6:14: But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, *by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

I. “Lovingly Living by the Spirit”

Galatians 5:6: ***“Faith working (expressing itself) through love.”***

THIS IS A FREEDOM TO LOVE AND SERVE ONE ANOTHER: LOVING FREEDOM AS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN GOD’S CHILDREN:

REMINDER OF WHAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD DOES IN US?

1. Uniting us to Christ by faith in our regeneration or being made alive with Christ (union with Christ).
2. We receive the Spirit as the Spirit of Adoption-Sonship.
3. The Spirit writes the Law upon our hearts.
4. Spirit leads and guides us according to God’s will (Law).
5. The Spirit ***enables and empowers us to love (not perfectly, but by faith).*** We have a disposition to love God and neighbor that we did not have before regeneration.

6. The Spirit of God or of Christ is the One who gives us the faith which **justifies and lovingly works**. This faith marks the beginning of a new life whose principle and power is the Holy Spirit and His work in us.

We are to live by the Spirit: We have been set free from the condemnation of the Law in order to freely serve Christ and our neighbor with all of our hearts through his Spirit who lives in us.

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:6** For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only **faith working through love.**

- Notice here that Paul says that there is outward fruit to the flesh as well as to the Spirit:
 - The flesh: circumcision or uncircumcision
 - The Spirit: “faith working, or expressing itself through love”

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:13-15:** **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.** ¹⁴ **For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."** ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

Galatians 5:16-18, 26: But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law....²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

What kind of freedom do we have?

- 1) **Freedom from slavery to sin.** “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed!” (John 8:31-36)

We have been called to freedom as children of God:

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:6** I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting **him who called you** in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel...

^{ESV} **Galatians 1:15** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and **who called me** by his grace...

^{ESV} **Galatians 5:13** 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.

- 2) **Freedom to serve and to love** (“faith working through love” or “faith expressing itself through loving service”). We once were self-centered and selfish, focused only on ourselves and “consuming each other” (sounds like Christmastime at the mall!).

Freedom and Love/Slavery and Self-Centeredness:
Christian Love and Loving Service or Loveless, Self-centered, Selfishness?

Notice Paul in v. 13: “You were called to freedom.” This freedom is to love one another; ***slavery is biting and devouring, envying, and every evil practice.***

Remember: Selfish people are consumed by each other (v. 15)

Freed in Christ to love one another; to love our neighbor.

Love is more than a feeling or mere sentiment, it is serving one another, not being served.

THE WAY OF FLESH AND THE WORLD SAYS: “SERVE ME!” (THIS IS SLAVERY).

The world may say you're weak...

THE WAY OF THE SPIRIT AND OF CHRIST SAYS: “I WILL SERVE!” (THIS IS TRUE SONSHIP BECAUSE IT MIRRORS THE SON WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US!)

“...but remember Christ says ‘WELL DONE MY GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT’.”

And who are you are you serving but Christ alone?

The believer is always under the constant constraint of love: **“Is this loving God and neighbor?”** should be our constant question to ourselves as we walk in the Spirit.

- Does this next statement I’m about to make encourage others with the truth and grace of the gospel? Does it build up?
- Does this clothe the needy?
- Does this feed the hungry?
- Does this care for those who are weak?

Remember James 2:12-16:?

So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. ¹³ For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. ¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that?

Service to one another is how love manifests and shows itself in the world and the church concretely.

- **Application: How can we serve God and neighbor “lovingly live” by the Spirit?**

- 1) **Lovingly serving in our call**: mom, dad, businessman, farmer, teacher, elder, etc.
- 2) **Lovingly serving in our Church**: using the gifts God has given to you by his grace to build up the church (teaching, serving, organizing, cleaning, building, etc). 1 Corinthians 12 says that all have gifts given for the common purpose of building Christ's Church- -that means all serve!

Application: When we live self-centeredly and selfishly focused on ourselves or merely our own needs or the needs of our family, we are not lovingly living through service ("faith working through love").

- 3) **We are to serve those who are not very loving**
("lovingly living by the Spirit those who are not very "lovely" or "loving to us").

- **Biblical example of the Love in the Good Samaritan**: "Who is my neighbor?"

