

# GALATIANS

## THE FREEDOM

OF  
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# CHRISTIAN MAN

A Seven-Session Bible Study for Men

by William M. Ramsay



# Galatians

## The Freedom of a Christian Man

A Seven-Session Bible Study for Men

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# Galatians

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# introduction

Men's

BIBLE

Study

## The Reasons for This Study

*We trust in God the Holy Spirit,  
everywhere the giver and renewer of life . . .  
The same Spirit  
who inspired the prophets and apostles  
rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture.*

These words from "A Brief Statement of Faith," adopted officially by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in 1991, state a primary conviction of Presbyterians. Presbyterians believe that God's Spirit actually speaks to us through the inspired books of the Bible, "the unique and authoritative witness to Jesus Christ in the church universal, and God's Word" to each of us (*Book of Order*, PC(U.S.A.), G 14.0516).

Recent studies, however, have shown that many men know very little of what the Bible says; yet many do express a desire to learn. To help meet that need, this Bible study guide has been prepared at the request and with the cooperation of the National Council of Presbyterian Men of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its president, Dr. Youngil Cho.

## The Suggested Pattern of Study

Men may use this guide in a variety of weekly settings: men's breakfasts, lunches in a downtown setting, evening study cells in homes, and many more. The material provides guidance for seven one-hour sessions. To facilitate open discussion it assumes a small group of men, no more than twelve, one or preferably two of whom might be designated as leaders. Each session is Bible study; there must be a Bible for each man. The Bible, not this study guide, is the textbook.

The men are not required to do study outside the group sessions, though suggestions are given for such study. To be enrolled in this study, however, each man is expected to commit himself to make every effort to attend and participate fully in all seven sessions.

The pattern of study is to be open discussion. Agreement by all to follow seven rules will make such study most effective:

**1. We will treat no question as stupid.** Some men will have more experience in Bible study than others, but each man must feel free to say what he thinks without fear of being ridiculed.

**2. We will stick to the Scripture in this study.** The group has gathered for Bible study, not to pool their own ideas on other matters, however good those ideas are.

**3. We will regard the leader(s) as "first among equals."** Leaders in these studies are guides for group discussion, not authorities to tell the group what the Bible means. But following their study suggestions will facilitate learning.

**4. We will remember that we are here to hear God speak.** Presbyterians believe that the Spirit which spoke to the biblical writers now speaks to us through their words. We do not come simply to learn about the Bible, but with minds and hearts expecting to receive a message from God.

**5. We will listen for "the question behind the question."** Sometimes a man's gestures and tone of voice may tell us more of what he is feeling than his words do. We will listen with sympathy and concern.

**6. We will agree to disagree in love.** Open discussion is an adventure full of danger. Men will differ. None of us will know the whole truth or be right all the time. We will respect and love and try to learn from each other even when we think the other person is wrong.

**7. We will make every effort to attend and participate faithfully in all seven sessions of this study.** Participation will involve making notes in the spaces provided for your own answers to questions relating to the study and from time to time sharing with others your answers, even when you worry that they are not the "right" answers.

## Some Suggestions for the Leader

Those who lead groups in this study should be especially aware of these seven "rules."

Though two leaders are not required, having a team of leaders often helps to open up the group for freer discussion by all its members. One leader might be responsible for introducing the study at a given session and for summarizing other parts of the study where such summaries are suggested. The other leader might take more responsibility for guiding the discussion, helping to see that each man who wishes has a chance to speak, helping to keep the study centered on the Scripture, and moving the group along to the next subject when one has been dealt with sufficiently. Or the leaders might alternate in their responsibilities or share them equally.

This material is a guide for study within the group. The study material for each session is to be distributed at the time of that session. The study guide for each session is in the form of worksheets. Each man should have a pencil or a pen. Spaces are provided for each student to make brief notes for his answers to questions on the passages to be studied. A good deal of the time may be spent as the men quietly, individually, decide on and note their own answers to these questions. Some are designed simply to guide the students in looking at key passages. Others are intended to help the student think about what these passages mean to us today. The real basis of this study should be the ideas that come in the times when the men are quietly studying their Bibles and deciding individually on their answers to these questions. When a man has made a note on his sheet concerning his answer to a question, he has had to do some thinking about it. And he is more likely to be willing to tell the group his answer.

There should also be time, of course, for the group to share and compare answers to these questions. In the New Testament the Holy Spirit seems most often to be manifest within a group. God speaks to us authoritatively through Scripture, but often what God says to us in Scripture becomes clearest when voiced by a Christian friend. We learn through each other.

Each session ends with an Afterword. During the session the leader may call attention to things in the Afterword when they seem appropriate.

Among the many characteristics of a good discussion leader are these: (1) He tries to give everyone who wishes a chance to speak, without pressuring anyone to speak who does not want to. (2) He does not monopolize the discussion himself and tries tactfully to prevent anyone else from doing so unduly. (3) He is a good listener, helping those who speak to feel that they have been heard. (4) He helps to keep the group focused on the Scripture. (5) He tries to watch for signs that show that the group is or is not ready to move on to the next question.

This kind of study can generally be carried on much more effectively with the participants sitting informally in a circle or around a table rather than in straight rows with the leader up front. Frequently, especially in a large group, you may want to divide into groups of three or four, or simply let each man compare his answers with those of the man sitting next to him.

Often, more questions have been given than some groups are likely to cover in one hour. If you don't answer them all, don't worry. Pick the ones that seem most interesting and let the rest go.

The questions in this study guide are phrased in various ways and come in different orders, but basically they are intended to help the participants think through three things: (1) What does this passage say? (2) What does it mean? And (3) what does it mean now to you? It is our conviction as Presbyterians that when believers study together God's word, in an atmosphere of prayerful expectancy, God will speak to them.

Throughout each study there are Scripture quotations. These are taken from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. While this version is used throughout this study guide, it may prove beneficial for each participant to use the version with which he feels most comfortable.

Testing has shown that the discussion that arises in each study may cause the session to last longer than the intended sixty minutes. A clock figure has been placed in each to suggest where a study might be divided into two sessions. Discussion is at the heart of these studies and should not be sacrificed for the sake of presenting the lesson exactly as suggested in this study guide.

In the letter inviting the writers of these studies to attempt this work, Dr. Marvin Simmers, having recognized some difficulties, added, "Remember, we are not alone!" The leader also may take courage from that assurance.

# Galatians

## INTRODUCTION

“For freedom Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). These seven studies on Galatians focus on a major theme of this epistle, the liberty that Christ brings through faith.

Millions of men and women have been willing to die for freedom rather than submit to any kind of slavery. But we know that the political freedom for which we have justly fought does not guarantee true liberty. “Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage.”<sup>1</sup> There are forces in the soul that may enslave men even when they seem quite free.

For example, there is the man who feels pressured to live up to the standards of his fellows, his fraternity, his gang, his friends. There is the man who slaves night and day for business success in order to feel his life is justified. There is the husband who feels bound to dominate his wife, or perhaps to be unfaithful to her, in order to prove that he is a real man. There is the man whose way of life is ruled by his concern for money. There is even the man who works hard at being a good church member and doing his civic duty because he lives by a conscience that seems to tell him that deep down he is guilty and must atone for his guilt by doing good deeds. You will know other ways in which men need the freedom that Galatians promises. “Christ . . . gave himself for our sins to set us free . . .” (1:3–4).

Galatians also reminds us of the freedom that concerns not just individuals, but society. Paul writes that Christ frees us from the old legal barriers in our culture: “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28). This is a book about freedom.

Galatians is a little book, less than 150 verses. A good case can be made, however, that it has been the most influential letter ever written. From the beginning, the church treasured it as one of its sacred Scriptures. The early church fathers wrote more commentaries on it than on any other epistle. Augustine used it over and over to battle Pelagianism, the heresy that taught that we are saved by being good. John Calvin found in it one source of the theology that was to become basic to Presbyterianism. But especially it was Martin Luther who loved Galatians, calling it his favorite epistle. “The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle,” he said. “To it I am as it were in wedlock. It is my Katherine [his beloved wife].”<sup>2</sup> To a great extent, out of Galatians and Romans the Reformation was born.

## The Setting of Galatians

The book itself was born in controversy. It has been justly called “a fighting epistle.” Glance at Paul’s other letters and you will see that it was Paul’s practice to begin with a prayer for the people to whom he was writing, and usually he has words of praise for them. In Galatians, however, he plunges directly into his argument, hurling curses at his opponents and demanding that his readers reject any other gospel even if it might be taught them by an angel (1:8–9).

