

Galatians

Return Church

Lesson #9

Sunday

October 26, 2025

Galatians

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Galatians 5:13-15 NKJV

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5:26 NKJV

1. Freedom from what?
2. Love your neighbor as yourself.
3. Don't consume one another.
4. What's wrong with our relationships?

1). Freedom from what?

*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, **Galatians 5:13 NKJV***

We are freed from sin, not free to sin.

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. **Romans 6:1-2 KJV***

Some people think that if you teach free grace that nobody will have an incentive to live a good and holy life. But quite the opposite is true, the more I think on the gospel, the more I want to live a holy and good life.

Free from the law

- The context of the book of Galatians is that Paul was writing a letter to the new churches of the region of Galatia that he had recently established.
- The purpose of the letter was to argue against some false teachers that had moved in after Paul left the region. They were teaching to these newly established churches, that in order to be saved, you had to believe in Jesus Christ, plus keep the law.
- So, the entire book is Paul arguing against these false teachers.
- Paul's message was the simple but profound Gospel, that in order to be saved all you must do is to repent of your sins and put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Freedom

*For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. **Galatians 5:13 NLT***

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. **Isaiah 61:1 NLT***

- The Bible is dripping with language of freedom.
- Here Jesus is saying, I am all about freedom.
- Sin is slavery, while salvation is freedom.

*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. **John 8:32***

Freedom

- I once was a part of a Christian church that had an authoritarian system of do's and don'ts, with many rules, regulations. There was nothing in the culture that even hinted at the idea of freedom.
- Is a relationship with Jesus a radical challenge to our freedom?
- Christianity seems like it doesn't have anything to contribute towards freedom. It appears to get in the way of freedom.
- Does becoming a Christian mean the end to your freedom?
- Yes, No, and ultimately no. It is a complex answer.

Modern western humanist definition of freedom

Freedom –the absence of all constraints. If anything constrains me, I am not free. True freedom is to create my own moral universe. I do whatever I want to do. My will be done. I live my life anyway I want to. No restraints. No fences. Complete unbridled, unrestrained liberty.

This is simplistic and unworkable.

NO RIGHT, NO WRONG, NO RULES FOR ME, I'M FREE!

Elsa “Let it go” Frozen, Walt Disney

Sin

- Sin is disobedience to your creator. You resist obeying God. When someone tells you what to do, you want to do the opposite:
- Deep inside the human heart, there is an impulse that says, nobody is going to tell me what to do, nobody tells me how to live my life. I am free to do whatever I want to do.
- God tells you to obey Him, keep the Ten Commandments, obey the teachings of Jesus, like the sermon on the mount, or the Golden Rule. He is your creator, so obey Him, but something inside you wants to do the opposite.
- A teenager wants freedom, so he first starts smoking cigarettes, (just a little rebellion), then he drinks a little alcohol, then smokes pot, then tries meth, then heroin. He moves out of the house. He now is free to do whatever he wants to do, but this leads to addiction, to ruined relationships, then to poverty, poor health, destruction and even death.

Is this freedom?

I often see motorcycle drivers pass me up, going 100 miles per hour. How they must feel free and liberated. With the wind blowing through their hair. But then you read in the papers how many people die each year from motorcycle accidents.

Sadly, motorcycle riders are 28 times more likely to lose their lives in a fatal driving crash compared with other motorists on the road.

NO RIGHT, NO WRONG, NO RULES FOR ME, I'M FREE!

This definition of freedom is killing people.

What am I made for?

- Freedom is not freedom to do whatever we want to do, it is to wholly do what I am made or created to do.
- Take a fish and put it on land, it will flop around on the floor, it doesn't do so good on the floor. Putting the fish on land will eventually kill it. But put it back in the water, it is now free, and it thrives.
- Water is the environment where the fish thrives, where it is truly free.
- What is a human being made for? What is our water? Love.
- Love is the perfect environment for us humans, where we will thrive.
- When you feel like a fish in water is when someone that you love is loving you back, it could be a spouse, a lover, a parent, a child, a friend, or better yet, God.
- When are you truly free? When are you the happiest, the most fulfilled, the most satisfied? When you are in love.
- This is why falling in love with Jesus is so powerful.

