

Live Free or Die Apart

Galatians 5:1-18

Christ came to set us free. From our text we can ascertain that to not live free in Christ, may mean we die hard apart from Him forever. Let me explain, considering verses 1-2. The context of our passage is Jewish “believers” (Judaizers), commanding gentile followers of Christ, in addition to repentance and faith in Christ’s death and resurrection, to be circumcised.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul declares that to become entangled in that error or “yoke of bondage”, was to make Christ’s finished work of no profit for them. This means you live free in Christ or die apart from Him forever, if you add anything to repentance toward God and faith toward Jesus Christ, for the salvation of man.

We ought never to add any stipulation to salvation, except what the Bible lays out. We are saved through a repentant heart walking towards God, which is the Holy Spirit’s born-again work—leading to faith in God’s grace, in Christ’s atoning death and resurrection. We rejoice in the truth of Romans 8:2 **“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death”**.

Although freedom in Christ means we are free from the need to meet a legalistic standard of righteousness, as a means to be save—for **Romans 3:20** proclaims that *“by the deeds of the law shall no one be justified (said to be not guilty) in His sight”*—and **Romans 3:23** *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”*—Freedom in Christ does not mean we are without accountability to the commands of God, after we are saved.

Often in American church settings, when a statement is made, like the one I just made, the shout of legalism rattles from the rafters, but Jesus Himself declared *“If you love me, keep my commands and My Father and I will make our home with you”* (**John 14:15-26**). He later declares *“Greater love has no man than this, that man lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do whatever I command*

you” (**John 15:13-16**). Translation: No friendship with Christ, if we do not keep His commands.

You will find it interesting that the New Testament contains 1050 commands, 800 by processing out the restated ones; which is 187 more than what’s in the Old Testament. The point being that often after we are saved, we begin to believe Christian freedom means I am free from accountability—where it’s better not to sin, not to live carnal, but “nobody’s perfect, Mike”. How many of you have repeated that statement? The problem is it is a self-fulfilling prophecy of justification, contradictory to Christ’s command for our lives in Him after we are saved **“Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”**.

PROPOSITION

Christian freedom means you and I are free to obey all the commands of Christ, as we grow in obedience to the Spirit, or we’ll die hard apart from Christ. Let’s begin by looking briefly at what Christian freedom is not.

I. FREEDOM IS NOT DEFINED BY OUR MODERN PREFERENCE

A) NOT OUR IDEA

- In America we generally believe that freedom is being able to live as you choose without interference from anyone else; so long as you don’t offend another person’s space or preference. Although widely held, this idea is not tenable from a natural perspective. Eventually the freedom one has to choose what they want, in a “free” society, will be an impingement on another’s freedom. The Creed song “Only in America”. Only in America were slaves to be free—only in America we kill the unborn to make ends meet—only in America sexuality is democracy—only in America we stamp our God, in God we trust.
- The general definition seems great, if everybody stays in their own lane, but seldom does anyone stay in their own lane. The problem with the popular belief

concerning what freedom is and what it ought to afford the individual, is that it has shaped the definition of freedom in the church, any time the church stays in its own lane; which we are never to do. This is egregious error. For in the church this means I am free to do with my time and resources what “I” deem best, regardless of how carnal, so long as I don’t sin too much, or behave too worldly in church settings.

- Usually when one begins to preach on true Christian freedom, the natives get restless and begin to proclaim, “all things in moderation” (out of context) or “pastor all things are lawful”. We begin to believe If it’s not clearly defined as sin or carnal, we are free to join in it. Alas, that statement is at least partially true, but when reading the full sentence in **I Corinthians 6:12** and **10:23**, we find that although **“all things are lawful, not all things are expedient** (needed or helpful in building our faith or that of the others). The wrong thinking, which is an error that first leads to sin.
- Not only does it lead to sin, but a faith killing heresy called “antinomianism”. We see this in **Revelation 2:1-8**, when Jesus names the “Nicolaitans” derogatorily. In this error, people believe in that the grace of God means they are free to do what they want so long as it is not overtly sinful or explained to be by scripture... “I’m not sinning, by doing this or that” by this token people continue to drink more than a little wine, smoke marijuana and cigarettes, even though it destroys the temple of God, or continue as a peeping tom, through the rectangles in their life.
- Let us consider some counteractive scripture to this kind of belief. (**I John 5:17**) Are my behaviors righteous? (**I John 4:17**) Is this what Jesus would do? (**Romans 14:14-23**; **I Corinthians 8:9-12**) Could this cause my brother to stumble? If in bondage to

anything other than Christ Himself. It means we not free. We are to have no chains holding us to the world or its system. Freedom in Christ is therefore [1] Not “Buffet Christianity” where we get to decide what we hold on too and what we want to walk in of the Christ life [2] It is not self-rule or freedom of choice, but **Philippians 2:1-10** gives us illumination. It is freedom to live, by the Spirit with the mind of Christ, placing God’s will first for the sake of love of Him.

