



Free for what?

Galatians 5:1-26

With all Paul's talk of "freedom from the law," we've already briefly asked the question, "if we're not under law, how do we know how to live." It's in the closing chapters of Galatians that Paul gives the answers. We must not move from freedom back to slavery - but on the other hand, our freedom must not be used as an excuse for sin. As Paul puts it, the Christian life is all about living by the Spirit... free at last... free to serve God.

Read Galatians 5:1-15.

1. As it has been through the rest of the letter, what is Paul's concern for the Galatians in verse 1?
2. Why is circumcision an "all or nothing proposition" for those who give in to the demands that Gentile believers must go through this ritual?
3. What is the result of turning back to law-keeping?
4. According to verse 5, what - as opposed to obeying rules - are the true keys to righteousness? Fill in the gaps..

But by we eagerly await through the the righteousness for which we hope.

This is a stunning statement. Rather than struggling to keep laws, Paul says we should simply struggle to keep trusting Jesus, while the Holy Spirit produces the righteousness we long for! Compare this with 2:20-21, and Paul's prayer for the Galatians in 4:19. Trusting and following Jesus is the source and motivation for our righteousness - not keeping rules and laws. To do this is to fall away from grace!

5. According to verse 6, what is the only thing that counts?

How much does this recipe "count" in your daily life?

6. Rather than using our freedom for self-indulgence, what should we be doing? (v13)

In what ways have you "served others" lately? Or been served? Did you realise this was the outworking of faith?

7. How does the one statement in verse 14 sum up all the Old Testament laws? (Think through the ten commandments as an example.)

8. It is commonly said that we are saved by trusting Jesus, but the old testament law (especially the ten commandments) show us how to live godly lives. What do you think Paul would say to this?

9. Is Paul's attitude to the false teachers unloving? (v9-12) Why, or why not?



Natural Conflicts

What are we really like? When you get right to the core, is human nature basically good - or do you find something else? A few years ago, a large supermarket had a blackout that lasted three minutes. By the time the lights and cash registers came back on, thousands of dollars worth of merchandise had been stolen. It seems that given the opportunity, ordinary, "honest" people steal. It's natural. In fact, Paul says there's a constant conflict between that ordinary human nature, and the new nature we take on as Christians. When you become a Christian, you're entering a war zone - the urges of the Holy Spirit, fighting it out with our desires to be envious, or selfish, or impatient. But for Paul, the solution is not more law... it's something else.

Read Galatians 5:16-26

- Many Christians today speak about dramatic evidences of the Holy Spirit at work in their churches or their lives. According to verse 16, what will the MOST dramatic evidence of the Holy Spirit be?
- How surprised should you be as a Christian if you find yourself losing your temper or being jealous? What perspective does verse 17 give on this?
- Verses 19 to 21 give a list of the natural acts of our sinful nature. Verses 22 and 23 give a contrasting list, showing what living by the Spirit will look like. Fill in these qualities in the lists below...

sinful nature

fruit of the spirit



- Look carefully at the list of the "sins of the flesh". They're not all "R-rated"! What does the future hold for people who want to continue down this path?
- How does living by the Spirit do away with the need for law? (v18, 23b)
- From verse 15 and verse 26, what were the biggest struggles for the Galatians? What are the biggest struggles for **you**?
- The work of the Spirit is God's work IN US. But that doesn't mean we are passive. Read through verses 16 to 26 again, and find out what we as Christians are TO DO as people who have been given the Spirit.

Memorise the list of fruits of the Spirit for next time. Look for times during the week where you can identify the urging of God's Spirit in you, and "walk in step."

