

Our State of Theology – 9i(1)

The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:1-26): Free Indeed!

Galatians 5:1 (NIV84)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

- Americans prize nothing more highly than freedom. The trouble is that they generally want the wrong kind of freedom.
- Freedom from what?

Freedom of speech and assembly?

Freedom from want?

Freedom from fear?

Freedom from drug addiction?

Freedom from chronic disease?

Freedom from credit-card debt?

Freedom from unjust oppression?

- *Sociologist Robert Bellah*: “Freedom is perhaps the most resonant, deeply held American value.... Yet freedom turns out to mean **being left alone by others**, not having other people’s values, ideas, or styles of life forced upon one, being free of arbitrary authority in work, family, and political life.”
- The reason we want to be left alone is that we are naturally selfish. We want to do what we want to do, whenever, wherever, however, and with whomever we please.

If this is what freedom means to us, then believing in God becomes extremely inconvenient. If there is a God, he undoubtedly has opinions about what we ought to do, where we ought to do it, and with whom.¹

Galatians 5:13 (NIV84)

¹³You, my brothers, were called to be free. But **do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature**; rather, serve one another in love.

- The freedom of the gospel is not tolerance of self-indulgence. It is not a means for satisfying the desires of the flesh but for opposing them.

Christ does not give freedom to believers so they can do what *they* want but so they can, for the first

time, do what *God* wants, because of love for Him.²

1 Peter 2:16 (HCSB)

¹⁶As God’s slaves, live as free people, but don’t use your freedom as a way to conceal evil.

- *As God’s slaves*. No one is ever completely “free.” We all are *slaves* to someone, whether it is the devil and sin or God.

Romans 6:11–23 (NIV84)

¹¹In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

¹²Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

- Sin doesn’t have to reign unless it is allowed.

¹³Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

¹⁴For **sin shall not be your master**, because you are not under law, but under grace.

¹⁵What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

¹⁶**Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?**

- This is not addressed to unbelievers but believers.
- A believer can be a slave to sin by choosing to offer themselves to sin.
- The phrase **present (offer) yourselves** indicates the *willing choice* of obedience to a master.
- All slaves, particularly voluntary ones, are bound to total obedience to their master, the one whom they obey.³
- When we think of slaves, we tend to think of the slave trade in the West in more recent centuries—man stealing. We think of slavery as kidnapping young people from Africa, bringing them across the ocean to the auction block, and selling them to other men.

In the ancient world slavery was **primarily voluntary servitude**. When someone had a debt he could not pay, he would offer his services to fulfill

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 193.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., *Galatians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 146.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Romans*, vol. 1, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 343.

the debt.

- If we present ourselves again to sin as slaves to sin, it will lead to death.

If we obey sin as a slave, the only outcome is death, but if we present ourselves as slaves of obedience, the end is righteousness.⁴

¹⁷But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.

¹⁸You have been set free from sin and have become **slaves to righteousness**.

¹⁹I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness.

²⁰When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness.

²¹What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!

²²But now that you have been set free from sin and have become **slaves to God**, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.

²³For the **wages** of sin is death, but the **gift** of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- A slave to sin will receive the compensation (wages) due to him from his master: *death*.
- As a slave to God, that slave will not be paid for anything he did for even his so-called righteous acts are like filthy rags in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6).

Instead of being paid for his works, the slave of God will, from his master (God), be given a gift that was earned by someone else, namely, Jesus Christ. That gift is eternal life.

John 8:31–36 (NIV84)

³¹To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.**

³²**Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."**

³³They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?"

³⁴Jesus replied, **"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.**

³⁵**Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.**

³⁶**So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.**

- **John 14:6 (NIV84)**

⁶Jesus answered, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

- Jesus is the truth. Truth is not intellectual knowledge of one's *self-defined perception* of truth that sets you free.

Knowing Jesus as your Savior and Lord frees you from being a slave to sin.

- There is a potential for one to be enslaved to sin. Which of the following slave masters exert the greatest control on your life?

Accomplishment—the lure of personal fulfillment

Approval of others—measuring up to peer expectations

Autonomy—the craving to do it my way or no way

Chemical addictions, accompanied by denial

Knowledge and technology—the faith that lends divinity to human abilities

Pleasure—entertainment as the ultimate pursuit

Sexual addiction—slavery to pornography of every kind

Success—the drive to reach the top, to be number one

Wealth—security promised through the accumulation of money, power, and possessions⁵

- *The truth shall set you free* has been a phrase taken out of context by many who claim that knowledge of truth, as they personally define it, liberates their minds.
- To know the truth, one must abide in God's word, hold to Jesus' teaching through obedience. This will result in freedom, not freedom from everyday situations and problems but freedom from sin and its dominion.
- Verse 36 defines *truth*. Truth is the Son of God: Jesus and all that He has said.

Romans 1:16–17 (NIV84)

¹⁶I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it **is** the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

¹⁷For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to

⁴ R. C. Sproul, *Romans*, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 200.

