

1. Freedom is a concept all Americans are interested in

- A. Our national anthem “The land of the **FREE** and the home of the brave”
 - B. Thursday watched Donald Trump at Arlington laying wreath at tomb of unknown soldier
 - 1). When they played taps – what a reminder of the cost of freedom
- Point:** Freedom is an important foundational concept to this country
- A. It is an extremely important concept for the Christian also

Why we spent some time looking at what freedom is

 - 1). Free from the guilt of sin – Free from the penalty of sin

Free to enjoy our relationship with God as Father – free from the tyranny of the devil
 - 2). We are free from the law – relating to God through our own inconsistent performance
 - a). We relate to Him through the perfection of Christ given to us
 - B. So were called to this wonderful freedom! From guilt that would keep us away

Into this relationship with God where He bids us to draw near
- Thought:** But there are always those who want to misuse the teaching of grace and freedom
- A. So Paul now brings in a necessary balance
 - 1). Showing Christian freedom is NOT a freedom from every kind of restraint
 - a). It is NOT a freedom to live in any way we please
 - B. It is freedom from having to earn our acceptance with God
 - 1). It is freedom from condemnation when we fail
 - a). BUT it is not a freedom to live in a way that disregards God’s Word

Ga 5:13–21 (ESV) For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ⁽¹⁴⁾ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ⁽¹⁵⁾ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. ⁽¹⁶⁾ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ⁽¹⁷⁾ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ⁽¹⁸⁾ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ⁽¹⁹⁾ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ⁽²⁰⁾ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ⁽²¹⁾ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

I. WHAT CHRISTIAN FREEDOM IS NOT

1. Not a freedom to indulge the desires of the flesh

Ga 5:13 (ESV) For you were called to freedom, brothers. *Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh*, but through love serve one another.

- A. The flesh is not our physical body – refers to our fallen nature
 - 1). That part of us that desires sin that we all inherited from our first father ADAM

Point: We’re not to use this idea of freedom as an *opportunity* to indulge that part of us

I’ve heard Christians say - “I’m saved by grace not by works – so it really doesn’t matter what I do”

Obviously so had Paul: Ro 6:1–2 (ESV) What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ⁽²⁾ By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Ro 6:15 (ESV) What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

- A. He had seen this misuse of grace – this perversion of Christian liberty before
- B. So after 5 ½ chapters of grace – He feels the need to add this balance

Point: Truth is – Christianity brings us a freedom *from* sin – not a freedom *to* sin

- A. It is a freedom to live for God now – to offer ourselves to Him – and the power to do that

The choice we now have: Rom 6:13 (NIV) Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, *but rather offer yourselves to God*, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

1). We didn't have that choice before – we do now! So use your freedom to do this!

B. Of course that choice is always motivated by God's grace – by God's love and mercy!

Rom 12:1 (NIV) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, *in view of God's mercy*, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

1). Why you have to know grace first – what He has done for you

Transition: What would this freedom look like when it is expressed properly

2. We are now free to love others

Ga 5:13 (ESV) For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

A. This is pointing to a very important aspect of the freedom we know enjoy

We have been liberated from US! From ourselves

1). That need to have ourselves as the most important thing in the universe

That need to have others serve us – that need to be lifted above everyone else

B. We are now free to care about others – free to be like Christ instead of like us

1). What was Christ like – He willingly laid down His life to serve others

2). Now Bible says *“Use your liberty to be less like you and more like Him. To serve others”*

Transition: Now he talks to these legalists so concerned about the law – circumcision - rituals

A. He simplifies the law down to one commandment

Ga 5:14 (ESV) For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

A. Can be confusing at first – Paul haven't you been telling us were no longer under the law?

B. Paul IS NOT schizophrenic here – suddenly calling them to a salvation by works

“To be accepted by God you must start loving others” = Its by your effort - law

Thought: You can't love like this until you are already saved by grace

A. But now being saved – out of love for God and empowered by the Spirit

1). We can start living out a life that starts to fulfill what the law required (not perfectly)

