

Title: Paul's Application of Justification in the Life of the Believer:
Grace Living is Grace Loving

Text: Galatians 5:13-15

Theme: Living by grace reveals itself by loving one another.

Introduction: It has been said that if we correctly teach grace people could view it as a license to sin. However, grace, when properly understood is not a license to sin, but the liberty to serve.

"The logic of Gal. 5:13-15 is simple. **First**, Paul restates the foundation of the Christian life: 'You were called to freedom, brethren.' **Then**, based on that divine call, he gives a twofold command. **Negatively**: 'Do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh.' **Positively**: 'Through love be servants of one another.' **Then** to support this twofold command he gives a positive and a negative incentive to love. **Positively**: 'For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' And **negatively**: 'If you bite and devour one another take heed that you are not consumed by one another.' The main point of the text is, 'through love be servants of one another.' If you do this, you fulfill the whole law; if you don't, you destroy yourselves."

June 12, 1983 (Morning), Bethlehem Baptist Church, John Piper, Pastor, **FREED TO LOVE** (Galatians 5:13-15). <http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper83/061283m.htm>

"His theology always ran one danger. When he declared that the end of the reign of law had come and that the reign of grace had arrived, it was always possible for someone to say, 'That, then, means that I can do what I like; all the restraints are lifted and I can follow my inclinations wherever they lead me. Law is gone and grace ensures forgiveness anyway.'" (Barclay, *Galatians*, 45).

"Of course, that danger is real, not because God's grace fails, but because men fail of the grace of God (Heb. 12:15). If there is a 'true grace of God' (1 Peter 5:12), then there is also a *false* grace of God; and there are false teachers who 'change the grace of our God into a license for immorality' (Jude 4). Christian liberty is not a license to sin but an opportunity to serve." (Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 127) But is the caution a valid one? If yes, why is the caution valid? What does Christian freedom look like?

Notice how verse 13 begins. It is an explanation as to why Paul wishes judgment on those noted in verse 12. There is a real compliment between what Paul said in 5:2-12 and what he now notes. Anyone who uses their freedom in Christ for an opportunity for the flesh . . .

- Undermines the benefit of Christ (5:2)
- Severs themselves from Christ (5:4a)
- Falls from grace (5:4b)
- Hinders obedience (5:7) and
- Removes the offense of the cross (5:11).

We must not miss the connection verse 13 has with verses 19-21. If grace is used as an opportunity for the flesh and as such produces the deeds of the flesh, that individual will not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 21).

THE BIG PICTURE:

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/ Authorization/Vindication
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/ Application

Its Eternal Value:

The design of God in redeeming His people from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and ultimately from the presence of sin is so that **they would be free from sin**. This is the message of Romans 6:18-23.

Romans 6:18 and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 19 I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members [as] slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in [further] lawlessness, so now present your members [as] slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. 20 For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. 21 Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. 22 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. 23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

As His people we are free. To this we have been called. To be in Christ is to be free.

When Jesus was “sparring” with the Pharisees in John 8 the issue of heritage was stressed. Like Galatians, Jesus points out that He is the true seed of Abraham and only in Him are people truly free.

John 8:32 and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free?'" 34 Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. 35 "And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. 36 **"If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.**

You and I in Christ are free.

The Problem:

Our problem is that we have lived so long in bondage that we have no idea what freedom looks like. Regardless as to how free we might appear to be, we are still living in fear and bondage to opinion, rejection, and acceptance.

The Storyline:

It is the love of God to us and through us that moves us to love one another. It is impossible to say you love God and yet hate your brother and sister in Christ. God shows His love to us by loving each other through us. The storyline of God is moved by His great love for us. It is a love that is unparalleled and without peer.

Questions:

1. To what have we been called? Is this idea in conflict with a call to Christ?
2. Is it possible to turn freedom into lasciviousness?
3. How do we guard against turning our freedom into an opportunity for the flesh?
4. Why is serving one another such a strong deterrent to sinning?
5. What is the summation of the whole Law?
6. Is this different than what Jesus said in Matthew 22:34-40?
7. Why do you think Paul makes the statement he does in verse 15? What might we assume from this statement?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know that we are free in Christ to love and serve Him and one another.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose Him above all else.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His finished work.

Outline:

Throughout Galatians Paul assumes they understand the meaning of His words. Like “Gospel” the word “freedom” suffers from misunderstanding. What is this freedom that flows from the gospel? Notice how the New Testament uses this word, “Freedom.”

- Only God can make anyone truly free (John 8:33).
- The children of God are described as having a “glorious freedom” (Rom. 8:21).
- The freedom secured by Christ is not to be judged (1 Cor. 10:29).
- Freedom is a consequence of the Spirit’s presence (2 Cor. 3:17).
- It is possible to be drawn back into bondage once you have been set free (Gal. 2:4).
- There are false brethren who would seek to destroy the believer’s freedom in Christ (Gal. 2:4).

