

GALATIANS 5-6

Lesson 4

**Freedom to Run a Serious Race
WELL
to the end**

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Galatians 5:1-6, Who would want to Give Up their Freedom in Christ?

The *freedom that we have in Christ* should *not be substituted* with anything else in this world (v. 1). Paul therefore warned the Galatian believers that this is exactly what they would do if they would get themselves circumcised (v. 2). This would set their feet on a path where they would not live by faith anymore, but they would now rather have to be obedient again to every Jewish law and custom (v. 3)! *This path would cut you off from Christ and leave you outside of the circle of God's grace* (v. 4)...

Living in faith is the only thing that makes sense (v. 5a)! This is how you stay on track to God's new world (v. 5a). The Holy Spirit reminds us daily of this Truth, and helps us to stay focused till we have to meet our Lord face to face (v. 5b). And if you have faith, it would make no difference when you stand before your God with a sign, like circumcision, on your body or not (v. 6a). It is all about faith (v. 6b)—*faith that brings about a love for God and our neighbor* that surpasses all (v. 6c)!

- ❖ How would you describe your life of *Freedom in Christ*? Can you think of specific examples of *how you live* in His Freedom, or perhaps *how you could live* in this Freedom?

Galatians 5:7-12, This is a Serious Race—let's be Serious about it!

This *Faith Race* is the only race that we need to keep running and we should believe nobody telling us any different (vv. 7-8). It is extremely important that we all stay in the race and on the right track. Leaving the right way will lead to disaster, because that will also take others along, just like a little bit of yeast causes the entire batch of dough to become sour (v. 9)! Therefore, a *terrible judgement awaits those who are leading people astray* (v. 10). To turn your back on the Truth is simply not worth it!

Paul states once more that it would be a lie to think that he would ever require any believer to be circumcised (v. 11a). In fact, this is exactly why some Jews are so upset with him (v. 11b)! Finally, Paul could not be clearer when he utters in frustration that he wishes for the Jews who had been clinging to the circumcision to have their knives slip while doing the circumcision and simply emasculate themselves totally...for then they will have something else to worry themselves about (v. 12)!!

Keep running the race of life in faith, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit keeping you on track! This is the only way to finish the race well. There is no other way to run this race. The race has to start at the cross and it will finish in front of the risen Lord. In between...have faith, love God and each other, and live in His grace! Spend some time in prayer and reflect on how these truths should impact your life.

- ❖ Sometimes Paul can deliver a pretty straight forward, hard message, leaving no doubt what he is trying to say to us. Why? Because our Faith Race is serious stuff—it has eternal consequences! Take a moment to reflect with all the seriousness in your bones on the following and decide which areas you need to focus on more to run this Faith Race well:
 - Stepping out of this Race can only lead to disaster.
 - Let us not be the yeast influencing the Faith Batch badly!
 - What should I focus on more intentionally to run this Faith Race well?

Galatians 5:13-21, Freedom in Christ: What is it...What is it NOT?

The freedom that we have in Christ should surely not be abused! Paul is now making it clear that this is never what he was trying to say. *Believers didn't receive in grace a free ticket to sin* (v. 13a)! No, they *received in grace the responsibility and the ability to really love* (v. 13b). Being free in Christ means that you can *now find joy in being the least, serving one another, and taking care of each other* (v. 13c). In fact, now we can finally do exactly what God is requiring from us!

The *entire law can be summarized in love* (v. 14). When believers therefore start fighting they become just like a pack of wild dogs tearing everything apart...also their freedom... substituting it once again for slavery to sin (v. 15). This would be sad...

Freedom in Christ means to allow total control to the Holy Spirit who will keep us within the borders of freedom (v. 16). Just as sinful temptations are an enemy of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is also an enemy of sin, and with Him at the steering wheel of our lives He can guide us through all these temptations (v. 17). It would therefore be impossible to think that we can visit our sinful temptations the one day, and drive around with the Holy Spirit again the next day—one would have to ask: *Who is truly at the steering wheel of your life* (v. 17b)?! We have to choose: *Freedom in Christ or slavery to sin. We cannot have both.* Paul is therefore urging the Galatian believers to allow the Holy Spirit to totally take control (v. 18a). They would then also not have to worry about obeying all kinds of rules and regulations of the law anymore (v. 18b).