Reading between the lines we can see what had upset Paul. A group of Christian teachers, perhaps disciples of Jesus’ brother James (2:12), were invading churches Paul had founded in Galatia (part of what is now Turkey). These Christians were arguing that while of course faith in Christ is important, every Christian must live by the law of God (2:14). God had given Moses laws that all God’s people must obey. At the very least, to begin with, a man must be circumcised, the symbol in his body that his soul was bound by God’s law. Earlier, Paul tells us, he had encountered these “Judaizers” (Christians insisting on obedience to the Jewish law) in Antioch. There they had persuaded Peter to stop eating with Gentiles who had become Christians but were not circumcised. Paul had protested vehemently to Peter (2:11–14). Now these troublemakers (6:17) had begun upsetting Paul’s beloved converts in Galatia.

As for Paul, they charged, he was simply “seeking human approval” (1:10) when he told his new converts they were not obligated to live by the law. He preached freedom from the law just to make it easy for them. The Judaizers probably claimed that they represented those like Peter and James who “were supposed to be acknowledged leaders” in the church (2:6). They professed to represent apostles who had actually seen and heard Jesus; Paul, who had not, was only a latecomer to the Christian faith.

Moreover, to give Paul’s opponents their due, they probably did find some of Paul’s new converts mistaking Christian freedom for license. They had begun to “use [their] freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence” (5:13). Why not? Had not Paul taught them that they were “justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16). Forgiven, freed from God’s law, some

1. Richard Lovelace, “To Althea from Prison,” stanza 4, as found in *Familiar Quotations*, John Bartlett, ed., eleventh edition (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co., 1944), p. 168.

2. As quoted from Luther’s table talks by Theodore Graebner, D.D., in his translation of Martin Luther’s *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), p. iv.

of Paul's converts probably thought that a Christian might live by any whim of passion one's selfish desires suggested. No doubt some Galatian Christians were indeed living that way (5:15). Paul's opponents were shocked, and they blamed this sinfulness on Paul's teaching.

## The Message of Galatians

If one were to pick out a single verse to summarize Paul's message, to both the legalists and the libertines, one good choice would be this: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love" (5:6). Freed from having to live each day by Moses' set of rules and regulations, the Christian has been given a new life by Christ. "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (2:20). If one lives by the Spirit, by faith, by love, then—and only then—does one experience the "fruit of the Spirit . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (5:22).

Paul begins (chs. 1—2) by defending himself in order to defend the gospel he had preached. Though he had not been with Jesus during Jesus' earthly lifetime, Paul insists that he had met the risen Christ. It was from Christ that he got the gospel he proclaimed. He was not dependent upon the Jerusalem apostles—far from it, once he had "opposed [Peter] to his face" (2:11). Nevertheless, those church leaders had "recognized the grace that had been given to" Paul and endorsed what he was preaching (2:9). The scars on his body attest that he has not been in the ministry just to please people (1:10; 6:17). Chapter 2 ends with his account of the new life given him by the Spirit through faith in Christ.

Chapters 3—4 are a long and sometimes difficult defense of his argument that faith, not law, is the guide to the Christian's life. He points out that the Galatians' initial experience of the Holy Spirit came not by their doing some good deeds, but by trusting in the gospel. "Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" he demands (3:3). Even the Jewish scriptures, Paul maintains, support the priority of faith over law. The promises were made to Abraham centuries before Moses gave any laws. The Scripture itself says that Abraham "believed God [not obeyed the law] and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (3:6). Chapter 4 continues by using the rabbinic technique of allegory. Paul equates those who live by the law with Abraham's son, Ishmael, born in slavery, while the promises of grace and faith come to those who are sons of God like Abraham's free son, Isaac. The law was only a kind of babysitter, which Christians no longer need. We are now not God's slaves but God's sons, ch. 4 promises. The section builds to a climax: "For freedom Christ has set us free" (5:1).

But turning now to those who mistake liberty for license, Paul's last two chapters remind his readers that the life given by the Spirit is not one of self-indulgence but of love. Joy, peace, patience, and kindness grow out of the life of faith just as fruit grows from a tree (5:22). Freedom does bring its own responsibilities, but not for saving our own souls. Don't worry about yourself and your circumcision. But do "bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2).

In witness to this good news, Paul closes the letter with an appendix not dictated to a secretary, as was his custom, but written in his own hand (6:11–18). His final words are "May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen" (6:18).



## Galatians<sup>3</sup> Living by Faith

*“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision or uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love” (5:6).*

<p>1:1 <b>A Personal Defense by Paul of His Authority as an Apostle</b></p> <p>Salutation, 1:1–5 Paul’s distress at the attacks on his gospel, 1:6–10.</p> <p>A brief autobiography to show that Paul does have authority, 1:11–2:14</p> <p>The relation of that gospel to life: “the life I now live . . . I live by faith,” 2:15–21</p>	<p>3:1 <b>A Defense of His Gospel of Freedom from the Law</b></p> <p>The Galatians’ own experience proves it. They, too, have begun to live by the Spirit through faith, not law, 3:1–5</p> <p>The Jewish scriptures themselves also teach that we live by faith, not law, 3:6–4:31</p>	<p>5:1 <b>A Plea to Continue to Live by Faith the Free, Spirit-filled Life of Love</b></p> <p>Since Christ has set us free, let us live free from the law, not slip back into legalism, 5:1–12</p> <p>The free, Spirit-filled life is the life guided by love, 5:13–6:10</p> <p>An emotional postscript written in Paul’s own hand, 6:11–18</p>
<p><b>Author:</b> Paul  <b>Recipients:</b> Christians in some churches founded by Paul, in what is now Turkey  <b>Date:</b> A.D. 55 (A.D. 49?)  <b>Occasion:</b> “Judaizers” have attacked Paul and urged these new Christians to live by the Jewish law, of which circumcision is an important symbol.  <b>Purpose:</b> Paul writes to defend his teaching that we are to live by the Spirit, by faith, not by law.</p>		

### Some Helpful Resources

Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, translated by Theodore Graebner, D.D. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.).

Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982).

William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh: The St. Andrew Press, 1960).

George S. Duncan, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954).

Raymond T. Stamm and Oscar Fisher Blackwelder, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Nashville: Abingdon–Cokesbury Press, 1953) “The Interpreter’s Bible.” Vol. X.

3. This outline is from *The Westminster Guide to the Books of the Bible*, by William M. Ramsay (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), p. 423.

# session

**Good News: YOU CAN BE FREE Gal. 1:1–11; 2:20**

## Some Alternate Paths to Freedom

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group. Note: In this first session the Leader may want to review some of the material found in the Introduction.

“Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains.”<sup>1</sup>

In a way Paul would agree with Rousseau’s famous lament. But Paul wrote Galatians to give us good news. There is a way to freedom.

Here are some of the things that seem to chain us, and some ways men have attempted to free themselves:

- “You’re busy. You’re very busy. You’re overbooked, overstressed, overburdened. You’re on a schedule that increasingly represents the baseline tempo of American life—a harried, Lucy Ricardo-in-the-candy-factory level of frenetic activity that’s impossible for anyone to sustain except in a state of mental and physical overload. . . .

Stress-related illness costs the nation \$300 billion a year in medical costs and lost productivity.” So *USA Weekend’s* cover story reminded us (Mar. 15–17, 1996). One attempted solution: withdraw to a cabin in Montana and mail bombs to the leaders of our technological society. So, at least it is charged, the alleged Unabomber has sought freedom.

- We are enslaved by “big government,” the conservatives tell us . . . or by “big business,” according to the liberals. Bosses and government agencies regulate our lives. One attempted solution: form a militant sect.

In the spring of 1996 a group in Montana armed themselves with automatic weapons and held off 100 FBI agents for 81 days. It is alleged that they wanted to escape huge debts they had accumulated. Thus “liberated,” they called themselves “Freemen.”

- Maybe we feel trapped by sexuality and life itself. The Heaven’s Gate cult found a way to “freedom”: they all committed suicide.

- Or maybe our problem is deeper: all those moral rules and regulations and inhibitions that keep us from enjoying ourselves and “reaching our full potential.” You probably know someone like “Joe.” He finally gave up trying to live up to all his responsibilities. He left his wife and his children and is playing around. He seems to be having a great time, “free at last.”

Galatians has been called “The Magna Carta of Christian liberty.” Words like *free* and *freedom* occur eleven times in its six short chapters. In contrast, Paul uses *slave*, *slavery*, and *bondage* thirteen times. There are other themes in Galatians, of course, but it is on freedom that we will focus in these seven studies.

## Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 1:1–11. With a pencil or pen briefly note your answers to these questions, and, if you have time, think through why you answer as you do.

