

GALATIANS 5:1-15

1. What would you list as the most basic, deep, crucial human needs we all share in common?

***Review** memory verses: try one you've found most challenging to learn! (1:3-5, 2:15-16, 20)

***Pray**, for He is with you: "God is exalted in His power! Who is a teacher like Him?" Job 36:22

***Read** Galatians 5:1-15.

Standing Firm: the inside story Galatians 5:1-6. Note the many times Paul refers to Christ.

2. Christ wants people to truly experience _____ (verse 1a). Jot down a few ways you would define this term (words, emotions, mental images).

A typical person might have a hard time believing this is Christ's desire for them. Yet He's the very One who "set us free"—at the cost of His own death in our place, on the Cross.

3. These verses give some basic truths that form our freedom in Christ. Comment briefly:
Romans 8:1-3

Romans 5:5b

Ephesians 2:10

Philippians 4:19

Perfect, unchangeable love, security, meaning: we're *given* all our hearts yearn for (all we were made for) in Christ Jesus. We're freed *from* our own futile attempts to find life, and freed *to* live each day as we were created to live—with, through and for the One "who loves us so."

4. Yet—what surprising tendency do we have, revealed by Paul's words in Galatians 5:1b?

It's a struggle—both to accept Christ and then to live in His freedom—because there's a battle going on inside between the enslaving “ordinary way” of the flesh and the freeing truth of the gospel. In verses 2-4 Paul lays out the situation: first, for those who always reject Christ and His grace, who always insist on earning salvation through what they can do—their flesh has won, but they are lost! All Christ is, all He died to provide, is of no benefit to them.

For all who do come to Christ by faith, there is no way to ever lose Him. Paul constantly calls the struggling Galatians *brothers*: their salvation was forever guaranteed when they believed and received the Spirit. But the apostle's message for believers is, we can and do slip back into the old “fleshly” ways of self-dependence and self-rule. When that happens, we can't and don't lose our Savior, but we do miss out on experiencing the great freedom He intends for all His own.

So, we can expect a fight! But these verses suggest ways to stand firm in our precious freedom.

5. **Don't forget!** If we're lured into trying to find security in keeping the law, it's because:

a. We've forgotten lessons learned in past attempts to measure up to the Law. In a few words:

Can we pick and choose what we'll obey? (5:3)

What does it feel like, trying to keep it? (5:1b)

What is inevitable, success or failure? (3:10-11a)

b. Most of all, *whenever* we believers take back on our shoulders the futile, heavy burden of securing righteousness and “making life work” ourselves, *we've turned our eyes and hearts away from our true need and true answer: Christ and His _____* (5:4).

Grace is Christ's limitless, merciful, undeserved loving-kindness and help, for all, in every need.

6. Did you need to be reminded today to return your focus to Christ and his wonderful grace? Explain.

7. What added insight for your life do you find in II Corinthians 12:9-10, Paul's own testimony?

8. In contrast to our old life under the yoke of exhausting self-effort, verses 5-6 show our new life of grace and freedom in Christ. Underline what stands out to you, share in class if you wish.

5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value (counts for anything). The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. (NIV, ESV)

Standing Firm: the choice to love Galatians 5:13-15.

13. What does Paul call believers to do in verses 13-14?

14. What do you think our human flesh will tend to do instead?

15. Optional question: We aren't asked to keep the Law to find God's acceptance. Why might a believer desire to obey His command, to love our neighbor as ourself? (e.g., Galatians 1:3-5, 3:26)

The world looks a lot like verse 15 (please read). It's the last way God's beloved family should look, but as we act in our flesh, it can and does happen. As Paul points us down a *new* road toward loving servanthood, we suspect (know!) it's a lifestyle that's beyond us, even as we truly desire it. *We might easily be tempted to form a new yoke of bondage, trying to "make it happen!"*

16. Is this God's desire? No: Paul would point us back to a centering truth in the heart of this passage: "the only thing that counts is _____ expressing itself through love." (5:6)

17. As you finish up your study, scan back over your lesson. If you wish, share one or two things the Lord brought to light for you that you want to "stand fast in" in the days ahead.

In passages to come, we'll learn more about our whole new way of life in Christ Jesus. Now in closing, rejoice in the One Who has set you free—and Who continues to set you free.

I am loved, I am loved; I can risk loving you,
For the One who knows me best, loves me most.
I am loved, you are loved—won't you please take my hand;
We are free to love each other: we are loved.

Bill and Gloria Gaither