What was that? *“Love the Lord your God and your fellow man”*

B. So what the law demanded but could not produce is the very thing that results from grace

1). When Christians exercise their freedom properly they love one another

2). They live in a way that is pleasing to God

C. This is the acid test of who are Christians – they love other Christians

1 Jn 3:14 (ESV) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

1). That's what grace does to us – the change it makes in everybody who embraces Christ by faith

Transition: Now in v. 15 he shows us that legalism produces the opposite

II. THE RESULT OF LEGALISM

Ga 5:15 (ESV) But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

1. Legalism doesn't produce love and humility

A. It produces a prideful self-righteousness and a critical spirit

1). This causes people in the church to rip each other apart

Point: This is how the Galatians were acting – the opposite of love

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- A. When you walk in an understanding of grace you're humbled
 - 1). You understand how far short you've fallen –you don't deserve to be accepted by God
Out of that understanding you're willing to accept others when they fall short
 - a). Even when they don't deserve to be loved – accepted - served
 - B. Under legalism you think you are earning blessing by your hard work and discipline
 - 1). That promotes pride – where you look down on others who don't live like you do
 - C. Paul says to these Galatians who were so worried about keeping the law
“You want to keep the law THEN love each other. Forgive each other. Show grace!”
 - 1). But you are on the verge of destroying one another. And you think God is pleased with that?
- Transition:** What is the remedy for this? How do we make sure this doesn't happen in our lives?
- A. You have to make a choice who is going to master you – the flesh or the Holy Spirit
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III. THE REMEDY

Ga 5:16 (ESV) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

1. The “desire of the flesh”

- A. The sinful desires of that “Old fallen self” – that still loves sin

2. The battle every believer faces = Spirit vs the flesh

- A. We were all born as descendants of Adam – all inherited his fallen, rebellious nature
- B. That part of us that still likes sin wasn't completely removed when we were born again

Point: This sets up a tremendous warfare that rages within us – you feel it right?

- A. You have the flesh and the new nature at same time trying to assert themselves

Ga 5:17 (ESV) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Gal 5:17 (NLT) The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, ***and your choices are never free from this conflict.***

- B. I'm free in Christ but my flesh is constantly challenging that freedom
If I'm going to grow I am going to have to take deliberate actions against this relentless enemy
 - 1). I am going to have to take advantage of every means available
The Word. Prayer. Fellowship to strengthen me spiritually

Thought: But taking advantage of these means is not easy – why? The flesh!!!

- A. Important to see how Paul portrays the flesh in Romans

Rom 7:21 (NIV) So I find this law at work: ***When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.***

- 1). Whenever I want to do good - this other principle dwelling within me becomes active
 - a). It rises up to oppose the good that I want to do! It resists that good
- B. That is why it is hard to read your Bible – pray – come to church regularly
 - 1). ***The flesh opposes everything that will weaken it*** – put it to death
 - a). If you give in – don't discipline yourself welcome to Christian immaturity – won't grow
- C. You must make it a habit to submit to the Spirit – and resist the flesh

Transition: Paul tells us what we must do to win this battle

3. We resist the flesh by walking in the Spirit

Ga 5:16 (ESV) But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

- A. Walking in the Spirit: Defined

Charles Swindoll: The phrase “walk by the Spirit” in 5:16 is another way of saying, “live by the Spirit” or “let your conduct be directed by the Spirit.” ***The issue is control. The solution is surrender.***

- 1). What are you going to let control you? The Spirit of the flesh?
- B. This is a choice that will determine if we live out our Christian life successfully
 - 1). Will I choose to be occupied with the things of the Spirit
 - 2). Will I choose to be guided by the Spirit through the Word that He gave us
 - 3). Will I be Spirit-filled = controlled by Him
- C. the Holy Spirit has been given to liberate us – free us from the bondage of sin
 - 1). He has been given to empower us to do what is right – to live a holy life
 - a). But Paul says – *this happens only when we walk by the Spirit*

