

## Set free in Christ– Gal. 5:1-15

- Q3. In verse 1 Paul speaks of freedom as opposed to slavery. Given that he had described the Law as a schoolmaster or guardian before Christ came, what are we freed from?
- Q4. From the previous studies we learned of the faults in the teaching of the ‘Judaizers’. Paul says those who seek to be justified by obedience to the Law have “fallen away from grace”. What does he mean? Why would becoming circumcised render Christ to be “of no value”? (see vs.2)
- Q5. How does the phrase “faith expressing itself through love” help you to understand how to live as a Christian?
- Q6. If we have been declared to be in the right with God in Christ, why would we still hope for righteousness (vs. 5)?
- Q7. Paul is talking about *freedom from* something, but what might we be *freed to*? (see vs. 13)
- Q9. How do the images of a “race” and “yeast” in verses 7-9 help to identify counterfeit presentations of the Gospel?
- Q8. What do you imagine Christian freedom might look like? (see verses 13-15 for Paul’s thoughts)

## #5.1 Freedom Gained

Galatians 5:1-15

### Introduction

*Galatians 5:1*

*“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.” (NIV)*

### Recap

The ‘Judaizers’ or ‘Law-keepers’ who came from Jerusalem and influenced the Galatian churches insisted on religious adherence to rules and regulations (e.g. food laws, circumcision) in order for one to be truly considered a son of Abraham and a child of God. The Apostle Paul has now thoroughly argued for the bankruptcy of such a position. In fact, Paul says you can’t add circumcision or other laws and practices to Christ as necessary for one’s status with God to be ‘righteous’. Why?- because Christ is sufficient to make this possible and to grant it to us in and of himself. Furthermore, the Law was not given as a means of righteousness for sinful human beings, but to restrain our wickedness and to alert us to our need of a Saviour, until the Saviour himself did come. John Stott makes the point clear: “If you add anything to Christ, you lose Christ. Salvation is in Christ alone by grace alone, through faith alone.

### Discussion Question for recap:

- Q1. When you move around from church to church you witness many different practices and rituals and emphases on how to live the Christian life. How do you discern whether a ritual or practice or a command has become something one is ‘required’ to adhere to in order to be a ‘true Christian’?

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Q2. In times past bank tellers were trained to identify counterfeit notes that came across their counter. They were not given lots of different types of counterfeits to study. Instead, they were told to study every fine detail of texture and color and artwork and watermark on a genuine note of currency for hours. When the counterfeit came across the counter, it was immediately identifiable. What are some of the key identifying marks of the true Gospel Paul proclaims in Galatians? List them below:



## The Core Message of the Letter

To those who have strived to live a life acceptable enough for God to favour them and found it impossible to achieve with any assurance and full of frustration, Paul's letter to the Galatians has been a book of "Good News".

1. Firstly, it has been good news because the Gospel of God's grace relieves you of a great burden. It convinces you that all those things you were trying to do to be acceptable to God in fact bring us no closer to God, and we ought to stop striving in this way.
2. Secondly, the letter to the Galatians convinces us that instead of adding our own human effort to what God has done, we are freed from the burden of law-keeping or rule-following, and instead we are urged to simply trust in Jesus Christ alone, and his righteousness (his goodness) to be sure of our relationship with God and all we need to live for him.

As Boice puts it in his commentary: "God would put a minus sign before Christ.... if they put a plus sign before anything else". Or consider John Stott's summary: "If you add anything to Christ, you lose Christ. Salvation is in Christ alone by grace alone, through faith alone."

Galatians points us to Jesus Christ: the one person we can trust to have kept God's laws, and the one person who has dealt with the curse that comes from breaking those laws.

We've been dealing in this series with the stark difference between a religion of good works or human achievement and the practice of faith which trusts in Christ alone. John Piper contrasts them this way:

"Works wants the thrill of feeling itself overcome an obstacle. Faith wants the thrill of feeling God overcome an obstacle. Works longs for the joy of being glorified as capable and strong and smart. Faith longs for the joy of seeing God glorified for His strength and His wisdom. In its religious form, works accepts the challenge of morality, conquers its obstacles through great exertion and offers the victory to God for His gratitude and applause and recompense. Faith also accepts the challenge of morality, but only as an occasion to become the instrument of God's power, and when the victory is achieved, faith rejoices that all the glory and thanks belong to God."



We can hear then why Paul in Galatians 5:4,5 puts the contrast so starkly as well. He says:

- 4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.
- 5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

In 5:6-12, the apostle Paul deals again with the "Law-keepers", who insisted on legalistic practices such as circumcision if the Galatians were to be truly considered to be God's people. Reiterating his previous argument, Paul writes in verse 6:

- 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

The Christian gospel, as we have seen, says that God has already DONE all that is needed. This is the good news of GRACE. Now we must ask what the life of grace and faith will look like.