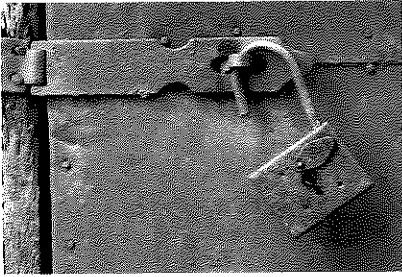


Free to Serve

LESSON 10



Topic

Liberty and love

Theme

Spiritual liberty leads to loving service.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will identify ways to serve others lovingly.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 12
- Paper and pencils

Scripture Focus

Galatians 5:2–15

Summary

Paul challenged the Galatians to use their spiritual liberty to love and serve one another.

Outline

I. True Faith Produces Love (Gal. 5:2–6)

- A. Holding to the law makes Christ unnecessary (5:2–4)
- B. Holding to Christ makes love necessary (5:5, 6)

II. False Teaching Deserves Judgment (Gal. 5:7–12)

- A. Source of false teaching (5:7, 8)
- B. Influence of false teaching (5:9)
- C. Judgment of false teaching (5:10)
- D. Rejection of false teaching (5:11, 12)

III. True Love Produces Service (Gal. 5:13–15)

- A. Principle of loving service (5:13)
- B. Basis of loving service (5:14)
- C. Contrast of loving service (5:15)

Memory Verse

*"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty;
only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another"
(Galatians 5:13).*

GETTING STARTED

Sentence Completion

Have the learners complete the following sentence: "I am glad I am free, because . . ." Comment on whether any sentence completions mentioned what a person can do for the Lord and others because he or she is free. Paul wrote about the freedom to do what pleases God.

Free Day

ASK: If you had a day free of normal responsibilities, how would you spend it? (Q1)

ASK: Have you ever freed yourself to spend a day serving others? What did you do? (Q2)

In his letter to Galatia, Paul wrote about the freedom that believers enjoy in Christ. However, this freedom is not liberty to do anything we please. It is liberty to do what pleases God. Liberty is not license; it is freedom to serve others in love.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

In the first four chapters of Galatians, Paul argued that Christ liberates believing sinners from spiritual bondage. Christians should not live under bondage to sin or to a set of regulations. Instead, they should stand fast in the liberty Christ has given them (Gal. 5:1).

Knowing the Judaizers would be quick to criticize this exhortation, Paul devoted the final two chapters to the argument that living in liberty means living in love. A spiritually liberated believer does not live for self but rather serves others in love.

I. True Faith Produces Love (Gal. 5:2–6)

A. Holding to the law makes Christ unnecessary (5:2–4)

Paul was circumcised (Phil. 3:5), and he had had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3); so he did not reject circumcision in itself. However, for the Judaizers, circumcision was an essential part of a religious system that required obedience to the law. Their position agreed with some other Jewish Christians, who said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1).

The real issue was whether Christ's sacrifice on the cross was sufficient for salvation. If the Judaizers were correct in insisting on circumcision, then Christ's death was not sufficient in itself to save anyone. By adding the law to the gospel, the Judaizers had actually subtracted Christ from the gospel (Gal. 5:2).

READ: Galatians 5:2, 3.

The Judaizers taught that both Christ and keeping the law were essential. But

Paul pointed out that if any part of the law were required, then all of the law was required (5:3). The Judaizers had no reasonable basis to insist on one aspect of the law, circumcision, unless they were also going to require all of the Old Testament regulations.

The inevitable conclusion of accepting the Jewish law was the Galatians' abandonment of grace. Depending on circumcision and the law to please God implied that the redemptive work of Christ was unnecessary for salvation. Those who trusted the law to justify them were no longer trusting God's gracious provision of salvation through Christ (5:4).

ASK: Agree or disagree: a person can be saved if he or she trusts in Christ and something else for salvation. Why? (Q3) *Our faith must recognize that Christ alone saves us from our sin.*

B. Holding to Christ makes love necessary (5:5, 6)

In contrast with Judaism, Christianity is activated by faith in God. The law left sinners in a state of doubt and fear, for no one could continually live according to the law's demands. On the other hand, the believer's faith rests in God, Who has promised to bestow His blessings upon those who trust in Him.

READ: Assign the following verses to be read by learners: Acts 16:31; Romans 5:1; Ephesians 6:16; Philippians 4:6, 7; James 1:5, 6. **ASK:** What blessings of faith are identified in these verses? (Q4) *Salvation; justification; victory over temptation; peace; wisdom.*

The Jews put their confidence in religious works such as circumcision. But their confidence was misplaced. Circumcision and other fleshly works cannot make a person righteous. For Christ's righteousness comes only through faith in Him (Gal. 5:5, 6).

