

• *Paul's third topic: How does the gospel promote godly living?*

• *An objection – too much preaching of grace encourages sin*

• *Good preaching inevitably provokes the false accusation that it promotes sin!*

• *The way of godliness – through love serving others*

1. The Christian is called to freedom

• *From God's condemnation, guilt and eternal punishment*

• *From the realm of sin*

• *To live a new life of godliness which is now achievable*

2. Freedom must be used in the right way

It is widely agreed that Galatians has three sections in it. In Galatians 1:11 – 2:14 Paul concentrates on explaining his authority as an apostle. In Galatians 2:15 – 5:12 Paul argues the case for his gospel and pleads with his friends to come back to their faith in Jesus-plus-nothing. But now he must move to a third topic. It might be asked: can 'freedom' not be misused? Paul must (as a good teacher) move on to the question: how does the gospel promote godliness of life? He does so from this point onwards especially.

There are always people who say, 'This gospel of yours has too much grace in it. It does not bother about sin!' They said the same thing about Paul! And they said similar things about Jesus. Unless you shock people because you are so gracious, you have not understood the gospel! Of course this is a test of our preaching. Any gospel that does not get this accusation is not really the gospel. If a person is preaching salvation by good works no one will ever accuse him of licentiousness. I can think of certain popular preachers who would never be accused of promoting looseness – but then they do not teach salvation by the grace of God. If no one would ever dream of saying to you, 'You are encouraging sin' – then you are not preaching Paul's gospel. Because his gospel did lead to that charge – although the charge was not true! 'If your preaching of salvation has not been misunderstood in that way,' said a famous preacher, 'then you had better examine your sermons again.'¹

Now Paul appeals for godliness and tells us what the way of godliness is. *'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.'*¹

1. **The Christian is called to freedom.** What kind of freedom is it? It begins with freedom from condemnation by God, freedom from guilt. It includes freedom from fear of eternal punishment. No one is free if he or she is scared of going to hell! What sort of freedom would that be? That is bondage of the worst kind! The Christian is free from the **realm** of sin. The Christian is not in sin's territory. He or she is to know that sin does not rule over us. It is a sheer fact. We are under the rule of grace, a kingdom of grace. The Christian is free from the smaller legalism of living under human regulations. Human cultures are not a matter of great importance to us.

But freedom is not only freedom **from** certain things. It is also freedom **for** the life of godliness. We walk **out of** the prison, **into** a new and greater kind of life altogether. Our freedom is to be used; we are called to it by God. We are free from sin; we are free from the devil. So we can walk in freedom. We can resist Satan. We are able to do it. We are not his slaves any more. The truth makes us free from the entire kingdom of darkness. If Jesus makes us free we are free indeed! We can walk out of the prison into a new life altogether.

2. **Freedom must be used in the right way.** The question is: now that we are free, how should our freedom be used? Paul tells us. We cannot be condemned, but this does not mean that we should use our freedom as the starting point of yielding to temptation. No, it the exact

¹ See footnote

¹ 5:13

opposite. *'Through love serve one another.'* We use our freedom to walk in newness of life, and the very heart of the new life is loving one another. We enjoy our freedom by serving others in the fellowship. It might be asked: why does Paul not speak of loving everyone? He begins with the Christian fellowship because that is where we start this life of love.

3. One law – following the pathway of love

3. Following the pathway of love is the one law upon which we focus. *'For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself"'*. ¹ We are not under the law but we do fulfil it! We fulfil it not by concentrating on the two thousand regulations in Exodus-to-Deuteronomy, but by focusing on one law: the law of love.

¹ 5:14

4. Legalists are quarrelsome people

4. Legalists are quarrelsome people. Paul says, *'But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another'*. ¹ At this point we discover something that we might not have realized before. The Christians of Galatia who are looking to the Mosaic law have become very quarrelsome. Before the legalistic teachers came, they were a much more loving people. But now since they are thinking of starting to live like Jews, they have suddenly become so quarrelsome they are likely to destroy each other altogether. This is the interesting thing about law. It is meant to promote love, but normally un-legalistic people are more loving than legalistic people. Bringing in the Mosaic law had not helped the Christians of Galatia to become loving at all. In fact since they brought in the Mosaic law – thinking it would make them more spiritual – they have been backsliding into harsh and critical ways.

¹ 5:15

• *Legalism promotes a harsh and critical spirit*

• *Love is not criticising others but helping them and bringing them freedom*

Love is not criticizing others but ministering to others. It moves out to touch everyone (as verse 14 implies), but it begins with 'one another'. We set people free. We undo their chains. We share our food with the hungry and bring poor people into our own homes. When we see someone who has no clothes, we give ours, and we do not refuse help to those God brings to us. When we start using our freedom by bringing freedom to others, everything that the law was pointing to is being fulfilled.

Note

1. D.M. Lloyd-Jones, *The New Man* (Banner of Truth, 1972), p. 10.



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