



360 DISCUSSION 06.25.17

ENJOYING OUR FREEDOM GALATIANS 5:13-15



Freedom always comes at a price.

The freedom to masterfully play the cello is only realized through hours, days, weeks, months, years and even decades of exacting practice. Each of those precious hours could have been spent hanging out with friends, going to concerts, taking in a movie, exploring the shops at the Domain, or sunbathing at Barton Springs. Your friends enjoy freedoms you've chosen to forgo, but you have earned a freedom they will never experience—the freedom to place bow to string and capture the soaring crescendos and delicate subtleties of a brilliantly crafted musical score.

One of my great loves is mountain biking. I can't just hop off the couch, pick a great destination, load up my bike and enjoy the trip. For me to really enjoy a great downhill run (even one) would take several months of conditioning, honing technical skills, working on strength and balance, and dropping at least thirty pounds. It takes a great deal of time and devotion to really enjoy a great downhill course. The freedom it takes years to acquire can be lost in a single season.

If you are in Christ, you have been given the precious gift of freedom. It's not a freedom that you've earned or deserve. It comes to you through the sacrifice and devotion of another. He, and he alone, lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father and freely offers you all the benefits of his pure devotion to the Father. He died the agonizing death, offering himself as the once and for all sacrifice for your sin—forever nailing your guilt and shame to the cross. He rose from the dead in a demonstration of God's grace and power and offers all of that grace and power to you through new life in him.

In Christ we have been given a freedom we could never gain for ourselves.

In Galatians 5:13-15, Paul reminds us that we have been called to be free; warns us that we can easily forfeit our freedom and points us to the way of life that enables us to fully experience the freedom we have in him.

CALLED TO BE FREE (v. 13a)

Jesus tells us that he has come to give us life in all of its fullness. Paul tells us that it is for freedom sake that he has set us free (Galatians 5:1) and that we are called to be free (v. 13a). God freely gave himself for our sins, and called us into a relationship with him for the sole purpose of setting us free.

VERSE 13a: You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free.

1. How do you think the world might describe freedom?
2. How does the gospel redefine freedom?
3. What have we been freed from?
4. At what price was our freedom purchased?
5. How does the fact that our freedom was purchased by another make it even more precious to us?

FORFEITING OUR FREEDOM (v. 13b)

While our freedom was purchased at a great price and given to us as a free gift, it can be easily lost. Paul tells us the surest way to forfeit our freedom is to spend it on ourselves.

VERSE 13b: But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh;

“The flesh” is an illusive concept in Scripture. Both the Hebrew and Greek can refer to “soft tissue,” “the human body as a whole,” “the weakness and frailty of humans,” or “the tendency we all have to oppose the things of God.” It is that final meaning that Paul has in mind here. Our tendency to choose what we want over what God wants, or to consume our freedom on ourselves rather than in the pursuit of godliness.

1. What are some of the ways we abuse the freedom we have in Christ?
2. Why do you think we are so prone to choose what we want over what God wants?
3. What are some ways our freedom can become slavery?
4. Why are we far better off pursuing what God wants for us rather than what we want for ourselves?
5. How do we come to the place where we want what God wants?

EXPERIENCING OUR FREEDOM IN ITS FULLNESS (vv. 13b-15)

Paul uses an interesting play on words when he points us to the way of life that allows us to experience the fullness of freedom we have in Christ. In effect, he tells us not to use our freedom to do whatever we want but to use our freedom to become slaves to one another.

VERSE 13c-15 ...rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

1. How can “becoming slaves to one another in love,” actually lead to greater freedom than pursuing our own interest?
2. Jesus told us that the greatest command was to “love God with all of our being,” and the second was, “to love our neighbors as ourselves.” How can Paul tell us that we fulfill the entire law by loving our neighbor?
3. In verse 3, Paul tells us, “...every man who lets himself be circumcised is obligated to obey the whole law,” as if that were a bad thing; in verse 14, he tells us, “...the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command,” as if that were a good thing. How would you describe the difference between “obeying the law” and “fulfilling the law?”
4. How does loving one’s neighbor fulfill the entire law?
5. What has Christ done through his life, death and resurrection to enable us to “love our neighbor” in a way we never could before?
6. How does Paul describe the corrosive effect “self indulgence” will have on our fellowship with one another and our witness for Christ?
7. What do you think the church would look like if “in love we humbly served one another?”
8. What are some things you can do in the coming week to more fully enjoy the freedom you have in Christ?