

I. Introduction.

A. What is the nature of our freedom in Christ?

- 1. We are free from the bondage of trying to keep the Law for salvation. 1:1-5:12
4:6-7,31 2:16**
- 2. We are liberated from bondage to sin so that we are free to keep God's Law by loving and serving one another. 5:13-6:10 Rom. 6:17-18**
- 3. This new life is empowered by the Holy Spirit Who indwells us. 5:16,18,22-23,25**

B. While Scripture presents these truths in perfect proportion, professing Christians fall into the same errors against which Paul warned. 1:9 2:16 Jude 4

II. Freedom is expressed in love. v. 13

A. You have been set free through the gospel of Christ. v. 13a,1

- 1. You did not liberate yourself. Rom. 8:30 2 Th. 2:13-14**
- 2. God had a purpose in calling you. 1 Th. 4:7**
- 3. Your liberty should be used responsibly. 1 Co. 6:12 8:9 10:23-24**

B. Don't turn your freedom into an opportunity to indulge fleshly desires. v. 13b,15,19ff

- 1. Previously Paul warned against fleshly legalistic efforts towards salvation. 3:3 4:23**
- 2. Here *flesh* refers to the sinful desires of fallen human nature. 5:16-21,24 6:8**
- 3. Though we are in Christ, saved by grace and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, our old fleshly nature still fights for control of our lives. v. 17 Rom. 13:14**
- 4. The misunderstanding of Christian liberty can lead to fleshly behavior. 1 Pe. 2:16**
- 5. Don't exchange slavery to the Law for slavery to the flesh. 5:1 2 Pe. 2:19 Jo. 8:34**
- 6. Paul's chief concern here appears to be fleshly behavior in relationships. v. 15,20**

C. Use your freedom to lovingly serve one another. v. 13c

- 1. After Paul has told us that we have been set free from serving the Law, he now tells us to serve one another. 4:8-9,25**
- 2. Such loving service is not merely compelled by Law, but it is brought forth by the Spirit. v. 22,6 2 Co. 5:17 1 Jo. 4:7**
- 3. The gospel sets us free from selfishness and empowers us to love. 2:20 1 Jo. 4:19 Phil. 2:3-8 Mark 10:43-45**

III. Lovingly serve one another because love fulfills God's Law. v. 14

A. After nearly five chapters of speaking of the Law in a negative way, now Paul speaks positively of God's Law.

- 1. There is nothing bad about God's Law. Ro. 7:12**
- 2. Paul warned against the misuse of the Law. 2:16,19 3:10,17-18,21 4:21 5:3-4**

B. What is the proper use of God's Law?

- 1. The Law reveals our need of grace for justification. 3:24 2:16**
- 2. We are saved because Jesus fulfilled God's Law. Mt. 5:17**
 - a. Jesus kept the Law perfectly for us. Heb. 4:15 7:26 1 Jo. 3:5 1 Pe. 2:22**
 - b. Jesus satisfies the righteous demands of the Law by enduring its curse for us. 3:10,13 Rom. 8:1-4 2 Co. 5:21**
- 3. God's Law reveals how we who have been saved by grace can express our love to Him through our obedience. John 14:15 1 Jo. 2:3-4 Ti. 2:14 Eph. 1:4 Jer. 31:33**

C. Love is the fulfillment of the Law.

- 1. The Law is summarized in the commandment to love. 6:2 Rom. 13:8-10 Mt. 7:12 Js. 2:8 John 13:34-35 Luke 10:25ff**
- 2. Why doesn't Paul bring up the greatest commandment, to love God? Mt. 22:34ff 1 John 4:20-21**
- 3. Legalists focus on certain fine points of the Law, while missing its true significance.**
- 4. How does our motive for keeping God's Law differ from that of the legalists?**

D. Does the Law teach that you should love yourself? Lev. 19:18 2 Tim. 3:2 Eph. 5:28

E. Whom are you to love? 6:10 Luke 10:29ff Mt. 5:43ff

IV. To bite and devour one another is fleshly and contrary to gospel love. v. 15

A. Do such conflicts actually take place among Christians? Js. 4:1-2

B. Harsh words spoken in judgmental self-righteousness destroy. Pr. 11:9a 17:14 20:3

C. Instead we should speak gently and build one another up. 6:1-2 Pr. 15:1 Eph. 4:29

D. Walk in the Spirit, remembering God's grace to you, then you will love from the heart and your speech and actions will be transformed. Col. 3:12-15 Eph. 4:1ff

V. Concluding applications. 1 Th. 3:12-13

A. How can we grow in love?

B. Our love is founded upon God's love for us in Christ. 2:20 1 Jo. 4:19 Phil. 2:3-8 Mark 10:45 John 13:35,13-15

Discussion questions

- 1. What are some common errors made concerning our freedom in Christ?**
- 2. Why does Paul typically talk about what God has done for us before he talks about what we should do for God?**
- 3. How can Paul tell us that we are free and then tell us to act as servants (slaves)? v. 13**
- 4. How can Paul speak negatively of the Law and then command us to keep the Law? v. 14**
- 5. How would you answer someone who says that we should only proclaim what God has done for us and that we don't have to preach the commandments of God to Christians. ?**
- 6. In what different ways does Paul use the word *flesh* in Galatians?**
- 7. Why do Christians still struggle with the flesh, given that the Holy Spirit indwells us and we have a new nature in Christ?**
- 8. In what ways do Christians sometimes bite and devour one another?**
- 9. How does love fulfill the whole Law?**
- 10. How do you plan to apply Paul's exhortation that we love each other?**