Love relationship

- In a love relationship, the deeper the relationship, the more you lose your independence.
- If you are in love, you can't be free in the modern definition of freedom. “No right, no wrong, no rules for me, I'm free”.
- With the modern definition of freedom, nobody should interfere with my freedoms----that's selfish.
- Self-centeredness destroys love which is the ultimate freedom. It is trying to use people instead of serving them. Me first, my needs are first.
- If your definition of freedom keeps you from loving, then you are not free.

Love

- To know the freedom of love, you must say, I will change, I will adjust, I will sacrifice, I will give up some freedoms for the greater freedom of love. Both parties must do this in order to make it work.
- You are in love, so now you are free, but:
 - Now you can't just go hang out with the guys after work.
 - Now you can't do whatever you want to do with your day off, you have to ask your wife if she is ok with this.
 - Now you can't spend the money anyway you want to, you now share the money, you have to get in agreement.
- Love says I will give, I will sacrifice, I will change, I will adjust. I gladly do these things, because I am in love.

Love relationship

- There is nothing more liberating than a great love relationship. You feel the most-free, in an environment of love. But the deeper you get into it, the more you have to give up your independence, your freedoms.
- The ultimate freedom is a love relationship with Jesus.
- If your idea of freedom moves you away from love, throw it away.
- Love means sacrificing your time, your money, your heart, your life.
- Jesus was nailed to the cross so we could be free. Jesus gave up all His freedom, so we could have true freedom.

Real freedom

I am a diabetic, and I want to eat whatever I want to eat. I am free to eat whatever I want to, but the doctor says if I do, it could cause blindness, I could lose my toes, and I could have a heart attack, plus I will probably die an early death.

There are two freedoms in this story.

- The freedom of eating any food I want to.
- The freedom of good health and a longer life.

Real freedom comes by choosing certain desires. Freedom is not the absence of constraints. It is finding the liberating constraints. Freedom is not doing whatever you want to do. It is sifting through your desires, so you can choose which ones you really want.

If you live anyway you want, you will die quickly. You will lose freedoms. Freedom is finding the right constraints, the ones that fit into reality.

Freedom

- Freedom is not doing anything you want to do, it is doing the liberating things.
- Freedom is a complex thing. How do you know what is the liberating constraints. Why don't people feel free? Our culture wrongly defines freedom.
- Our culture says the enemy of our freedom is outside. There are forces out there limiting you. Jesus says, no the ultimate enemy of our freedom is inside of you.
- The enemy of freedom is this thing deep inside your heart that says, nobody is going to tell me what to do.

Freedom

- In Christianity, Jesus says, I will set you free by dying for you. God does all the giving. Jesus says, I will give up my freedom for you, I will adjust for you, I will sacrifice for you, I will change for you.
- A love relationship with God is the most valuable thing in your life. It is the only thing that really matters at the end of the day.
- It is in a love relationship with Jesus where we can thrive, like a fish in water. But in all love relationships, we have to give up some freedoms to experience the ultimate freedom of love.
- Freedom is not the absence of constraints. It is finding the most liberating constraints. Freedom is not doing what ever you want to do. It is sifting through your desires, so you can choose which ones you really want.
- Come to Jesus, turn your life over to Him and experience true freedom.

2). Love your neighbor as yourself

But through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ***Galatians 5:13-14 NKJV***

What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself?

- **The golden rule.**
- **Who is your neighbor?**
- **You must first love yourself before you can love others.**

The golden rule

Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets. **Matthew 7:12 NLT**

- Do we really love our neighbor as ourselves?
- Do you treat others the way you would want them to treat you?
- Look how you treat yourself when it comes to comforts like food, clothing, shelter, transportation, air conditioning, etc....
- If you got into the condition that the poor are in you would make it a matter of absolute urgency to get yourself out of that condition, as fast as you could.
- To fail to treat the poor with the sense of urgency is a sheer lack of obedience to the golden rule.
- Does anybody really keep the golden rule 100% of the time?

Who is your neighbor?

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, And who is my neighbor? **Luke 10:29 NLT**

- Jesus addressed this question in the Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Who is your neighbor? The short answer is everybody.
- The Jews hated the Samaritans, but in the parable, he showed him great mercy.
- The entire Bible can be summed with this command:
- **Love God and love people.**
- Christianity doesn't have to be complicated.
- Of course we love those who love us back. But what about loving the unlovely? How do you love people that will not or cannot ever love you back to any degree?

