

GALATIANS: CHARTER OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (study 6)

OUR FREEDOM IN CHRIST

IN THE LORD -- BUT IN THE FLESH OR IN THE SPIRIT?

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge your sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. GAL.5:13

FREEDOM IN CHRIST (5:1-12)

5:1-3 What bondage do those fall into who attempt to be justified by obedience?

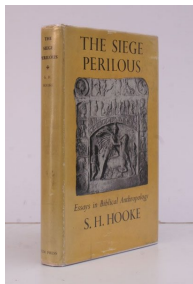
[1] [5:1] Paul repeatedly urges his readers to stand fast – in the faith (1 Cor.16:13), in one spirit (Phil.1:27), in the Lord (Phil.4:1; cf. 1 Thes.3:8). [Bruce 226]

[2] [5:1] Having escaped from the slavery of Heathenism, they would fain [be glad to] bow to the slavery of Judaism. [Lightfoot 185]

5:4-6 How are grace (v.4), faith (vv.5,6) and love (v.6) ONLY available

Is the 'old nature' dead in the Christian?

Some teachers maintain that the Christian has no inner conflict, no civil war within himself, because (they say) his flesh has been eradicated and his old nature is dead ... But the flesh and the Spirit remain, and the conflict between them is fierce and unrelenting. Indeed, one may go further and say that this is a specifically Christian conflict. We do not deny that there is such a thing as moral conflict in non-Christian people, but we assert that it is fiercer in Christians because they possess two natures – flesh and Spirit – in irreconcilable antagonism. [Stott 146]



Paul does not simply mean that the nine virtues which make up the fruit of the Spirit are not forbidden by law; he means that when these qualities are in view we are in a sphere with which law has nothing to do. Law may prescribe certain forms of conduct and prohibit others, but love, joy, peace and the rest cannot be legally enforced. 'A vine does not produce grapes by Act of Parliament; they are the fruit of the vine's own life; so the conduct which conforms to the standard of the Kingdom is not produced by any demand, not even God's, but it is the fruit of that divine nature which

God gives as the result of what he has done in and by Christ' (S.H. Hooke, 'What is Christianity? In *The Siege Perilous*) [Bruce 255]

'in Christ', but not to those who trust in works-righteousness? (1 Cor. 4:7; Eph.2:8; Rom.5:5,10)

[3] [5:5] Does this emphasis on faith in Christ mean that we can live and act as we please? Is the Christian life so completely a life of faith that good works and obedience to the law simply do not matter? No. Paul is very careful to avoid giving any such impression. Notice the phrases which I have so far omitted. Verse 5: "For *through the Spirit*, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness.' That is to say, the Christian life is not only a life of faith; it is a life in the Spirit, and the Holy Spirit who indwells us produces good works of love, as the apostle goes on later to explain (verses, 22,23). Verse 6: 'faith *working through love*.' It is not that works of love are added to faith as a second and subsidiary ground of our acceptance with God, but that the faith which saves is a faith which works, a faith which issues in love. [Stott 134]

***Faith is the root,
love is the fruit***

[4] [5:6] ... in keeping with the general teaching of this and other Pauline letters, faith is viewed as the root, love as the fruit. [Bruce 232]

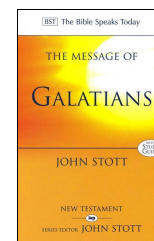
5:7,8 Note that TRUTH too is here inseparably connected to being 'in Christ' (v.6)

5:9,10 'In the Lord' what leaven will not be tolerated? (1:6,7)

[5] His sentiment sounds to our ears both coarse and malicious. We may be quite sure, however, that it was due neither to an intemperate spirit, nor to a thirst for revenge, but to his deep love for the people of God and the gospel of God. I venture to say that if we were as concerned for God's church and God's Word as Paul was, we too would wish that false teachers might cease from the land. [Stott 136]

Have we truly 'crucified the flesh'?

[5:17] How do you kill the flesh? The best way is to starve it to death. Don't put yourself in the place to be tempted. Don't give the flesh anything that appeals to it. Don't put yourself in a position to have the flesh – your human inclination for sin – entertained. [MacArthur 108]



So, Paul says, if we crucified the flesh, we must leave it there to die. We must renew every day this attitude towards sin of ruthless and uncompromising rejection. In the language of Jesus, as Luke records it, every Christian must 'take up his cross *daily*' (Lk.9:23). So widely is this biblical teaching neglected, that it needs to be further enforced. The first great secret of holiness lies in the degree and the decisiveness of our repentance. If besetting sins persistently plague us, it is either because we have never truly repented, or because, having repented, we have not maintained our repentance. It is as if, having nailed our old nature to the cross, we keep wistfully returning to the scene of its execution. We begin to fondle it, to caress it, to long for its release, even to try to take it down again from the cross ... We have declared war on it; we are not going to resume negotiations. [Stott 151]

5:11,12 Is Paul's 'parting wish' for the Judaizers mere meanness of spirit, or justified? (i.e. Why is the cross a stumbling-block? - 1 Cor.1:23)

