

The Proper Use of Freedom

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Date: 28 June 2026

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[0:00] This morning, if you have your Bibles, I'd encourage you to get them out. Follow along. If you didn't bring a Bible, there's always Bibles in the entrance as you come in. Feel free to grab one and use it. If you don't have a Bible, keep it.

If you know someone that needs a Bible, give it away. God's Word needs to be part of our lives, and we need to share it too. Galatians chapter 5 is where we're going to be this morning.

Galatians chapter 5, and we're not going to move from there. It's all in Galatians this morning, so once you find it, you're not going to have to flip around much. So Galatians chapter 5. And if you have found that, I'm going to ask if you're able if you'd stand while we read God's Word this morning.

We are going to share the first verse, and then we're going to jump down to verse 13. So Galatians chapter 5, beginning in the first verse, and this is what God's Word shares. Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. And then jump down to verse 13 in that same chapter. For brethren, you have been called to liberty.

[1:11] Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you be not consumed one of another. This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.

Of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

[2:26] Against such, there is no law. Let's bow our heads as we pray. Lord God, we again thank you that we can come together here in your house this morning. And Lord, I just pray that you remind each one of us that we are, we're here for a reason.

We're here to praise you. We're here to bring our requests to you. But Lord, we're also here to hear your word. And I pray right now that we would really focus in on what you have to say to us.

And understand that it's for each one of us, not just the person next to us, not for our parent, not for our child, but it's for us. Not for our spouse, but for each one of us. So help us to have ears that are ready to hear, hearts that are soft and ready to change if they need to be changed.

I just pray, Lord, that you'd work in our lives this morning. And it's in the name of Jesus Christ we pray, and all God's people said, Amen. You can be seated this morning.

It should not probably be a surprise what we're talking about this morning. And it's exactly what I didn't know for sure that Wendy had a kid's corner, let alone what it was going to be.

[3:31] But you know, God has a way of always kind of putting things together. And it's no surprise that we're talking about freedom this morning. Our nation is celebrating something that's really pretty special. I think of 250 years as a pretty long period of time, don't you?

Really, it's not in the grand scheme of things. But as a nation, 250 years is significant. And it's celebrating 250 years of what? Freedom.

Do we need reminded of that sometime? You know, typically a person can go through, we can get to the time of year when we celebrate the 4th of July, and really instead of being grateful for that freedom, what often happens?

What are we thinking about? Having a party? Barbecue? Fireworks?

Anything else? Getting together with family? Playing out in the yard? Going swimming? Whatever you do on the 4th of July. Are you able to do all of those things without really thinking about freedom?

[4:38] Yeah, you can go through the motions. You can do all those things. You can enjoy yourself and somehow really not think about what you're celebrating. It's the same way with any other holiday. You can go through Christmas and think about exchanging presents and putting up lights and putting up Christmas decorations.

You can do all that and still not think about the birth of Jesus, can't you? You know, 4th of July is no different. We can go through all the motions without really thinking about freedom. But that's what I want us to spend some time thinking about this morning is freedom.

And in this verse, verse 1 of chapter 5 that we shared, it says, Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

You know, liberty is another word for freedom. And what God's Word tells us to do here is to stand fast in it. And one of the things I think that we need to understand as we come into God's house, as we come into church this morning is we are extra blessed living in the place that we live.

And we sometimes take that for granted. Because really there are two freedoms that we have that we can celebrate and be thankful for. We can think about our country turning 250 years old, and you are blessed to live in a nation that has the freedoms that we have.

[5:54] Do you understand that? Do we take it for granted? I mean, do you get up every morning and think, Oh, I'm glad I'm free today. Do you do that? But how many people wake up every morning and don't have that kind of freedom?

There's a lot of places in the world that do not have the freedoms that we have. So we should make sure that we are grateful for the freedom that we have, and thank God for the freedom that we have. And I love history, and I enjoy reading about history, going to historical places. I enjoy it all. And folks, never let anyone fool you. Our nation was founded upon godly principles.

The founders of our nation were godly men. There is no way around that. You can read the things that they wrote, and over and over again they would talk about God, they would talk about His principles, His wisdom, and the need to follow God for our nation to be successful.

We need to be thankful that we live in a nation like that, that we have the freedom to get up and to come to church, that we have the freedom every day to get up and go to work. We have freedom to make our own choices.