Love your neighbor

- Love the religious
- Love the irreligious
- Love the rich
- Love the poor
- Love the saved
- Love the lost
- Love the Republican
- Love the Democrat
- love the straight
- Love the gay
- Love the pretty
- Love the ugly
- Love the white man
- Love the black man
- Love the Christian
- Love the Muslim
- Love the Hindu
- Love the atheist
- Love those you have much in common with.
- Love those you have nothing in common with.
- Love those that believe just the way you believe.
- Love those that do not believe anything like you do.

Loving others

If someone says, “I love God,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar; for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? ***I John 4:20 NLT***

But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.
Luke 6:32-33 NLT

How to love yourself

You must first learn to love yourself, before you can learn how to love others.

How do you love yourself in a healthy way?

- It doesn't mean to indulge yourself with worldly pleasures.
- It doesn't mean to give yourself everything your flesh wants.
- To love yourself is to see yourself the way God sees you, and then to love yourself the way that God loves you.
- To love yourself is to know who you are in Christ, and to walk in that new identity. I am righteous, I am holy, I am sanctified, I have no condemnation in Christ Jesus. I am a Saint and not a dirty rotten sinner.
- You must love yourself properly, the way that God does, before you can ever learn how to love your neighbor.

3). Don't consume one another

But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! ***Galatians 5:15 NKJV***

- What a strange verse! This idea of spiritual cannibalism.
- Biting one another could mean hating, slandering, persecuting, gossiping, envying, back-biting, etc.....
- The world's idea of love is to use somebody for what you can get out of them. To use someone for sex, or money, or anything that will satisfy your desires. You are consuming them. To use someone is to eat them alive.
- As opposed, God's idea of love is to give yourself away, to serving others, to trying to meet their needs, just because you love them for who they are intrinsically and not for what they can do for you, or what you can get out of them.

Don't eat them up

- When you are attracted to one another, your hope is that this person will make me feel like I am somebody.
- But when you go after somebody not to serve them, but to deal with your emptiness so they will serve you. You are using them, you are eating them.
- In Hell there will be no love there. Nobody that goes there will have the love of God in their hearts. In Hell everyone will be trying to use everyone.
- In Hell there will be a hunger, where metaphorically, the stronger sucks the weaker into themselves. They are trying to eat each other up, they are trying to use each other. They consume each other and never get satisfied.
- As opposed to this is heavenly love where we open and empty ourselves for each other. Giving, sharing, serving each other, not expecting anything in return.

4). What's wrong with our relationships?

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
Galatians 5:26 NKJV

In Genesis chapter 1, God created everything. At the end of each of the first 5 days of creation, God looked at His creation and said it was **good**. Then on the 6th day He created man, and He look at this and said it was **very good**.

But God got to looking at everything He had created and He saw something and said, “It is not good.”

Then the Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him. **Genesis 2:18 NLT**

Relationships

- Once God had created everything, the first thing that was “not good” is man without a relationship,
- This is because we are all made in the image and likeness of God.
- Christianity believes that God is one and yet He is also three. Christianity has a triune God. And whether you believe He exists in 3 persons or 3 manifestations, you must understand there was never a time God was not filled with love.
- The idea of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost creates a lot of problems for people. People have a hard time understanding that Jesus is God, but he is always praying and talking to God. People simply don’t understand it.
- You don’t have to understand it. The main thing you must know is that there is only one God and His nature is full of love within Himself. God is love.
- The reason that humans without relationship is not good, because we are made in the image of God. Relationships are at the heart of Christianity.

Bone of my bones

It was not good, until Adam got a friend. When Adam sees Eve, he gives the first poem or song.

*And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*

Genesis 2:23 NKJV

“I found myself.” Since we are made in the image and likeness of God, you cannot know yourself until you know another. This was Adam getting a perfect relationship. He saw her and then saw himself.

We need relationships

- At first, they were naked and not ashamed.
- But as soon as there was sin the world, they were ashamed, they were hiding, they were running from each other.
- Why do people try to escape, or need to get away from people sometimes?
- Relationships are so very hard, people are always getting offended, or disappointed. People are always running away. There are always problems in relationships.

What is the problem?

