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Brothers and Sisters, You were Called to Freedom 5: 13-15

Brothers and Sisters, you were called to freedom DIG: How does Paul navigate between the dangers of those who set rules to live by, and those who want no rules at all? Can an external set of rules restrain evil? What does Paul say is the answer? Who gives the believer both the desire and power to refuse the wrong and choose the right? What is the antidote against using our freedom from legalism as an excuse for sinning? What is the negative side of that truth?

REFLECT: What experience have you had with legalism in the past? When did you recognize it? Have you overcome it? How have you dealt with it? In your culture how is your freedom in Messiah misunderstood today? How does this misunderstanding lead to sin? How do you personally understand your freedom in Messiah, and also guard against using it as an excuse for your favorite sin? How can you help others understand this? In what situations do you find it hard to love others? How will remembering your hope in Yeshua Messiah increase your love?

Paul warns the Galatians not to use their freedom from legalism as an excuse for sinning, thus, turning their freedom in Messiah into an excuse to sin. Instead, he encourages them to govern their lives by divine love produced by the Ruach ha-Kodesh.

Ours is a day that cries out for liberation. Men, women, and even children are demanding more **freedom** to do as they please. In the name of personal rights, authority is flouted and restrictions are resisted. Like the Israelites in the days of the judges, **sinful** people want to do **what is right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6, 21:25; Deuteronomy 12:8)**.

But is also a day of addiction, not only to alcohol and drugs but also to sexual passions, violence, and many other forms of bondage in which a person eventually becomes powerless to escape. When people choose to persist in a **sin**, they develop less and less control over it until eventually they forfeit any choice entirely. Except for the extremity of their situations, debilitated addicts are no different from most of the lost in the world today. **I tell you the**

truth, everyone who [habitually practices] sin is a slave to sin (John 8:34). Fallen people are slaves to their **sinful** nature, an addict who cannot successfully control his **sinful** thoughts and actions even when they want to. And ironically, the more they insist on their self-centered freedom, the more they become enslaved to **sin**. However, in the passage quoted above, **Yeshua** gave the remedy for true **freedom: So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36).** That is the great manifesto of all believers in **Messiah** and the theme of the letter to **the Galatians: freedom in Yeshua Messiah.**

Paul had already spoken of **our freedom in Messiah (2:4)** and presented an analogy illustrating the believer's spiritual descent from **Abraham's wife Sarah, a free woman (to see link click Bq - Abraham had Two Sons, Ishma'el by the Slave Woman and Isaac by the Free Woman).** **He** declared that **it is for freedom that Messiah set us free (5:1).** But because the idea of freedom in **Messiah** is so easily misinterpreted and misapplied, **Paul** knew the importance of understanding its true significance. Therefore, here, **he** briefly explains **freedom's** basic nature and purpose.¹³³

The sentence: **Brothers and sisters, you were called to freedom (5:13a),** is transitional, reaching back to all that has come before it, summing up the whole preceding argument for our freedom in **Messiah** and looking ahead to what follows, in that it introduces a completely new aspect of the matter of **freedom . . .** the danger of abusing it. To those who had a working understanding of **the Torah,** the teaching of our **freedom in Messiah** might have meant that there is nothing to stand in the way of the unrestrained indulgence of one's own **sinful** impulses. During **his** ministry **Paul** frequently had people react to **his** teaching in this way to **his** teaching on **grace.** The questions of **Romans 6:1** and **6:15,** "**What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so grace may abound?**" and "**What then? Shall we sin because we are not under [legalism] but under grace?**" were asked by someone who did not understand **grace.**