[7:03] We need to be grateful for that. That is a tremendous blessing. And did you have anything to do with that? Did you decide where you were going to be born? I mean, did you say, Oh, I think I want to be born in the United States.

I'm going to pick there. I mean, we can choose where to live, but we didn't choose where to be born, did we? Most of us that were born here, we are blessed to have been born here.

But this morning, the other thing that we need to be especially thankful for is, we not only have the physical freedom of being born in the United States, but we have spiritual freedom.

The freedom that comes from knowing Jesus Christ. And this is if you know Jesus Christ, if you've accepted Him in your heart. If you have done that, you are experiencing the kind of freedom that it talks about here, aren't you?

The kind of freedom that we have in Jesus Christ. What is that freedom all about? What are we free from? I mean, as a nation, when we got our freedom, who did we get our freedom from?

[8:09] From the King, from England. We were under their control and we gained freedom from them. As Christians and as believers, when we find freedom in Christ, what do we find freedom from?

From what? Sin. Before we accepted Jesus Christ, it says that we were in bondage to sin. Sin had control over us. Whether we knew it or not, whether we realized it or not, that's the case.

And we get freedom from that when we find Jesus Christ. Folks, are we thankful for that? If you don't have that freedom, you need to invite Jesus Christ in your heart.

But once you do, and if you've done that, you need to understand that you have that freedom as well. You have the freedom of living in a free country, and you have the freedom of having Jesus Christ in your heart.

Freedom from sin, and that is the most important freedom. Why is that freedom even more important than the country you live in? Because it's eternal.

[9:11] Once you have Christ in your heart, your name's written in the book of life, and what do you have waiting for you after this earth? Heaven. That lasts for how long? Forever. Forever. So we have both freedom.

But as we look in God's word here, there are some cautions it gives us that go along with freedom. And I want to look at those. If you look in the first verse, the first thing that it says is, when it talks about this freedom, this liberty that we have, it says, stand fast in the freedom that Christ has given us.

Why do you think it tells us to stand fast in the freedom that we have? What does it mean to stand fast? Stay abiding within it.

Any other thoughts? What does it mean to stand fast in the freedom? I need a volunteer. Any of the kids want to come up here and volunteer? I need a volunteer up here.

Come up here, Ella. Thank you. We get the birthday girl up here. All right. I want you to imagine that this is freedom right over here.

[10:24] This little square right here, that's freedom. Okay? Everybody understand that? You have freedom right now. What does it mean to stand fast in that freedom? Hey, Ella, you know what?

This square over here looks better. Let's stand over here. What just happened? Are you still in freedom? Where's freedom at? Well, get back over there.

That's freedom over there. That's what it means to stand fast, doesn't it? To remain there. To make sure you stay in something that's good for you.

And that is that kind of freedom. Now, sometimes we find ourselves on the wrong side of it, don't we? We get talked into it. We get led astray by people like I just did with Ella.

But once that happens one time, what should be our response when it happens the second time? Hey, Ella, I think maybe you should move over to this square. This one's better over here.

[11:26] What do you think? She's learning, isn't she? Good job, Ella. Do we do that? I mean, Satan's going to try to trick us and say, hey, this is better over here.

And that's why the Bible gives us this caution. Stand fast in the freedom. Make sure you stay in the good spot. Are you sure you don't want to go over to that one?

That one looks pretty. I think the weather's nicer over there. It's warmer over there. You're not buying that? Let's just move over. What's she doing now?

She's standing fast. That's what it's all about. Thank you, Ella. Yes, you can sit down. Thank you. Excellent job. But did you notice there, when I was trying to tug her this way, what was she doing? She was pulling back. She was resisting, wasn't she? She's like, no, I don't want to go over there. I want to stay right here in this freedom that I have. That is what standing fast is.

[12:30] Here's what we need to understand. To stand fast, do you know what it takes? Effort. It takes effort. We somehow think sometimes that if we're in the right spot, we can just get lazy and not do anything, and we're just going to stay there.

Is that the way it works? No, in reality, we start drifting this way. We start drifting that way. Folks, it takes effort to stay where God wants you to be. Because there is somebody that doesn't want you in that spot.

And who would that be? Satan. The Bible talks about Satan. He is real. He was an angel in heaven, it says, and he wanted to be equal to God, and he got kicked out of heaven and took a third of the angels with him.

