

YES, THERE ARE LIMITS ON OUR LIBERTY!

INTRODUCTION: If you know anything at all about the history of our nation, it was founded on the concept of *liberty*. It is in *songs* that we sing. Just a few moments ago, Don played for the offertory: “My country, ‘tis of Thee, sweet land of...” what? **Liberty**

It is in the **Declaration of Independence**, signed on July 4th, 1776. Although most of us **don’t know as much as we should** about the “Declaration,” many of us are somewhat familiar with the **first sentence** of the **second** paragraph:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life—what’s the next word?—Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

People that travel to this country via ship are “greeted”—figuratively speaking—by the **Statue of Liberty** if they come through New York Harbor.

Probably the most famous use of the word **liberty**—in our country, anyway—was by Patrick Henry in his speech on March 23rd, 1775, in Richmond, VA. Listen as I read the last two paragraphs of that speech:

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate [meaning lessen the seriousness of] the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?

Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

How stirring were those words when first spoken by Patrick Henry? Many historians suggest it is one of the top 10 influential speeches in **world history** and led the colony of Virginia to unanimously adopt Henry’s resolution to organize a militia to fight against Britain. The Revolutionary War—also known as the American War of Independence—began **less than one** month later!

Liberty, then, is a noble thing—and obviously worth fighting for! But there is a **new kind** of “liberty” rising up in America—that **really isn’t liberty** at all!

1) It is a so-called “freedom” that says, “You **can’t tell me** what I can or can’t do—**but I can tell you** what you can or can’t do!”

Example: “**Don’t tell me** I can’t kill a baby inside of me—but you **better protect my health** by wearing a mask and getting the shot—whether you want to or not!”

2) It is a so-called “freedom” that says, “I am free to **say what I want**, but you aren’t free **to say what you want**—unless, of course, you agree with me!”

Example: Censoring of supposed “disinformation” on social media. Most of us are seeing firsthand that “disinformation” is really code for “disagreement” with the narrative—the propaganda—of the main stream media.

3) And it is a so-called “freedom” that says, “**I can protest** by burning, destroying, looting, and vandalizing—but you can’t **protest anything**—in any fashion!”

Example: Summer of 2020—and recently trying to intimidate the SC Justices—vs January 6th, 2021.

This “new” definition of “freedom” **isn’t just found** in the political arena, though—it can also creep into the church! Why do I say that? Two reasons. 1) Because we are **rebels by nature**—and that nature **is still within us** even after we become a child of God! We **don’t like to be told what to do** because the **rebel in us** wants to do **what we want**, when we want to do it, and **in the way we want** to do it!

Reason 2) Because God through Paul warns us in the book of Galatians that although **we are free**, we are **not free to do whatever** we want. There are restrictions—there are limits—on our liberty. This morning we are going to look at what it means to be free—and the limits God places on our freedom.

Please take your Bibles and turn to Galatians 5; follow along as I read verses 1-6. Now skip down to vs 11-15. We're going to be focusing on verse 13, but I wanted to give you a little more of the context.

Let's notice first...**1. The call to liberty**

Vs 13 "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty..." Paul is reminding **brethren**—meaning fellow believers—those who have trusted Christ for salvation (forgiveness of sins), that they have been called to liberty—meaning **freedom**. The question that begs to be answered is "Freedom from **what**?"

A. Freedom from the law as a means of salvation

In order to understand what it means to be free **from the law** as a way of salvation, we need to know what the **law** is referring to. Let's consider then.... **i. A definition of the law**

The word "law" is used in 25 **different verses** in Galatians—and sometimes more than once in a verse! The only other book in the NT where the word "**law**" is found more is in Romans—but Romans has 16 chapters compared to only 6 in Galatians. The point I'm making is this—Galatians is the most "law heavy" book in the entire NT! So what does "law" mean?

Although we don't have a verse that spells out the definition, we do have a pretty good idea what Paul is referring to. Look at Galatians 3:16. Here we see a reference to a promise that God made to Abraham. What was the promise? Notice what God said to Abraham after he was willing to offer up Isaac.

Genesis 22:18 "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." In Gal 3:16, Paul interprets "seed" for us—and plainly states that "the seed" of Abraham that will bless the nations is not Isaac—it is **Christ**!

Now Galatians 3:17. Here we have a reference to the covenant—another word for "promise"—and **the law**. The **law** followed 430 years after the promise to Abraham. **What—and who**—followed 430 years after Abraham? Moses...and the 10 Commandments! But Paul is referring **to more than** just the 10 C's when he speaks of the law. How do we know that?