*According to Gal. 1:4, why did Christ give his life for us?*

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*From what does Christ free us (1:4)?*

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*What do you suppose is meant by “the present evil age”? Can you give some examples to support what you think that phrase might mean?*

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*What would you do if you really were completely free?*

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1. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, chapter 1, as found in *The Essential Rousseau*, translated by Lowell Bair (New York: New American Library, 1974), p. 8.

What is it that keeps us from being free? Some answers were suggested above. Here are some more answers some have proposed. Check the ones that seem to you the biggest threats to our freedom:

- the government
- family responsibilities
- moral laws
- the rat-race of your job
- the fear of disease
- finances
- alcohol and other drugs
- social pressures
- big business
- pressures from parents
- ambition to get ahead
- other, namely:

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Note, however, that Paul says Christ set us free by giving himself “for our sins” (1:4). What has “sin” got to do with our lack of freedom?

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Paul had founded the churches in Galatia. But now these seemingly more devout Christians have invaded those churches. They have told Paul’s converts, in effect, “The way to freedom is to try to be good. Keep the Ten Commandments. Keep the rest of the law. Paul said that wasn’t necessary, but Paul was just trying to win a popularity contest. He wanted to make it easy on you. But there is no substitute for moral striving. Try and try again to do right. Be good and you will be free. Be bad and you will be a slave. It’s that simple.” So Paul’s enemies argued.

### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

What truth do you find in the idea that we must obey God’s law and that if we do so we will be free of sin, the thing that really enslaves us?

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What, then, is wrong with this idea? Doesn’t God deal with us according to what we deserve?

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Here are three key words in the first verses of Galatians. How is each of them different from “law” or “trying to be good” or “keeping the rules”?

*grace (unmerited favor)(1:3)*

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*gave (1:4)*

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*gospel (good news) (1:6–7)*

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### WRONG WAYS AND THE RIGHT WAY TO FREEDOM

Saint Paul was so angry at his opponents that within the first nine verses he damns them twice: “Let that one be accursed! . . . Let that one be accursed!” (1:8–9). Yet they had proposed what might seem the most pious possible way of achieving freedom: Be good! Obey the law of God! Thirty-one times in these six chapters Paul must use the word “law,” almost always referring to the laws prescribed by the Almighty. Sin, the legalists agreed with Paul, is our problem. The way to be free and to overcome sin is to obey God, Paul’s enemies claimed. That twisted “gospel” makes Paul furious.

The symbol for keeping the law, for trying to be good, that Paul and his opponents use is the Old Testament ceremony of circumcision. Paul is so incensed against those who propose obedience to God’s law as the path to freedom that he says he wishes those people would just go all the way and castrate themselves (5:12)!

*It is getting ahead of this lesson, perhaps, but to see where Paul is taking us, look now at his portrait of a really free man. What he is saying about Christian freedom, the new life of freedom that comes through faith in Christ, not laws and regulations, is found in 2:20. Read it. What help do you think it offers to the problem of how you can learn to live as a free man?*

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*What is freedom as implied by this verse?*

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*If it wasn't by obeying God's law, by what does Paul say he got this new free life?*

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## Afterword

Martin Luther's commentary on Gal. 2:19 includes this imaginary conversation between you and one of Paul's opponents:

"I confess that I have sinned."

"Then God will punish you."

"No, He will not do that."

"Why not? Does not the Law say so?"

"I have nothing to do with the Law."

"How so?"

"I have another law, the law of liberty."

"What do you mean—'liberty'?"

"The liberty of Christ, for Christ has made me free from the Law that held me down. That Law is now in prison itself, held captive by grace and liberty."<sup>2</sup>

Circumcision is not a problem in our churches today, but legalism keeps on appearing in various shapes. . . . A hardened creed imposed by some on others is slavery, not freedom. . . . Ritual acts may express or even induce and cultivate Christian experience, but when they become ends in themselves they are counterproductive, just another form of idolatry. The authentic Gospel sometimes is supplanted by Culture Religion, the church merely reflecting the values and patterns of society. Civil Religion is another substitute for "gospel," where God and country are barely distinguished from one another. . . . Wherever there is anything authentic—like the Gospel of Jesus Christ—there is the counterfeit. . . . "Accept No Substitutes."<sup>3</sup>

Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,  
Were still in heart and conscience free:  
How sweet would be their children's fate,  
If [we], like them, could die for thee!<sup>4</sup>

Christianity acknowledges the necessity of the struggle for political and economic liberation, and its gospel of the kingdom is a political gospel; but the freedom of which Christianity speaks has its ultimate source neither in politics nor in economics but in the word of God, which liberates men and women by calling them forward into true communion with God and with each other. . . . Christianity acknowledges that freedom entails an inner psychic liberation—a liberation from the binding forces of sin (infinite desire), law (the regulations and norms of culture), and death (not a natural instinct but the consequence of a false pursuit of life), a liberation that leads to the recovery of authentic selfhood. But it does not agree that people on their own can achieve such a liberation by rational or psychoanalytic means. . . . Christianity acknowledges that freedom means a new life, a new vitality—a life of love, unity, peace, play, marked by the qualities of ecstasy, vision, and communion with the vital powers of life that transcend ordinary experience. . . . God liberates.<sup>5</sup>

Christ says, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. . . . So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31–36).

## Looking Ahead

Read Gal. 1:13–2:21 and compare Paul's experience with yours.

2. Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 2:19, abridged translation by Theodore Graebner, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n. d.), p. 76.

3. Frank Stagg, *Galatians/Romans* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), p. 7.

4. Frederick W. Faber, "Faith of Our Fathers," as found in *Worship and Service Hymnal* (Chicago: Hope Publishing Co., 1957), No. 169.

5. Peter C. Hodgson, *New Birth of Freedom* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 111–12.

# session *two*

## The Story of How ONE MAN WAS SET FREE Gal. 1:11-24

### Paul's Story

*May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.*

Nicea was free! We will never know her whole story. Was it that some man fell in love with her and bought her freedom? Did she earn money and buy freedom for herself? What we do know is this: an inscription at the sacred Greek city Delphi records her redemption. Following the custom of the time, the price paid for Nicea's freedom was given first to the god Apollo. That god then "bought" her. Now she was a slave to Apollo, but from all human masters Nicea was free indeed.

In a sense the same thing happened to Paul. At the cost of his own life, Christ had purchased Paul's freedom. Converted, Paul was now a slave to Christ. But as far as any human master was concerned, Paul was free indeed.

"Let that one be accursed!" Paul almost shouts at any who would twist the gospel and take away that freedom. "How can you be so sure your version of the gospel is right?" you can almost hear his readers demanding. Paul is eager to reply. Mine is not a hand-me-down faith, he says, in effect. "I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:12). Paul's freedom was not just something others told him about; he experienced it himself.

The story of how Paul became a Christian is the subject of this lesson.

Sometimes we say, "I figured something out." Sometimes we say, "It occurred to me that. . . ." Which, if either, is closer to saying, "It was revealed to me"?

\_\_\_\_\_ (The point is that the gospel was not something Paul thought up; it came from outside himself, from Christ.)

To get more details of the story of how Christ was revealed to Paul, read Luke's account in Acts 9:1-22. *What are some of the details Acts adds to the story?*

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### OUR STORIES

*May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.*

Down through the years millions upon millions of people have experienced the liberation that Christ brings to those who become Christians. No one else, however, has ever had an experience exactly like Paul's. In fact, no two people have ever been set free by Christ in exactly the same way. The Bible describes people becoming Christians through a variety of quite different paths:

- Three thousand were converted in one day when they heard Peter preach (Acts 2:40-41).
- Peter himself seems to have had a long period of ups and downs, affirming faith in Jesus at one time (Matt. 16:15-16), a bit later denying that he even knew Jesus (Mark 14:66-72), and after Easter being reconciled again (John 21:15-17).
- Timothy grew up a third-generation Christian, his faith being taught him by his mother and his grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5).
- The Ethiopian eunuch was persuaded while studying a passage of Scripture (Acts 8:26-40).

### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 1:11-24 and note your answers to these questions:

*What changed Paul?*

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*In what ways was he different after that experience?*

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Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Which of the above is most like your own experience?

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In what way?

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Here are some stories of how some twentieth-century men became Christians. With each of these note briefly two things: How is it like the experience of Paul or someone else in Scripture, and how is it like your own experience?

• Theologian John Baillie writes how, like Timothy, he grew up a Christian. "I cannot remember a time when I did not already feel, in some dim way, that I was 'not my own' . . . but was claimed by a higher power. . . . I was born into a Christian home, and God's earliest disclosure of His reality to my infant soul was mediated to me by the words and deeds of my Christian parents."<sup>1</sup>

This is like \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible in this way:

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Perhaps it is like your own experience in this way:

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• A house painter I'll call "Joe" told me his story, a bit like that of the 3,000 on the day of Pentecost. "I went to hear this revival preacher. Suddenly he pointed his finger right at me and shouted, 'You're going to hell!' I knew he was right. Man, I used to drink a gallon of whiskey a week. I never touch it now." When I knew him Joe was a sober and respected elder in the Presbyterian Church.

