

True Freedom in Grace:
A Study in Paul's Letter to the Galatians
Session 10: The Freedom To...
July 11, 2022 • Monday Night Bible Study



I. Introductions and Prayer

- a. Teaser: What is freedom? How do we know?
- b. Prayer

II. Recap: Knowing the Galatians & Greeting

- a. Galatians — Galatia is a mountainous region in Turkey. The Galatians are mostly Gentiles, wanting to be hard-core for God. Paul was the founder of some churches in Galatia. This letter would have been read aloud in worship at one house-church, then passed to another. Probably written in 50–56 AD.
- b. Themes to watch for — Some Jewish-Christian missionaries are telling the Christians in Galatia that they have to keep all the Jewish Law to be saved. Paul wants to be clear that grace is what matters. Watch for Paul's distinction between what "keeping the rules" can get you, and what following Christ can do for us.
- c. Context — Chapter 4 talks about the difference being "children of the Law" and "children of the Promise," pointing out that we are all the spiritual descendants of Abraham, who "believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness." Chapter 5 is the grand, soaring summary of the letter, bringing everything to a head!
- d. Watch for the "standout" verses in this passage that speak with great clarity! They are the guide to understanding everything else!

III. Words to watch for

- a. slave (*doulos*) — In Greco-Roman society, you had freemen (often tradesmen and merchants), servants (chamberlains, foremen, etc; position of some prestige), and slaves (*doulos*). Slaves had limited rights, limited upward mobility and no social status.
- b. *Christ has freed us for freedom* — Freedom is both the action and the goal in this sentence. The verb tense tells us this was a once-for-all act that is completed—Jesus' perfect atonement for our sins is a completed project. *Freedomed* (Gr. *eleuthero*) is the word used for purchasing or redeeming someone from slavery. In his word study, Ralph Earle notes that a slave who wanted to purchase their freedom would make a donation of the right amount to one of the temples who recorded the purchase and purpose, then the owner would go and retrieve the money. In a symbolic way, the slave would belong to the god of that temple. "...a Greek inscription from Delphi, of about 200 B.C...states that the god Apollo 'bought from Sosibius of Amphissa, for freedom, a female slave...with a price.' We, too, were bought with a price...for freedom...and we belong to God!
- c. yoke (Gr. *zugos*) Paul talks about a *yoke of slavery* here. Keller explains, "It was common in Judaism of the time to talk about taking on the study and practice of the whole law of Moses as coming under the 'yoke.'" Contrast this *yoke of slavery* with the yoke Jesus offers in Matthew 11:28–30: "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy [or well-fitting/comfortable] and my burden is light."
- d. Justified...righteousness — remember these are relationship words! See chart on next page for a reminder of those words and their meanings.
- e. circumcised/uncircumcised — These words are shorthand with multiple layers of meaning. Physical — yes, they reflect the physical reality of cutting off the foreskin of a penis, an act

which marks the man as a participant in Abraham’s covenant (see Genesis 15 and 17) Spiritual — Paul is saying that a “circumcised” heart is what counts, not the physical circumcision. “Abraham *believed* God and it was credited to him as righteousness.” Social — The Circumcision Party said that those who were circumcised and who kept Jewish Law had the inside track to being right with God. In this thinking, the Jews are “Insiders.” The Uncircumcision Party were Gentiles, and were considered “Outsiders” to the covenant. In our times, this social dynamic can be seen with those who are “churched”—growing up in the church, understanding the language and culture—and those who are “unchurched”—coming in from outside the church. It’s still about *Insiders* and *Outsiders*!

- f. counts — (Gr. *ischuo*) legal term, has value, worth considering as valid testimony
- g. running a good race...cut in on you — The track and field metaphor imagines one runner running well (the Galatians) and another runner (the Jewish Christian missionaries) in a race, with the Galatians’ runner doing great! The other runner moves over into their lane and cuts them off, then slows down, preventing the first runner from running effectively.

IV. Reading Galatians 5:1–15

V. Questions for Reflection

- a. What does freedom mean to you? How do you know that you’re free? Take a moment to write down 3–5 (or more!) answers to these two questions.
- b. Can you think of a time when you were feeling hemmed in on all sides, maybe even feeling trapped or enslaved? What was that like? What led to that situation?
- c. When you were in that position, how did you get free? What was it like to be freed from that trap?
- d. Are there things trying to run your life for you right now? In our culture, what forces are trying to run the show? Are those things healthy for people or for society?

VI. Why does this matter?

- a. Christians often let non-Christian faith approaches creep into their relationship with Christ. Paul helps us find where that line is.
- b. Loving God in Jesus Christ is always first, but it’s closely followed by expressing grace to others. Truly caring for people and ministering to them is not a “for me” love, but a “for God,” or “for you” love.

Justify/Right/Righteousness

Usual English	Better English	Part of Speech	Greek
justify	make right	verb	<i>dikaio</i>
righteousness, justice	right relationship with God	noun	<i>dikaiosune</i>
right, just	right (in God’s eyes)	adjective	<i>dikaios</i>

Faith/Trust/Believe

Usual English	Better English	Part of Speech	Greek
Faith	trust or belief	noun	<i>pistis</i>
Faith	trust or believe	verb	<i>pisteuo</i>
faithful	objectively, trustworthy, subjectively, trustful	adjective	<i>pistos</i>