

**Title: From Freedom to Fulfillment**

Text: Galatians 5:13-15

Date: April 12, 2026

Proverbs 3:26 tells us that by following the Lord in wisdom and discretion, *"he will be our confidence and will keep our feet from being caught."* So, if you have your copy of God's word with you this morning, and I hope you do, please turn to Galatians 5, Galatians 5. We're going to be briefly looking at verses 13-15 this morning, and Galatians 5 is a set up for our special fellowship time today. You'll see in a few short minutes we're going to participate in our church-wide ministry fair, an event where we have set up just through these side doors booths that represent nearly every major ministry opportunity in our church.

And every year we like to set aside a special day for this, because having a ministry fair where every member and attendee can see in a very tangible way a lot of the ways that they can plug into our church, this day reflects one of the central aims of our church, which is to see every member as a minister. See we want every member of our church family here at Grace Chapel to find their unique place of belonging, connecting, and serving here alongside their brothers and sisters in Christ in the case cause of advancing the gospel for the glory of God. We want every member to be a minister, to be a testimony of our church, because this is the testimony of scripture. See a church is not a religious building where people just idly sit, nor is it a service organization where only professionals serve. No, the local church, Grace Chapel, is a living organism, a family where every individual has an important part to play alongside the rest of the body.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12, *"just like a physical body is one and has many members, and just like all the members of the body, though many, operate as one, so it is with the body of Christ."* Each part is indispensable. See a true church, when it is operating properly, is an organic community of believers who is clinging fast to Christ and serving with and for one another. It is a family of faith where every member is a minister. And one of the ways that we seek to cultivate that aim and vision here in a tangible way is through our ministry fair. It is by taking this whole concept of Christian service and making it physically concrete in a way that you can see, feel, touch, and talk about. One of the reasons why we make this such a priority at our church is because God tells us in his word that those who have been truly set free in Christ ultimately find their greatest fulfillment and satisfaction here on earth by serving God faithfully in a local church.

And that's what we're going to see this morning by briefly looking at Galatians 5:13-15, which is a passage that shows us how God has designed us as believers to go from a life of freedom to a life of fulfillment. And what we're going to see is that the path that leads from freedom to fulfillment in Jesus is a path of serving one another through love. And that's the path that I want to kind of briefly skip through this morning and to see how God brings us in three short steps, first from freedom to love, that's in verse 13, then from love to service at the end of verse 13, and then finally from service to fulfillment in verses 14-15. So, this is the path that God wants to take all of us on this morning by his grace. A path that goes from freedom to love, from love to service, and from service to fulfillment.

So, with that in mind, if you're able, please stand with me out of reverence and readiness for the word of God as I get to read our passage before us today from Galatians 5, starting in verse 13 on into verse 15.

Paul writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, *"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."*

This is the word of God whose commandments are exceedingly broad, perfect beyond all limitations.

Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you so much for your word this morning. I thank you for the truth that it conveys to us, and I thank you, Father, that you are a God who shepherds us throughout our lives and that you are working not only for your glory but also for our good as your children. So, show us, Father, I pray, afresh from your word, by your spirit today, the path that you have laid out in front of each and every one of us who belong to you so that we would go by your spirit and your truth from freedom to fulfillment as we give our lives to you.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

You may be seated.

So, Paul points out for us here in Galatians 5:13-15, that when God begins his good work in us by his grace, he first takes us on a journey from freedom to love. From freedom to love. That's in verse 13, where Paul says, *"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."* Paul starts off in verse 13 by reminding us of this great truth as believers. *"For you were called to freedom, brothers."* Boy, isn't that good?

See, one of the most fundamental realities of the Christian life is that we who have trusted in Jesus Christ for our salvation did so because we were effectually called by God and appointed by God unto salvation. He is the author and finisher of our faith. As 2 Timothy 1:9 says, *"God saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began."* And God called us to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus so that we might be free. Free from what once held us in bondage. As John 8:36 says, *"So if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed."* And so, what were some of the things that once held us in bondage before coming to Christ that God called us to Christ in order that we might be free from?