This is like the experience of \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible in this way:

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Perhaps it is like your own experience in this way:

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• Psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck describes his own long, slow experience of becoming a Christian. "I very gradually gravitated toward Christianity. . . . When people ask me whether I've been 'born again,' I say, 'Well, maybe so. But if so, it was a very prolonged labor and difficult delivery.' There were all kinds of milestones on that journey, but perhaps the most important was reading the Gospels for the first time at the age of forty." Peck tells of a dream of a father driving a son from place to place. "I finally realized . . . God was saying to me . . . 'Leave the driving to me.'"<sup>2</sup>

This is like \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible in this way:

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Perhaps this is like your own experience in this way:

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1. John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 4-5.

2. M. Scott Peck, *Further Along the Road Less Travelled* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 156-64.

• Billy Graham’s son and successor William Franklin Graham seems, like Peter, to have had his ups and downs as a Christian. He was born, of course, into a godly home, but he rebelled. As *Time* tells his story, young Franklin was given to “fighting, taunting the police of Montreat, North Carolina, into high-speed car chases and cultivating a fascination for firearms and rock music and a taste for hard liquor. . . . He managed to get himself expelled from a tiny technical college in Texas. . . . He had come to identify full Christian commitment with hated authority: ‘I was afraid if I surrendered my life to Christ I’d have, like, spiritual handcuffs on me. I had this picture of this God in heaven who had, like, a big stick, and if I surrendered my life, he’d just wait for me to go to the left or right and clobber me.’ . . . [But some time later] in a hotel room . . . he reread what might be called the New Testament’s great amnesty clause, *Rom. 8:1*: ‘There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.’ ‘I put my cigarette out and got down on my knees beside my bed. I was his.’ . . . The Lord had not clobbered Franklin . . . he had set him free.”<sup>3</sup>

*This is like \_\_\_\_\_ in the Bible in this way:*

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*Perhaps this is like your own experience in this way:*

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We have been looking at the story in Galatians and in Acts of how Paul became a Christian. We have compared it with the stories of how others in the Bible became Christians. And we have looked at the stories of how some twentieth-century men became Christians. It is difficult for many of us to talk about our own spiritual experience. Nevertheless, telling what God has done for us is one helpful form of Christian witness. If you are willing, briefly tell others in your group your own story, how Christ claimed you for his own.

3. David Van Biema, “In the Name of the Father,” *Time*, May 13, 1996, pp. 69–70.

## Afterword

Diverse as all these stories are, Presbyterians hold that all complete stories of becoming a Christian have these things in common:

“Q. How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption [freedom] purchased by Christ?

A. The Spirit applieth to us the redemption purchased by Christ by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

“Q. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.”<sup>4</sup>

Among the most dramatic stories of liberation brought about by Christ are those of men actually in prison because of their sins. Charles Colson, once in prison himself and now devoted to spreading the gospel among inmates, tells of an experience in Walla Walla penitentiary. “It was a simmering concrete cauldron of rival inmate gangs. . . . Four months before my visit a guard had been killed. . . . Anger and tension had mounted. . . . As I looked out over those who had gathered to hear me speak at a service in the prison’s dingy auditorium, the small inmate audience looked back at me defiantly. Two particularly tough-looking prisoners sat in the front row, arms folded across their chests. As I began to speak, sharing the good news of the gospel . . . these men simply stared at me, their eyes unblinking. Even as I spoke, I found myself praying that somehow their hearts would be touched. At the end they came to the front. Their expressions hadn’t changed, but one extended his hand. ‘I’m Don Dennis,’ he said quietly. ‘We’ve been talking, and we believe you.’ I later discovered what I was glad I hadn’t known while I preached: a riot had been planned for that very afternoon. Six guards had been targeted for murder. . . . But during my sermon God *had* touched their hearts; the inmate leaders had sensed sincerity and a real desire to help them. They called off the riot. . . . Several prisoners became Christians through the Bible study, along with Don Dennis, whose leadership in the prison now reflected his new walk with Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

## Looking Ahead

We have looked at stories of how some men received the freedom Christ offers. But just what kind of freedom is it? For part of the answer read Gal. 2:19–20.

4. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, questions 30–31, as found in *The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (USA)* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1991), 7.030–7.031.

5. Charles Colson and Daniel Van Ness, *Convicted* (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1989), pp. 93–95.

# session *three*

**Get a Life: THE LIFE OF FREEDOM**

**Gal. 2:15–20**

## Freedom From . . .

*May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.*

Free? Look at the life of this man who claims to have been given freedom. He says he has to endure “labors . . . imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received . . . the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city . . . in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night. . . . I am under daily pressure . . .” (2 Cor. 11:23–28). What kind of freedom is that!

Yet Paul writes that he is a free man, and he promises that we can be free too. Obviously, by freedom he does not mean being free from danger, hardship, prison, or pressures from one’s job. Rather he seems to be offering a special kind of life, a power that enables a person to live free, no matter what comes.

One of the crucial passages for understanding what this freedom can be is Gal. 2:15–20. In Gal. 2:11–14, Paul has just described how he had a heated argument with Peter. Unaware that later Christians would someday speak of Saint Peter as the first pope and “infallible,” Saint Paul says, “I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned” (2:11). The reason for the controversy was this: Peter felt bound by peer pressure and by the Old Testament law not to eat with uncircumcised non-Jews. At least for that moment Peter had forgotten the good news of freedom and had gone back into legalism. Recalling that incident leads Paul to write the words that we study today.

## Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

*Read Gal. 2:15–20.*

*According to Paul, how are we not freed?*

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*In how many ways does he say that?*

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*What did trying to be good, to keep God’s law, teach Paul about himself?*

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*How does he describe the results of that effort?*

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To Paul, the great barrier to true freedom is the effort to live by rules and regulations, even though these rules are the laws of Moses. One problem many of us have in grasping Paul’s idea is that few of us have been reared to try to save ourselves by obedience to the Mosaic law. Here are some of our strivings that are at least somewhat analogous to the effort to do “the works of the law” that Paul finds enslaving:



• *Popular religion*, the kind millions of ordinary Americans really believe in, is often simply this: the belief that if a man is good, God will bless him in this life and he will go to heaven; if he is bad, he will suffer now and later. So we try diligently to earn our salvation.

• *The concept of God* that, as we saw last week, Franklin Graham says he once had is this: "I had this picture of this God in heaven who had, like, a big stick, and if I surrendered my life, he'd just wait for me to go to the left or right and clobber me."<sup>1</sup> So we watch our steps every minute.

• *Typical middle-class striving*, quite apart from religion, is much like that of the minister who confesses that too often he is "trying to be a man—or Superman—in our culture: supercompetent, expert, error-free, cool, sturdy, silent yet eloquent, hearty, tender without being weak, an effective and prolific lover of people, understanding of human dilemmas . . . yet above the fray; an untroubled, steadfast, well-armored and desexualized model of stability and endless commitment; an unwoundable and always available hero; everyone's ideal father, everyone's ideal man. That's what people expect of men."<sup>2</sup> So we try to be real men!

*Which of these three seems to you most like Paul, striving to save himself by doing the good works of the law?*

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*Which seems most typical of us today?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Why?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What do you think Paul would say to each of these three, who are not free?*

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*In what other ways are we like Paul before his conversion, trying to save ourselves by our works?*

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1. David Van Biema, "In the Name of the Father," *Time*, May 13, 1996, p. 69.

2. James E. Dittes, "A Men's Movement for the Church?" *The Christian Century*, May 29–June 5, 1991, p. 588.



## FREED TO . . .

*May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.*

Paul writes of the spiritual crisis he went through as he realized that he could not save himself by his own goodness: "I died" (2:19). The newspapers recently reported the sad case of a striver who literally died. He had seemed to succeed at everything. He earned a doctorate, played and composed music, was an athlete, and was making a fortune. He committed suicide, apparently because he realized that in all his striving he still was so far from achieving perfection.

And now for the contrast! What is the life of freedom of the true Christian? Paul makes an amazing claim: the Christian life is to have Christ actually living inside of you! "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (2:20). Remember from last week: Scott Peck tells of a dream in which God seemed to be saying to him, "Leave the driving to me!" In the free Christian, God takes over.

