

Free In Christ!

By

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We are Free!

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.”
Galatians 5:1

Free in Christ! That’s what we are. Free men and women, boys and girls. Freedom is a great theme in Paul’s writings. Earlier in his letter to the Galatians, he wrote: “And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage).” (Galatians 2:4). What was Paul talking about? Members of the Jewish congregation in Jerusalem had heard about Paul’s teaching that Jews and Gentiles did not have to be circumcised any longer. They no longer had to obey the Law of Moses. This angered and frustrated many. Several went to Antioch to see for themselves. Some of the Jews taught the Gentile Christians that “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.” (Acts 15:1) Paul went with the Jews to Jerusalem to set the record straight.

Paul understood what it was to be a slave to sin. He knew all people were dead in their sins and could only follow the ways of the world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air. He knew they could only gratify the cravings of their sinful nature and follow its desires and thoughts. (Ephesians 2:1-3) That’s the “natural” way of things. Paul also knew that **in Christ** people were set free from sin and had become slaves to righteousness. (Romans 6:18) Paul understood clearly why God had saved us: “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” (NIV)

God does not want us to be slaves to sin any longer. There’s no need for it. We are FREE! Why would a former slave want to taste freedom and then run back to the shackles that once held him? Why? Doesn’t make any sense. But that’s exactly what Christians around the world do every day. They put themselves back into slavery. How? By believing the lies of Satan and the world. Too many Christians believe they aren’t good enough for God, that they don’t do enough for God, that God isn’t pleased with them unless they do certain religious

things, that other Christians are better than them, that God will judge them if they don't do the things other Christians tell them to do. As Paul wrote, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you." (Galatians 5:7-8)

Jesus told His disciples:

"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:31-32

The disciples were free within the framework of holding to Christ's teaching. They would know even more freedom when the Spirit of God came into them later. Today we are free within the framework of God's Love and Grace. We have received "every spiritual blessing" because we are **in Christ** and He is **in us**, not because of something we've done. The problems come into Christians' lives as they put themselves back under the Law. God doesn't put us under the Law. We do it to ourselves. Paul told the Galatian Christians:

"Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt* to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Galatians 5:2-4

Grace is about Freedom, Love and Joy. Law is about slavery, guilt and fear.

Christians feel guilt and defeat every day of their lives because of the lies of the world and, unfortunately, other Christians. Look at what Paul wrote:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:1-2

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Far too many Christians are convinced they can approach God only through a particular doctrine, ministry, denomination or congregation. That's **NOT** what it means to be “in Christ.” Paul wrote:

“... in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” Ephesians 3:12

God has called us to live a Holy life. True. God created us in Christ Jesus to do good works. Again, true. The question before us is what's the motivation to do these things. Is it fear and guilt? Is it obedience to the Law? Or is it love and gratitude? Is it response to God's Grace? Yes, it's God's Love and Grace that motivates us. We serve God because we **can**, not because we have to. We understand what it means to be “in” Christ. Every Christian should share Paul's passion in this matter.

Freedom from Bondage

God frees (liberates) all of His children of Grace from all spiritual bondage. We are truly free in Jesus Christ! So, what do we do with our freedom?

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13

First, we must grasp the FACT that we are **FREE!** Second, we must understand why we're free. God made us free. That's fact. His Grace dictates that we are no longer under the supervision or power of Law and sin. We are now under the control and power of His Grace. In what direction does God want us to go with our freedom? Indulging our sinful nature? No! God's direction for us is the direction of **servicing others in love**. For Christians hung up on obeying the Law, Paul reminded them:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Galatians 5:14

What happens to Christians who get hung up on sin, law and guilt? They destroy each other. Paul wrote:

“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” Galatians 5:15

If you've been a Christian for even just a few years, you've seen this. Christians tearing into each other like hungry lions. Why? Because they get hung up on sin and law. It leads to guilt, frustration, anger, jealousy, and eventually hatred. It tears Christians and their churches to pieces as surely as we breathe to live. Satan accomplishes his goals through God's own people. Satan did it to the Galatians and he's still doing it today. When are we going to wise up and see sin and law for what it is? It's the great divider in the church. It's what keeps us from enjoying God and each other.

Love, given freely from a life lived free, is the Holy Goal. It's the essence of GraceLife: "to serve one another in love." It's what God's Spirit will produce in us when we open ourselves to the freedom He has given us.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

Nobody can stand against the real work of God's Spirit! It's honest and real. It's true. It is our strength and hope. It's what makes a lasting difference in our world. Exercising Spiritual Freedom in a Spirit of Love means we are "other-centered" and not "self-centered." By that, I don't mean we deny and denigrate ourselves. We are best able to serve others in love when we love ourselves. It is from a heart of self-love and appreciation of what we are in Christ that we can reach out to a world filled with people who do not love God, themselves or others. We have something very special to give them: the knowledge and experience of God's Grace. We share that gift best when we are filled with God's Spirit and overflow with the fruits of our relationship with Him.

Part of exercising our Spiritual Freedom is looking out for others. Paul told the Corinthians to "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak." (NIV) If you really love someone, you won't do things that cause them to stumble and fall. You won't purposely try to hinder their relationship with God. Love leads us to do the **right** things for ourselves and others. If we really love others, ministry becomes very easy. It's not a struggle to do good things for people we love. Christ "in" us will love others in a way no one can reproduce. It is a supernatural ability because the Supernatural Christ is in us loving others through us.

The world we live in is in big trouble. It desperately needs to hear from God. How does that happen? When Christians show the world the love they have for each other. That's where it starts. The world is looking for evidence that God is real. We claim to know God, so the world watches what we do. What are we telling the world when we bite and devour each other? What message are we sending when we are mean and cruel toward members of our own spiritual family? It

sends the opposite message of the Truth of our salvation.

Our Lord said it so well when He walked among men and taught His disciples the meaning of following Him:

“Honor your father and *your* mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 19:19

“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:39

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” John 13:1

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” John 15:12-13

“These things I command you, that you love one another.” John 15:17

“I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” John 17:23

It's time for us to revel in the **Freedom** God has so freely given us, and then turn that **Freedom** toward each other. God wants us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ and serve them in a unified spirit of love. God will bless that **Unity** and let the world know that God the Father sent God the Son with the **Gospel** of **Love** and **Grace**.

In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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