Thought: So here is the choice we all have

- A. Submit to the Spirit and we will not indulge the flesh
Or indulge the flesh and choose not to live under the control of the Spirit
- B. Paul basically says take your pick – these are mutually exclusive
Ga 5:18 (ESV) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
 - 1). Either you live by the power of the Holy Spirit (in His strength)
Which will result in righteous behavior and spiritual attitudes (see next week)
 - 2). Or you live by the law (your power)
Which can only produce the sinful behavior and attitudes of the flesh

Transition: Now Paul tells us what the flesh produces and the end results of that

- A. Why it is so important to care about this

IV. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

1. While our old nature is invisible – its works are plain

- A. Paul gives us a list that is not exhaustive – he ends it by saying “and the like” = there are others
 - 1). The deeds he does include seem to fall into four categories
 - a). Sex, religion, society, drink
- B. These outward deeds are an indicators of what is happening in the heart
 - 1). A Christian can fall into any of these works of the flesh
But if the life is *characterized* by them – that is proof salvation hasn’t taken place
 - 2). In the same way – if a person is characterized by the fruit of the Spirit
Their life gives evidence that God has done a saving work in them

IN THE REALM OF SEXUAL SIN

Ga 5:19 (ESV) Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

1. Sexual immorality = Porneia – we get our word pornography from this

- A. Refers to all illicit sexual activity
 - 1). Viewing pornography would obviously be included
 - 2). But also such things as adultery, premarital sex, homosexuality, incest, and prostitution

2. Impurity

- A. A broad term referring to moral uncleanness in thought, word and deed
 - 1). We live in a time that is characterized by this – lustful, lewd thoughts and deeds

3. Sensuality = excessive sensual behavior or lack of restraint

- A. The word originally referred to any excessive behavior or lack of restraint
But eventually became associated with sexual excess and indulgence.

- B. I'm constantly amazed at lack of restraint there is in things that should be embarrassing
 - 1). Even women feel no hesitation to parade their sexual exploits in front of all

IN THE REALM OF RELIGION

Gal 5:20 (NASB) idolatry, sorcery...

1. Idolatry

- A. This would be the worship of any false god
- B. Also that "little god" in our heart that relegates Jesus to a secondary place in our affections
 - 1). It could be an automobile or an ambition, a hobby, money, security, a relationship

Point: We need to ask ourselves – who receives the utmost affection in my heart

- A. I've noticed my heart needs to be regularly checked because it is an idol producing factory
 - 1). My flesh loves to exalt things above Christ – why I must guard my heart

2. Sorcery

- A. This would include the practice of evoking spirits to produce some kind of result
 - 1). It would include palm readers and fortune tellers etc.
- B. It also would include the whole realm of drugs
 - 1). The Greek word is pharmakeia = where we get our word "Pharmacy"

MacArthur: This originally referred to medicines in general, but eventually only to mood- and mind-altering drugs, as well as the occult, witchcraft, and magic. Many pagan religious practices required the use of these drugs to aid in the communication with deities

Thought: I've heard people say – "Where does the Bible say you can't take drugs?"

- A. The answer is right here
 - 1). Plus it doesn't make sense – the Bible prohibits drunkenness
Why would someone think it would allow getting wasted on some drug

IN THE REALM OF SOCIETY

Ga 5:20–21 (ESV) ...enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ⁽²¹⁾ envy

1. Enmity (hatred)

- A. Strong feelings of hostility directed toward individuals
 - 1). Rather than be willing to work it out – this person hangs on to the anger
Allows bitterness to build up against them

2. Strife = Discord, contentions, quarrels

- A. You allow = hatred and bitterness – next thing – you're causing discord (even in church)
- B. Titus 3 warns that people who cause division are corrupt and sinful
 - 1). They are to be warned – if they continue – they are to be removed
And the church is to have nothing to do with them

3. Jealousy = Resentment of what others have (green monster)

- A. It is not being content in what God has given to you – you are always looking at others
 - 1). Where does that end – there will always be people with more – JESUS IS ENOUGH!