Paul answers these questions in **Romans 6,** by showing that the control of the **sinful** nature over the individual is broken the moment a person believes in **Yeshua** and is indwelt with **the Ruach ha-Kodesh.** Such a person would, at that time, hate **sin** and love righteousness, and would have both the desire and the power to keep from **sinning** and to do **God's** will. **Paul** teaches in **Galatians** that the power of **the Ruach** exercises more control over the believer than obedience to the 613 commandments of **the Torah** ever did, and who gives the believer both the desire and power to refuse the wrong and choose the right, a thing which **the Torah** was never able to do. As a result, the believer passes out of the control of a mere legal system into the control of a **Person, the Spirit of God.**

When **Yeshua** died and was resurrected, we passed from the Dispensation of **Torah** to the Dispensation of **Grace**. **The Torah** was, and is, still righteous (see [Af - The Torah or Righteousness](#)), and still valid as our blueprint for living (see the commentary on [Exodus Dh - Moses and the Torah](#)). **The Torah** was not abolished (see the commentary on [Exodus Du - Do Not Think That I Have Come to Abolish the Torah](#)). **God** knew what **He** was doing. **He** did not leave the world without a restraining hand. **He** ran this world for 2,500 years before **the Torah** was enacted, and **He** can run it again. **He** does not need the help of legalistic teachers and preachers in the Church (see [Ak - The Hebrew Roots Movement: A Different Gospel](#)) who think they are helping **Him** control this world by imposing legalism on grace.

Indeed, it is the general ignorance and lack of recognition of the ministry of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** that is responsible for the tendency of the Church of adding legalism (baptism, tongues, etc.) to grace. There is a recognition that the flesh was still **sinful** even though its power over the individual was broken, and, as a result, the feeling that the child of god still needs a restraint, as it should be. But the mistake that is so often made is that the perversion of **the Torah**, or legalism, is substituted for the restraint of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** with disastrous results. Not only does **the Torah** not restrain evil, but on the other hand, it brings out evil in the believer because our **sinful** nature rebels against it (**Romans 7:7-13**). **The Ruach ha-Kodesh** strove with men before **the Torah** was given, and **He** still continues to do so. And moreover, **He** indwells all believers and has their cooperation in restraining evil. **He** will restrain evil until the Church is Raptured (see the commentary on [Revelation By - The Rapture of the Church](#)). No pastor or Messianic rabbi ever helps his flock live a holy life in **Messiah** by putting them under legalism and let them smell the fire and brimstone of the Lake of Fire. A policeman on the street corner is a far more efficient deterrent of breaking the law than any number of city ordinances posed for public notice. To understand the ministry of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, is far more productive in our victory over **sin** than the imposition of any list of rules. Thus, the controlling ministry of **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** is the key to holy living. And that is **Paul's** point here.¹³⁴

Only do not let your freedom become an opportunity for the flesh (5:13b). **Paul** warns believers who were tempted to abuse their **freedom** in **Messiah** is not a means for satisfying the desires of **the flesh**, but for opposing it. **Flesh** here does not refer to the physical body but to the **sinful** inclination of fallen mankind, the old self, whose supreme desire is to do its own will and to satisfy its **sinful** appetites. It is a synonym for **sinful** self-will. **Messiah** does not give **freedom** to believers so they can do what they want but so they can, for the first time, do what **God** wants, because of **love** for **Him**. **Live as free people, but not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil. Rather, live as God's slaves (First**

Peter 2:16). To advocate immorality or corruption in the name of our **freedom** that we have in **Messiah** is to deny our **Lord**, who gives **freedom from sin**, not **freedom to sin**. **Put on the Lord Messiah Yeshua, and stop making provision for the flesh - for its cravings (Romans 13:14).**¹³⁵

The antidote against using **their** freedom from legalism as an excuse for **sinning**, is found in **Paul's** appeal: **But through love serve one another (5:13c)**. The Greek word for **love** here is *agape*, which refers, not to human affection but to divine **love**, the **love** produced in the heart of the yielded believer to **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**, and the **love** with which that believer should **love** other believers. This **love** is a **love** whose chief essence is self-sacrifice for the benefit of the one who is **loved**. Such a **love** means death to self, and that means defeat for **sin**, since the essence of **sin** is self-will and self-gratification. The **Galatian** believers were rescued from the slavery which legalism imposed, and were brought into a new bondage, that of a **loving**, glad, and willing service to **ADONAI** and mankind which eliminates self-will and subordinates all selfish desires to **love**. This is the secret to victory over the totally deprived nature whose power over the believer was broken at the moment of salvation, when that old **sin** nature attempts to seduce the believer to use his **freedom** as an excuse to **sin**.

