

Bible Truths  
Foundations of the Faith

*Our Freedom in Christ*

*Our Position and its  
Impact on Living the  
Christian Life*

*Iron Range Bible Church*

*Dedicated to the Systematic Exposition of the Word of God*

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## *Freedom in Christ*

Galatians 5:1 begins that last major section of Galatians and he does so with a very strong statement that has tremendous implications in our life as believers in Christ. *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.* We must also remember the point Paul made just prior to this in 4:31. *So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.*

Paul has shown the superiority of the Abrahamic Covenant to the Mosaic Law and thus of grace over law. Since the Law leads only to bondage, and grace to freedom, it is foolish to seek to return to bondage by placing oneself under the Mosaic Law or any law performance system which some were doing.

Paul begins with the goal of the redemptive work of Christ and that is our freedom!

So Paul goes from summarizing the previous section in 4:31 to introducing this last section in 5:1. The word for *freedom* (ἐλευθερία) speaks of the release from slavery. It is never used of political freedom nor of the idea or nuance as the power or ability to do what one desires to do when he wants to do it as it so often is these days.

Grammatically it refers to an advantage that we as believers possess. That is what is ours in Christ, what he did for us by going to the cross is for our advantage. Here the emphasis is on the result to us who have believed in Him.

This freedom is a gift, the source of this freedom is Christ, *that Christ set us free* (ἐλευθερώω) verb, which means to make free or set free.

The basis of this freedom we discovered back in 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law.*

Redemption paid the price to purchase the slave, us, out of the slave market, to release from slavery.

**Not only from the guilt and penalty of sin but also from the enslavement to the indwelling sin nature and its ruling power.** When examining the verb *to set us free* we find that it is in the aorist tense which speaks to the historical reality of the work of Christ on the cross that provided salvation and freed us from the curse of the law. The active voice points to the fact that it was accomplished by Christ as He was totally obedient to the Father's will.

The indicative mood speaks to the reality of the freedom we have in our relationship with Christ which is provided by Him.

*It was for freedom that Christ set us free;*

As we consider this first phrase some things we need to think about .

**1.** Jesus Christ's work on the cross was designed to set us free!

By this I mean it was to free us from condemnation of spiritual death, eternal separation from God and free from us from slavery to the sin nature (Rom 8:1-4) free from servitude to the sin nature. Free us from slavery to any and all systems of law performance living, that is man devised legalism.

2. This statement totally rejects the possibility that the means of this freedom that we have in Christ lies within the realm of our own ability or capacity to produce therefore it is not by works. This freedom is potential to any and all mankind because of the work of Christ and it is actualized by the individual through faith in Christ.

3. As freed slaves we must develop the capacity for this freedom. Christ accomplished everything needed to provide for us positional freedom in Christ at salvation when we believed in Christ.

Everything we need to realize the full potential of this freedom in our life after salvation, in our life as a believer, which is the subject of much of the rest of the epistle.

The link Paul lays out for providing this capacity is the Word and the Spirit.

4. The truth you know, that forms your frame of reference, the Doctrine resident in you forms the basis for the capacity to enjoy and appreciate this freedom. John 8:31-32, 36; James 1:25; 2:12

5. This freedom becomes a reality experientially in our lives, only when the Holy Spirit is empowering the life so that we are walking by the Spirit or walking worthy of our calling . 2 Cor. 3:17; Rom. 8:2-4; Gal. 5:16; Eph 4:1

6. Functionally what does this freedom say to us? That we as believers are no longer a slave to our sin nature with its lust patterns and human good. It no longer has to rule or dominate our life. Rom 6:16, 18 The point of Romans 6 is that we're either a slave of sin nature or of righteousness.

7. This freedom can be a reality regardless of the political, or economic system in which one lives.

Your free in your relationship with God which impacts your thinking and attitudes and therefore how you deal with the routine issues of life. 1 Cor. 7:20-23

8. Paul reminds the Galatians that they were delivered from slavery to idolatry and paganism when they believed in Christ and now some have and others are on the verge of reverting to another form of slavery to live their lives. This would occur if they adopt dependence on self effort and law performance living as introduced to them by the Judaizers.

9. What should their lives (and ours) be characterized by? Dependence on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who illuminates the truth, fills us with it so that we can be occupied with Christ and His thinking. Heb. 12:1-2

The normal Christian life is a **supernatural life** and we are given **supernatural power** in order to live this life.

The divine enablement for daily living is from the Holy Spirit who indwells all believers and the Word illuminated to us.

In Romans 8:2 Paul expands our understanding of the freedom we have in Christ.

Paul begins Romans 8:2 with the word "for" (γὰρ) which indicates that he is giving the reason for the believer not being condemned to a life of servitude to the sinful nature. This is the thrust Paul made in the flow of thought from chapter 7 to 8:1. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."

In other words, God has provided a means of deliverance. We no longer need to be enslaved by the sin nature and its lust patterns as well as its desire for human good. The means for that deliverance, he calls here, *the law of the Spirit of life*.