READ: Galatians 5:5, 6. **ASK:** How does a secure faith help a believer grow spiritually? (Q5) *A secure faith allows a believer to look beyond his salvation to deeper truths and to focus on serving God out of gratitude for saving him.*

ASK: How might an insecure faith hinder a person from serving God? (Q6) *An insecure faith causes a person to look inwardly with doubt and ignore his need to serve God and others.*

Love should motivate Christians to do good works. After all, when God saves us, He fills us with His love. Our responsibility and privilege is to let His love flow through our lives as service to others. The sign of the Christian is not circumcision but love (5:6).

READ: John 13:35.

II. False Teaching Deserves Judgment (Gal. 5:7–12)

A. Source of false teaching (5:7, 8)

Circumcision in Judaism was an outward sign that the person was accepting the responsibility of fulfilling the law. That would put a Jewish man into a debt that no one could ever hope to pay. Some believe the statement, "Ye are fallen from grace" (5:4), suggests that a Christian may lose his or her salvation. However, in the context, Paul was simply telling the Galatians that adding law to the gospel shortchanges what Christ has done by grace.

Paul had led the first Galatian believers to Christ. As a result of his ministry, people had been saved and churches established. Using the picture of an athlete to describe the Galatians' initial progress as Christians, Paul recalled, "Ye did run well" (Gal. 5:7). At the start, they knew the truth of God's Word and lived according to it. However, something went wrong.

Paul knew that the Judaizers were the guilty party, but he asked a question to focus the Galatians' attention on the source of their problem. "Who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" he asked in verse 7. The Greek word for "hinder" was used to describe the tearing up of a road so that an advancing army could not use it. The Judaizers were sabotaging the truth Paul had taught the Galatians so they would not advance in their faith.

ASK: What activities or people might hinder believers today in the same way that the Judaizers hindered the Galatians? (Q7) *An atmosphere of judging outward appearance and holding people to standards while ignoring the condition of their hearts.*

READ: Hebrews 12:2. **ASK:** Where should our focus be as we run the Christian race? (Q8) Jesus Christ.

In Galatians 5:8, Paul affirmed that God was not the source of the false teaching. God had called the Galatians into the grace of Christ (Gal. 1:6), but the Judaizers were leading them away from it. Their false gospel was hostile to God's good news.

B. Influence of false teaching (5:9)

Paul realized that some of his readers would accuse him of making a mountain out of a molehill. After all, they would reason, the Judaizers were not that different, and they comprised only a small number of Christians. Why not just overlook this minor difference of opinion? But Paul saw the matter in a different light. He quoted a proverbial saying, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (5:9). It does not take much yeast to affect a large lump of dough. In the same way, a little falsehood over time will produce catastrophic results because it spreads to affect the whole.

Paul used the analogy of leaven in 1 Corinthians 5 to admonish the Corinthians to deal with a sinner in their assembly. Infection in the church will spread if it is not dealt with early.

C. Judgment of false teaching (5:10)

Throughout his letter, Paul wrote forcefully and directly to the Galatians. He expressed his amazement that they were considering another teaching so soon after accepting the gospel of Christ (1:6). He called them "foolish," and asked who had bewitched them (3:1). Nevertheless, he also revealed his confidence in them. His many arguments indicated that they had not become firmly entrenched in error, but rather that they were confused and deluded. So, Paul reassured them, as well as indirectly exhorted them. He wrote, "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded" (5:10). He knew that the Galatians were genuinely saved, and he was confident that they would respond to his admonition and recommit themselves to the truth of Christ. They would cast out the leaven of the Judaizers.

On the other hand, the Judaizers would have to face God's judgment. No matter who those false teachers were, they were opposing God's truth and therefore would have to pay the penalty (5:10).

READ: Galatians 5:10. **ASK:** Why should you never give up on fellow believers whose spiritual progress seems to lag? (Q9) *God may be working in the person's heart in ways that are not yet apparent. God is longsuffering toward us. The extra time and effort are worth it both now and in eternity.*

ASK: How could a believer show his or her reliance on God to draw wayward believers back to Himself? (Q10) *Pray for the wayward believers; instruct them patiently; show them Christlike love.*

D. Rejection of false teaching (5:11, 12)

READ: Galatians 5:11.

In Galatians 5:11, Paul countered the allegation that his message was like the Judaizers' message. He reasoned that if that were the case, the Jews would not be persecuting him.

ASK: Since the Christian life means freedom to serve God, how should we respond if we are persecuted for our faith? (Q11) *We should trust God for wisdom and strength while we rejoice to be counted worthy of suffering for His name.*

The Judaizers were trying to unite two opposing teachings. Paul challenged the Galatians to choose Christ and reject the false teaching. To try to adhere to both Christianity and Judaism was foolish. If the Judaizers were going to take this half-step away from grace by insisting on circumcision, why didn't they go the whole way and cut themselves off totally from God's people (5:12)?

Paul was being persecuted because his message of Christ opposed the Jews' teaching. The Jews spoke of earning salvation by keeping the law. Paul preached that salvation comes only by God's grace through our faith.

