

Galatians 5:1-15 Bible Study

Launch: As A Christian, do you think of yourself as free? What does freedom mean to you?

Do you think that 'outsiders' think that Christians are free? Why/why not?

Read Galatians 5:1-12

1. *Paul says that the Galatians have been set free. When were they set free, and what might they have been set free from?*

Set free by God (implied here, but obvious in context). Set free when they became Christians - (i.e. when Jesus' death and resurrection were applied to them at conversion).

What from? accept answers and leave unresolved. This is one idea that will be fleshed-out throughout the study.

2. *There is an immediate warning not to return to 'a yoke of slavery'. What would it look like for the Galatians to be burdened again by a yoke of slavery?*

The immediate context is the urge to be circumcised (i.e. keep the Jewish Law).

3. *Why is this warning necessary?*

v7 - some people (=agitators v12) have cut in on them and are teaching them that they need to keep the law.

v10 - these people are 'throwing them into confusion'

v9 'a little yeast works through the dough' - imagery shows how contagious this wrong teaching is. A few people being convinced to return to law-keeping will have a big affect on the church.

Notice also v11 which implies that these agitators (= false teachers) have been misrepresenting Paul and his teaching to say that Paul would agree with their teaching (i.e. saying that circumcision is necessary). But Paul points out that this doesn't make sense - why would he be being persecuted if he agreed with the false teachers?!

"the offense of the cross being abolished" is to say that IF Paul was teaching that law keeping was necessary, then the 'outrageous' idea that the cross was the solution to the problem of sin is no longer 'an offense'. It is just a good example of love. However, the cross is an 'offense' to those who hold to law-keeping because it suggests that God forgives us without us keeping the law. (The agitators would see the cross as an offense for this reason) cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25.

4. *What reasons does Paul give for rejecting the (false) teaching that we need to keep the law to be saved?*

v1 - it is a yoke of slavery to have to rely on performance

v2 - Christ will actually be of no value to you if you approach God this way. This approach alienate us from Christ (v4)

v4 - it leads to falling away from Grace (sounds pretty bad!) - i.e. it doesn't work! We can't be saved by keeping the law.

5. *What, then, should living in freedom look like (v.5-6)?*

2 aspects: passive and active.

passive = *eagerly awaiting the righteousness which is coming.*

Note, 'righteousness' here is synonymous with all the blessings of Christ that we will share at his return - not just the experience of being perfect.

Note also, that hope is certain! Could say "...eagerly await the righteousness which is certain to come".

active = *acting in love. Note that our actions here spring from our faith and confidence in what God has done, and is going to do!*

6. **Read Galatians 5:13-15.** *What are the two options presented for how we might use our freedom?*

Indulge the sinful nature (flesh)

Serve one another humbly in love.

7. *What reasons does Paul give for freely choosing to love?*

Indulging in the flesh (sinful nature) is the opposite of loving others (and God).

The intent of the law (God's good and perfect purpose) is for us to love each other.

If we don't, we end up biting and devouring each other – which leads to destruction. (I think primarily spiritually – i.e. faith is destroyed).

Cf. Gal 5:5-6:

Christ has set us free by loving us to the point of death.

Faith in this truth WILL express itself in loving service of others!

8. As a Christian, do you *feel* free?

Hopefully people do feel real freedom – particularly from the requirement to be perfect before God. We have seen how burdensome law keeping is.

When are you less likely to feel free?

Discuss different reasons for us not feeling free (perhaps burdened by 'rules', or guilt of sin, etc).

What can you do when you don't *feel* free?

Remember you have been set free BY God (i.e. if you have faith in Christ, you are actually free, even if you don't always feel it!). Forgiven, loved, saved, etc.

Remember our hope (v5)

9. Are there things that we, as a church, need to 'stand firm' against so that we don't become burdened by a yoke of slavery?

Think about things that might lead us to return to moralism / or rule keeping / or traditions that detract from 'Grace Alone'.

How might we put people under a burden?

How might we accidentally promote individualism to the exclusion of the body?

Are there things *you* need to stand firm against?

10. Where does your faith express itself in love?

How can you guard yourself from thinking that "God loves you even more" because of your actions?

Give thanks for the privilege you have to serve in these ways.

11. What other ways could you express your freedom in service of others?

Finish by praying. Thank God for the freedom he bought us. Ask for help to stand firm and to use our freedom for good.