The phrase *of life* is a functional title. It describes for us something about the noun it is related to, that is, the Holy Spirit. It could describe what the Holy Spirit **does or is**. In this context it describes what He does. Another title is that He is the Spirit of truth, which puts the emphasis on what He is!

What is the first thing done for us at the point of faith in Christ, believing the Gospel? The Holy Spirit regenerates and gives us a **new life** in Christ! (Titus 3:5) When the Holy Spirit regenerates the new believer what does He do? He gives them life, spiritual life, eternal life!

He has also done something else for us when we believed, and that is what Paul is emphasizing here, "*has set us free from the law of sin and of death*." [which leads to death]

That He has *set us free* (ἐλευθερώω) is the same verb as in Gal 5:1 and means to be set free, liberated, and it speaks of completed action. The aorist tense takes us back to the cross, to the point of time we believed and the act of regeneration, when the freedom began and was established in our life. In the past, when we were regenerated, from that moment the Holy Spirit also set us free from the ruling power of the sin nature.

It takes a growing capacity from the word in us to live consistently within the sphere of the will of God. At any time we can choose to put the sin nature back in rulership and live under slavery to it. That's the point of Rom 6:11-14.

What Paul is leading up to here is that we as believers have a whole new way of living, a whole new means of enablement for living, have completely new resources available to us. Part of the uniqueness being a church age saint in union with the King Jesus Christ!

Several significant things should be noted concerning Paul's statement in Romans 8:2. First Paul refers to two distinct laws: The law of the Spirit of life and the law of sin and death. Law, no matter what kind it may be, is established for the purpose of governing or influencing a course of action. In light of this, the law of the Spirit of life is the enabling power of the Holy Spirit, which is related to the newness of life (Romans 6:4; 7:6). We have a whole new framework for the life of the believer in Christ.

**The reason that the believer is not condemned to a life of servitude to the sin nature is that the enabling power of the Holy Spirit has set him free from the ruling power of the sin nature.**

Second, the freedom from the sin nature to which Paul refers to here is different from the freedom from that same nature to which he refers in Romans 6:7. Two things indicate this.

#1 Paul uses two distinct different words for freedom in these passages.

The word in 6:7 is a legal term. [δικαιόω] freed from, to be justified.

The word in 8:2 is not a legal term. [in a spiritual or moral sense ἐλευθερώω]

#2 The freedoms spoken of in these two Passages are obtained through two different means.

The freedom of 6:7 is obtained through our identification with Christ.

The freedom of 8:2 is obtained through the indwelling Holy Spirit and His enabling power operative in the life through the Word of truth believed and applied.

In Romans 8:2 Paul is saying that someone much more powerful than the sin nature has intervened on behalf of the believer and has set him free from the ruling power of his former master. That someone is the Holy Spirit. If we continue to choose to live under the law of sin and death we will eventually fail, crash and burn. That's Rom 7's message! But when we come to that realization of 7:24 *O Wretched man that I am!* I'm incapable on my own.

We must believe the facts of our position in Christ, choose to live under the law of the Spirit. Because we have a new life, we're in Christ, we're separated from the law of sin, the sin nature and its power then we will be able to soar and fly as a believer. Because He is the power source for the new life! We now are enabled to serve a new master!

Paul will continue in 8:3-4 with the provision of our freedom/liberation, the how and the why. He says that grace succeeds where the law fails. Grace motivates to holy living, while the law is unable to do so! 8:3 focuses on the **HOW** while 8:4 focuses on the **WHY!**

Now let's examine another passage that speaks to the issue of the freedom we have in Christ and that is Galatians 2:20. Here Paul makes the application of Positional truth to our daily life in Christ. Having explained in 2:19 that he had died to the law so that he might live unto God, now in 2:20 he explains for us how this happens, how as believers we died to the law and how we are now alive in Christ.

*"I have been crucified with Christ;* (συσταυρόω perfect passive indicative) which means to be crucified together with.

The first word in the Greek text actually is Christ which tells us that the emphasis of the context is Christ and His work, not what Paul or you or I could do, the focus is Christ.

What Paul is saying here of himself is also true of every believer. "*I have been crucified with Christ* You can put your name here. What is being spoken of here is **retroactive positional truth**, that is, what God did for you the moment you believed in Christ. The perfect tense says that this is a completed act, that is, at the point of salvation, when you believed you were crucified with Christ. This takes us to the identification truth that you find in Rom 6. [also Col. 2:9-14]

The perfect tense also tells us that this identification with Christ has enduring lasting results.

The passive voice says that this action of being crucified with Christ is received, therefore it is accomplished by God/Holy Spirit in response to faith in Christ. The indicative mood points to the historical reality of this identification with Christ.