Psychiatrist Rollo May says that when a patient begins to say "I can" or "I will," the therapist listens with joy, for these are words of hope and power and thus of freedom. The freedom of the Christian man is that of having his life filled with the powerful Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The late theologian W. R. Inge says this experience of Christ inside the Christian, the Spirit taking over that person's life, is "the kernel of St. Paul's religion. It is not a doctrine about Christ; it is fellowship with Christ, not with a figure in past history, but with a life-giving power, a spiritual reality and energy transforming and at the same time perfecting his character, and enabling him to 'put on the new man.' Christ is 'highly exalted' at 'the right hand of God,' and yet is the indwelling Spirit, very near to men and women here on earth. . . . The Spirit is called indifferently the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. . . . The same experience is meant, whether St. Paul speaks of Christ living in us, or of the Spirit dwelling in us, or of our bodies as the temple of God. . . . The formula 'in Christ,' or 'in the Lord,' occurs . . . 164 times in St. Paul."<sup>3</sup>

3. The Very Rev. W. R. Inge, *Mysticism in Religion* (London: Hutchinson's University Library, n. d.) p. 35.

## Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 2:15–20 again. What does Paul say does set us free?

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The truly free man is one filled with the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of which Paul writes lived perfectly in only one man. What is there about Jesus which would make us call him a free man?

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One partial description of what it would mean to live as a free man is in Matt. 6:25–34. In what ways is the man who lives that way free?

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What story, if any, can you tell about somebody who really did seem to have the Spirit of Christ living in that person?

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Can you tell about a time when the Spirit of Christ really seemed to be at work in you?

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## Afterword

Coca Cola magnate Asa G. Candler tells about how his old self, like Paul's "died." Coming home drunk one day he heard an inner voice say, "You must get rid of your self; you must renounce your *self*." "I should not have been surprised if the voice had commanded me to stop drinking. But this was not the message at all. It was my *self* that I was commanded to give up. My *self* was my trouble—my love of myself, my fear of anything that might frustrate my wishes. My will had always been the central interest in my life. False pride had erected a barrier between my soul and God. This pride had to go—in one way or another. . . . I blubbered in my drunken voice: 'Lord, how shall I give up myself? I can't do it. How shall I do it?'" At home he and his wife prayed together. "Lord, if I try to renounce myself, will you help me?" All self-sufficiency was gone; I was as poor in spirit as a newborn babe. I now understand Jesus' words: 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' I felt the assurance that God had made my problem his own. We were weeping, but for the first time in my life I experienced peace of soul. . . . Christ was giving me newness of life in his Spirit."<sup>4</sup>

Traditionally Presbyterians have called the gift of new life "sanctification." We emphasize that it is not something we achieve but something God works in us gradually. "Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of god, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness."<sup>5</sup>

A more recent statement of Presbyterian doctrine describes the new life in this way: "The new life does not release a man from conflict with unbelief, pride, lust, fear. He still has to struggle with disheartening difficulties and problems. Nevertheless, as he matures in love and faithfulness in his life with Christ, he lives in freedom and good cheer, bearing witness on good days and evil days, confident that the new life is pleasing to God and helpful to others."<sup>6</sup>

"I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13).

## Looking Ahead

What does it mean to be a grown-up son of God? Read Gal. 4:1–7 for an answer.

4. As recorded in David Wesley Soper, *These Found the Way* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), pp. 55–57.

5. "The Westminster Shorter Catechism," question 35, as found in *The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1991), 7.035.

6. "The Confession of 1967" as found in *The Book of Confessions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*, 9.23.

# session *four*

## The Choice:

## SON OF GOD OR SLAVE OF THE LAW

## Gal. 3:1–4:7

### Don't Be a Slave (3:1–29)

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.

Go to a synagogue and you are likely to find the focal point of the building to be the ark in which the congregation keeps a scroll of the *torah*, the law. It may be handwritten in Hebrew, on parchment, ornamented with silver and gems, the most beautiful the congregation can afford. Jews love and revere the law of God and seek to live by it.

Go to a Christian church and you are likely to find a very different symbol as the focal point of that building. It is a cross. Perhaps it is huge and ornate, perhaps small and simple, but in many churches the eyes of the congregation are directed toward the cross. Even when there were no church buildings, Paul says, regarding his preaching in Galatia, "Before your eyes Jesus Christ was publicly exhibited as crucified" (3:1). The cross was like a big placard displayed before their eyes.

Christians should admire and rejoice in the dedication of our Jewish neighbors to God's law. But the two symbols, the *torah* and the cross, depict two quite different understandings of how we are to live. It was difficult indeed for the first Christians, who were Jews, to accept the idea that they were to live by faith and by the Spirit, not by striving to keep a set of rules. Galatians 3 is part of Paul's argument for that idea. It is difficult for us Christians today to believe that we are to live not by our own goodness and frantic efforts but by faith and by the Spirit. But that is a major truth to be grasped in study of Galatians.

Galatians 3 makes two arguments to support the concept of living by the faith or by the Spirit. The first is one you can check out simply by remembering how you became a Christian in the first place. Paul asks, "Did you receive the Spirit

- by doing the works of the law, or
- by believing what you heard?" (3:2).

You did not start being a Christian by trying to be good, Paul is arguing, but by believing the gospel. So don't try to continue as a Christian by trying to earn your way to heaven. Keep on living by faith.

His second argument is this:

*Note: This dialogue could be read by two readers.*

*Paul:* How many of the 613 laws of Moses did Abraham try to obey?

*Paul's Opponents:* None, I'll admit. Abraham lived 430 years before Moses gave those laws.

*Paul:* Was Abraham therefore a great sinner?

*Opponents:* Of course not. He was the father of the faithful.

*Paul:* Exactly! Our spiritual father Abraham lived by faith, not law. Remember what was said about him: Abraham "believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gal. 3:6; cf. Gen. 15:6). He ventured out on faith alone. The prophet Habakkuk said it too: "The one who is righteous will live by faith" (Gal 3:11; cf. Hab. 2:4).

*Opponents:* But God's covenant is with Jews, with us who keep the law.

*Paul:* But remember God's covenant promise to Abraham. God said, "All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you" (Gal. 3:8; cf. Gen. 12:3). It is not rules and race that make somebody a child of Abraham or a child of God. It is living by faith, trusting in the power of God's Spirit.

### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 3:21–27. Make two lists. On one side put words that Paul associates with living by law and on the other, those he associates with living by faith.

Law	Spirit
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The “disciplinarian” (3:24) in Roman households was like a kind of nanny or babysitter. How was the law like a babysitter for Israel?

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See if you can put in your own words what Paul is saying in these verses.

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Read the conclusion Paul reaches in vs. 28–29. A traditional Jewish prayer is said to have been, “O Lord, I thank thee that thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman.” According to Paul, what has Christ done to these traditional boundaries?

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What are some analogous boundaries from which Christ frees us today?

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Next Paul mixes in another figure. Apart from Christ, we are *like slaves* in a household. But with Christ we have been adopted by God and now have become heirs, lords where we were once slaves. “God sent his Son” so that we might become sons of God. We have God as our Parent.

*Wingspan* is a collection of essays describing the secular men’s movement. It pictures little groups of men, sometimes in sweat lodges dancing to drum beats and chanting ancient liturgies, sometimes seeking to give release and expression to the “wild man” within. To many of us, some of the things they do may seem bizarre. But their sharing their joys and sorrows with each other evidently ministers to a real need. The first chapters of *Wingspan* are under the heading “Issues That Concern Men.” The first is “Am I a Real Man?” “No matter how much money he earns, how striking his build . . . or what make of car he drives, the average guy is left with the uneasy suspicion that perhaps he isn’t all the man he could or should be.<sup>1</sup> A second issue is “Longing for the Great Father.” The author tells how at a men’s conference, “I heard men talking in sad tones about how they felt abandoned by their fathers.”<sup>2</sup> So many men have been abused, neglected, or abandoned by their human fathers.

*Wingspan* is right! These two are basic needs of men everywhere: (1) to know ourselves as free, adult men, and (2) to sense fellowship with a Father. And are not these precisely two things that Paul says Christ has brought to us who were once spiritually only infants or slaves? Christ offers us real manhood as sons of the heavenly Parent.

One thing even the most skeptical historians agree about Jesus is this: Jesus called God “Father.” He even used the familiar form in Aramaic, *Abba* (4:6). (One might translate it “Dad.”) Now we can join in that prayer, too, for through Christ we also are sons of God.



## BE GOD’S ADULT CHILD (4:1–7)

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.

It is important to be, spiritually, a child of Abraham. But what is really important, of course, is to be an adult child of God.

