

**Intro:**

A fable is told of a scorpion and a turtle:

A scorpion, being a very poor swimmer, asked a turtle to carry him on its back across the river.

“Are you mad?” exclaimed the turtle. “You’ll sting me while I’m swimming and I’ll drown.”

“My dear turtle,” laughed the scorpion, “If I were to sting you, you would drown and I’d go down with you. Now where is the logic in that?”

“You’re right,” cried the turtle. “Hop on.”

The scorpion climbed aboard and halfway across the river gave the turtle a mighty sting. As they both sank to the bottom, the turtle, resigned, said, “Do you mind if I ask you something? You said there is no logic in your stinging me. Why did you do it?”

“It has nothing to do with logic,” the drowning scorpion replied. “It’s just my nature.”<sup>1</sup>

What aspect of our humanity does this fable point to?

To our nature – our sin nature, that aspect of man that binds him to pursue evil

A few weeks ago, I preached a message from Gal 5.24 about *The Violent Christian*. The idea was that as Christians we are called to take violent hold of our flesh and mortify it – to crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts.

This kind of activity is a constant demand of the Christian walk. We are going to hear Paul speak of it again and again in the Scriptures. When we get to Romans 6-8, he will deal with it extensively.

The life of crucifying the flesh and walking in the Spirit is a life that is absolutely impossible to the man who has no faith in Christ. Why?

Without faith in Christ, a man is under bondage to serve the law of sin and death. He has no life in himself and no power to escape the bonds of his nature.

The book of Galatians was written to people who:

1. Had escaped the bondage of human nature by faith in Christ, but...
2. Were struggling spiritually because they were entering a new kind of bondage, a bondage of dependence on law-works instead of faith for victory over sin.

<sup>1</sup> "The Scorpion And The Turtle", Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements

We are going to look at the key verse to the epistle of Galatians and talk about what it is that Christ did for us when he took the penalty of our sins on himself.

In this message, we are going to examine two things:

1. The nature of spiritual bondage
2. The nature of Christian liberty

Read Gal 5.1

**Proposition:** Christian liberty is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.

## I. The nature of spiritual bondage

A. The language of liberty implies the issue is bondage

1. Don's literal translation of the verse:

a. For liberty us Christ liberated

[Note emphatic position of words]

b. Therefore

1) Be standing (continue standing) [implied: 'in liberty']

2) Not again to a yoke of slavery be held in a snare  
[entangled]

2. Three concepts that imply bondage

a. You were saved for liberty – implication: if you didn't know this, you must be in bondage

b. You are commanded to stand in liberty – implication: if you are being called to continue in it, you must be faltering into bondage

c. You are commanded not to be entangled again in bondage – that must be where you are.

B. Three aspects of spiritual bondage in the Bible

1. Bondage to sin (Jn 8.31-34 Rm 6.17-23)

a. Man in his natural state is enslaved by sin

b. Man's slavery to sin continually produces more and more sin

Inescapable, inexorable

2. Bondage to the Law (Rm 7.1-4, 8.2-3)

- a. Man without Christ is bound to the Law (obligated, subject to)
- b. Man under the Law is unable to escape the Law's demands by his own initiative

Guilty, guilty, guilty...

3. Bondage to death (Rm 6.21, 8.21)

- a. The twin bondage to sin and Law produces only one outcome: death
- b. All creation is bound to this outcome: death

Now recall our text (Don's literal translation):

- For liberty us Christ liberated

Salvation is intended to extricate us from all of that bondage – free from the enslaving power of sin; free from the demands of the law; free from the outcome of death

C. Renewal of spiritual bondage in Galatia

1. Initial hints of Paul's concern:

- a. Gal 1.3-4
- b. Gal 1.6
- c. Gal 2.21-3.1

2. The renewed bondage is the fruit of false teachers (Gal 2.4)

3. The renewed bondage involves a new submission to the Jewish law after receiving the freedom that is in Christ (Gal 4.8-10, 21-31)

- a. They are accepting the notion that in order to please God, they must add to Christ works of the law

But how did they fall into this error?

- 1) They fell under the sway of men who undermined Paul's credentials (so Paul must re-establish them, Gal 1-2)
- 2) They fell for an argument that somehow the gospel of Christ is incomplete without adding Jewish law-works (so Paul must re-establish salvation by grace alone, Gal 3-4)

Their possible sales pitch:

“You know, Paul has helped you, but one thing he always leaves out is likely to trip you up into sin. You see, when we were in Judaism, we found our rituals to be helpful to keep us approved by God. By following this plan, we were able to be more faithful and have God’s blessing.”