- The freedom secured by Christ is not to be abandoned (Gal. 5:1).
- The person and work of Christ form the perfect law and it is this “law” that gives freedom (Jam. 1:25).
- Believers are free from the Law (Rom. 7:3).

Our freedom as believers is because of the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is the infinite nature of Jesus who acting as our substitute complete and forever fulfilled the wrath of God against us. In order for us to begin processing the sheer magnitude of His work in our behalf, I would like to consider sixteen consequences of His cross work (i.e., grace) and the resultant “freedom” that should cause us to see His glory.

- a. Because of His cross work you have been pardoned of all your sins. Grace takes literally the statement, “He has forgiven you of all your transgressions.” (Col. 2:13).

There is no sin that you can commit that He has not already forgiven. The sins of today and tomorrow are already forgiven even if you never ask.

- b. Because of His cross work God will never impute to your account sin (Rom. 4:8). God will never lay to your account sin.

The sins of today and tomorrow are not being laid to your account. You do not have to pay for your sin before God. On a horizontal level you will face the natural inherent consequences of your sin, but before God you will never have to answer for them.

- c. Because of His cross work God’s on going forgiveness is unconditional (Eph. 4:32; 1 John 2:1, 2).
- d. Because of His cross work God the Father sees you in the real righteousness of His Son (Romans 3:24).
- e. Because of His cross work you are as holy now as you ever were or ever will be (Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:10; 3:1; 1 John 4:17).
- f. Because of His cross work neither your obedience nor disobedience can change God’s opinion of you or dealings with you since we are already complete in Him (Col. 2:10).
- g. Because of His cross work rules and regulations are of no value against fleshly indulgence (Col. 2:20-23).
- h. Because of His cross work “my” obedience is the outworking of the Spirit’s ministry in me and through me (Gal. 5:22; Phil. 2:12, 13) to those around me.
- i. Because of His cross work there is guilt free living (Heb. 9:23-10:2).
- j. Because of His cross work there is unity within diversity (1 Cor. 12). Grace believes the diversity within the body of Christ is as

- different as cultures and personalities and as limitless as our infinite God.
- k. Because of His cross work we can leave all judgment with God believing that only He knows the heart and motives of men (Rom. 14:13). Thus, I can never judge your motives. How many times have you judged someone for something they said or done without knowing the context in which it was said or done only to be proven wrong when the truth was known? Friend, the best thing we can do is (1) think the best of people, (2) give them the benefit of a doubt and (3) keep our mouths closed.
 - l. Because of His cross work love is the ultimate quality of believers whereby others will know we are followers of the Lamb (1 Cor. 13:1-7; John 13:34, 35).
 - m. Because of His cross work our relationship with God from start to finish and everything in between is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone (Gal. 3:3).
 - n. Because of His cross work what the believer receives by grace they do not maintain by works. This is true in the area of justification, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, sanctification and glorification.
 - o. Because of His cross work my fellowship with God was merited by Christ and is maintained by Christ.
 - p. Because of His cross work you cannot undo what God has done. Romans 8:31-38 affirms this truth. Nothing can separate you from His love.

Because this is true, some would potentially conclude that this liberty from sin is a license to sin. Paul consistently meets and addresses this error. I think the challenge and the error come from the false brethren.

- I. What Christian liberty looks like (vv. 13, 14)
 - A. Negatively considered (“Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature” v. 13a)

It is interesting to see how this idea is present throughout the New Testament both with Paul and with the non-Pauline or General Letters.

1 Corinthians 8:9 But **take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.**

1 Peter 2:16 [Act] as free men, and **do not use your freedom as a covering for evil,** but [use it] as bondslaves of God

Jude 4 For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, **ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness** and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

To view your freedom in Christ as an opportunity for the flesh is to miss the bigger picture. Paul was confronted with this same kind of thinking in Romans. His response to the charge is three-fold. **First**, in response to those who say, “Let us do evil that good may come.” Paul says, “Their condemnation is just.” Paul is telling us that if you are viewing and using grace as an opportunity to sin, then your condemnation to hell is just (Rom. 3:9). **Second**, in response to those who say, “Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase (Rom. 6:1)?” His response in verse 2 is strong, “May it never be!” **Third**, in response to those who say, “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” Again, “May it never be!”

Just because there is a potential for danger and abuse does not mean we abandon the theology of Jesus, the cross, and grace. I am convinced God is big enough to hold His people in love. I am convinced God will finish the work that He began and is even now maintaining.

