



“The Proof of the Gospel”

Galatians 5:13-15

Theme: The Gospel frees believers to glorify God by denying oneself in order to love others.

Introduction: One of the most controversial and confused truths of Christianity is the idea of Christian liberty. Many believers have been led to believe that this means that one is free to do whatever pleases them ... as long as it does not violate any clear commandment. There is the thought that it is essential you can do whatever unless God explicitly states: “don’t!” Just a couple of verses after our text, Paul informs the believers that because of the power of the flesh to justify, rationalize, and excuse sin, one cannot “*do the things that you please.*” (v. 17). Hence, Christian liberty ought not be interpreted as living independently of self-restrictions but being freed from the power and dominion of sin so that one might bring pleasure to God in the things we do ... something impossible before the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome our flesh. This chapter is devoted to the life of the believer being lived through the influence and power of the Holy Spirit who promotes the interests of Jesus Christ in our lives. As we live for the great pleasure of Christ, the proof of the Gospel is seen in our fighting our flesh and favoring others. Essentially, our text teaches us that “**THE GOSPEL FREES BELIEVERS TO GLORIFY GOD BY DENYING ONESELF IN ORDER TO LOVE OTHERS.**”

I. GOSPEL FREEDOM FIGHTS THE FLESH – 5:13A-B

A. The Liberty from the Flesh – v. 13a

1. Paul returns to the matter of the freedom the Gospel produces – “*For you were called to freedom, brethren;*”
2. The reference to our being “*called*” [ἐκλήθητε]¹ – is a reminder of the call to salvation – out of the bondage to sin and into the ability to bring pleasure to God – **Romans 8:30; 1 Peter 2:9.**
3. In calling us to belief and transferring us out of darkness, God has liberated us through redemption so that we have “*freedom*” [ἐλευθερία] to serve Him – a reference to a state of being (as opposed to in bondage).
4. Hence, we are no longer slaves to our flesh – we have been loosed from it and are no longer obligated to serve it – cp. **Romans 6:17-18.**

B. The Liability of the Flesh – v. 13b

1. Although we have been liberated from our bondage to the flesh, the flesh continues to seek to control us.

2. The constant pull of the flesh is to lure us back into bondage so that it might continue to use our bodies to gratify its lusts.
3. Paul states that having been liberated from the obligation and bondage to the law, we cannot allow the flesh to take opportunity to defile us – “... *only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.*”
4. The term “*opportunity*” [ἄφορμή] – “**the starting-point or base of operations for an expedition.**”²
5. Our liberty cannot become a base of operations from which the flesh is given opportunity to exercise itself through indulgence.
6. Our freedom is not given to us so that we can rationalize or justify sinful activity – we aren’t saved so that we can feel free to sin!
7. Rather, we will fight our flesh and see the liability that the flesh is to our spiritual vitality.
8. When the believer sees the liability of the flesh, and rejoices in the liberty from the flesh he will know the joy of fighting the flesh to the glory of God.

II. GOSPEL FREEDOM FAVORS OTHERS – 5:13c-15

A. ... by Serving Saints – v. 13c

1. Instead of serving the flesh, those who are freed through the Gospel will seek to serve others – “... *but through love serve one another.*”
2. As we mortify our old master – the flesh – and know the joy of liberty from sin and rejoice in our new Master.
3. In this sense, “freedom in Christ” is NOT autonomy – it is a call to serve others [δουλεύω] – to perform the duties of a slave – “**to act or conduct oneself as one in total service to another, perform the duties of a slave, serve, obey.**”³
4. This was the heart of Jesus to which He has called each of us – cp. [Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:5-7.](#)
5. “*love*” causes a person to see the needs of another and do all that one can to make sure those needs are met.

B. ... by Submitting to Scripture – v. 14

1. The reason believers do this is given – our love for Jesus causes us to submit to Him and to His Word.
2. Paul states: “*For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*”
3. If you love a person – you will not be violating the Law in your treatment

² William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 158.

³ Ibid, 259.

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of them – you will not “murder ... commit adultery ... steal ... bear false witness about them ... covet your neighbor’s things ...” – [Exodus 20:13-17](#).

4. It is motivated out of devotion to Jesus, His Word, and other saints – not out of mere duty – cp. [Galatians 6:2](#).

C. ... by Safeguarding Solidarity – v.15

1. Not only will we be motivated out of love we will deliberately strive to maintain unity with other believers – *“But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.”*
2. This is the antithesis of loving one another – seeking to harm one another.
3. A person who has been freed by the Gospel will strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit through a Spirit-led life – cp. [Ephesians 4:1-3](#); [Colossians 3:14](#).

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