

## Love one Another

Galatians 5: 13-15

Genuine liberty is desired and sought after by millions around the world. Those who lack liberty are kept in bondage. Such bondage can be the result of many influences and agencies in life. Some seek liberty from oppressive, tyrannical governments; some seek liberty from poverty and prejudice; others seek liberty from addiction and undesirable behaviors.

As believers, we know that true liberty is only found in Christ the Lord. While one may live in a country that offers much freedom, one may still be in bondage to other aspects of life. However, Paul cautions those who possess genuine liberty in Christ. As we enjoy liberty in the Lord, we must not use our liberty to take advantage or mistreat others. Placing impossible demands upon others while enjoying Christian liberty, (such as the actions of the Judaizers), was to be avoided. Through love we must seek to point others to true liberty in Christ, not seek to keep them bound in personal demands and preferences.

As we discuss the [admonitions](#) within the text, I want to consider: [Love one Another](#).

**I. The Liberty in Love** (13) – [For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another](#). The liberty believers enjoy in Christ ought to compel love for others. Notice:

**A. The Call** (13a) – [For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty](#). Paul declares that every believer has been called unto liberty. As we ponder the call of God, we often think of the call for salvation, or the call for particular service based on the gifts provided by the Spirit. Such callings are individual and unique. However, this call to liberty is universal for all believers. Christian liberty accompanies one's salvation. [John 8:36 – If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed](#).

➤ So, where does this biblical principle fit in the context of Paul's discourse in Galatians. We know he has spent much of the letter disputing the demands of the Judaizers, those who sought to add works of the flesh to faith in order to possess and maintain salvation. Paul declares that the believer has been called unto liberty – we have been set free from the demands of the law. We have salvation, full and free, through faith in Christ. We are no longer bound to accomplish works of the flesh in order to be acceptable to God. I, for one, am thankful for the liberty I have in Christ. [Gal.5:1 – Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage](#).

**B. The Caution** (13b) – *only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh*. Paul warned the believers against using their liberty as “*an occasion to the flesh*.” While the believer did enjoy genuine liberty in Christ, they were not free to behave as they wished, seeking to satisfy the flesh. Such behavior would be an abuse of the grace and true liberty they had received. The word occasion, *aphormē*, was often used to indicate a central base from which all operations of a military campaign originated. In this context **flesh** 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.<sup>i</sup>

➤ It is apparent that the Spirit provided great wisdom and guidance here to Paul. The Judaizers sought to keep one bound in tradition and law, infringing on the genuine liberty the believer receives by grace through faith in Christ. These preached a legalistic doctrine that expected more than the Lord required. Paul realized that it would not be unreasonable for some to take a rejection of legalism to the other extreme – license and indulgence. While we do possess liberty in Christ, we must never use that liberty as an excuse for willful sin.

**C. The Challenge** (13c) – *but by love serve one another*. Having been called unto liberty in Christ, with the expectation of faithfulness to Him, we are challenged to serve one another in love. While denying the flesh is good and needful, the Lord desires more of His people. We are called to serve one another, just as Christ came as a servant to men. **Mark 10:45 – For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.** **Phil. 2:5-7 – Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: <sup>7</sup> But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.** There is no greater way to serve our Lord than to be willing to serve others in love through His great name.

**II. The Responsibility of Love** (14) – *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*. Paul quotes our Lord as He was asked about the greatest commandment. Consider:

**A. The Context** – We must bear in mind that Paul continues to deal with the false teaching of the Judaizers. He has built a biblical argument regarding the debate of law and grace. The Pharisees and legalist refused the doctrine of Christ, since it appeared to them to be contrary to the law. Paul reveals that the law of God is summed up in this one action – loving others as ourselves. Some argued that Paul denied the truths of God’s law and rejected them outright. He affirms here that God’s moral standard for the Old Testament remained in the New Testament, and particularly in the gospel. Christ had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. As believers fulfill the command

to love God and love others, in essence, they fulfill the moral elements of the law. [Rom.13:8-10](#) – Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. <sup>10</sup> Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

**B. The Command** (14) – As believers, loving others as ourselves is not optional; we are commanded to do so if we are to live according to the dictates of the Lord and His Word. I am well aware that this is easier with some than others, but we must love others. This is a large commitment due to the fact that we are to love them as we love ourselves. Our love is not to be prejudiced or limited. We are expected to love others in a sacrificial, enduring way.

➤ This is not to say that we must love or agree with their lives or behaviors, but we must love the individual, with a desire to see them enjoy the same liberty we enjoy in Christ. I am sure you are aware that such love is only possible through a right relationship with Christ. If we don't love Him as we should, being transformed by His grace, we will never be able to love others as we should.

**III. The Disparity without Love** (15) – [But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.](#) Paul reveals the disparity that will always be present when love is absent. Notice:

**A. The Potential** (15a) – [But if ye bite and devour one another...](#) Apart from genuine love through the grace received in salvation, and serving one another in love, there is potential for great damage within the body of Christ and the communities in which we live. Paul reveals a potentially serious situation. This has the idea of wild animals engaged in a deadly conflict. While one individual or group would survive as the victor, great damage is very likely for all involved. To engage in such behavior would have immediate and lasting effects.

➤ Unfortunately, we have all seen such behavior far too often among the church. Some treat those outside the faith better than those within the body of Christ. May it never be said of us that we have engaged in such brutal disregard for the health and well-being of others.

**B. The Problem** (15b) – [But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.](#) Paul reveals the end result that is possible when love is absent. As believers bite and

devour one another, they have the tendency to consume one another. Clearly, Paul is not speaking in a literal, physical sense, but in a spiritual and emotional sense. When such behavior exists among the church, it can destroy the church from within. There are countless congregations who once thrived, but have come to ruin over such behavior prompted by a lack of love and desire for dominance.

➤ I can assure you that our Lord is not pleased when these events happen, regardless of the eventual outcome. Christ loves the church – He died for the church. We are to love one another, seeking unity and harmony within the church. If such behaviors are present within a congregation, it reveals that local body is, at the very least unhealthy, and apart from repentance and restoration, doomed for death. A culture that lends itself to biting and devouring will never promote health and longevity. Let us strive to ensure that we possess and portray genuine love and service to one another.

**Conclusion:** I have said many times that membership has its privileges, but it also has responsibilities. As members of the body of Christ, we are responsible to use the liberty we have in Christ as an occasion to love and serve our Lord and one another. If we will commit to these practices, we will help ensure the health and prosperity of the church and her witness to the world.

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., [Galatians](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 146.