4. Fits of anger = Violent outbursts of anger. Rage

5. Rivalries = self-centered striving to be "Number one"

- A. You promote yourself and your agenda above all else – selfish ambitions

6. Dissensions =

- A. The fruit of people promoting self rather than the unity of promoting Christ

7. Divisions (some translate heresies)

A. Refers to taking a course of thought or action that is against the Word of God

- 1). Which may result in creating factions – people taking sides

8. Envy = The eager desire for possessions created by what another has

A. Rather than rejoicing with them you are agitated - angry

THOUGHT: Don't think these aren't happening in churches

A. Here is a cause of church splits – people hate each other – grow bitter – cause discord

Because of selfish ambition – politicking for position

Jealous and envious of how God is using others

- 1). Dissension in the church grows

Factions are formed as people gather others to their side – eventually it splits

IN THE REALM OF DRINK

Gal 5:21 (NASB) drunkenness, carousing...

1. Drunkenness = being intoxicated with strong drink

A. Some believe you can drink – some don't – between you and God

- 1). But we MUST all agree that drunkenness is a sin
- 2). 1 Cor 6:10 – no drunkard will inherit the kingdom of heaven

2. Carousing = Engaging in loose, boisterous behavior

A. This is the environment of the bar – the club – Mardi gras – the Rose Bowl

Point: These deeds of the flesh do not exhaust all the desires of the flesh

A. But they do show us that many of our churches are overrun with carnal Christians

Transition: If you are a follower of Christ you should have a burning desire to be delivered from any hint of these kinds of deeds – Why? **Next point**

V. THE WARNING

Ga 5:21 (ESV) I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1. We need to fill this in – other translations help

A. ESV just says “Those who do such things” – but it is more than an isolated failure

- 1). Others “Those who practice such things... those who live like this...

2. Greek is speaking of a continual, habitual action – a lifestyle

A. While the believer can commit these sins – they will not live habitually in them

- 1). They may fall – be convicted and repent – then struggle again later
- 2). There is failure but it is not continuous – habitual - there is a fight going on
 - a). They win and sometimes lose – but they care – they are fighting
 - b). But notice what the proof of the Spirit being in you is

Ga 5:17 (ESV) For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, *to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

- 1a). Sin is not what you want to do – you want to follow God though you may fail

Thought: For your comfort. The fact you feel the struggle doesn't mean you're not a Christian

Swindoll again: Many Christians doubt the assurance of their salvation because of this unending struggle with sin. If that's you, stop doubting! The fact that you even care about the struggle is a sign that the Spirit is working in you “both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

If the Spirit of God was not fighting this battle on your behalf, you wouldn't care one bit about struggling against sin.

- A. The true believer feels the war – they know the struggle well
Because the true believer has both sinful and godly desires
 - B. The one who will not inherit the kingdom of God lives a life characterized by things in this list
They have abandoned themselves to a lifestyle dominated by these deeds – not isolated instances
 - 1). Paul says if this is you – you cannot belong to God
 - 2). There is no evidence of His work in your life
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CONCLUSION

1. We see what Christian freedom is NOT

- A. Not the freedom to indulge our flesh – freedom NOT to sin
- B. Not the freedom to be unloving to others – freedom from self so we can love

2. The result of legalism

- A. It produces the opposite of love – self-righteousness, pride, critical spirit
 - 1). A legalist church has the tendency to devour itself

3. The remedy is to walk in the Spirit

- A. In submission to Him – in absolute dependence upon Him
A God saturated life will defeat the flesh

4. The Works of the flesh

- A. Saw four realms – Sexual, religious, societal, drink

5. The warning

- A. Those who are given over to these things (Not a temporal slip followed by repentance)
Will not see the Kingdom of God