

“Choose Freedom” Galatians 5:1-12

For believers, slavery to legalism is a choice. Living under the Law renders ineffective the power of God's grace in our daily lives. We have been set free by Jesus Christ to become and to do all that God has created us for. So choose freedom.

I. Slavery is optional – 5:1

Imperative/command – you have a choice

So why do we surrender our freedom in Christ for the slavery of legalism?

Satan's strategies are deceitful. He tries to trick us. Adam and Eve were deceived. Result – we were born into slavery.

Born a slave – to temptation, to sin, to death, to fear

Re-born free; change of nature. Easily deceived. 3:1

“Again” – they were slaves before to lusts of flesh; 4:8-10

Legalism OR license are both slavery

But legalism is more dangerous than immorality or excess because it is more subtle. Immorality in believers is very obvious. Self-denial looks spiritual.

What is NOT legalism?

- Obedience is not legalism – Eph. 4:28; don't steal
- Holiness is not legalism – 1 Peter 1, “be holy”
- Self-discipline is not legalism –
 - 1 Cor. 9, I discipline my body and make it my slave
 - 1 Tim. 4:7: Discipline yourself unto godliness.
- Good works are not legalism – Eph. 2:10; We are His workmanship
- Effort is not legalism – Phil. 2:12; “work out your salvation...”

What is legalism?

- Legalism is attempting to achieve a relationship with God (justification; Gal. 2:16) or grow in a relationship with God (sanctification; Gal. 3:3) through effort independent from the finished work of Christ and the empowering work of His Spirit.
- Justification by works
- Justification by faith AND works
- Transformation by works apart from Spirit; Jn. 15
- Evaluating others based on external standards
- God doesn't love you more when you obey and less when you disobey. God doesn't love you more because you are a Christian.

Subtle. Not merely what we do, but attitude, perspective.

Does a "Quiet time" make you mature? Why? When? How long?

Earning acceptance; earning greater love

II. Slavery to law is comprehensive – 5:2-3

Whole law; Law is a life system. Not just circumcision and Jewish calendar

Stumble in one point, guilty of all; James 2:10-11

What was the significance of circumcision originally for Jews? NOT ETERNAL LIFE

Parents' confidence in God – God would preserve the seed of Abraham; God would fulfill His promises through the seed of Abraham. We want our children to participate in the fulfillment of those promises

Consequence of failure to circumcise children. Removed from blessing. Death. "Cut off"

Ex 4:24-26 – Moses; he was a believer but had not obeyed

Significance for gentiles. Representative of complete commitment to the Law as the governing principle of life.

Absolutely necessary for inclusion in God's kingdom on earth and His future Messianic kingdom.

Galatians 5:5-6; 6:15. Acts 16:1-3; Paul had Timothy circumcised. After Jerusalem council (Acts 15:1, 5). After writing Galatians. Legalism for some and not others!

III. Slavery to law renders grace inoperative – 5:2-4

5:2 – “Christ of no benefit”

5:4 – “severed from,” “rendered inoperative”

“fallen from grace”

Grace = acceptance

Grace = empowerment

How do you know if you are suffering from legalism?

- Proud? – Luke 18:9-12
- Judgmental? – I thank you I am not like other men
- Gal. 5:7-10
- Disturbed? Confusion. Am I in or out? Teach eternal security first
- Divided? over external issues.

What are the insider issues we are fighting about? Judging each other by what current standards? In what areas of life do you feel superior to other Christians?

- Knowing stuff
- Involvement in missions
- Discipline of children
- Schooling for children
- Proper size of a church

IV. Solution to slavery? Freedom through Christ – 5:1, 13-14

Misunderstanding Freedom

Ability and desire to do what is good. To act, or think or speak or feel without a twinge of guilt or regret. Confidence and joy.

True godliness, holiness, maturity is intangible but OBVIOUS

Romans 14:17 for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

True godliness is a matter of the heart; internal

Clean the inside of the bowl

Who gave more money? The widow.

True godliness is constantly under attack

Application

Are you trusting in something other than, or in addition to Jesus Christ in order to earn eternal life? Believe.

Are you trusting in some activity to earn more of God's love? Rest.

Are you evaluating others spiritual maturity according to your own standards? Release.