Well, this morning I just want to touch on, for the sake of our time, two, the condemnation of the law and the selfishness of sin. First in Christ, we have been set free from the condemnation of the law. You've got to love it, freedom, right? You see, God has shown us in his word, through all the commands that he has given us, what righteousness looks like when it is lived out in everyday life. The only problem is that law,

which testifies to the level of righteousness that we should possess before God, that very law actually condemns every single one of us as sinners. We don't love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. We don't love our neighbor as ourselves. We don't. We are sinners. And that's the purpose of the law. It is to show us our sin.

As Romans 3:19-20 states, *"Now we know that the law of God speaks, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by the works of the law shall no human being ever be justified in God's sight, since it is through the law that comes the knowledge of sin."* The purpose of the law, quite frankly, is to show us that we are condemned, and the purpose of Christ is to free us from that condemnation. As Paul states earlier in Galatians 3:24, *"the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to,"* who, *"Christ in whom we find freedom."* The law shows us our condemnation before God and Jesus frees us from that condemnation before God. As Romans 8:1 says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus."* Jesus frees all those who trust in him from the law's condemnation.

How did he do that? He did it, as Galatians 3:13 says, *"by becoming a curse for us."* He took the condemnation for our sins in our place as he died on that cross so that we might be free. And as Colossians 2:14 states, *"God has canceled the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. These he has set aside, by nailing them to the cross."* Brothers and sisters, this morning, if you have trusted in Christ, we are free indeed. Free from the law, as one hymnist wrote, O happy condition. Jesus has bled and there is remission, cursed by the law and bruised by the fall. Christ has redeemed us once for all. Once for all, O sinner, receive it. Once for all, O doubter, believe it. Cling to the cross, the burden will fall. Christ has redeemed us once for all. In Christ, we are freed from the condemnation of the law.

And second, in Christ, we are free from the selfishness of sin. Romans 6:6, which was the verse that actually follows what we studied last week, says *"Our old self was crucified with Christ so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin."* I want you to notice that there is a parallel being made there that when we died to sin, we died to self. And the reason why this parallel is made by Paul in Romans 6:6 is because selfishness is one of the central characteristics of our old unredeemed life. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 says when Paul was listing the sins that would mark unredeemed humanity in our day, he begins the entire list off by saying, *"people will be lovers of self."* And then every other sin that he mentions flows right out of that one. And again, in James 3:14-16, James states that what's at the central core of an unbeliever's heart is *"bitter jealousy and selfish ambition."* A.W. Tozer once put it, the essence of sin is self, specifically self-righteousness, self-pity, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-admiration, self-love, and a whole host of others like these.

See, our old unredeemed life was fundamentally self-oriented and self-focused on self-pleasure. And that selfishness, by the way, destroys every relationship that you're in. God and man. But when we turn to and we trust in Jesus Christ, we are set free from the selfishness of sin. As 2 Corinthians 5:15 states, the reason why Christ died was so *"that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised."* And again, 1 Peter 4:2 says that we, for whom Christ suffered and died, can now *"live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God."* Brothers and sisters, we are free, free from the selfishness of sin.

As Francis Havergal once wrote in song, that in salvation, God has committed to take my will and make it thine, it shall be no longer mine. In Christ, we are freed from the condemnation of the law, and we are free from the selfishness of sin. Free at last. Free at last. Praise God Almighty. We are free at last. And therefore, in light of the freedom that God has given us, we are called to no longer live a life of selfishness towards sin, but rather live a life of love towards God. That's what we've been set free for, as Paul says next, *"Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the,"* what, *"flesh for selfishness, but through,"* what, *"love serve one another."* Notice, we are to have a new mode of operation as believers, a new motivating factor that characterizes our life, and it is no longer selfishness, it is now love.

Most fundamentally, a love for God. It is through love that we as believers should now live our lives. That is the first and most basic step of the journey that God wants to take every single one of his children on. It is to go from freedom to love. God has called us to freedom. He has called us to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus so that you and I most fundamentally might love him. Might love him. And God has shown us this from the very beginning, if you recall, all the way back in Deuteronomy 6:5, right after God redeemed Israel out of Egypt, he said to them, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength."* That was the goal of the redemption of that freedom. It was love.

As he says later in Deuteronomy 10:12, *"And now, Israel, now that you've been set free, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all of his ways, and to love him."* This is what God has always desired from us at a most fundamental level. It is your heart's affection. It is our love. God has redeemed us. He has freed us so that through knowing him we might greater delight in him. As 1 John 4:19 says, *"We love God because he,"* what, *"first loved us."* The grounds and the growth of our love as believers is his prior love for us. He loved us first. Why? So that we might love him now. We have been forgiven much so that we might love much. And so that we might be able to take this first step of the Christian journey and go from freedom to love.