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
Galatians 5:26 NKJV

Provoking – Envying

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
Galatians 5:26 NKJV

This is basically a summary of all the things that go wrong in our relationships.

- **Provoking** - means to look down upon or to Lord over someone, to irritate.
- **Envy** - means to look up to someone and to be mad about it, to be jealous.

What we have here is a superiority complex and an inferiority complex. Most everyone has with one of these or even both of these problems.

- **Superior pride** – you think you are better than others.
- **Inferior pride** – you think others are better than you.

Provoking – envying

- Our relationships go bad, and we are desperately trying to feel better about ourselves. We compare ourselves to other people. Almost everybody is ahead of us or behind us on a scale, this is why people don't have many friends.
- We are either provoking or envying. We are either looking down on others or we are looking up to others and being upset about it.
- I could listen to other teacher's sermons and say, I will never be able to teach like that, or I can teach a lot better than him, both are wrong. This is why we are not to compare ourselves to others.
- I know some rich people who never can keep rich friends, because the envy eats them up. So, they surround themselves with people who are poorer or lesser than themselves, to feel superior.
- I know many people who look down on the poor, they have no meaningful relationships with the poor because they think they are superior to them.
- I know some longhorn breeders who hate some big and powerful breeders simply because they are so envious of them.

Conceited

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
Galatians 5:26 NKJV

- Conceited, is the main reason that all relationships fall apart.
- Conceited in the old King James translation is vain glory. It means empty of glory. A glory vacuum.
- Glory means weight, importance, value, or significance.
- There is a problem or a spiritual condition deep inside of us, we fear we don't matter, we don't count, or we are insignificant. We are empty of honor or glory.
- We fear that we are nobody and we spend our lives desperately trying to prove to others that we are somebody.
- This is our greatest fear, that we will have no honor, no glory, no weight, no significance, or no value that we will not matter.

Everybody matters

- Madona at the height of her fame said, I struggle with fear of being mediocre, I still have to prove to myself everyday that I am somebody.
- Every human being is born thinking that they don't matter, they don't count, or they are not significant.
- Our biggest problem is that we are not noticed. We are overlooked or ignored.
- This is the main thing that we must communicate to others; that they matter, they are valuable, they are significant. Especially to those that we once looked down upon.
- If you still look down on certain groups of people, you cannot possibly make them feel the love of God. They will pick up on your conceit, they will feel that you think you are better than them and that they don't really matter.
- This is what is important when you come to church, to make sure that everybody feels important, valued, honored. To make sure that everybody knows that they do matter, they do count, they are significant, and they are not ignored.

Come to Jesus

- The nature of sin is to make you less and less, less and less solid, weightless, of lesser value, to the point where you don't matter.
- Sin has disrupted our relationship with God.
- Hell may be worse than a lake of fire, it might be a place where we are eternally and utterly ignored and overlooked for eternity.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. **Matthew 16:24-25 NKJV**

- Come to Jesus! You will lose yourself, that self who fears he doesn't matter, and you will find yourself in Christ. In Christ you are rich, you are valued, you are a treasure, a beauty.

Look at Jesus

- The more self-centered and the more self-absorbed you are, on judgment day, the more God will overlook or ignore you.
- This is why we provoke or envy. This is why we bite and devour one another, because deep inside we fear we don't really matter.
- Jesus runs toward what we run from. We are afraid of any situation that makes us feel small, or less important, so we run.
- Jesus emptied Himself of His glory. We are trying to fill ourself with glory, we are eating others, they make me feel good about myself.
- Look at Jesus, who did the opposite of what we are trying to do. He became of no beauty, He emptied himself, He took off His robe of glory, he ran toward the cross.

Jesus emptied Himself of His glory

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. ***Philippians 2:5-8 NLT***

God values you, you are a treasure to Him

- Jesus came to the earth and emptied himself of his glory. He took off His robe of glory and put on a robe of humanity, of humility.
- Jesus got what we deserved so we could get what He deserved.
- On the cross He became our sin so that we could be made right with God.
- To the degree the Holy Spirit shows you what he has done for you, this will melt your heart. Now you can finally be full again, be valued.
- God treasures you so much that He sent His Son to die for you.
- He treasured me and gave me value, worth and significance.
- You may feel superior or inferior towards others, but the gospel will take all that away and will change you and heal your relationships.