

LESSON 9: GALATIANS 4:21-5:15

Slavery vs. Freedom, and Liberty Constrained by Love

1. What is an apostle (v. 1)? Describe the allegory of Abraham's two sons (vv. 21-31). List in two opposing columns the description of each son and his mother.
2. What is the point of this allegory?
3. Why are Christians so easily pressured into the religious slavery of legalism? Or are they?
4. What does the freedom Paul speaks about in chapter 5 mean to you personally? Define that freedom.
5. Try to explain in your own words the gist of Paul's argument in vv. 2-6. How does the enslavement of works righteousness cut us off from God's grace in Christ?
6. "In Christ Jesus," Paul writes in 5:6, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." Rephrase the first sentence in terms of contemporary issues. What is the operative principle in Christian freedom?
7. "You were running a good race," Paul writes in v. 7. What does he mean here? In what way is the Christian life like a race. (Compare 1 Cor. 9:24-27; Acts 20:24; Gal. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Heb. 12:1-3.)

8. In verses 7-10, how does Paul view the actions and the teaching of those seeking to influence the Galatians? List the ways he describes their activities. What do you think the “little yeast” that works through the whole dough is?

9. Why isn’t Paul more tolerant of these teachers? When, if ever, does intolerance become appropriate in the church?

10. Of what two things is Paul confident in v. 10? How does Paul’s thinking in v. 11 fit in with the flow of thought in this passage? What is the offense of the cross, how has it “been abolished,” and why is Paul so vexed at the thought of it?

11. Paul’s strong statement in v. 12 suggest that these false teachers should castrate themselves, as did some of the pagan priests in Galatia. Why do you think Paul is so angry? Is such language appropriate in God’s Word?

12. “You, my brothers,” Paul writes in v. 13, “were called to be free.” What is the nature of the freedom which Paul calls the Galatian believers to exercise?

13. How does this Christian concept of freedom differ from the world’s understanding of freedom?

14. What are some areas where Christians are tempted to indulge “the flesh” in exercising their freedom? What is the flesh? Think about Paul’s use of “flesh” through the whole course of his letter to the Galatians. What does he mean by “the flesh”? What do you think would be Paul’s opposing principle? How might this antithesis be misunderstood and misapplied? And how, conversely, ought they be applied?

15. What is the difference between liberty and license?

16. How is the Christian free to love others in a way that non-Christians cannot?

17. Contrast what Paul says about “the whole Law” in 5:3 with what he says in 5:14. Can we rightly say that “the law is abolished”? Or are we liable still to keep “the entire law”? In short, try to explain in your own words Paul’s important point in all this?

18. Give examples of people devouring and destroying one another, and suggest how these situations could be changed by love.