So, this is the first application that I want you all to consider this morning. Is the spiritual freedom that Jesus paid for by his own blood, freedom from condemnation and selfishness, is that freedom producing in your life today its intended love for him? Is your relationship with God characterized by a spirit of delight and of joy and of peace in what he has done for you in Christ? Or is your relationship with God this morning characterized by a spirit of fear and guilt and deceptive hypocrisy? Do you love him? Do you love him or are you still in bondage to selfishness and to sin's condemnation? I encourage you today that if you are, then come to Christ. Come to the cross afresh today and trust in him. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Trust in his perfect life and death and victory on your behalf and you will be saved. You'll be born again, you'll be free indeed, and you will go from freedom to love.

So, this is the first step that God wants to take every single one of his children on. He wants to take you from a moment of being free to coming to love him as you ought. From freedom to love. So as God is doing this good work in us by his grace, he aims to take us as we've seen from freedom to love.

Second, from love to service. That's at the end of verse 13. Notice Paul finishes verse 13 by saying this, *"through love,"* do what, *"serve one another."* See the next natural step that God wants us to take in our

relationship to him after going from freedom to love is to go from love to service. And again, this should be a very natural step. Knowing the love of God that is seen in Christ Jesus, our Lord, should cause us to want to respond to God and to serve him out of love.

I can remember how the Lord did this work in my own life when I was in college. I was pursuing glory through politics. Not that there is any glory through politics, sorry. And I came to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards me as a sinner. I came to realize afresh the freedom that Christ had bought for me. And I shudder to say, and I think for the first time in my life, I started to love him. And then my immediate response was I wanted to serve him no longer out of guilt or fear of am I being everything God wants me to be. I wanted to serve him because he had given everything to me. And I wanted to love him in response.

This is the natural step that God wants us to take. That knowing the love of God that is seen in Christ Jesus, our Lord, it should cause us to want to respond to God and serve him out of love. As Romans 12:1 says, *"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."* In other words, the natural consequence of delighting in God's mercies towards you is wanting to worship him and serve him with your life, to present your body as a living sacrifice to him, to lay it all down before him. Love leads to service. As Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:14, *"The love of Christ compels us to live for him."* And again Hebrews 9:14 says, *"the blood of Christ.... purifies our conscience."* In other words, it sets our minds and our hearts free from dead works to serve the living God.

Just as the psalmist expressed in Psalms 116, *"I love the Lord, for he has heard my voice... What shall I do to render to the Lord for all his benefits to me?"* Love leads to service. And as Paul makes it clear here in verse 13, this love for God and this desire to serve him is expressed how? Answer, Paul says, *"through serving one another."* If we love God, we will love God's people. If we seek to serve him, we will seek to serve his people also. Just as Jesus taught Peter three times after his resurrection, if you love me, feed my lambs, tend my sheep, serve one another. Where? In the local church.

Again, as in Romans 12, just after Paul says in verse 1 that we should *"present our bodies in sacrificial service to God."* He then tells us how to do that in verse 5 and following by saying, *"being one body.... and individually members of one another. And having gifts that differ according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them."* And then he talks about prophecy and faith and service and teaching and exhortation and generosity and leadership and zeal and mercy and cheerfulness, all of these gifts that are to be used in the context of a local church in service to the Lord. Christ's freedom and our love for him is to lead us to service. As Titus 2:14 says, *"Christ gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous to do good works."* Christ's freedom and our love is to lead us to greater service, to the service of one another.

And so, is the second application of this message this morning, just as I asked you if freedom is producing this type of love in your life, so also, I ask you, is love producing this type of service in your life? Is your life characterized by a free and fervent service of God's people because of your love for Jesus and others

mindedness and in others concern where you long to be of some spiritual good to the body of Christ? Or is your life characterized by a stingy, cold and distant presence among the body of Christ, a self-focus and a self-concern where you are silently critiquing others for whether they are being of some spiritual good to you? Do you love God? Do you love him? Then feed his lambs, tend his sheep.