This statement actually points out for us how Paul as well as you and I have actually died to the law. By dying with Christ who died under its penalty, bearing the curse of the law having become a curse for us, the law's demands were satisfied and therefore the law has no hold on Paul or anyone else who believes in Christ. (Rom. 6:14)

This results in the divine provision for daily living. The current positional truth for living, *and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.*

The words *live* and *lives* are both durative present verbs from ζάω. The emphasis is keeps on living. Paul is saying that as a new creation in Christ it is no longer the old self-centered, self-righteous Saul with my sin nature dominating and ruling my life that now lives. This is to be the norm for all believers also. Point is that **who you were** in Adam before salvation is no longer the basis of your life. Christ is now the Source of your Christian life. "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

The old nature still lives in you, but you as a new creation in Christ are no longer related to it. You separated from its power, it no longer has to rule your life. Rom. 6:2,7; 8:2

When Paul says *but Christ lives in me*; keeps on living in me, you, the new-creation "me," are indwelt by Christ. It is not Christ living instead of you, as the emotional devotional crowd minus doctrine would say but rather He is the Source of your new life as a recreated person. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). This indwelling of Christ is realized through the Holy Spirit's ministry of filling you with Christ, that is through the illuminated word taken in and believed. (Eph 3:17; 5:18)

The next phrase *and the life which I now live in the flesh* that is the life we live now as believers in this body no longer does the sin nature have to dominate my life therefore I have a new way of life. I have a new paternity, a new source of life! Why would we want to go back to the old way of living?

**How are we able to live this new life in Christ?** *I live by faith in the Son of God* (ἐν πίστει) by means of faith. Always the faith must have an object, once again just like earlier in 2:16 the object of faith is indicated here by the objective genitive phrase *Son of God*, i.e.

Christ is the object of the faith. This takes us back to the word of God, the only place you can know who Christ is and what His thinking is, remember we have the mind of Christ 1 Cor 2:16.

2:20b *and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

Paul wants to make sure we understand that this new life in Christ does not rest either on the basis of law codes, nor in the human efforts of any of us, but that it rests in and looks confidently to Christ for its provision.

Ron Merryman very perceptively said, "Simply, this new life is not dependent upon the ineffectual efforts of man to draw near to God [relationship] instead it depends upon the total sufficiency of Christ."

This is the second time in 5 verses that Paul has emphasized the importance of faith. In 2:16 he made the point that justification before God is by faith. Here the focus is on living out this new life in Christ is also by faith. In both cases the merit or value of faith is in the object of faith. Everyone everyday exercises faith in many things, [jobs, material possessions, friends, human authorities, money]. But our faith is only as secure as the object of our faith. The true dignity and the worthiness of Jesus Christ as the object of our faith is intended here by the title "Son of God."

Next Paul gives the reason or motivation for our faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. The word loved (ἀγαπάω Aorist ptc) expresses the divine motivation for going to the cross. And gave Himself (delivered) παραδίδομι (Aorist ptc) which takes us to the cross. And He did it for me ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ the preposition of substitution in the place of, for, in the name of, instead of. This points out that He was there bearing the guilt and penalty that we rightly deserved.

The fact that He died in our place forms the ground of basis for justification: the demands of the law for death due to sin have been met. Therefore God can now justify the one who believes in Christ on a righteous basis without compromising His character. This is the greatest demonstration of love in all of history. (1 John 3:16; Rom 5:8)

Pulling this together should motivate us to live our lives with a purpose of honoring Him in all aspects of our lives. Paul's exhortation here is very personal.

[Expanded translation of Gal 2:20]

I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who keeps on living but Christ who keeps on living in me and the life which I am now living in the flesh-body I live by means of faith in the Son of God who loved me and delivered Himself up on behalf of me.

### **Summary of 2:20**

1. Paul is explaining more fully what it means to die to the law so that he and we are able to live to God.
  - to live the Christian life in a manner that pleases Him, to walk in a manner worthy of our calling
2. Basic to understanding this context is understanding of the believer being in union with Christ and therefore having a standing before God.
  - to be **in Christ** speaks of our position, the work of God the Holy Spirit at the point of salvation through what is known as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.
  - this is not an emotional experience; it occurs as a response to faith in Christ and being justified.
3. Another aspect of the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit is that each believer is also identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection.
  - this is referred to as **retroactive positional truth**, it's a spiritual identification
  - When Paul speaks of the results that flow to us from this identification, like raised up to walk in newness of life or as here the life that I now live he's referring to what is called **current positional truth**. All based on the work of Christ.
4. When Paul says here that he was crucified with Christ (RetroActive Positional Truth) and it has lasting impact in the present reality of his life (Current Positional Truth CPT).

5. At the cross all sin was judged as they were poured out on Jesus Christ.
  - 1 Pet. 2:24 both retroactive & current positional truth; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21
  
6. Need to recognize also that all human good, human works systems were also rejected Titus 3:5; Isa. 64:6.
  - rem: what is the source of the human good? Sin nature!
  
7. Being crucified with Christ (RAPT) recognizes that being identified with Christ includes the sin nature being positionally handled in that it no longer has to rule, we no longer have to live life dominated by it.
  - Rom. 6:6, all we were in Adam, first birth; 6:2,7; 8:2-3; Col. 2:12-14