

It Was For Freedom That Christ Set Us Free!

The VISION Newsletter / October 2017

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

Galatians 5:1–4 (NKJV) *“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”*

Freedom is a precious thing indeed! Our founding fathers put their lives on the line and many died to deliver themselves and others from the tyranny of King George III of England. They fought to make America a free and independent people. The documents of this freedom are the Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Many have died since to preserve our freedom and to bring freedom to others who are oppressed. The responsibility of freedom is to defend and preserve this freedom for today and the future. Failure to defend and preserve freedom will lead us back under bondage. Many in our own nation are rejecting the principles and documents upon which our freedoms are founded. Many are willing to give away the privileges of freedom to accept the yoke of tyrants, socialists, and communists. If there has ever been a time to stand fast in the liberty by which we have been made free as a nation, the time is now!

The theme of bondage and freedom is found throughout Scripture. Israel was in bondage to Egypt and later to Assyria. Judah was in bondage to Babylon, the Medes-Persians, and the Greeks. During the days of Christ the nation of Israel was in bondage to the Romans. However all men have experienced the greatest bondage of all, the bondage to sin.

In the days of Moses, God delivered Israel from the bondage to Pharaoh. Although God had set them free, in times of difficulty Israel wanted to give up their freedom in order to go back under Pharaoh's yoke. Although we did not experience bondage to Pharaoh, we have all been in spiritual bondage. How is this possible? First Paul says that we were in bondage under the elements of this world: *“Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of this world.”*¹ This refers to pagan and legalistic superstitions that hold men in bondage. Second we were in bondage under the requirements of the law: *“Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?”*² Third, we were in bondage to the corruption of sin: *“While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.”*³ Fourth, we were in bondage to death: *“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”*⁴

Christ came to set us free! Jesus paid our debt! Jesus opened our prison doors! Jesus delivered us from the slave master of sin! Jesus delivered us from the power of the devil! Jesus delivered us from the kingdom of darkness! Jesus translated us into the kingdom of His Son! Jesus set us free. He whom the Son sets free is free indeed!

It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Jesus died that we might be free. For what purpose did He set us free? Why did God set Israel free from bondage to Pharaoh? It was so that Israel would be free to serve Him! Why has Christ set us free from sin, darkness, corruption, the law, and death? It is so that we will be free to serve the LORD!

Freedom is not the right to do what we want but the right to do what is right. Grace is not a license to sin. Paul said very explicitly: *“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! ¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your*

¹ Galatians 4:3 (NKJV)

² Acts 15:10 (NKJV)

³ 2 Peter 2:19 (NKJV)

⁴ Hebrews 2:14–15 (NKJV)

flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. ²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”⁵

We have a responsibility to stand fast in liberty for which Christ has made us free so that we can serve Him without hindrance. Those who do not stand fast in this liberty will become entangled again under a yoke of bondage. Paul exhorted the Galatian believers not to be entangled again in a yoke of bondage. A yoke is an instrument to harness an animal around the neck to serve its master. Why would any former slave want to live under the yoke of his former taskmaster? Why would anyone want to go back to those things that once held them bound? Those who are bound are not free to serve the LORD.

Although we did not pay the price for our own freedom, we are to live worthy of the freedom which Christ purchased for us. We are to stand firm in that freedom. We are not to allow others to bring us back under the yoke of the law. Paul stood firmly against those who sought to do so: *“Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. ² And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. ³ Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), ⁵ to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.”⁶*

The freedom that Christ purchased for us delivers us from other things also. First it delivers us from the bondage of the past: *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³ Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”⁷* The bondage of the past will keep us from experiencing freedom today and tomorrow.

Second it delivers us from the bondage of sinful lust: *“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³ And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. ¹⁴ For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”⁸* Those who are bound by sinful lusts are not free to live for Christ.

Third it delivers us from the bondage of lawful things that are not helpful: *“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”⁹* Those who allow good things to keep them from what is best are serving themselves rather than God.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free. He wants us to freely serve Him. Therefore we are to stand fast in the liberty that Christ gave to us so that we might serve Him freely and fully in this life!

⁵ Romans 6:15–23 (NKJV)

⁶ Galatians 2:1–5 (NKJV)

⁷ Philippians 3:12–14 (NKJV)

⁸ Romans 6:12–14 (NKJV)

⁹ 1 Corinthians 6:12 (NKJV)