

## Called to Freedom

Franklin Church of Christ  
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### Introduction:

Freedom is an important concept to us Americans. Each July 4, we proudly celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We look back with pride upon our Revolutionary War where our ancestors and forbearers fought and died to provide our nation with freedom. We speak with honor of our Bill of Rights, which declares our right to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom to assemble and freedom to petition the government. However, what we often miss as we regale the concept of freedom is freedom is never absolute. The fact is, to maintain the freedom we hold so dear, we have had to establish law. If we do not submit to the laws, we destroy our freedom. Freedom is not absolute. We must understand this concept because it is true even in Christ. According to **Galatians 5:1**, "For freedom Christ has set us free" (ESV). According to **Galatians 5:13**, we were called to freedom. However, Paul immediately places limitations on our freedom. Being free in Christ is not absolute freedom to live as we please. Examine **Galatians 5:13-15**, in its immediate and biblical context to learn the magnificent freedom we have in Christ and also the necessary limitations of that freedom.

### Discussion:

#### I. Free in Christ.

##### A. In Christ, we are free from the Law of Moses.

1. The entire book of Galatians is a treatise against binding the Law of Moses on Christians as a means of salvation. Paul's statements about freedom are on the heels of his popular allegory of Hagar and Sarah in **Galatians 4:21-31**. Those who would put themselves back under the Law of Moses are not children of the promise, but of slavery. All of this discussion is predicated by the Judaizers who taught Gentiles had to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses to be saved.
2. The great joy of this freedom is seen in **Galatians 3:10**, quoting from **Deuteronomy 27:26**. The Law of Moses did not bring salvation to anyone. Rather, it brought a curse. In Christ, we are free from that curse. If someone decided to be saved by the Law of Moses, the only means of salvation was to conform completely and perfectly to it. The problem is, of course, no one (save Jesus) ever has. The Law of Moses was never a means of salvation. The Law could never take anyone who was lost and save them. It could only provide the guidelines for those who had never sinned. Thus, a person who goes back to the Old Law, places themselves under a curse because they have already fallen and cannot be saved by Moses.
3. Peter explained the slavery of the Law of Moses in **Acts 15:7-11**. He described submission to the Law of Moses as a yoke that no one had ever been able to bear. Think about it. When Gentiles and Jews alike were turning to Jesus to be saved, they were admitting they had already sinned and destroyed their relationship with God. They could begin at that point to live the Law of Moses perfectly for the rest of their lives but it wouldn't save them because they had already failed. The Law of Moses might help keep pure those who were already pure, but it could not save anyone. Consider the slavery of being forced to try to keep a law perfectly, not being able to do it, but then knowing that even if you did, it wouldn't help you. It is a great thing that Christ Jesus has called us to freedom from the Law of Moses. Why would we ever want to go back to that? As we understand this point, we learn the real purpose of the Law. It was not to save anyone, but rather to point out that we needed saving. **Galatians 3:22-24** demonstrates the purpose of the law was to hold us captive in sin so that we might turn to faith in Jesus to be saved.

##### B. In Christ, we are free from the law of sin and death.

1. We have already seen that the Law of Moses, instead of saving anyone, enslaved and made everyone captive to sin (**Galatians 3:22**). In a parallel passage in **Romans 8:2**, Paul explains that the law of the Spirit has set us free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. That law is concisely stated in **Romans 6:23**: "For the wages of sin is death..." (ESV). That is the law of sin as also stated in **Ezekiel 18:20**: "The soul who sins shall die" (ESV). But the law of sin and death takes us even farther.
2. The law of sin and death is not merely about a moment of death. It is about the domination of sin in our lives. Paul described this domination in **Romans 7:14-24**. When we submit our-

selves to sin, we become slaves of sin. It establishes law and rule in our lives that we follow, even when part of us doesn't want to. How many of us have faced this point in our lives, telling ourselves again and again that we will not commit that sin again, whether it be lying, stealing, lusting, gossiping, outbursts of wrath, drinking alcohol, etc. Yet, in times of stress and duress, our resolve fizzles and sin takes over. That is the law of sin and death. I've been there. You've been there. Everyone has been there. Even Paul.

3. Notice how he ends his discussion of what the law of sin had done to him. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (ESV). He immediately follows it up with, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (**Romans 7:25**, ESV). In Christ, we are set free from this law of sin and death. We are forgiven of the sins. But not merely forgiven, we are set free to pursue righteousness, overcoming the temptation that so easily besets us because of our past. When we pursue the course of the Spirit, we grow beyond our sins, increasing the virtue in our lives (cf. **II Peter 1:5, 8**).
- C. We must rejoice in the freedom we have in Christ. We are free from the Law of Moses, which could not save, but only held us captive to sin. We are free from the law of sin and death, which dominated our lives and kept us pursuing sin when we did not want to.