II. CHRISTIAN FREEDOM DEFINED BY JESUS HIMSELF

A) GALATIANS 5:1

- To understand our freedom in Christ we must first look at God’s character in relationship to his dealings with mankind. Although Almighty with the prerogative to do what He wants, when He wants and how He wants, He has chosen to behave according to parameters, He has placed upon Himself. This is because God wants men to know Him from the counterfeits, which are selfish and capricious. The truth that God is love, means He does what He does without regard to whether it’s received, therefore He behaves in consistent discernable ways. His word is His inviolable parameter.
- Freedom to God means He behaves in ways that reveals Himself to man, and by nature that revelation is self-limiting. Consider Jesus Christ as God. He commanded us to love our enemies, bless those that curse us... (**Matthew 5:44-46**). In this command we know Jesus who should have received praise from men, was treated scornfully, as God He had right to deal in wrath with them on the spot. Yet He limited His behavior to the command He gave to us. This is freedom. To be free from the dictates of selfishness. Again, God chooses patience and mercy over wrath for the sake of man (**II Peter 3:9**).

- Consider again **Philippians 2:5-8**. Although equally God, Jesus chose to “**make Himself of no reputation**”, which means “to empty one’s self”. This means Jesus Christ laid aside His right to do what He would will, as God, for the sake of the redemption of man; which would take limit Him to living as a bond slave on our behalf. He would only live and move as the Holy Spirit commanded Him, never doing what He, as a human would want. His only desire to please the Father and finish His work. Remember this meant, He had to lay aside His omnipresence to be localized in a virgin’s womb, to live in one country His entire human life. This meant, as virgin born, He had no sin nature passed to Him from human father; therefore, He had to do what we could not (until redeemed), fulfill the law.

B) CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

- In Jesus model, Christian freedom, after we are saved and in the kingdom of God, is our growing ability to choose to obey the Holy Spirit, as He leads by Christ’s commandments. Consider (**Romans 6:5-6, 22**). Christian Freedom means...
 1. We are free from earning our way to everlasting life with God, because Jesus earned it for us (**Romans 6:4**). This we receive by repentance and faith.
 2. We are free from the sin nature, which is our old man, which was crucified with Christ. We don’t have to sin, be carnal or remain “not perfect” (**Romans 6:6; 22**).
 3. We are free, like Jesus to obey the Holy Spirit, living as true children of God (**John 14:15-23**).
 4. This means we can live a holy life, in choosing righteousness over the carnal, worldly and unrighteous actions (**Romans 6:12-14**).
 5. This means the law is written on our heart and lived out by Christ in us, as we submit to Him; there need be no excuses, just joyful

overcoming (**Galatians 2:20; Hebrews 8:10-12**).

6. We are free to enter God’s presence at any time for grace and mercy, in time of need (**Hebrews 4:16**).
7. We are free to be bond-slaves for Jesus Christ (**Phil. 2:7; Romans 6:22**).

CLOSING

There are two types of slaves. Those who are slaves against their will and those who must pay a debt; therefore, they lose their will until their debt is paid. Jesus Christ was of the second variety, although He had no sin debt of His own. He became a bond-slave on our behalf. The New Testament indicates that Christians, therefore, become bondservants to pay a debt of love we owe to Christ, but in a true biblical sense we do not look for that debt to ever be paid this side of heaven. Let us consider the bond-servants choice **Deuteronomy 15:12-18**.

If the bondservant had prospered in his master’s house and he loved his master, an awl, an earring and a servant forever, would he be. Happily choosing to have no will of his own.

Every born-again heart desire’s just that: to be Christ’s servant forever in gratitude and love for what He did for us.

If you do not have that desire or are irritated at the suggestion you ought to, there may be something off in your faith. For we have prospered in our Master Jesus’ house.

For love we ought to desire to spend our life, completely for His sake. How do we live in this Christian freedom?

- **Galatians 5:15-17**
- **Luke 9:23; Galatians 6:7-8**
- **Roman 6:12-14, Galatians 2:20**