That's what the Bible tells us, right? And you know what? Satan took a third of the angels, but do you know who else he wants to take with him? Everybody else. Satan does not want you to have that freedom in Jesus Christ, so he is going to continually try to pull you out of that.

And that's where we need to make sure that we are following what it says here, to stand fast in that freedom. To work, to make sure that we stay where we need to be.

[13:41] Because it tells us after this, the danger, if we don't, it says, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Don't end up right back where you were.

You were over here. You were in bondage to sin. You found this freedom in Christ. Now stand fast in that, because if you don't, where are you going to find yourself? Right back over there, tangled up in sin.

And here's the part that makes it hard. When we go through our lives here on this earth, how much sin is around us? How far do you have to look to find sin?

It's always there, isn't it? The temptations are always there. The temptation of sin never really goes away. It's always there while we're here on this earth. The temptation to lie, the temptation to deceive, the temptation to do, well, all the things it talked about here at the end of this chapter. Adultery and fornication and worshipping other things. And all those temptations are there in our lives. To follow the world instead of following God. All those temptations are there.

[14:53] And he's saying, don't get tangled up in that again. Once you have your freedom, don't give it up. So if you accept Jesus Christ, you gain this freedom, right?

So then what do you do with it? I mean, as a nation, we got our freedom, right? 250 years ago. So then what are you supposed to do with the freedom you've got?

As a believer, if we have freedom in Christ, what do you do with it? What's the purpose of it? Spread it out. Spread it around. Share it.

I want to look at a couple other verses that it talks about here. Look down in verse 13 where we jump down to. For brethren, you have been called to liberty.

Being called to liberty means you've been given this freedom when you accept Jesus Christ. Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. What do you think that part means?

[15:57] Not to use it for an occasion to the flesh. What do you think that means? Any thoughts? To justify your sin?

There's one word in there that I want to focus on. Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. When it says flesh, what's it talking about? Yourself. It's talking about self. So when you have freedom, it says don't just use it for yourself.

Is that easy to do? Yeah, it's easy to begin to think, well, I have freedom. I'm going to use it for me. I'm going to use it to do whatever I want to do. We think of that as being freedom, just like Wendy's story that she was telling.

You know, when a child runs away from home, they're thinking, I'm going to get the freedom I want to do whatever I want to do. I don't have to listen to mom and dad anymore. I can do whatever I want. And we think of that as being real freedom, don't we?

[16:59] Doing whatever we want to do. Is that really freedom? You know, there's another analogy that I've often heard that I think is really pretty fitting, and it's one that's always stuck in my mind.

It's just like picture a fish that's swimming in water. I mean, that's kind of where they belong, right? Say he's swimming in a pond, and he decides, I am so tired of this pond.

This pond is really limiting what I want to do in life. I think I'm going to jump out of this pond, because then I'll be free of that, and I can really do whatever I want after I get out of this silly pond. So the fish jumps out of the pond, and he has his freedom. Do you see any problems with this story? I mean, he has freedom, right?

He's not contained by that silly pond anymore. He can now do whatever he wants because he's out of the pond. Any problems? Oh, he can't breathe.

[17:56] That's a problem? Okay. He stays in that freedom because now he's got it. What happens? But that's really freedom getting out of that pond, right?

Isn't it? So it's not really freedom. What is it then? It's getting what he wants, right? Getting what we want is not freedom.

Just doing whatever we want is not freedom. That's the thing that sometimes we need to get clear in our mind, because we think of freedom as doing whatever I want to do. That is not true freedom. That's why he says, use not liberty or freedom for an occasion to the flesh. Don't use it just to do whatever you want, because that is not true freedom. But, there's that but word right after that in verse 13.

Then he tells us what we're supposed to use our freedom for. The purpose of the freedom that we have is to do what? To serve one another.

[19:01] Well, you can look at that. Does that really seem to make sense? You now have freedom, and the first thing you're supposed to use it for us to do what? Serve somebody else.

Well, does that sound right? How does that make sense? We have freedom, and then we're going to serve somebody else. How is that freedom? It's not a trick question.

I really want you thinking about it. How is that freedom? You're giving it away to keep it? It's being more like Christ.

Joy in doing God's will. You know, here's the thing. When it talks about serving someone else, it's not doing it because we have to.

As a believer, it should be doing it because we want to. And if that's the case, that is freedom.

