



## NG Study Guide: Gal. 5:1-12 “Freedom from Bondage” [3.10.19]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

There is a tension between Jesus’s followers being free from the burden of the Mosaic Law, and the danger of abusing our freedom by treating God’s grace as a license to sin. How can we experience Christian liberty and glorify God with our lives? Let’s discover how to let faith work through love...

#### A. Keep Standing in Christ [1-6]

*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.* <sup>2</sup> *Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.* <sup>3</sup> *And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.* <sup>4</sup> *You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.* <sup>5</sup> *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.* <sup>6</sup> *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.*

**You are not made right with God by performance of commandments.**

We are to *stand fast* [1]. The Greek tense can be translated “keep standing.” You are to keep standing in *the liberty* [1] which is, through faith in Christ you are made right with God.

*Christ has made us free* [1] from the *yoke of bondage* [1] of trying to be right with God by religious performance. Trying to be right with God by performance of the Mosaic Law is an impossibly heavy burden, because it requires moral perfection [3, Ac. 15:10]. Similarly, ignoring God, and His standard of morality, and adopting your own standard is not freedom but enslavement to sin [Jn. 8:31-59]. Whenever you condition your spiritual well-being and future on your performance of a moral code you are entangled with the burden of not measuring up. It is only by God’s love and grace that we discover true contentment and freedom through faith in Christ.

**You are not made right with God by performance of a ritual.** A ritual such as circumcision or baptism cannot make you right with God. Abraham and his descendants, the Jews, were circumcised as a sign of their covenant relationship with God [Gen. 17:10-14]. Christ has offered us the New Covenant, through His sacrifice on the cross. We enter the New Covenant by faith in Christ, not by ritual. Ritual can’t save us, or make us right with God [2,3,6]. Rituals such as baptism and communion benefit you by recognizing the value of identifying with Jesus, remembering what He has done, and obedience to His commands.

Trying to earn your salvation by your efforts of adherence to a moral code, in effect declares Rejection of Christ’s atonement on the cross, or that it was insufficient. You in effect reject the grace of God and the New Covenant [4].

**You are made right with God by committing to Jesus. Knowing Him, is proven by loving God and neighbors.** *For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith* [5], refers to the Holy Spirit’s assurance that you are right with God by confident trust in Christ, and His work of redeeming you on the cross, not your own efforts. Rituals such as circumcision won’t prove that you’re right with God *but faith working through love* does [6]. Life with Christ produces love! On the other hand, life with the law produces pride or self-condemnation.

#### B. Keep running with Christ [7-12]

<sup>7</sup> You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. <sup>9</sup> A little leaven leavens the whole lump. <sup>10</sup> I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. <sup>11</sup> And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. <sup>12</sup> I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

**Stay on course.** *You ran well* [7] is the sense that they had started strong, but they had veered off course. Paul asks rhetorically, *Who hindered you from obeying the truth?* [7]. The term *hindered* conveys the image of blocking a road or course. They were being hindered from growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus and the truth of His gospel. Jesus has never tried to *persuade* them that the way to be right with God was by ritual or their ability to perform the commandments per the Mosaic Law [8].

**False doctrines are obstacles to finishing well.** *A little leaven leavens the whole lump* [9]. A small amount of yeast placed in new dough will permeate the whole loaf. Leaven is a picture of evil, sin, or false doctrine. False doctrines about the significance of rituals or the relationship between performing God's commands and salvation can corrupt your thinking about Christ and the gospel [Mt. 16:6-12].

Paul had *confidence in them in the Lord that you will have no other mind* [10]. We trust that as the truth of God's word is taught, Christ gives understanding so that people recognize false doctrines, their dangers, and remove themselves from their influences, and discover true freedom in Christ.

*He who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is* [10] is the idea that God will judge unrepentant false teachers. *And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?* [11]. Some said that Paul taught that you had to be circumcised, if he had, then he wouldn't have continued to be persecuted by the "Judaizers." *I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!* [12]. Paul used vivid language that reveals how upset he is at these false teachers. In essence, he wishes that those who taught you have to be circumcised to please God should castrate themselves so that they would experience the pain that they were causing others, or that they would be unable to reproduce.

*Then the offense of the cross has ceased* [11]. The message of the gospel is an offense, because we are saved solely by committing to Jesus. Thus, the cross offends our pride, because we get life with God because of what He has done, not what we have done.

### **C. How to let faith work through love in Christ [6]**

**1. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved [Ac.16:31].** You need to commit your life to Christ, and choose to yield your will to His, and you will be in Christ, and He in you. You will receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life.

**2. Grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [2Pet. 3:18, Mt.11:28-30].** Bible learning, prayer, contemplation, and healthy Christian community are helpful to grow in Christ; and you need time and experience with Him to grow in faith.

**3. Grow in love for God and neighbors [6].** The by-product of a healthy relationship with Christ is evident growth in love for God and neighbors. A claimed love for others apart from love for God is simply altruism; and a claimed love for God without meaningful love for others is religious hypocrisy.

**4. Remove obstacles to Jesus [Heb.12:1, 1Cor. 5:7, Rev. 3:16].** Remove the influence of false doctrines about God and the gospel. Don't remain under false religious teaching. Also, remove sin and things that hinder spiritual growth.

**5. Remember His grace, stand fast in freedom, and keep running!**

### **Study Guide Qs**

**Q1. How have you observed that life with Christ produces love?**

**Q2. How does placing your confidence in Christ rather than a ritual or your ability to perform all of God's commands make you feel?**

**Q3. What are some of the specific obstacles to Jesus that you are aware of, or have experienced?**

**Q4. What are some ways that reveal that you are growing in love for God and neighbors?**

**“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Read John 8:31-59. What did you discover about Christian liberty? What did you learn about the place of religious heritage? How does a person’s response to Jesus reveal their spiritual parent?**

**2. Read Heb.12:1, 1Cor. 5:7, and Rev. 3:16. What did you learn about obstacles to Jesus. How would you like to apply what you learned to your life?**

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**Invite your neighbor(s) who don’t know the Lord, or have a home church, to attend church with you this coming Sunday. There are invite cards at the welcome center and administration office.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn’t enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

**a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.