Paul does not mind mixing his metaphors. First, he describes us, apart from Christ, as *like infants*, our freedom inhibited by “guardians and trustees” (4:2). Under such babysitters, Paul says, a child is in a sense little freer than a slave. Joking, I used to tell our babysitter, “Just put the boys out in the back yard, and every half hour stick your head out the door and yell, ‘Stop doing that!’” That is life under the law. Commentators debate exactly what Paul means by “the elemental spirits of the world,” but apparently that category can include any of those devilish things that keep us feeling or acting more like babies than like free, responsible adults. With the coming of Christ, we can become free, grown-up men.

## Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 4:1–7. According to these verses, what difference has the coming of Christ made for us?

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What do you think Jesus meant when he called God “Father”?

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1. Christopher Harding, ed., *Wingspan: Inside the Men’s Movement* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992), p. 2.

2. George Taylor, “Longing for the Great Father,” in *Wingspan*, p. 13.

*Unfortunately, there are many fathers who are not good symbols for God. The Bible, however, also speaks of God as like a mother (Isa. 66:13). What does that add to our understanding of what it means to be sons of God?*

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*What, if anything, can you remember about your own father that makes him a symbol of the fatherhood of God?*

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*What kind of father would you like to be?*

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*How is God like that kind of Father?*

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*Can you tell a story of a reconciliation between a child and a parent to illustrate Paul's meaning?*

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*What good news might a Christian offer a secular men's group?*

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## Afterword

In a climactic moment in the film *Dead Man Walking*, the condemned murderer and rapist at last confesses his crime. He gives up his old bravado and his denial of his sin. "I done it," he admits, almost in tears. But now there is something different about him. Now he has a certain dignity. "You are a son of God," Sister Prejean tells him. "A son of God! I've been called a son of something else a lot of times, but nobody ever called me a son of God before." Paul calls this "adoption" (4:5).

Classic Presbyterian doctrine defines adoption in this way: "Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God."<sup>3</sup> Among those privileges, Presbyterians say, are, even in this life, "assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end."<sup>4</sup> And there is the life to come!

## Looking Ahead

What can help us hold on, to "stand firm" in our freedom? (5:1)?

3. "The Westminster Shorter Catechism", question 34, as found in *The Book of Confessions* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1991), 7.034.

4. *Ibid.*, question 36, 7.036.

# session

## five

### Holding On to YOUR FREEDOM

Gal. 4:8—5:14

#### Things That Do Not Matter (Gal. 5:1–12)

*May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.*

“Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” Or, as Paul puts it, “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1). As outlined in the introduction of this study guide, Galatians here begins its third and final section.

For four chapters Paul has been pleading, arguing, begging, and even warning his readers not to yield to “another gospel.” He began by cursing his opponents (1:8–9)! Those legalists had been trying to mislead the new Christians in the churches Paul had founded. They argued that living by faith and the Spirit are fine, but you *also* must keep God’s law. The Christian life, they said, is faith *and* works. At the very least Christians ought to be circumcised, they alleged. In itself the ceremony was a little thing, but it was the mark of godly men.

For two chapters Paul defended his gospel by defending his own authority. He described how he had met Christ. In ch. 3 he pleaded with his readers to remember their own initial experience of faith and to recall the promises God gave Abraham centuries before the law was invented.

In ch. 4 Paul, having earlier almost called his readers fools (3:1), now calls them friends (4:12). He reminds them how he sacrificed for them, but also how they had responded with care for him. He pleads with them like a mother (4:19). And he ends his plea with a long, rabbinic-style argument from Scripture (4:21–30). Abraham, he reminds them, had two sons. Using allegory, Paul equates the son of the slave woman Hagar with those who are slaves to law. But Isaac was Abraham’s legitimate son by his wife Sarah. Through him God promised free, unconditional blessings to all the races of the world.

What frightens Paul is that his converts, having started out so well, may now be persuaded to slip back, perhaps just a little at a time, into trying to live by rules and regulations. “How can you turn back?” he demands (4:9). “I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted” (4:11).

And so we come to this climactic plea, one that introduces the passage we will study more carefully: “For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (5:1).

#### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

*Read Gal. 5:1–12.*

*Circumcision seems like a little thing. What reasons does Paul give for opposing it so strongly?*

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*To Jews it was the mark of a true man. Have you known anyone who seemed almost to think any of the following was an important mark of a real man:*

- \_\_\_\_\_ *the right brand of shoes or shirts*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *the right model new car*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *a house in the right neighborhood*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *children in the right school*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *a “trophy” wife*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *a corner office*
- \_\_\_\_\_ *something else, such as: \_\_\_\_\_*

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*In this connection, what do you suppose he means by saying that “A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough” (5:9)?*

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*Can you name some “little” things that interfere in big ways with our living as free, adult Christians?*

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*“You were running well . . .” (5:7). If there is a runner in your group, ask him to say what things interfere or help with running. By analogy, are any of these like helps or hindrances to Christian living?*

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**Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group**

*Read Gal. 5:1–12 again and add verses 13–14. This time look for words that suggest what Paul says really does help us to live lives of Christian freedom. List some of them:*

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*Paul has denounced trust in the “works of the law” (2:16). By contrast, what is the work of faith (5:6)?*

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*Now, without using any of Paul’s words, see if you can put in your own words what Paul is saying is the main thing.*

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*In your own experience, what has helped you personally to “stand firm” in the Christian life?*

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**Afterword**

“You were running well . . .” (5:7). Jogger Jack Batten quotes a long distance runner as admitting that “there are moments of such torture and helplessness that you’d turn your mother into the Gestapo if only they’d allow you to stop.” Here are some of his suggestions for running well: “Warm up gradually.” “Don’t let the body’s complaints, as it shakes off its apathy, panic you into quitting.” “Try exercises that strengthen the hamstrings.” “Psyche yourself.” “Keep a gentle governor on yourself.” “Be flexible.” “If all else fails, recall the words of Fyodor Dostoevsky: ‘Suffering is the sole origin of consciousness.’”<sup>2</sup> Are there any analogies for those who are having difficulty “running well” (5:7) in the Christian life?

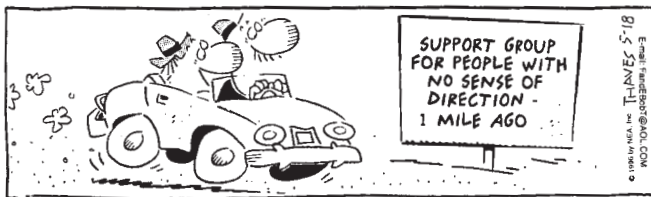


**WHAT REALLY DOES MATTER?**

*May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.*

As usual, the comic strip characters Frank and Ernest are looking lost and confused. As they drive along the highway they encounter this sign, “SUPPORT GROUP FOR PEOPLE WITH NO SENSE OF DIRECTION—1 MILE AGO.”<sup>1</sup>

FRANK & ERNEST by © Bob Thaves



In the last two chapters of Galatians, Paul makes sure that his readers will not be left without a clear sense of direction. He has told them what things do not help in the Christian life: law, circumcision, and, by implication, all striving for perfection, to get ahead of the game, to “succeed.” Those things only enslave us.

But now he will tell us what things really do help, what really does matter. There is a saying, “Remember that the main thing is the main thing!” Focusing on what really matters frees us from concern about the rest.

Perhaps as you and the others in your group look at these verses in Galatians, you may be a kind of “support group.” It probably is not for people with no sense of direction but for men who can help by reminding each other of what the right direction—the main thing—is.

1. Bob Thaves, “Frank and Ernest,” comic strip for May 18, 1996 (copyright 1996 by NEA, Inc.), as published in the Memphis Commercial Appeal, May 18, 1996. Used with permission of Bob Thaves.

