

Galatians - Freedom to Do Right

*“For you have been called to live in **freedom**, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your **freedom** to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your **freedom** to serve one another in love.” Galatians 5:13 NLT*



- Is the issue of grace vs. works for salvation confusing to you? Have you been trying to earn salvation as a trophy?
- Have you had a moment in your life where you received God’s forgiveness and salvation as a free gift?

The Bible Knowledge Commentary explains that the book of Galatians: “...is indeed the ‘Magna Charta of Christian Liberty,’ proclaiming to modern generations that salvation from the penalty and power of sin comes not by works but by grace through faith in God’s provision.” (p.587).

Background: Acts 15 details the discussion of the Jerusalem council and the controversy that was infiltrating the early church. **Acts 15** is helpful in understanding **the background of the book of Galatians**. Some people in the early church were saying, *“Unless you are circumcised as required by the law of Moses, you cannot be saved.”* (Acts 15:1). And *“The Gentile converts must be circumcised and required to follow the law of Moses.”* (Acts 15:5).

Peter was one of the first to argue that no one has been able to fully follow the Laws of Moses but salvation is available through grace. Peter said: *“¹⁰ So why are you now challenging God by burdening the Gentile believers with a yoke [the Law of Moses] that neither we nor our ancestors were able to bear? ¹¹ We believe that we are all saved the same way, by the undeserved grace of the Lord Jesus.”* (Acts 15:10-11).

The essence of Galatians is that the New Covenant of Grace FREES us from the Old Covenant of Law and works. Salvation and sanctification are **not a trophy** to be earned but a **free gift** of grace received by faith. Bible teacher, Warren Wiersbe, writes: “Many religious systems today mix law and grace and present a garbled, confused way of salvation that is actually a way of bondage (Gal. 2:4; 4:9; 5:1). Keeping the Sabbath, dietary laws, an earthly priesthood, holy days, obeying rules—all of these are swept away in Galatians and replaced by the glorious liberty the believer has through faith in Christ!” *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, p.515.

Theme: Christ freed us from sin and the old religious system of law-keeping. Salvation results in **freedom** from **sin and works**. Sanctification results in **freedom** from **the control of the sinful nature**. We don’t seek to achieve righteousness from our efforts to keep the laws. Rather, we surrender to the control and direction of the Holy Spirit. He empowers us to live right.

Central Lesson:

Christ freed us from sin and legalism so we can live right.

Key Word: **FREEDOM** (2:4; 4:22-23, 26, 30-31; 5:1, 13). Used 14 times in the NLT. *Able to act as one wishes; not under the control or in the power of*

another. In the context of Galatians—not under the requirements of the Law of Moses.

Author: The book identifies the Apostle **PAUL** as the author (1:1). The vocabulary, style, logic, and theological development are consistent with Paul’s other epistles. Paul even mentions that he wrote Galatians with his own hand (Gal. 6:11) whereas he often dictated his epistles to a secretary.

Date: Galatians was written about A.D. **49** from Antioch, before the Jerusalem council of A.D. 50 recorded in Acts 15.

Title: The title of the book is named after the recipients—Christians living in the area of **GALATIA**. Galatia refers to the central part of Asia Minor and is not one particular city but a region. There were several churches in Galatia (1:2) *“...to the churches in Galatia”*.

Key Verses: The key verses are:

- Galatians 5:1 NLT *“So Christ has truly set us **free**. Now make sure that you stay **free**, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.”*
- Galatians 5:13 NLT *“For you have been called to live in **freedom**, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your **freedom** to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your **freedom** to serve one another in love.”*

Key Chapter: Chapter **5**. Free from the law, but not free to sin. Be filled (controlled) with the Holy Spirit.

- Christ set us **free** from the Mosaic Law as the way to be **saved** and **sanctified**. God does not want us to be slaves to the law (5:1). At the same time, our **freedom** from the law is not a license to *“satisfy your sinful nature”* (NLT) or *“indulge the sinful nature”* (5:13).
- Even though a Christian under grace can be sinful and still go to heaven, Paul emphasizes that no Christian should abuse grace as a permit to sin. Rather, we should use our freedom to serve others (5:13).
- Paul also indicates that every Christian experiences the battle between the sinful nature and the control of the Holy Spirit over his or her heart (5:17). However, we must choose to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit and surrender to His control and promptings (5:16).
- Paul paints a quick **picture** of what the **flesh controlled life** looks like (5:19-21) in contrast to the **Holy Spirit-controlled life** (5:22-23).
- The Christian who intentionally considers himself dead to his sinful nature and surrenders to the control of the Holy Spirit will live a sanctified life and avoid abusing his freedom in Christ (5:24). Every Christian must continually seek and yield to the control of the Holy Spirit over his life (5:25).

Outline: Bible teacher, Warren Wiersbe, outlines the book as:

- I. **PERSONAL: Grace and the Gospel (Chapters 1-2)**
- II. **DOCTRINAL: Grace and the Law (Chapters 3-4)**
- III. **PRACTICAL: Grace and the Christian Life (Chapters 5-6)**

Central Lesson:

Christ freed us from sin and legalism so we can live right.

- ▶ Accept Christ as your Savior. ▶ As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ▶ Invite someone to next Sunday’s study. ▶ Attend a small group. ▶ Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ▶ Pray for friends that need Jesus.