Friend, as a believer you can sin and as far as God is concerned it’s forgiven, but as a believer God has changed your appetite for sin. It’s still there and wanting to be fed, but you no longer want to feed it. To willfully sin because you are under grace is a tragic misunderstanding of grace and your relationship with the Father through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. To be freed **from** sin is not the liberty **to** sin.

Grace says that Jesus Christ is better than my sin. When you sin you are saying that the sin is of more value and of greater satisfaction than Jesus Christ. Grace says, “Jesus Christ is enough for this life and in the life that is to come.”

Paul gives us the positive implications of grace living. He uses a strong contrasting conjunction to show the marked difference between the two (**alla**).

B. Positively considered (“Serve one another in Love” vv. 13b, 14)

In the absence of love nothing else matters and in the presence of love nothing else matters. The idea of love’s position in the Christian life is notable in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

1 Cor. 13:1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, **but do not have love**, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as

to remove mountains, **but do not have love**, I am nothing. 3 And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, **but do not have love**, it profits me nothing.

It is impossible to speak of Christ, grace, and discipleship without speaking of love for God and for one's neighbor.

Love does what law could never do. "Love in the heart is God's substitute for laws and threats." (Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 127).

"Today's text picks up the theme of love from 5:6 and presses it home with a command in verse 13: "Through love be servants of one another." Someone may ask, "Why should Paul command us to love if love is an inevitable result of faith (5:6), indeed, a fruit of God's Spirit (5:22)?" The answer is that even though God is sovereign over his people and it is his Spirit that produces the fruit of love, nevertheless, God's means of doing his work includes human exhortation. There is no contradiction between saying God brings about love in our hearts and saying that one of the ways he does it is to remind us of love's importance with commands. But the fact that Paul has waited five chapters before he commands us to do anything but trust God, warns us not to take this command as a "work of law" to be performed in our own strength to win God's favor. Paul's attack on works of the law has not been an attack on commands but on the teaching that we should try to fulfill commands in our own strength to earn God's blessing. Commands are good and should be seen as a summons to have the obedience which faith produces. The command to love in Gal. 5:13 is a command to have the kind of free and confident heart that by its very nature has to love."

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There are two thoughts inside our text.

1. Grace through love serves one another (v.13b)

We have been freed from sin in order to serve one another in love. The essence of Christian liberty is not about you but Him and others. This is the emphasis in the New Testament.

- a. Because of His cross work believers are members one of another (Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:25).
- b. Because of His cross work believers put others above themselves (Rom. 12:10; 1 Cor. 11:33; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3; 1 Pet. 5:5).
- c. Because of His cross work believers are unified in the body (Rom. 12:16; 15:5, 7).

- d. Because of His cross work believers are to edify the body (Rom. 14:19; 15:14; 1 Cor. 12:25; 1 Thess. 4:18; 5:11).
- e. Because of His cross work believers are moved to love one another and in so doing fulfill the Law (Rom. 13:8; 1 Thess. 3:12; 4:9; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:7, 11; 2 John 5).
- f. Because of His cross work believers do not judge the body (Rom. 14:13).
- g. Because of His cross work believers are tolerant (Eph. 4:2, 32; Col. 3:13).
- h. Because of His cross work believers bear burdens (Gal. 6:2).
- i. Because of His cross work believers are transparent (James 5:16).

Have you ever worn a mask? No matter what kind it is no mask is comfortable long term. It is my constant prayer for us as His people in this community of faith that we would be a fellowship where biblical love is expressed and felt. Let this grace-based fellowship be a place of authenticity.

2. Grace through love fulfills the Law (v. 14).

The Judaizers were calling the Gentile believers back to law keeping. Paul is basically challenging their assertions, “So you want to keep the Law?” Then serve in love your neighbor!

This is an interesting statement made by the apostle Paul. He is quoting Leviticus 19:11-18.

Leviticus 19:11 'You shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lie to one another. 12 'You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD. 13 'You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him. The wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning. 14 'You shall not curse a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the LORD. 15 'You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly. 16 'You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. 17 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. 18 **'You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.**

We are familiar with Leviticus 19:18 because of Matthew 22:37-40.

Matthew 22:34 But when the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered themselves together. 35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "**The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'** 40 "**On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.**"

Think about what Paul is telling us? He did not say be holy, judge, separate, etc. He said love. The Judaizers were pushing the Galatians to keep the demands of the Law and Paul says the law is being kept by your love for one another. The law is fulfilled in one word: L-O-V-E.

What does Christ like love look like?

- It is without hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9).
- It is encouraging (1 Cor. 8:1).
- It is patient (1 Cor. 13:4-13)
- It is kind
- It is not jealous
- It does not brag
- It is not arrogant
- It does not act unbecomingly
- It does not seek its own
- It is not provoked
- It does not take into account a wrong suffered
- It does not rejoice in unrighteousness
- It rejoices with the truth
- It bears all things
- It believes all things
- It hopes all things
- It endures all things.
- It never fails
- It is the greatest of the gifts (1 Cor. 13:13).
- It is genuine (2 Cor. 6:6).