[6] [5:11] The good news of Christ crucified is still a 'scandal' (Gk. *skandalon*, stumbling-block), grievously offensive to the pride of men. It tells them that they are sinners, rebels, under the wrath and condemnation of God, that they can do nothing to save themselves or secure their salvation, and that only through Christ crucified can they be saved. If we preach this gospel, we shall arouse ridicule and opposition. Only if we 'preach circumcision', the merits and the sufficiency of man, shall we escape persecution and become popular. [Stott 137]

[7] [5:11] To be shut up to receiving salvation from the crucified one, if it is to be received at all, is an affront to all notions of proper self-pride and self-help – and for many people this remains a major stumbling-block in the gospel of Christ crucified. If I myself can make some small contribution, something even so small as the acceptance of circumcision, then my self-esteem is uninjured. [Bruce 238]

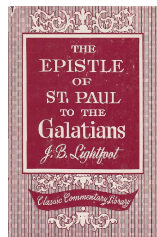
***The cross is an affront
to men's pride and
self-esteem***

[8] [5:12] One of the pagan gods of the day was Cybele. It was the practice of the priests and worshipers of Cybele to be castrated as a sign of their devotion. [MacArthur 101]

FREEDOM IN THE SPIRIT (5:13-26)

5:13-15 Is freedom FROM Law an excuse for self-indulgence?

[9] [5:13] Indeed, such 'liberty', an unbridled license, is not true liberty at all; it is another and more dreadful form of bondage, a slavery to the desires of our fallen nature. So Jesus said to the Jews: 'every one who commits sin is a slave to sin' (Jn. 8:34), and Paul described us in our pre-conversion state as 'slaves to various passions and pleasures' (Tit. 3:3). [Stott 141]



[10] [5:13] St Paul's meaning may be expressed by a paraphrase thus; 'You desire to be in bondage: I too recommend to you a *bondage*, the subservience of mutual *love*. Temper your liberty with this bondage, and it will not degenerate into licence.' [Lightfoot 208]

5:16-18 What real freedom of choice do Christians actually have? (Rom.8:1-15)

[11] [5:16-25] This section in which Paul elaborates this theme is simply full of the Holy Spirit. He is mentioned seven times by name. He is presented as our Sanctifier who alone can oppose and subdue our flesh (verses 16,17), enable us to fulfill the law so that we are delivered from its harsh dominion (verse 18) and cause the fruit of righteousness to grow in our lives (verses 22,23). So the enjoyment of Christian liberty depends on the Holy Spirit. True, it is Christ who sets us free. But without the continuing, directing, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit our liberty is bound to degenerate into licence. [Stott 145]

5:19-21 With which works of the flesh did the Galatians apparently have a problem?

[12] The fact, however, that the list includes not only those vices which belong to the stock-in-trade of Jewish polemic against paganism but enmity, quarrelsomeness, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party spirit and envy, suggests that it was in these forms that the 'flesh' manifested itself in the Galatian Christians (cf. v.26). For Paul, as R. Jewett wisely points out, flesh 'is not rooted in sensuality but rather in religious rebellion in the form of self-righteousness which was in his terms a "boasting in one's own flesh"' [Bruce 250]

5:22,23 What does Paul's choice of 'fruit of ...' as metaphor make vivid as to our freedom in Christ?

[13] [5:22,23] So we may say that the primary direction of 'love, joy, peace' is Godward, of 'patience, kindness, goodness' manward, and of 'faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' selfward. [Stott 148]

[14] [5:22] One could well believe that love, joy and peace formed a triad in early Christian language, like faith, hope and love ... In the upper-room discourse of the Fourth Gospel Jesus gives his disciples 'my peace' (Jn. 14:27), bids them abide in 'my love' (Jn. 15:9f.) and desires that they know 'my joy' (Jn 15:11) ... Because God is faithful, because he can be relied upon, his people are to be faithful too, and the Spirit enables them to be so. [Bruce 253-254]

[15] [5:23] [*pistis*, faith] seems not to be used here in its theological sense 'belief in God.' Its position points rather to the passive meaning of faith, 'trustworthiness, fidelity, honesty,' as in Matt.23:23, Tit.2:10; comp. Rom.3:3. [Lightfoot 213]

5:24-26 Though we live in the Spirit (by God's choice), how may we fail to 'walk in the Spirit'?

[16] [5:25] This will be seen in our whole way of life – in the leisure occupations we pursue, the books we read and the friendships we make. Above all in what older authors called 'a diligent use of the means of grace', that is, in a disciplined practice of prayer and Scripture meditation, in fellowship with believers who provoke us to love and good works, in keeping the Lord's day as the Lord's day, and in attending public worship and the Lord's supper. In all these ways we occupy ourselves in spiritual things. It is not enough to yield passively to the Spirit's control; we must also walk actively in the Spirit's way. Only so will the fruit of the Spirit appear. [Stott 154]

[17] [5:6] These words [*di agapes energoumene*, working through love] bridge over the gulf which seems to separate the language of St Paul and St James. Both assert a principle of practical energy, as opposed to a barren, inactive theory. [Lightfoot 205]

***"... a diligent use of
the means of grace"***

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