Doing it because we want to.

[20:01] Doing it because it's a choice that we're making. That this is something I want to be doing. This freedom that Christ has given me, the freedom from sin, that I am so grateful for it, that I understand what Jesus did on the cross so that I could have this freedom.

That then I want to use this freedom for other people. Just like Christ gave this to me, I want to give this to other people. That's what it's talking about. That's how it's freedom. And do you know what that kind of freedom leads to?

All the things that it talks about at the end of this chapter. The fruits of the Spirit. Look in verse 22. That kind of freedom, when we serve other people, when we serve God by serving others, this is the natural result.

The fruit of the Spirit is love. How does that sound? Does that sound good? Okay. How about joy? Joy. Anybody in here like joy?

Anyone want a little joy in your life? Any of you got plenty of it? Don't really want any more of it?

That's something we should continually want more of, right? It comes by serving others.

[21:09] By voluntarily understanding the freedom Christ gives us and then having a desire to share that with others. Joy. How about peace? Do you like peace in your life? What's the opposite of that?

What? Turmoil? Conflict? Serve God in serving others, and guess what you're going to find in that? Peace. Long-suffering.

That's patience. How are you doing with that one? Do you think you find that through serving others? Yeah. Are you going to find that on your own just by doing whatever you want to do?

Are you going to find patience? No. But you'll find it by serving others. What about gentleness?

Goodness? Faith? Meekness? Temperance? All these things, folks, are good things.

And that is what God wants for us. And He gives us the recipe here of how to have these things in our life. It's by having Jesus Christ in our life, finding that freedom, and then using that freedom not for ourselves, but using it for God by serving other people.

[22:15] And yes, Christ did set that example for us. Christ was the Son of God, the King of kings, and what did He do when He was here on this earth? He served others. He said, I came not to be served but to serve.

I came to serve others. He healed. He taught. He fed. He did all kinds of things for other people.

What I want us thinking about this morning is what it tells us here.

But by love, at the end of verse 13, serve one another. If you have freedom in Jesus Christ, if He has given you that freedom, if He's forgiven you your sins, understand then that you should have a desire to serve Him by serving the people around you, by looking out for needs around you, by sharing His love with people around you.

Folks, that's what true freedom is all about. That's what we're to use it for. Not just to go about our life and do whatever we want to do and forget and ignore other people. That is not what God asks us to do.

He says, use our freedom to serve each other. That's where we find peace and joy and love and all those wonderful things. This morning, what I want you to understand is first of all, be grateful for this nation we live in and the freedom that we have because of that.

[23:35] But even more importantly than that, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, if you have Christ in your heart and have had your sins forgiven, understand that you should have a desire to serve other people.

If you're just living your life and not concerned about others, folks, you're missing it. You're not using your freedom for what God wants you to use it for. Now lastly, if you've never accepted Christ, you don't have that freedom to begin with.

I encourage you to ask Christ into your heart. And when we do that, He'll forgive our sins and He'll give us a fresh start. And we can have freedom from sin. We can have freedom from addictions like Glenn was talking about, the sobriety that she's had or Doug has shared many times the sobriety that God has given him.

We can have freedom from all those other sins that try to push into our lives, whether it is the sins of lying and deceit or pornography or all kinds of sins that we can find ourselves getting involved in.

We can have freedom from all that with Jesus Christ. If you've never asked Him into your heart, do it today. Don't wait. Ask Him into your heart today.

[24 : 41] Ask Him to forgive your sins and He will give you that freedom from sins. If you've already done that, thank Him for it and make sure you're using it in the way that He wants you to use it.

Let's pray. Lord God, we thank You again for this morning that You've given us. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for the truth of it. And Lord, Your Word talks so very much about freedom because as believers, we have the freedom that only Christ can give, the freedom from sin, the freedom from all these things that the world tries to tangle us up in.

And Lord, if there's anyone here in this place this morning that hasn't invited Christ into their heart, I pray that they would do that today, that they would ask Jesus Christ to forgive their sin. And Lord, that they can know that they leave here with a fresh start.

Lord, for all of us as we leave here, I pray that You'd help us to remember that we've been given freedom for a reason and that's not just to do whatever we want. We have been given that freedom so that we can serve You and we serve You by serving others.

Help us to realize that is the job that You've given us. Help us to have that desire within our hearts. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.