What is grace love? Grace love is Christ-like. **Grace loving is Christ living.** There is no way in myself I can love this way, but I do know that Christ can, is and will love through me those around me. Have you ever met a person that was unloving? How about a person that is unlovable? I have met people who are not revealing the love of

Christ, but I have never met a person that is unlovable. I love you all. But I love you only because God loves me and loves you through me. He is doing the loving for me.

II. What Christian legalism looks like (v. 15)

Because of the false brethren and the perversion of the gospel, the church of Galatia was imploding. There was great division and hurt present. I would probably argue that every church problem can be sourced back to a deviation from who Jesus is, what He has done, and who His people are in Him. When we fail to celebrate the supremacy of Jesus in all things and when we fail to magnify the enormity of His cross work and when we fail to see who we are in Him and treat others according to their identity in Christ, we will be biting, devouring, and destroying the body of Christ. Isn't this the same thought as found in 1 Corinthians 3:17 and what the problem was in 11:27-30?

1 Corinthians 3:17 **If any man destroys the temple of God**, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

1 Corinthians 11:27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. 30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

In our passage Paul explains love and grace by noting its contrast. When we seek the destruction of others we are neither loving nor gracious. In fact we are "fleshly and walking like mere men (the unbelieving)." Such behavior on our part is "earthly, natural, and demonic." Notice the following two passages in 1 Corinthians 3 and James 3.

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. 2 I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able [to receive it.] Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3 **for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?** 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," **are you not [mere] men?**

James 3:13 Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and [so] lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, **but is earthly, natural, demonic.** 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, **there is disorder and every evil thing.** 17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle,

reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

I know we use the term legalism much like the gospel or freedom. We assume each of us know what it means. **Legalism is an attitude that thinks God’s favor or blessing can be manipulated or merited to its advantage.** Legalism is not what you do but rather why you do what you do.

The false brethren believed those who received circumcision and endeavored to keep the Law could manipulate or merit the favor or blessing of God. Paul denounced such thinking as being inconsistent with the gospel.

The statement, “Christian legalism” is actually a misnomer. There is no such thing as Christian legalism. We only think there is. Christian legalism is only legalism. It is not Christian. “The conditional protasis stated what was actually going on in the churches. The legalism of the Judaizers and the misuse of liberty combined to produce an atmosphere of destructive criticism.” (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 158).

Those who were standing for Christ were being attack by those who were deserting from Christ. By telling people it isn’t about them and that their “good works” was not meriting favor with God, those who followed Jesus only were met with ridicule and persecution (4:29).

Legalism is marked by biting and devouring. It is the cannibalism of the body. Legalism is its own worst enemy. “The picture here is of wild animals attacking each other. This in itself is proof that law cannot force people to get along with each other.” (Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 128). There is a progression of thought ending in utter destruction (“Bite, devour, consume”). Within the book of Galatians Paul sets the doctrine of grace against that of the Judaizers (a.k.a. Legatists). Jesus, the cross, and grace speak of freedom whereas legalism speaks of bondage. Grace is about Jesus whereas legalism is about you.

Legalism loves to perform and obey because of the sense of accomplishment and achievement such actions bring. Legalism is easily offended when things are not going its way. Legalism has zero tolerance for when its preferences are violated. Legalism is self-destructive. Legalism is a poor excuse for biblical Christianity. In fact, **legalism is not Christian at all.**

It is unfortunate, but verse 15 is strongly characteristic of local churches. We can hardly get along with ourselves let alone with other local churches. Our combativeness and “ugliness” is a consequence of our non-Christ-like spirit. It is this spirit of the Judaizers that still infects the modern church. Because legalism is territorial and judgmental and present, the church is still noted as divisive and critical.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What's the NEXT STEP?)

1. Live free.
2. Make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). Abstain from fleshly lusts (1 Peter 2:11).
3. Love large. Don't be selective or partial. Love big. Personal hurt and individual grudges harm us in ways we cannot fully appreciate. I become petty and small when I take allow personal wounds to fester and what it does is keep me from loving the body unconditionally.
4. Don't hurt yourself by criticizing the body. I recognize that each of us have personal weaknesses that can be justly criticized and hopefully corrected, but I would caution you never to criticize unless you have a personal relationship with the individual. It is easy to throw rocks from afar, but I would challenge you and caution you to think carefully about the criticism you are leveling against the individual and see what the perceived problem might be from their perspective.
5. Celebrate all that Jesus is for you and that you are in Him. I would also challenge you to celebrate who Jesus is for others and what they are in Him.