

¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ... ¹³ For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh....

Text: Galatians 5:1, 13a A 7-5-26 1 Ki. 19:11-21 Jn. 8:31-36 Ps. 119:V-VI Resp. Psalm: 146
Hymns: 141, 373 (1-4), 289, 578

JESUS HAS SET US FREE!

1. Enslavement through the Law

2. Enslavement to sin

3. Freedom in Christ

By grace I'm saved, grace free and boundless; My soul, believe and doubt it not.
Why stagger at this word of promise? Hath Scripture ever falsehood taught?
Nay; then this word must true remain: By grace thou, too, shalt heav'n obtain.

By grace! None dare lay claim to merit; Our works and conduct have no worth.
God in His love sent our Redeemer, Christ Jesus, to this sinful earth;
His death did for our sins atone, And we are saved by grace alone.

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

Freedom! It's one of the most precious treasures we have. Those who founded our country were willing to defend it with their lives. Many of them did, and many more since then have done the same. Yesterday was the Fourth of July, the day on which we celebrate our nation's freedom. As precious as this kind of freedom is to us, there's an even greater freedom we have in Christ. That's what our text speaks of. We're warned of two things that can rob us of our freedom: enslavement through the Law, and enslavement to sin. But we're comforted with the reminder of our freedom in Christ. We're urged to stand firm in the freedom that Jesus gives us.

1

The Galatian congregation, to whom Paul originally addressed the words of our text, had a serious problem. Paul had preached the Gospel to them in its truth and beauty, and they had happily taken it to heart and believe it. Tragically, some false Christians – Judaizers – had sneaked in among them. The Judaizers told them that if they truly wanted to be devoted to God, they needed to believe in Jesus and practice the Old Testament Law of circumcision. Paul warned the Galatians that if they kept listening to the Judaizers, they would become slaves.

This is a favorite trap of the devil. By nature, we think we have to do something to make ourselves right with God and show Him how devoted and religious we are. But that switches our confidence for our salvation from Jesus and what He did for us, to ourselves and what we do for God.

If we allow ourselves to fall into this trap, we're in danger of making ourselves slaves. We're fooling ourselves into thinking that there's something we can do to earn our salvation. Galatians 2:16 says, *"By the works of the law no flesh shall be justified."* Do we really think that God needs our help to save us? Galatians 2:21 says, *"If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."* If we get to heaven by what we're doing for God, then why did God's Son have to die? And what did Jesus mean when He said, *"It is finished!"* which can also be translated, *"It is paid in full!"*? (Jn. 19:30, my emphasis). Galatians 3:10 says, *"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.'"* If I think I can make myself right with God by what I do, then God says I have to be perfect. Galatians 3:13 says, *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us."* We're not saved by living a good enough life. We're saved by faith alone in Jesus and what He did for us.

2

The Lord warns us that we can abuse the freedom Jesus has given us: *"You, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh...."* We have to watch out that we don't use the freedom Jesus gives us as an excuse for sinning. In Romans 6:1 Paul asks, *"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?"* Can we sin whenever we want to in order to give Jesus more opportunities to forgive us? *"Certainly not!"* Paul says (Ro. 6:1-2). We live in a free country. But that doesn't mean that we're free to live however we wish. As the saying goes: *"Your freedom to swing your fist ends where my nose begins."* Freedom involves responsibility. We're responsible for seeing to it that our actions don't infringe on the freedom of others.

The spiritual freedom we enjoy also involves responsibility. We're responsible to God for what we think, what we say, and what we do. Our Heavenly Father doesn't want us to use our freedom in Christ as an excuse for sinning.

We can become slaves of sin. We know that Jesus died for our sins. We know that when we sin and tell God we're sorry, He forgives us. Satan tries to lull us into thinking that we can do whatever we want, and later ask God to forgive us, and He will. If we're thinking and living that way, we're downplaying the seriousness of our sin in God's eyes, and downplaying God's anger over sin. We're abusing God's love and forgiveness. Our Lord warns us, *"If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin"* (He. 10:26). If we keep willfully committing sin, and don't repent of it and ask God to forgive us and help us to live the way He tells us to, we can wander away from God. It can become easier and easier to sin, and harder and harder to obey God. We're taking the very real chance of losing our salvation altogether. *"The wages of sin is death,"* the Bible tells us, eternal death in hell (Ro. 6:23). God forbid that we abuse our freedom in Christ, and end up losing it.

How can we avoid being slaves through the Law and slaves to sin? We're told, "*Christ has made us free.*" (In the original the word "*free*" is emphasized.) We escape slavery through the Law and slavery to sin through the freedom we have in Christ.

"*Christ has made us free.*" You and I are free! Jesus has freed us. It happened on the cross when Jesus declared, "*It is finished!*" Jesus had taken on our flesh and lived a perfect life in our place. He freed us from having to live lives good enough to deserve salvation. In the chapter before our text Paul tells us, "*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law*" (Gal. 4:4-5). Paul says in Galatians 2:16, "*A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ;*" and in Galatians 3:11, "*The just shall live by faith.*" We're saved, we're God's dear children, simply by believing in His Son. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,*" the Bible tells us, "*and you will be saved.*" (Ac. 16:31)

There's more to what Jesus meant when He declared, "*It is finished!*" He had also taken the sins of the whole world upon Himself and paid for them all with His death on the cross. Jesus defeated the devil and sin. Because of Jesus, the devil and sin can't make us their slaves.

Our Lord urges us, "*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.*" Keep standing firm in Jesus. Whenever you're tempted to think that you have to do something to make yourself right with God, or tempted to give in to sin, look to Jesus. Jesus tells us, "*If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*" (Jn. 8:36)

At this time of year we celebrate the precious freedom we enjoy in our country. Let's remember our most precious freedom of all. Jesus lived and died and rose again to set us free. Satan would take our freedom from us and enslave us through the Law or make us slaves to sin. But, as Paul says, "*You, brethren, have been called to liberty.*" Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law, and defeated sin for us! Jesus has made us His own dear brothers and sisters! **JESUS HAS SET US FREE!**

Enslaved by sin and bound in chains, Beneath its dreadful tyrant sway,
And doomed to everlasting pains, We wretched, guilty captives lay.

Jesus the Sacrifice became To rescue guilty souls from hell;
The spotless, bleeding, dying Lamb Beneath avenging Justice fell.

Amazing goodness! Love divine! Oh, may our grateful hearts adore
The matchless grace nor yield to sin Nor wear its cruel fetters more! Amen.