- b. Their error countermands or counter-effects (counterfeits?) the entire notion of the gospel
- 1) Remember the religious man of Rm 2? The issue is that he assumes his religious deeds [Jewish] will gain God’s acceptance
  - 2) But also remember the moral man of Rm 2 – he assumes that his moral deeds gain God’s acceptance
  - 3) But remember even the pagan man of Rm 1 – he assumes that his false religious works are sufficient to appease God and excuse his bad behaviour

The superstitious (idolatrous) exemption: If I give the god this chicken (or whatever) – he won’t be mad at me

All men are under bondage to this law: sin offends a holy God and demands death; men assume their deeds can countervail the demand.

“In this passage Paul again disparages the pernicious notion that the Law is able to make men righteous before God, a notion deeply rooted in man’s reason. All mankind is so wrapped up in this idea that it is hard to drag it out of people. Paul compares those who seek to be justified by the Law to oxen that are hitched to the yoke. Like oxen that toil in the yoke all day, and in the evening are turned out to graze along the dusty road, and at last are marked for slaughter when they no longer can draw the burden, so those who seek to be justified by the Law are ‘entangled with the yoke of bondage,’ and when they have grown old and broken-down in the service of the Law they have earned for their perpetual reward God’s wrath and everlasting torment.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Luther, *Galatians, in loc.*

“Rightly are the doers of the Law called devil’s martyrs. They take more pains to earn hell than the martyrs of Christ to obtain heaven. Theirs is a double misfortune. First they torture themselves on earth with self-inflicted penances and finally when they die they gain the reward of eternal damnation.”<sup>3</sup>

## II. The nature of Christian liberty

A. Let us note from our text, briefly, that liberty is the goal of redemption

1. For liberty us Christ liberated (Don’s literal)
2. It was for freedom that Christ set us free (NAU)
3. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free (KJV)

We are going to expand on this next week... but first, what kind of liberty are we talking about?

B. The Greek notions of liberty

1. Primarily a political term
  - a. Liberty/freedom is seen as opposite the condition of the slave – it is the privileges of a free man, of a citizen
  - b. The citizen of a polis (a city) is a full fledged participant in the life of the city
  - c. The citizen, however, is free only under the law – the *nomos*
    - 1) If he is a lawless man – *anomos* – he is one who assaults freedom
    - 2) If there are enough men ‘without law’, you have the rule of the mob – anarchy
    - 3) If there is only one man who usurps the law (and succeeds), you have the rule of one – tyranny

Freedom only exists as long as men live under the law.  
 “A rule of law, not of men” [all democratic societies follow this concept]

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<sup>3</sup> Luther, *Galatians, in loc.*

- d. One other aspect of the free man of the city: he is only free so long as he (and his fellow citizens) are willing to oppose the will of barbarians who would enslave them
- 2. Stoic philosophy developed the term further
  - a. Saw failure of political ideals
  - b. Freedom/liberty came to refer to “independent self-determination”
    - 1) But not everything in one’s life is under one’s control
    - 2) Freedom = mastery of those things in one’s life one can control
  - c. Philosopher’s therefore sought mastery of self, especially the passions

“Liberation from the world is only possible, however, if there is in the third place liberation from that which represents the world in us, from that whereby it obviously takes possession of us, namely, from  $\pi\alpha\theta\eta$ . In this we abandon ourselves to the impulsion of things. In its neutralisation we withdraw from them.”<sup>4</sup>

- 1) The greatest and most enslaving passion is the fear of death, they thought
- 2) Gk philosophers saw something – bondage; but they did not see the solution – Christian freedom

The use of the term in the Bible must keep some of these concepts in mind, even though the Bible speaks of something else...

### C. The New Testament idea of liberty

- 1. The Stoic teaching thought freedom could be achieved by mastery of self – the Bible, as we have seen says we are mastered by self
  - a. Slaves to sin
  - b. And therefore to the Law
  - c. And therefore to death

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<sup>4</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vols. 5-9 edited by Gerhard Friedrich. Vol. 10 compiled by Ronald Pitkin., ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed., 2:495 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976).

2. Only one man truly in himself was free of these things: Jesus Christ
  - a. He is not condemned by the law
  - b. He has perfect access to the Father
  - c. He is not bound by the peculiarities of legalistic constraint in order to win God's approval ("This is my beloved Son!")
  - d. He is not bound by corruption ("Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy one to see corruption")
3. By Christ's death, all the demands of the Law are answered so that we might be free indeed
  - a. The debt of sin is paid
  - b. The demands of the law are satisfied
  - c. The bonds of death are shattered

## Conclusion:

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It was for freedom that Christ set us free (NAU)

<sup>KJV</sup> **2Co 3:17** Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

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Now, at last!!, you are liberated to live free before God, in the perfect freedom of his approval and in the spiritual power to do his will.

There is no freedom better than that!