

“Be Servants One Of Another”

“For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another ...” (Gal. 5:13). Galatian Christians had been warned against being enslaved in a yoke of bondage (5:1). They had been released from their bondage to them that were no gods at all but persuasive false teachers were trying to lead them into bondage to the law (4:8f). They were to resist every effort that might entangle them in such bondage for they would be severed from Christ and fallen from grace were they to yield (5:4). Still, the fact they had been set free did not mean they were free from all restraints. Such would be folly for them to so conclude.

Liberty is a precious thing but liberty must be properly used. In his Corinthian letter Paul taught those brethren they were not to use their liberty to create a stumbling block for a weak brother. *“But food will not commend us to God: neither, if we eat not, are we the worse; nor, if we eat, are we the better. But take heed lest this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to the weak”* (2 Cor. 8:8f). In his appeal to these Corinthians, that *“liberty”* about which he wrote, was the *“liberty”* to eat meats offered in sacrifice to idols. If they understood that an idol was nothing, then meat offered to it was no different from any other meat. But all did not have such knowledge. If a brother with that knowledge ate in the presence of a brother who did not have such knowledge, the weak brother might be caused to stumble: he might eat that which he believed was wrong and therein sin. Therefore, the brother with knowledge should forgo his liberty lest a weaker brother be caused to do that which he believed wrong.

However, here in Galatians the warning against the improper use of liberty takes a different bent. It is a warning not to regard oneself as free to engage in any carnal desire he has (an according to the flesh) nor to run rough shod over another or fail to hear the cry of the feeble and frail. Rather *“through love be servants (be in bondage!) one to another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself”* (5:14). He who loves his neighbor as himself realizes that he must show his love to his neighbor. In James two the writer shows the emptiness of a faith without works. *“If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food and one of you say unto them, go in peace, be ye warmed and filled, and yet ye give them not the things needful for the body; what doth it profit?”* (James 2:17f). John asked a thought provoking question, *“But whoso hath the world’s goods, and beholdeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his compassion from him, how doth the love of God abide in him”* (1 John 3:17)? Indeed, how does it? So John urges, *“My little children, let us*

not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 Jn. 3:8).

What would be the consequences of being "so bent" on "doing our thing," "saying what we think," ignoring the needs of others? Paul tells us. "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15).*

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