

The Epistle to the Galatians
Lesson #18 • Galatians 5:1-6

“Christian Liberty • Part 1”

• HANDOUT •

▶ With lesson #18, we begin Paul's third section of his Epistle to the Galatians. This section shifts the emphasis to a new theme: Christian Ethics.

As we reflect on Paul's letter, thus far, we see that Paul has established two important truths in his appeal to the Galatians:

1. Paul has defended his apostleship, including a defense of his right to preach the Gospel with or without the support of any other human authority.
2. Paul has defended the Gospel itself, teaching that it is by grace alone, entirely apart from human works, by which the Christian is freed from the curse of sin and bondage to the law and brought into a right relationship with God.

▶ Now Paul introduces his third topic of discussion: Christian Liberty.

▶ Paul emphatically stresses that Christian liberty is ***not*** a license to sin. **Rather, it is a liberty that leads the Christian into a desire for holiness before God, through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

Note: We ended our last lesson with a summarizing statement from verse 31 of chapter 4. We are going to start this study with the same verse because the verse also serves as a connection to the opening thoughts of Chapter 5.

**The opening verse of Chapter 5
becomes the Key Verse of the entire Epistle to the Galatians ...**

Galatians 4:31 & 5:1 • So, dear brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman; we are children of the free woman. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

Q: Why is the statement “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” considered the key verse of the entire Epistle?

Q: What are the two declarations Paul makes in this passage?

- 1.
- 2.

Q: In this passage, Paul uses the term “yoke of slavery.” How would the Jewish & Christian communities differ in their views of what it meant to be “yoked?”

Q: Why does Paul continually return to the concept of the Law making a person a slave? He emphatically stated this in the first four chapters. Why does he continue to make the same point, over and over again?

Galatians 5:2-3 • Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

Q: In Greek, the phrase “mark my words” is an adverb delivered as a strong exclamation and points to something that is of immense and critical importance. [In all of Paul's writings, it is found only here.] To what issues does Paul use this phrase?

Q: Why does Paul say that Christ had no value to those who “let themselves be circumcised?”

Q: Paul's words: “Again I declare” is written as a warning. What is the warning?

Q: What is Paul condemning: the act of circumcision, or the theology of circumcision?

Q: Wasn't Paul acting hypocritically when he had Timothy circumcised? [ref: Acts 16]

Q: What is significant about Paul saying: ***if you let yourselves be circumcised...*** ”

Galatians 5:4 • You who are trying to be justified by Law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

Q: What does the statement, "You have fallen away from grace" mean?

"Fallen away" or the better alternative: _____ speaks about:

► This is **not:**

Q: How does one "fall out or away from the gift of Grace?"

Q: Does this mean you can lose your salvation?

Paul gives us his last full statement on the principle of justification by faith in this Epistle. Up to this point, Paul has been directing his comments to the Galatians. Now we see a change. He has gone from the pronoun "you" and it becomes "we."

Galatians 5:5-6 · But, by faith, we eagerly await, through the Spirit, the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

Q: What does this change in pronoun from "you" to "we" indicate?

Q: There are a series of key phrases in the above verses which reflects significant theological importance. "Through the Spirit, By Faith, Eagerly Awaits, and the Righteousness for which we hope. What do each of these word phrases mean?"

	Key Phrase	Meaning
1	Through the Spirit	
2	By Faith	
3	Eagerly Awaits	
4	Righteousness for which we hope.	

Q: What does Paul mean when he says that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value? He just told the Galatians not to be circumcised. Now he says it has no value. How do we reconcile this confusing and seemingly contradictory statement?

Q: What does Paul mean when he says: “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love?”

Romans 6:1-2 · What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?

Q: What three great eternal theological terms appear together in verses 5 and 6 of this chapter in Paul's letter to the Galatians?

1.

2.

3

Q: What is the overall message of this passage?

In part 2 of Christian Liberty, Paul will once again shift his emphasis, this time by contrasting the message of the false teachers with the message that Paul is teaching. This is where we will pick up our study next time ...



Next Time · Lesson #19

“Christian Liberty • Part 2”

Galatians 5:7-12