2. Jack Batten, *The Complete Jogger* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), pp. 87–91.

“Who prevented you . . .?” (5:7). “Junk values reign in American culture and weaken our families, argues Mary Pipher the author of *Reviving Ophelia*. . . . She cites three main invaders:

- Abusive, intrusive media (think vulgar rap and trashy talk shows, Snoop Doggy Dogg and Ricki Lake).
- Pop psychology unhinged from common-sense moorings (labeling any imperfect family ‘dysfunctional’; putting your ‘inner child’ ahead of your real relationships).
- Isolating, addictive technology (family members in separate rooms, hooked on TV and computer games).”<sup>3</sup>

For many of us, what seems to interfere with our “running well” in the Christian life is that, out of somewhat genuine necessity, we are so busy. Perhaps we can learn from Brother Lawrence, a layman whose job was sometimes that of kitchen help, sometimes that of a purchasing agent. He wrote, “The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clutter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament. . . . It is not necessary for being with God to be always at church. We may make an oratory [a place of prayer] of our heart wherein to retire from time to time to converse with Him in meekness, humility, and love. Every one is capable of such familiar conversation with God, some more, some less. He knows what we can do. Let us begin, then.”<sup>4</sup>

“While pastoring a church in a steel town in Pennsylvania, I heard a conversation between two workers. One was very effective in all sorts of ministries and made a real difference in the lives he touched. ‘What is your secret?’ he was asked. He replied, ‘Every morning I get out of bed by installments. I am not very healthy, and my knees hit the floor first. With my knees on the floor and my elbows on the bed, I might as well pray. So I pray this prayer: ‘God, I love you. What are you up to today? Let me be a part of it!’”<sup>5</sup>

Describing what have traditionally been called “the means of grace,” things that help keep us going, *The Confession of 1967* of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) says, “Jesus Christ has given the church preaching and teaching, praise and prayer, and Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as means of fulfilling its service of God among men.”<sup>6</sup>

3. Brenda Turner, “Culture Crash,” in *USA Weekend*, April 26–28, 1996.

4. Nicholas Hermon (Brother Lawrence), *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), pp. 8, 49.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

6. Section B. “The Equipment of the Church,” as found in *The Book of Confessions*, 9.48.

“The only thing that counts is faith working through love” (5:6). T. George Harris edited *Psychology Today* and later *American Health*, both of which won Columbia University’s coveted journalism award. When asked, “What matters, anyway?” he replied, “The question of meaning has been the obsession of all of us, whether there is an essence for living. Is there a reason for getting up in the morning? Asking questions ‘Did I break a rule today?’ ‘Am I liked by others because I followed the rules?’ are not the essential questions for today’s generation. The essential questions are: ‘Why am I here?’ ‘Can I love?’ ‘Does it matter?’ ‘What is worth dying for?’ Dying is not that hard, but dying is hard if there’s nothing worth dying for.”<sup>7</sup>

“The main thing is the main thing.” Charles Olsen pictures a football player who is asked about the difficulty of playing before 65,000 people. “I only play for one person,” he replies. “That’s the coach. I play his way.”<sup>8</sup>

“Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matt. 6:33).

## Looking Ahead

Some interpreters of Galatians have said that it proposes that Christians are free. Some say that it says we are to be slaves to each other. Read Gal. 5:13–6:2 and see which seems nearer the truth.

7. T. George Harris, as quoted in *Questions of Faith*, Dolly K. Patterson, ed. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990), p. 44.

8. Charles M. Olsen, *Transforming Church Boards* (New York: The Alban Institute, Inc., 1995), p. 16.



# session *SIX*

## What To Do with

## YOUR FREEDOM

Gal. 5:13–26

### What Not To Do with Your Freedom

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.

We saw him on television shouting, “Praise the Lord!” After thirteen years, the prison door had opened; Thomas Webb was free. The sacrificial labor of a volunteer in a ministry program had brought a new trial. DNA evidence proved that Webb was innocent of the rape with which he had been charged. And now, married in prison to the woman whose work had liberated him, Webb was a free man. As I watched I wondered, what will he do now? Previously he had pleaded guilty to four charges of burglary. What will he do with his new freedom? Will he continue to live as one united in marriage to his ministering liberator?

“For freedom Christ has set us free” (5:1). Though we were guilty, the sacrifice of Christ won that freedom for us. Freedom means opportunity to choose, openness to the future, the opportunity to make decisions, being able to take responsibility for our actions. United to Christ in a kind of “marriage,” what are we to do with our freedom?

The answer of the great theologian Augustine, an answer based on Paul, is often summarized as this: “Love God, and do as you please.”

Reading between the lines, it is easy to see how some of the people in the churches to which Paul was writing were misusing their freedom. “God forgives us,” they said in effect, “so let’s live it up!” And so the passage that we study this session begins, “You were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence” (5:13).

### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 5:13–26. (As you read its warnings about the “flesh,” do note that more is meant than physical desires. “Flesh . . . means self-centered existence, egocentric existence; not [just] proclivity to carnal sins . . . but a concern focused upon oneself . . . self-indulgence . . . for Paul ‘flesh’ can express itself in non-material, indeed in religious ways.”)

Note the “works of the flesh” (5:15, 19–21, 26). Of these, which two would you say present the biggest threats to genuine freedom for people you know today?

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Compare your list with others, and say why you chose the ones you picked.

What others would you add as “things like these” (5:21)?

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What truth do you suppose there is in Paul’s warnings in 5:15 and 21?

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What do you suppose Paul means when he says that those who belong to Christ have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (5:24)?

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### WHAT TRULY FREE MEN DO WITH THEIR FREEDOM

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.

Here is a riddle right out of classic Reformation theology. Which of the following is true:

\_\_\_\_\_ “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.”

or

\_\_\_\_\_ “A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

Take a vote before you read on. . . .

1. C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Philadelphia: the Westminster Press, 1985), p. 73.

2. Martin Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian,” as found in Martin Luther, *Three Treatises*, translated by W. A. Cambert, revised by Harold J. Grimm (Fortress Press, revised edition 1970), p. 277.

You were right, of course: Martin Luther wrote that *both* are true. The first four chapters of Galatians were written to present the first half of that paradox. The last two chapters focus on the second. “For freedom Christ has set us free” (5:1). That is how Paul summarizes chs. 1–4. But “through love be slaves to one another” summarizes chs. 5 and 6. Life lived not by law, but by the Spirit of Christ is the life of love. That is why Augustine could write, “Love God, and do as you please.” “We who live by the Spirit,” have been given a new birth of freedom. So, Paul urges, “let us also be guided by the Spirit” (5:25). Let the Spirit of the one who loved us show us what to do with our freedom.

## Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

*To see what contrasts with “the works of the flesh” read Gal. 5:22–25. Can you tell the group of an act you have observed that exemplified one of those “fruits of the Spirit”?*

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*Why do you suppose Paul speaks of the “works” of the flesh but the “fruits” of the Spirit? What, if anything, is the difference between working and bearing fruit?*

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*Insisting that we are not saved by good works, Luther nevertheless wrote, “Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works.”<sup>3</sup> In what way, if any, does this help explain Paul’s meaning about “fruit”?*

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*Read again 5:13. How can it be true that Christians are free and at the same time “slaves to one another”?*

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3. Ibid., p. 297.

*Read again Gal. 5:14. In his highly controversial Situation Ethics, Joseph Fletcher, citing this verse, wrote: “Christian situation ethics has only one norm or principle or law . . . that is binding and unexceptional, always good and right regardless of the circumstances. That is ‘love’—the agape of the summary commandment to love God and the neighbor. Everything else without exception, all laws and rules and principles and ideals and norms, are only contingent, only valid if they happen to serve love in any situation.”<sup>4</sup> Fletcher gives examples which he feels demonstrate that it is sometimes right even to steal or kill, provided one does this out of love. Do you think Paul would agree, or is that an example of misusing “your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence”?*

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*What verses or ideas in Galatians, if any, can you find to support Augustine’s maxim, “Love God, and do as you please”?*

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## Afterword

Commenting on *Situation Ethics*, Joseph F. Green wrote, “The New Testament not only stresses love as the foundation of ethics, but it repeatedly and emphatically goes beyond this to say: Love works by respecting four things—human life, truth, marriage, and property. . . . The New Testament leaves room for exceptions, but it does not emphasize them. Rather it emphasizes the larger situation that demands a moral stable order. In the larger sense, we can claim to love others only as we support systems that protect life, truth, marriage, and property.”<sup>5</sup>

One commentator on Situation Ethics protested that “Do what love demands in this situation” is not a valid instruction for a boy and girl on the back seat of a car at one o’clock in the morning. Perhaps, however, that depends on what one means by *agape* love and by whether the “situation” is defined broadly enough to include their families, their future, and their other friends.

4. Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p. 30.

5. Joseph F. Green, in *The Situation Ethics Debate*, Harvey Cox, editor (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1968), pp. 78–79.

“There is no contradiction between freedom and obligation. There is no conflict between faith and love; faith expresses itself in love.”<sup>6</sup>

“Freedom never consists in the pure capacity of indulging in whatever fancy crosses one’s mind, limited only by the fancies of others. . . . The ‘authenticity’ of our lives [results] from a sincere and creative fidelity to a man’s own truth. . . . In this light every sin is a freely accepted destruction or, at least, a wounding of our own freedom. Sin is the freely intended suicide of freedom. Sin is therefore undoubtedly an enslavement, because, since it is a distortion of the real situation in which we all stand together before God, it freely surrenders the best of ourselves, our own truth, to alien and lower powers which tend to destroy it. Freedom is therefore truthfulness, faithfulness, and because of these, authenticity. Only with these does freedom grow freely into ever deeper freedom. Sin is deceit and sham liberty.”<sup>7</sup>

Make me a captive, Lord,  
And then I shall be free;  
Force me to render up my sword,  
And I shall conqueror be.