Up to this point **the apostle** had tried to discourage the **Galatian** believers from once again placing themselves under the bondage of legalism by listening to the false doctrine of the Judaizers. But now **he** exhorts them to **love one another**. If **they** do this, **he** says, they will fulfill **the Torah**. **For the whole Torah can be [fully obeyed] in a single saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Galatians 5:14; Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:8-10; James 1:27)**. But how are we to understand this? **Paul's** statement becomes clear to us when we understand that the heart of **the Torah**, and all that it requires, is revealed in **love**. At the moment of salvation we pass from condemnation to acceptance, from being **the enemy of God (James 4:4)** to being a child of **God**. We are adopted into the family of **God**, not by a set of written commandments, but by the **love of God** that produces in the heart of the yielded believer both the desire and power to live life by the dominating principle of **love**. **God's love**, which exercises a stronger and stricter control over the heart, and is far more efficient at extinguishing **sin** than the Judaizers could ever dream of.

Then to reemphasize the need for believers to use their **freedom** to **serve one another (5:13c)**, **Paul** stresses the negative side of that truth - in the form of a warning about what happens when believers *do not love* and **serve one another**. **They** become destructive and **bite and devour one another (5:15a)**. The words **bite** (Greek: *dakno*) and **devour** (Greek: *katethio*), were commonly used in classical Greek in connection with wild animals in a

deadly struggle. We are not specifically told what the deadly struggle was about, but the context dictates that it was the Judaizers who were at the root of all their deadly struggles. By devouring one another, **Paul** does not mean that they will lose their salvation, but that such infighting, if continued, would destroy the fellowship and witness of the churches in **Galatia**. So **he** warned: **Watch out that you are not destroyed by one another (5:15b).**¹³⁶

The Ruach ha-Kodesh does not minister in a vacuum. **He** uses the Word of **God**, prayer, worship, and the fellowship of believers to build us up in **Messiah**. When we spend time daily in the Word and prayer, and yield to **the Ruach's** working in our lives, we enjoy **freedom** and build up our fellowship of believers using our spiritual gifts.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, We love **You!** We praise **You** for releasing us from the slavery of trying to follow the law perfectly, of trying to earn **Your** love by good works. Thank you that chose to make your son become our sin offering. For **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (Second Corinthians 5:21). You clothed us with Messiah, for all of you who were immersed in Messiah have clothes yourselves with Messiah. You made us all sons of God through trusting in Messiah Yeshua (Galatians 3:27, 26).***

Your** awesome, magnificent love causes us to want to love **You** back with all we have. This world is just a passing vapor. We will be gone in the blink of an eye and the only thing that matters is what we have done for **Jesus** with a loving attitude. Thank **You** that though our salvation is a free gift (**Ephesians 2:8-9**), **You** allow us the privilege of serving **You** and **You** reward those who choose to honor **You** with **Godlike** attitudes. **Now if anyone builds on the foundation (- which is Yeshua the Messiah (v. 11) with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work - what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (First Corinthians 3:12-14).

*Praise **You** that **You** have not only freed us from sin's penalty, but **You** also freed us from sin's power and will deliver us from sin's presence. **You** also allow us the blessing of serving **You** and **You** promise to take all who follow **Yeshua** as **Messiah** into your eternal **Kingdom (Colossians 1:13)** and to the home that **You** are preparing for **Your** loved ones. **If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be (John 14:3).** In the name of **Your Holy Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*