

Galatians 15:1-15 Article
(Lesson 12)

When the Galatians first received the Spirit of God, they also received the gift of freedom, as Paul made clear in 2 Cor 3:17, "The Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." When Paul listed the various graces included in the "fruit of the Spirit" (5:22–23), freedom was not included among these desirable virtues. This is because freedom is already presupposed in each one of them. Thus the fruit of the Spirit *is* freedom—freedom to love, to exude joy, to manifest peace, to display patience, and so on. It is *for freedom* that Christ has set us free. This means that Christian liberty is freedom for others, freedom that finds its true expression not in theological privatism ("I am free to believe anything I choose") or spiritual narcissism ("I am free to be myself no matter what") but rather freedom to love and serve one another in the context of the body of Christ.

Evidently one of the major problems among the churches of Galatia was that believers there did not know what to do with their Christ-won freedom. Some were using their liberty as a pretext for license, to the gratification of their sinful nature. Others were "Lone-Ranger" Christians, having forgotten the mandate to bear one another's burdens. Still others had fallen into discord and faction, backbiting and self-promotion. Thus in these closing two chapters Paul summoned the Galatians to a mature use of their spiritual birthright, reminding them that it is love, the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Spirit, that brings liberty to its fullest expression.¹

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There are people (in churches) who do not want us to be free. They don't want us to be free before God, accepted just as we are by his grace. They don't want us to be free to express our faith originally and creatively in the world. They ... insist that all look alike, talk alike and act alike, thus validating one another's worth. Without being aware of it we become anxious about what others will say about us, obsessively concerned about what others think we should do. We no longer live the good news but anxiously try to memorize and recite the script that someone else has assigned to us. We may be secure, but we will not be free.

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¹ George, T. (2001). *Vol. 30: Galatians* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (354–355). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.