.....  
[I] cannot freely move  
Till Thou has wrought [my] chain;  
Enslave [me] with Thy matchless love,  
And deathless [I] shall reign.<sup>8</sup>

“Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet’; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:8–10; cf. Mark. 12:28–31).

## Looking Ahead

Finish reading Galatians, review this whole little book, and see if you can tell the group at the last session the best thing you have learned or been reminded of in this study.

6. C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985), p. 71.

7. Piet Fransen, S. J., “Grace and Freedom,” in *Freedom and Man*, John Courtney Murray, S. J., editor (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1965), pp. 34–35.

8. George Matheson, “Make Me a Captive, Lord,” slightly revised, as found in *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), No. 378.

# session *seven*

## Freedom FOR ALL

## Gal. 6

### Some Paradoxes of Responsibility (6:1–10)

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.

Lay theologian M. Scott Peck says that before he became a Christian he spent some years studying Zen. From it he learned that sometimes two contradictory things can both be true. This helped prepare him for the paradoxes of Christianity. Certainly one might be tempted to accuse Paul of a kind of double-talk. Here are two examples. Which of the following is right?

- “Bear one another’s burdens” (6:2); or
- “All must carry their own loads” (6:5).

In *The Good News Bible*, Annie Vallotton has drawn a delightful illustration of Gal. 6:2. In it Christian pilgrims are in a line. Each is carrying a burden on his back, but each is using his hands to help ease the burden on the back of the one in front.



Here is another paradox. Which of the following two seems right?

- “You reap whatever you sow” (6:7); or
- “[We are] justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16)?

Perhaps a partial key to understanding such paradoxes is this: a mature Christian, being free, now can and will take responsibility both for his own actions and for helping others. Our freedom in Christ is no license for irresponsibility. God is indeed gracious, but, as William Barclay translates 6:7, “Don’t deceive yourselves; no one can make a fool of God.”<sup>1</sup> Our salvation by grace is no excuse for neglecting our neighbors.

1. William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: The St. Andrew Press, second edition 1958), p. 59.

### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

Read Gal. 6:1–10. Paul gives several examples of taking responsibility. Which do you find here?

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Can you tell about a time when someone did for you what Paul describes in 6:1?

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Luther, commenting on 6:1–5, tells us to remember about our straying neighbor: “He fell yesterday; I may fall today.”<sup>2</sup> How well do you think the attitude Paul describes would work for a supervisor in a business?

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How do you resolve what might seem to be a conflict in the first paradox noted above?

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How do you resolve the second paradox?

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2. Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians*, p. 238.

## Some Broader Implications of Galatians

May be summarized by the leader or read individually by the group.

The letter to the Galatians moves from the individual to the social. Paul described his own experience, called upon his readers to remember their own, and wrote of the very personal, individual relationship we may have with Christ, a relationship that sets us free. But with chs. 5 and 6 Paul begins to write of our responsibility toward others.

There had already been hints of this. In 2:11–14 he described how when Peter had refused to eat with non-Jews Paul “opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned” (2:11). In a life lived “by faith in the Son of God” (2:20), there is no room for racial barriers. Many commentators have seen Paul suggesting, at least by implication, a whole new vision of society when he wrote, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28). In Christ, walls of injustice dividing race, class, and sex must be torn down.

Slaves do not have to take responsibility for their actions. Free men do. As free men, Paul says, we have the responsibility to “bear one another’s burdens” (6:2). This means being concerned “especially for those of the family of faith” (the church) (6:10). But, as the conclusion of the main part of the letter itself, to which all has built up, Paul writes, “Let us work for the good of *all*” (6:10; emphasis added). Using language derived from Paul, Lincoln dreamed of “a new birth of freedom” for the whole nation as he led in freeing the slaves. Using the three barriers Paul says Christ breaks down, let us consider some of the social implications of Galatians.

### Questions for Study & Discussion by the Group

• **Race:** “There is no longer Jew or Greek” (3:28). “A majority of white Americans have fundamental misconceptions about the economic circumstances of black Americans . . . with most saying that the average black is faring as well or better than the average white . . . That’s not true. Government statistics indicate that whites, on the average, earn 60 percent more than blacks, are far more likely to have medical insurance and more than twice as likely to graduate from college.”<sup>3</sup> There are equal misconceptions about Hispanics and other minorities.

3. Richard Morin in the Washington Post, as reprinted in the *Houston Chronicle*, Oct. 8, 1995.

*What significance, if any, do you see in the fact that the vast majority of whites believed O. J. Simpson was guilty of murder, but the vast majority of blacks believed that he was the victim of racism by police?*

• “There is no longer slave or free” (3:28). To her embarrassment, Kathie Lee Gifford recently discovered that much of the Wal-Mart clothing line marketed under her name was made in Honduran sweatshops, and one item was from a New York factory where workers were grossly underpaid. She has attempted to compensate some of the workers. But the richest 5 percent of our nation get 20 percent of our wealth, and more than 15 percent of Americans (nearly 40 million) live in poverty. The gap between rich and poor gets bigger every year.

*What, if anything, do you think Christians should do to try to cut down on this disparity?*

• **Sex:** “There is no longer male and female” (3:28). “A woman is raped every six minutes. Three to four million women are battered each year; every 18 seconds a woman is beaten. . . . More than 1 million women seek medical assistance for injuries caused by battering each year.”<sup>4</sup>

*To what extent, if any, do you think such crimes are caused by the tradition that the “macho” male is supposed to be the boss, rather than men and women being partners?*

*In what other areas do you believe Christians today need especially to “work for the good of all” (6:10)?*

4. *Newsweek*, July 16, 1990, the Senate Judiciary Committee.



## CONCLUSION AND REVIEW (6:11–18)

With 6:11, Paul, who usually dictated his letters, now adds a postscript in his own hand. Perhaps he writes in big letters (6:11) because he had bad eyesight (4:15; Acts 9:8). Perhaps it is because he wants to emphasize his message. Read 6:11–18. Charles Cousar says of this postscript, “Paul chooses to return to the primary reason for writing and to several terms already mentioned in the body of the letter: circumcision, flesh, law, the cross of Christ, boasting, and persecution. The section, in fact, epitomizes the heart of the letter.”<sup>5</sup>

*Note one thing you find about each of those themes in these verses.*

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*As you think back over the letter, what verses have meant most to you?*

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*What ideas have meant most to you?*

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## Afterword

I bind my heart this tide  
To the Galilean’s side,  
To the wounds of Calvary,  
To the Christ who died for me.

I bind my soul this day  
To the brother far away,  
And the brother near at hand,  
In this town, and in this land.

I bind my heart in thrall  
To the God, the Lord of all,  
To the God, the poor man’s Friend,  
And the Christ whom He did send.

I bind myself to peace,  
To make strife and envy cease,  
God, knit Thou sure the cord  
Of my thralldom to my Lord.<sup>6</sup>

Paul writes, “I have been crucified with Christ” (2:19) “From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body” (6:17). Slaves were branded. Paul’s marks came from repeated beatings. There is a legend that St. Francis lived so Christlike a life that, near its end, he had a vision of his Lord and felt the pains of the cross. When the vision ended, there in his hands, his feet, and his side were the *stigmata*, the marks of the crucifixion.

O God,  
the author of peace and lover of concord,  
to know you is eternal life,  
to serve you is perfect freedom.  
Guide us by your truth,  
and order us in all our ways,  
that we may always do what is right in your eyes;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>7</sup>

Paul ends the letter, “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen” (6:18). “And so after the storm and stress and tensivity of the letter there comes the peace of the benediction. Paul has argued and rebuked and cajoled but his last word is grace, for him the only word that mattered.”<sup>8</sup>

5. Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 148.

6. Rev. Lauchlan MacLean Watt, “The Christian Life,” as found in *Hymnal for Christian Worship* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1940), No. 169.

7. *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 124.

8. William Barclay, *The Letter to the Galatians*, p. 62.

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Among his publications are *The Layman's Guide to the New Testament* and *The Westminster Guide to the Books of the Bible*, along with numerous church school curriculum materials. He was also a columnist for *Presbyterian Outlook* for seventeen years.

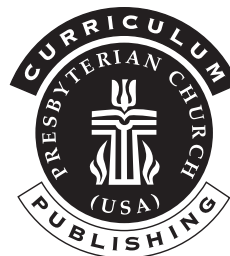
Ramsay is married to DeVere Maxwell Ramsay, an author and adjunct professor of Christian education. They have two sons and four grandsons.

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