Let's look back at some verses we read earlier, Galatians 5:1-3. In vs 3, Paul refers to the law, but he ties it to **circumcision**. Since the 10 Commandments themselves do not say anything about circumcision, Paul is using the word "law" to refer to **more than** just the 10 Commandments.

One more example. **I Corinthians 9:9** "For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn..." What is Paul quoting? If you have a study Bible with cross references, you will see he is quoting Deuteronomy 25:4. So when Paul refers to "the law," he is referring to **all that Moses wrote**—the first 5 books of the Bible—not just the 10 Commandments.

Now that we have the definition of the law, let's look at... **ii. The declaration that the law does not save**

How do we know that keeping the law—doing everything that Moses said—doesn't get us to heaven? Because God through Paul **declares it several times** here in Galatians and **many times** throughout the NT. Galatians 2:16. "Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law**, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be **justified by** the faith of Christ, and **not by the works of the law**: for **by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.**"

Can it be any plainer than that? Three times—in one verse—it says that we cannot be justified—meaning forgiven and **treated as not having sinned**—by keeping the law!

Look at Galatians 3:10. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse..." **Why** are we cursed if we are **trying to do** the works of the law? Because we **fail to keep** what is written in the law! That's what the rest of the verse says: "...for it is written, Cursed is every one that **continueth not** in all things which are written in the book of the law **to do them.**"

Same thing in verse 11. “But that **no man is justified by** the law in the sight of God, it is evident...”
Now vs 13. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us...”

Let that sink in. We are redeemed! We are free! We are no longer under the curse of trying to gain forgiveness by keeping the law! The burden of “I can’t possibly do enough” is replaced w/ “Jesus did it 4 me!”
Titus 3:5 “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us...”
Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹**Not of works**, lest any man should boast.”

I love the way **Alva McClain** put it in his little booklet entitled “Law and Grace”: “Either Christ will save you by grace **through faith plus nothing**, or He will not save you at all.... Such is the mathematics of grace. If the sinner adds something, he loses everything. If he adds nothing, he wins everything.”

Praise God! We are free from the burden of trying to **keep the law to save us!** Those of us who are saved, we get that...we understand that...we embrace that. We are free from the law as a means of salvation!

But there’s a second freedom that God through Paul teaches us, and it is this:

B. Freedom from the law as a means of sanctification

Listen carefully: Not only are we free from the law as a way to **be saved**, we are also free from the law as a way to **be sanctified!** Just like law-keeping—obeying what Moses said—cannot **get you into heaven**; doing what Moses said will **not make you more holy!**

And because it will not make you holy, God says you are **free from it!** In other words, ‘Stop doing what Moses told you to do!’ Does the Bible really say that? Yes, it does!

Look at Gal 3:2. “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” The answer is obvious! The Holy Spirit came to **indwell them** when they became a child of God. Did they become a child of God by the **works of the law?**

--No; they became a child of God **by faith!** So they **received the Spirit** by the hearing of faith!

Now vs 3. “Are ye so foolish? Having **begun** in the Spirit, are ye now **made perfect** by the flesh?”

--Don’t miss the point Paul is making. He is writing to believers—people who have “begun in the Spirit;” people who are saved. Paul says, ‘You **begun** your relationship by God through faith. Are you going to **complete it**—are you going **to end it**—by the works of the flesh?’ The answer is obviously “NO!”

Now vs 24. “Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” What is our “schoolmaster”? The law!

Now vs 25. “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” Paul could just as easily have said, “But after that faith is come, we are no longer **under the law!**”

Now turn to Galatians 4:9-10. “But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God,”—meaning they were children of God—“how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.”

“Days, and months, and times, and years” are spoken of by Moses—for the Jews...under the law. Paul says, ‘Why do you want to be in bondage to the law and follow rules about days, months, times, and years?’

Galatians 5:1 again. “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.” Paul in essence is saying, ‘You have been freed by Christ from the law of Moses for both salvation and sanctification—**don’t put yourself in bondage to the law** you’ve been freed from!’

To again **quote McClain**: “The Word of God condemns unsparingly all attempts to put the Christian believer ‘under the law.’ The Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul gave to the church the book of Galatians for the very purpose of dealing with this heresy.... It is not a total rejection of the gospel of God’s grace and a turning back to total legalism. It is rather the error of saying that the Christian life, **having begun by simple faith in Christ, must thereafter continue under the law or some part of it.**” (pg 51)

Paul says the same thing to the believers in Rome. **Romans 6:14** “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are **not under the law**, but under grace.” “Ye are not under the law” is plainly stated, isn’t it?