Luke 10:25-27: And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ He said to him, "**What is written in the Law? How do you read it?**" ²⁷ And he answered, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.**" ²⁸ **And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."**

²⁹ **But he, desiring to justify himself**, said to Jesus, "**And who is my neighbor?**" ³⁰ Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the

robbers?" ³⁷ He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Remember 1 Corinthians 13:4-8:

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 13:4-8:** Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

II. “Lawfully Living by the Spirit

Freedom to live the Law, but not to be under the law as condemned.

***John Stott reminds us in his commentary:
“Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.”*** (pg. 140).

- I. **The will of God is revealed in the Law**
- II. Jesus summarizes the Law in “loving God and neighbor”.
- III. Jesus came to fulfill the Law not to abolish it.
- IV. **The love that we should have for God and others** -Not merely a subjective feeling of what we feel God wants us to do, not merely an empty sentimental love toward others, but what the Law objectively tells us, and instructs us with regard to what God wants us to do in love.

^{ESV} **Romans 8:1-4:** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³ *For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh,* ⁴ *in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

- **“Lawfully Living” in thought, word, and deed** before God and neighbor which is the summary of the Law of God.
- No idols!
- Uphold the holiness of God’s character and name.
- Keep the Sabbath.
- Honor your father and mother.
- Do not kill.

- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not lie.
- Do not covet.

- **Lawfully Living by the Spirit Paul also describes as:**
 - a. Walking by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16)
 - b. Being led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18)
 - c. “Not under law” (Gal. 5:18)
 - d. “Keeping in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25)
 - e. “Fulfilling the Law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)

In contrast to Loving-Grateful Law-Keeping in Christ is “FLESH”:

- **What is flesh?** It is not our skin and bones- - our bodies.

The flesh is our **fallen condition by inheritance through natural birth** in contrast to the Spirit give to us in the new birth received by faith alone in Christ.

The flesh is that remaining sinful taint that still wills and desires what we want rather than what God wants.

The flesh hates to consider God’s will and so the flesh is in opposition to the Spirit of God, who is the Author of the Law, and the One who enables and empowers us to love and to obey the Law of God.

- **Remember Two important theological truths in Galatians:**

1) Justification removes by God’s grace the **guilt before God.**

2) Sanctification removes by God's grace the pollution or taint of sin as we walk by the Spirit and resist (or war against) our flesh.

- **Notice the works of the flesh (anti-Law/or literally "against the law"):**

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- **Notice the fruit of the Spirit (Loving Law-Keeping):**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

- **Why is there no law? Because by the Spirit's *enablement and empowerment and faith working through love we do God's will revealed in the Law.***

Paul says later in Galatians 6:2:

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

As we grow in the Christian life will we ever fully keep these laws perfectly? No, in fact, as we grow in the Christian life in our sanctification and look deeper into the Law, we will perhaps think that we are keeping them less and less, and thank God in Christ for his grace and forgiveness and mercy to us!

**REMEMBER: MONERGISM IN JUSTIFICATION AND SYNERGISM IN
SANCTIFICATION**

^{ESV} **Ephesians 2:8-10:** For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ **For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

^{ESV} **Philippians 2:12-13:** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

FLESHLY ALTERNATIVES AND COUNTERFEITS IN SANCTIFICATION

***John Stott reminds us in his commentary:
“Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.”*** (pg. 140).

- I. **Dangers of Legalism and Antinomianism** (both are sinful, fleshly ways of living apart from Christ) (indicative and imperatives are understood in our union with Jesus Christ).
- II. **Legalism:** Measuring one’s standing before God based on how well one is keeping the Law (and ultimately, yet unintentionally nullifying the grace of God in Christ).
- III. **Antinomianism:** A disregard for the Law. Saying that one does not need to worry about the Law anymore.
- IV. **In Christ:** We find out hope for salvation in Christ, and we find our hope for sanctification in Christ, who is our righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30).

This Christmastime- -go out and serve: “Lovingly living by the Spirit” and “Lawfully living by the Spirit” because you can **in Christ!** This

Sonship and delivery from slavery too is part of the whole gospel good news of what Christ has come to do for us:

“If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed!”

So live like it!

And show to the world in Christ what “Merry Christmas” really and truly looks like!

CRB