⁵ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 135.

last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

- The gospel *is* (not *was*) the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

Grammatical tense of *is*: Present, active, indicative

This shows that the action happens in the present time and that the subject (gospel) carries out the action, and that it is a true statement (indicative).

- The gospel continues to work for the salvation of everyone who believes. This includes the believer, whose heart has been transformed by the gospel.

The gospel *continues* to transform a believer’s heart to keep them from the enslaving power of sin.

Galatians 5:2-4 (NIV84)

²Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

³Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

⁴You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

- Teachers who arrived after Paul’s departure were instructing Christian Gentiles in Galatia to be circumcised, and it appeared these Christians were being convinced that this was something they needed to do to become part of the “inner circle” of Christianity.

The choice to rely on something we accomplish to give us status before God is a denial of Christ and a rejection of God’s grace.

Those teachings that encourage such a choice must be carefully resisted.⁶

- If you rely on something else besides the gospel, you separate yourself from the grace that brings salvation to men’s hearts.
- Submission to circumcision as a requirement for favor with God would risk the entire reality of salvation by grace alone through faith alone!⁷
- Circumcision is not an isolated act but commits the individual to observance of the “entire law”.
- Keeping the law means being justified by the law,

⁶ Geoff Ziegler, *Galatians, A 12-Week Study*, ed. J. I. Packer, Dane C. Ortlund, and Lane T. Dennis, Knowing the Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 61.

⁷ Jon Nielson, *Galatians: The Gospel of Free Grace, A 13-Lesson Study*, ed. Daniel M. Doriani et al., Reformed Expository Bible Studies (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2019), 87.

Galatians 4:8–11 (NIV84)

⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods.

⁹But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? **Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?**

¹⁰You are observing special days and months and seasons and years!

¹¹I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

- **How** could they excuse their conduct? They had come to know **God**, or, if they didn’t know Him in a deep experiential way, at least they were **known by Him**, that is, they were saved.
- Yet they were turning from His power and riches (of which they were heirs) **to weak and poor things**, the things connected with the law, such as circumcision, holy days, and rules of diet.

They were again putting themselves **in bondage** to things that could neither save nor enrich but could only impoverish them.⁹

- It gives some people intense satisfaction to feel there is something they can do in their own strength to win God’s smile. But this implies that man has some strength, and hence, to that extent, he does not need the Savior.
- If Paul could write in this manner to the Galatians, what would he write to professing Christians today who are seeking to attain holiness by legal observances?

Would he not condemn the traditions brought into Christianity from Judaism—a humanly ordained priesthood, distinctive vestments for the priest, Sabbath-keeping, holy places, candles, holy water, and so forth?¹⁰

Colossians 2:6–23 (NIV84)

⁶So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him,

⁷rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

⁸ Beverly R. Gaventa, “Galatians,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, ed. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1382.

⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1887–1888.

¹⁰ William MacDonald, *Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 1887–1888.

⁸See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

⁹For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

¹⁰and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

¹¹In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ,

¹²having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

¹³When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins,

¹⁴having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

- The Greek word translated “written code” referred to the handwritten certificate of debt by which a debtor acknowledged his indebtedness. All people owe God an unpayable debt for violating His Law, and are thus under sentence of death.

Paul compares God’s forgiveness of believers’ sins to wiping ink off a parchment.

- Through Christ’s sacrificial death on the Cross, God has totally erased our certificate of indebtedness and made our forgiveness complete.
- **nailed it to the cross.** This is another metaphor for forgiveness. The list of the crimes of a crucified criminal was nailed to the cross with that criminal to declare the violations he was being punished for.

Believers’ sins were all put to Christ’s account, nailed to His cross as He paid the penalty in their place for them all, thus satisfying the just wrath of God against crimes requiring punishment in full.¹¹

¹⁵And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

¹⁶Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

¹⁷These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

¹⁸Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize.

¹¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), Col 2:14.

Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions.

- **worship of angels.** The beginning of a heresy that was to plague the region around Colosse for several centuries and far beyond—a practice the Bible clearly prohibits (Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8, 9).¹²

¹⁹He has lost connection with the Head, from whom the whole body, supported and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows as God causes it to grow.

²⁰Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules:

²¹“Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!”?

²²These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings.

²³Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

- All these external attempts to be or appear godly does not change a person on the inside. No transformation takes place.

Galatians 5:5 (NIV84)

⁵But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

- It is the Spirit of God and not the law that gives us hope.

Romans 8:22-25 (NIV84)

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

²⁴For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

²⁵But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

- The Christian *is* saved “upon the basis of *hope*,” for hope and the things upon which it terminates constitute the supreme goal of salvation.

The pre-Christian pagan state is characterized by the absence of God and of hope.

Foremost among the benefits of religion (that is of “having God”) is to have hope.¹³

¹² John F. MacArthur Jr., *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), Col 2:18.

¹³ Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Princeton, NJ: Geerhardus Vos, 1930), 29-30.

2 Corinthians 4:13–18 (NIV84)

¹³It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.”

With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak,

¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.

¹⁵All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.

¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

- Therefore, comfort one another with these words.