Romans 6:15 “What then? shall we sin, **because we are not under the law**, but under grace? God forbid.”

Here it is again—we are **not under the law!** But Paul then asks a very logical question: **Can we go ahead & sin?** He not only **asks** the question—he **answers** it! What is the answer? **God forbid!** He **gives basically the same answer** in Galatians 5:13. Look at it again. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty”—you are free from the Mosaic law. “You are not under the law of works to get to heaven—and you are not under the law of works to be holy! You are free!”

But the verse **doesn’t end there, does it?** How does it end? “...only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” Paul here gives us... **2. The constraint on liberty**

There are limits—there are restrictions—on our freedom. We can’t use our freedom **from the Mosaic law** to be lawless! We can’t do **whatever** we want...**whenever** we want...**however** we want! What are the limits? First notice... **A. The negative—what we should not do.** (use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh)

Don’t use your freedom from the law of Moses as an excuse or opportunity to **fulfill your selfish, fleshy desires**. What are **works of the flesh**? We have some of them listed here for us in this chapter.

In verse 19, we have sins that are **sexual in nature**. We are not free to practice **adultery**—intimacy with someone who is married to someone else; or **fornication**—intimacy with someone you are not married to! **Uncleanness** is the opposite of purity, and probably refers to **homosexuality**.

In verse 20, we see that we are not free to **worship idols**. We are to love God with all our heart—not any **thing** or any **person**. We are also not free to practice **witchcraft**—which at that time had a strong connection **with drugs**. In fact, “witchcraft” comes from the Greek word “far-mak-i’-ah” (“pharmacy”)

--Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions are all opposites of brotherly love and kindness.

In verse 21, we see other works of the flesh—envyings, murders (which I believe includes abortion), drunkenness, revellings.

Even though we went through this list rather quickly, it’s pretty easy to see that a **lot of what people do today in the name of freedom** are things that God says we are **not** free to do! God through Paul says that we have been called to freedom—but it is **not a freedom to serve our selfish nature** and desires. The verse doesn’t end there, though, does it? We are **not only given a negative**—something we are to avoid.

We are also given... **B. The positive—what we should do.** What is it that we are to do?

“...but by love serve one another.” Obviously can’t spend a lot of time on this, but notice the following:

i. The motivation for service is love. What kind of love? **Agape** love; the unconditional, undeserving, sacrificial love that brought Jesus from heaven to earth to die on a cross for us!

ii. The manner for service. There are several Greek words that carry the idea of “serve” and “serving,” but God had Paul use one that is rather surprising. He used the word “dool-yoo’-o” which means **“to be a slave.”** A guy named Andrus wrote: “Isn’t it ironic that, having urged his readers **not to become slaves to the Law or to the sinful nature**, Paul should now encourage them to **become slaves of one another?** It is a paradox for sure, but a valuable one. Slavery to the sinful nature is self-destructive. But slavery to one another is a deep source of joy.” (Precept Austin; on-line).

iii. The method for service. How are we to serve one another? What will it look like? Paul gives them several ways to serve one another in the next chapter.

Gal 6:1 – We will seek to restore those who are “overtaken in a fault”—meaning sin.

Gal 6:2 – We will bear one another’s burdens. We will know what is going on in their lives. We will rejoice with those that rejoice—and weep with those that weep.

Gal 6:10 – We will do good unto all men—“especially unto them who are of the household of faith”—meaning believers.

Are we known for having this kind of love? We are supposed to be! Jesus said in John 13:35 “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” This is not a natural kind of love, though, is it? It is a supernatural kind of love that is produced by the Holy Spirit. But we have a part. We need to ask God to make us less selfish and more loving. And we need to do what vs 14 says: “...love thy neighbour as thyself.” You already love yourself—love others in the same way. Treat them as you would want to be treated.

As we close, here are some things I believe God would have us think about this morning.

1. Freedom—liberty—is a wonderful gift. We are blessed to live in a free nation. That is not the most important freedom, however. The most important freedom is to be free from the penalty of your sins! The only way to be free from that is to receive Jesus as your personal Savior. Have you done that?

2. Be thankful that we are not under the law, but under grace! What a joy it is to be free from trying to keep the law to earn salvation—or to stay saved. But we need to honestly evaluate our lives.

--Are we using our freedom as an excuse to live the way we want?

--Are we serving one another in love? That’s what God wants, isn’t it?