III. True Love Produces Service (Gal. 5:13–15)

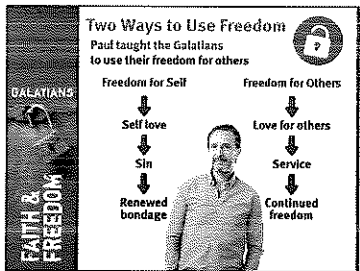
READ: Galatians 5:13.

A. Principle of loving service (5:13)

The danger persisted that the Galatians might misunderstand or misapply what Paul wrote. This danger exists today too. We know that Christ has made us free, but we must not assume that we are free to sin. Liberty is not a synonym for license. Freedom in Christ does not give us a carte blanche to do whatever we please. Paul balanced his teaching about Christian liberty with a plea to "use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (5:13).

The law demanded service under the threat of punishment, but Christ's death freed believers from that bondage. However, our freedom is the freedom to serve God and other people. Our motivation is love, which involves a voluntary decision to help someone in need, just as Christ chose to die on the cross for sinners (1 John 4:9–11). On the other hand, when Christian liberty is abused, it turns into license

and an excuse to indulge one's sinful flesh. Instead of following God's plan, license furthers one's own ambitions. License feeds selfishness and insults God's grace.



RESOURCE: Display resource 12. Using our freedom in Christ for ourselves leads to a love of self, sin, and bondage. But using our freedom in Christ for others leads to a love for others, service, and continued freedom.

Even though we Christians do not live under the bondage of the Old Testament law, we are still under obligation to love. Our love for God is seen in our obedience to His Word. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). So, Christian liberty chooses to love others rather than just oneself.

B. Basis of loving service (5:14)

READ: Galatians 5:14.

The Judaizers insisted on the need to keep the Jewish law. However, in their zeal for regulations such as circumcision they overlooked what God values most. He values love, deeming it the fulfillment of the law (Gal. 5:14).

READ: Matthew 22:37–40.

Jesus said that the whole law could be summarized in two great commandments: loving God completely and loving your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37–40). These central commandments revealed what God desired and demanded of His people.

C. Contrast of loving service (5:15)

READ: Galatians 5:15.

In ancient cities wild dogs roamed as scavengers. They ate garbage and often fought over it. Selfish believers, who serve themselves rather than one another in love tend to bite and devour one another. If they persist in such unloving behavior, they will destroy one another. Sharing God's love would produce the harmony the Galatian churches needed.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

Use the following activities to help persuade learners to use their spiritual freedom to serve the Lord and others.

Loving Service

ASK: Who are the people in your life God has called you to love? (Q12)

ASK: Focus on two people in your list and determine ways to love them anew this week. (Q13)

ASK: How will you lovingly serve God this week? (Q14)

Love Notes

Have a volunteer read Psalm 116:1. Give each learner a sheet of paper and a pencil and instruct learners to write a note expressing love for the Lord. The note should begin, "I love the Lord, because . . ." On the reverse side, the learner should complete the sentence, "Because I love the Lord, I will . . ."

Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Lovingly serve others and God.

Encourage your learners to memorize Galatians 5:13. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.

Living by Faith

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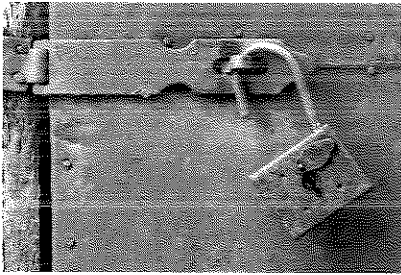
13.

GALATIANS

FAITH & FREEDOM



Walk in the Spirit



Topic

Fruit of the Spirit

Theme

Spiritual victory is achieved by walking in the Spirit.

Desired Learner Response

The learner will rely on the Holy Spirit for victory.

Materials

- Resources 1 and 14
- Glove and book

Scripture Focus

Galatians 5:16–26

Summary

The flesh, the sinful nature, stimulates the Christian to sin. It produces a variety of evil works. The Holy Spirit, Who dwells in the Christian, stimulates him or her to please God. The Spirit produces holy qualities in the Christian who cooperates with Him. No one can defeat the flesh by following a set of regulations, but he or she can enjoy victory by submitting to the Spirit.

Outline

I. Principle of Spiritual Victory (Gal. 5:16–18)

- A. Dynamic of walking in the Spirit (5:16)
- B. Internal struggle for control (5:17)
- C. Power for victory (5:18)

II. Production of Spiritual Victory (Gal. 5:19–23)

- A. Works of the flesh (5:19–21)
- B. Fruit of the Spirit (5:22, 23)

III. Practice of Spiritual Victory (Gal. 5:24–26)

- A. Remember who you are (5:24)
- B. Walk in the Spirit (5:25)
- C. Deny the flesh (5:26)

Memory Verses

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24, 25).