## II. Enslaved in Christ

- A. As we stated earlier, no freedom is absolute. We must not think that because we are free in Christ we may live however we want. Actually, even **Galatians 5:13-15** demonstrates that we are still bound in servitude and slavery in some areas. Further, if we do not maintain these enslavements, we will lose the freedom Christ has given us.
- B. In Christ, we are enslaved to the law of the Spirit.
  1. **Galatians 5:13** says we must not use the freedom Jesus offers us to be a license to pursue the lusts of the flesh. Freedom in Christ is not permission to live how we choose. I am very concerned about this today as I hear and read Christians making claims that our freedom in Christ sets us free from the legalists who claim we shouldn't drink alcohol, shouldn't gamble, should avoid the lasciviousness of most modern dancing, etc. Despite this clear statement in scripture, many Christians are in fact using the banner cry of freedom in Christ to allow them to pursue the desires of their flesh. In contrast to pursuing the desires of the flesh, Paul claims we must walk by the Spirit (**Galatians 5:16-25**).
  2. Interestingly, when Paul taught these same principles in **Romans 8:2**, he called following the lead of the Spirit, the law of the Spirit of life. He said that law has set us free. Consider the laws of our land in the realm of driving. Those laws restrict certain behavior. But those restrictions provide us with the freedom to travel in relative safety. If there were no speed laws, traffic signal laws, laws about which side of the road to drive on, how free would our travel really be? Interestingly, that law and those restrictions set us free. In the same way, the law of the Spirit sets us free to be righteous in Jesus. I have heard people today complain that Christians are just trading one law for another and how awful that is. It is not awful. It is true. We are trading the Law of Moses and the law of sin and death for the law of the Spirit of life. If you do not want to be enslaved to any law, don't become a Christian because it is only by the law of the Spirit (also called the law of Christ, **I Corinthians 9:21**) that we are free in Christ Jesus.
- C. In Christ, we are enslaved to obedience.
  1. Once we recognize that we are enslaved to a law, we recognize that we are enslaved to obey the law. Too many Christians today have some false idea about the gospel. They act as if it is a bad thing to talk about the need for obedience. They fear that any talk of obedience means we are trying to earn our salvation. That is just not so. We cannot earn it. We have already botched it and we will botch it. But our lives are still to be governed by obedience. We must still hold each other to standards of righteousness and remind each other that if we let our freedom in Christ give us license to sin, we will lose our freedom in Christ and regain death as a result of our submission to the law of sin and death.
  2. Paul explains this in **Romans 6:15-23**. We just have to come to grips with this. As I said earlier, there is no such thing as absolute freedom. We must submit to something and are enslaved to something no matter what. If we submit ourselves to sin to obey it, we become the

slaves of sin and death. However, if we submit ourselves to the teaching of righteousness to obey it, we become slaves of righteousness and life. I know which enslavement I prefer.

D. In Christ, we are enslaved to other Christians.

1. Instead of pursuing whatever pleases us, Paul explains that we are supposed to serve one another through love (**Galatians 5:13**). The word translated “serve” is the verb form of the word for “slave” or “servant” in the New Testament. We are not set free to pursue whatever we desire. We are set free in Christ so that we may pursue what will help others.
2. Paul explained this to the Romans in **Romans 15:1-3**. Our job is not to please ourselves but to please our neighbors, edifying them. In the context of **Romans 14**, this means sacrificing some of our liberties that we may preserve and protect the conscience of our brothers and sisters. Further, it means sacrificing time and personal goals to help others. As **Galatians 6:1-2** explains, we are to restore those we see caught in trespasses and help bear their burdens. **1 Peter 4:10** explains the gifts God has given us were not give merely for our enjoyment or the pursuit of our personal goals. They were given to us that we might serve others.
3. We are set free from the Law of Moses and the law of sin and death, but we are not set free from one another by Jesus Christ. Rather, we are set free to serve one another in righteousness and help one another go to heaven in Christ Jesus.

E. In Christ, we are enslaved to natural consequences.

1. As Paul discussed our servitude to one another and our servitude to the law of love, he explained why they needed to follow love: “But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another” (**Galatians 5:15**, ESV). This demonstrates an interesting point. The fact is, no matter to which law we submit ourselves, there are some natural consequences that follow. Our freedom in Christ will not change those things. **Galatians 6:7-8** demonstrates the same point.
2. Thus, I can claim my freedom in Christ all day long, but if I use my claim of freedom to be a license to pursue sin and the desires of my flesh, I will suffer the natural consequences. I will become once again entangled in sin and corruption. I will fall headlong into the law of sin and death, all the while proclaiming that I am free from it. The fact is, once I enter Christ, I am not free from the natural consequences of my actions. Those still take place. If I submit to sin, I will become a sinner. I will regain the wages of death. Not to mention, in this context, I will end up devouring others as well because I am no longer living in submission to them. This simply cannot be helped.

**Conclusion:**

The freedom Christ offers is amazing. We are no longer bound to a law that cannot save but can only condemn. We are no longer bound to a law that dominates our lives with sin. We are set free to pursue righteousness. We are set free to be holy. But we must understand that no freedom is absolute. Freedom in Christ doesn't mean living as we please. Freedom in Christ means obediently submitting the law of the Spirit, serving others and recognizing the natural consequences of our actions. We are not free to do whatever we want. We are free to serve Christ and go to heaven. Let us pursue our freedom God's way and walk the path to heaven holding His loving hand.