

# Freedom Has Its Limits

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When we read and study the Bible, new insights are often discovered from passages and books we have previously read, even several times. The book of Galatians is such a book. The book of Galatians has been credited as one of the prime movers of the so called Protestant Reformation. Jerry Jones, president of Heritage University wrote, "I immersed myself in studying Galatians for a year. The more I studied, I realized how little he knew."

The theme of Paul's epistle to the churches in Galatia may be described as "to stand fast in the liberty we have in Christ and don't become entangled in a legal system; the Law of Moses in this instance" (Gal. 5:1)." In verse 5:13, he wrote *For you, brethren, have been called to liberty, only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.* Paul cautions these brethren against the attitude that freedom in Christ, i.e., freedom from Jewish observances, was not unrestricted freedom. They should not live loosely and carelessly.

Freedom in Christ has limits. In some of life's circumstances, Christians must not exercise their liberty to do good or do and say things that are right, if, in so doing, they could hinder someone from becoming a Christian or cause a brother or sister in Christ to stumble. The law of love says, *Therefore, do not let your good be spoken of as evil* (Rom. 14:10). The entire 14<sup>th</sup> chapter is about limiting our freedom for the spiritual well-being of our brethren.

When we use our liberty in Christ to serve one another, the Law is fulfilled. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Gal. 5:14). The liberty Paul is discussing in Chapter 5 is the liberty led by the Spirit, that is, *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control* (Gal. 5:21-22)

Perhaps, it is more difficult to limit our freedom of doing or saying things that are good than to restrain ourselves from the works of the flesh. Regardless, we must always remember the apostle Paul's instruction to the Roman brethren, *Therefore, let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another* (Rom. 14:19).

For the elders,  
Don Denton