

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

"Liberty Or License"

Gal. 5:13-15

Introduction

1. This is the last major section of the epistle. It extends itself over a most vital subject: Christian practicum.

2. Christianity is indeed freedom, but not an anti-nomianism of any sort whatsoever!

3. The calling of the Galatians (aorist passive form of the verb) has been into freedom. It is a state of calling to which the Judaizers have nothing in common. What kind of liberty is it? Consider its description:

1. It is RESTRICTED liberty. v. 13.

In apostolic times, this same problem presented itself (cf. Rom. 6:1). Liberty must always be stood in fast (Gal. 5:1), but it is never to be utilized with abuse!

What Paul is urging here is that there is a vast difference between Christian liberty and the use of it. "Occasion" is a military term denoting a base of operations and concerns generally any starting point for action. No military base of flesh (the old life) is to be allowed from which to operate in Christian spheres. Hence, the practical display of liberty is often given up!

Let it never be said that your freedom from sin has provided you a freedom in sin.

2. It is COMMANDED liberty. v. 13.

Here is a positive affirmation. It relates itself to a bondage of which Christian freedom is a notable part!

The verb "serve" means to "act the part of a servant one to another." The classic example of this is John 13:1-15. Love is really the deep desire to seek the best interests of the other. It annihilates self and subordinates all selfish desires to this end. Let no one think that this sort of love ignores a defense of righteousness.

3. It is RELATED liberty. v. 14.

As a support for the commanded liberty just given, Paul elicits this text.

The whole law here obviously does not mean entirety, but rather that which pertains to one's relation to his neighbor. This is the true concern unless one feels love here is both toward God and man.

Who one's neighbor is under New Testament thoughts is different than the Old Testament (cf. Lev. 19:18). That people in need constitute "neighbor" is taught without controversy in Luke 10:30-37.

Hence, Paul appeals to the unity of the Scriptures in pointing out that there is a divine principle involved here: love is a strain of true believers in whatever age they may live!

4. It is ENDANGERED liberty. v. 15.

Here is another motive which Paul deduces for "serving one another in love." The use of the first class condition in the Greek shows that the Galatians were doing something very real and Paul assumed it as such.

The verbs "biting and devour" are obviously used metaphorically, but they point to a spirit of violent strifes, debates, and disputes which were the consequence of the new views rising from the Judaizers.

Viewed as a church or individually, the result of such conduct would be the "consuming of one another." The point is clear: This sort of thing prevents edification within and conversion without! How concentrated is the pungent statement of James (3:16).

Conclusion: What is the answer to these appeals of the apostle? It is to be found in a diligent study of His will as made known in the Word; a more liberal effusion of His Holy Spirit in our lives (v. 16), Who alone is the Spirit of peace and love, of truth and piety. To engage in this study and to pray for this Spirit effusion is the obligation of every believer.

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