When one had chosen to *follow sin your life would show it* (v. 19a). It will be filled with sexual impurity, drunkenness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, fighting, jealousy, rage, selfishness... (vv. 19b-21a). This lifestyle will surely lead you through the gates of hell (v. 21b).

- ❖ Is there an area in your life that you feel is not yet completely under the control of the Holy Spirit? What would that be, and what would you like to do about it?

Galatians 5:22-26, The Single FRUIT of the Spirit

Following the Holy Spirit leads to a life where the fruit will be: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (vv. 22-23a). This life represents a lifestyle that the law is not against (v. 23b). This is a lifestyle where sin had been nailed to the cross of Jesus, with no control over our lives anymore (v. 24). Such a life shows that we had been renewed by the Holy Spirit, because of our faith in Christ. Therefore the Holy Spirit should continue to lead all that we say and do (v. 25). This will also keep us from thinking it is all about us and how great we are (v. 26a). This will keep us humble and pure (v. 26b).

- ❖ Read carefully through the kind of fruit that a life under control of the Holy Spirit should bear in our life. Which of these fruit could you find in your own life, and which are you missing? Make a clear list. Here is the Fruit of the Spirit again:

*Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-control*

Go to our Father in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to also take control of those areas that you are still lacking in.

Galatians 6:1-8, "I Stand Corrected—Thank you for Saying Something!"

Paul encourages us to *keep fellow believers accountable* when they fall under the temptation of some kind of a sin. We need to reach out and help them immediately to get back on the right path, without criticizing or judging them (v. 1a). However, Paul also warns all not to fall into temptation as nobody should ever think that they can never be tempted (v. 1b).

Believers should truly care for one another (v. 2a). They should recognize each others' suffering and help! We should carry the burdens of those who are broken. They should not have to struggle alone. This is how we do exactly what Christ wants us to do...loving each other (v. 2b)! Those who think that they are too important to care in such an intense way for each other still doesn't understand a thing about the Gospel... (v. 3). We should therefore all take a good, hard look at our own lives (v. 4a). *Be happy with what God had done in your own life, rather than constantly comparing your lives with other believers' lives* (v. 4b). In the end *we will each have to stand before God*, giving account of what we had done (v. 5).

Paul reminds the believers that they should also *take great care of the people who teaches them about the truths from God's Word* (v. 6). However, they should also honor them by *doing what they were taught!* Nobody should fool himself (v. 7a). God will not be mocked (v. 7b)! *We will reap what we sow* (v. 7c). When we sow in the field of *sin*, we will *reap hell* as a harvest, and when we sow on the field of the *Holy Spirit*, we will *harvest eternal life* (v. 8)!

- ❖ How do you react when a believer calls you out on something? How should you react?
- ❖ Is there someone that you need to correct in a caring, grace-filled way? When and how are you going to get it done?
- ❖ What else struck you in this passage?

Galatians 6:9-18, Unafraid, Intentional, Focused...Till the END!

We should not become weary or give up doing the right thing (v. 9). We should be encouraged to continue to do good as our Lord wants us to do. Till we meet Him we need to use every moment that we have to do good to all who crosses our path, especially to believers (v. 10a). Let us live towards fellow believers with open hearts and hands as they are like our own blood family (v. 10b).

Paul concludes in his own handwriting that the believers should be willing to suffer for the Gospel of the cross of Christ that had freed them from laws like the circumcision (vv. 11-12). They should *not fear the persecution* of the Jews by getting circumcised. These circumcised Jews don't follow the law anyhow (v. 13)! The believers should remember that the only thing that they ever have to boast about should be that they had *been crucified with our Lord Jesus Christ* (v. 14). They *don't need to add anything else* to that. This is why we can be dead for sin, and our faith in our Lord is also why we don't need the circumcision anymore. We are now a new creation, free, part of the new Israel, and share in God's peace and grace (vv. 15-16). And like Paul, who had experienced so many hardships, we should *never compromise* what we have in Christ for anything else (v. 17).

Finally Paul shares a blessing of grace, and a prayer of God's power with the Galatian believers (v. 18).

- ❖ Which fears do you need to let go of?
- ❖ Where do you want your spiritual focus to be moving forward?
- ❖ What are some of the life lessons that you have gained from this Galatians Bible Study?