I encourage you today to look around at the booths that are set up and to see where the Lord might be calling on you to express your love and service to him. Maybe it'll be the first area that you've ever served in a church ever before, or maybe it will simply be a new area of expanded service in our church. Whatever it might be, I encourage you to dive on in and to make sure that Paul's admonition of through love serve one another is not absent in your life, nor limited only to a few select times of the year, but rather that the testimony of your life would be that of a living sacrifice to God in light of his great mercies, that of regular and varied service to Christ's people in love. I encourage you in light of God's word to join us as God intended in moving from freedom to love and from love to service. Because God is calling us to do this, and this is the final point. God is calling us to do this not only for his great glory, but also for our own good, which is what we'll see in conclusion next.

See, God has begun this good work in us by his grace so that he can take us as we've seen from freedom to love, from love to service, and then finally from service to fulfillment. That's in verses 14-15. Paul writes this, *"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."* Now, first, Paul points out here that what we've been told to do, to through love serve one another, that command actually brings about a fulfillment of God's commands. He says in verse 14, *"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" See, even though we are free from the law's condemnation, this whole new way of serving God in the spirit motivated by love in light of the freedom that he's given us actually leads to a fulfillment of the law.*

It actually leads to a genuine love for your neighbor. Isn't that fascinating? The freedom that Christ has bought for us and the love that springs out of that actually equips us to fulfill what's at the very heart of the law that once condemned us, and that is love. At a horizontal level, what's at the very heart of the law is this Leviticus 19:18 states, which Paul quotes here, *"love your neighbor as yourself."* Now, when you through love serve one another, that actually brings fulfillment to God's commands. So that through love, love to the greatest commandment, to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, it leads to the second greatest commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. Not only does it bring fulfillment to God's commands, but it also brings fulfillment to you.

Look at verse 15, kind of a strange verse if you didn't understand it. Verse 15 says, *"But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."* Cannibalism is wrong. That's not what Paul's saying. Here Paul is showing us what happens when Christians don't let their freedom and don't let their love for God drive them to serve one another. Paul warns here that if you don't follow by God's grace this journey that God has laid out for you, if you don't through love serve one another, then you will end up biting and devouring and consuming one another. Believers who don't serve one another



will bite one another. And that word for bite is the word used throughout the Bible to describe a serpent's bite.

In other words, if you don't act like Christ in serving one another, then you will start to act like Satan and bite one another. And you know what's at the root of this type of fighting among believers? Unfulfilled desires. James 4:1-2 says this, *"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel."* See at the heart of all biting and devouring and fighting between believers is unfulfilled desires.

Can I tell you, when it comes to a church, I know this sounds harsh, but I've been a pastor long enough I can say this, there are either serving Christians or complaining Christians. There's nobody in between. That's the truth. There's either serving Christians or complaining Christians. There's no one in between. And that's exactly what Paul is pointing out here. At the heart of all biting and devouring and fighting between believers is unfulfilled desires. People want something, they're looking for something, they can't find that something and so they lash out in frustration at others.

Well Paul says here, if you want to be free from that, if you don't want to go down that path and instead you want to go down a path of fulfillment, a path of satisfaction, a path of peace, then Paul says follow God's plan for your life. Follow God's plan for you in Christ and listen to his call, *"in love serve one another."* And in that you will find fulfillment, fulfillment of God's commands and fulfillment for you. As Jesus said in John 4:34, *"My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work."* In other words, Jesus ate it up, it's what brought him the most personal joy and satisfaction on earth. It was to do the will of God by serving others and we're to follow in our Savior's footsteps. This is where all fulfillment is found, it is found not in living for yourself but in living for others.

Can I tell you; nothing is more satisfying than giving your life and service to others out of love for God, nothing. It is the most eternally satisfying thing and there are numerous testimonies that can be given out of our own church body about this. I can mention so many names, I'll just give one that came to mind as I was writing this. As I think of Betty Stonerock who served in our children's ministries for decades. Before she passed, she shared with me how she had pictures of several of the children that had passed through her area of service while at church. And oftentimes as she was dealing with pain, she would look through some of those pictures and remember how many of them had now grown up and were either serving the Lord in ministry now or raising godly children as parents of their own or just faithfully following Jesus in a multitude of ways and it gave her joy and fulfillment in some of the hardest hours of her life.

Just as 3 John 4 says, *"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."* Though there are often necessary struggles when it comes to service, we are still sinners, sanctified sinners. There is always satisfaction. And though it can often be a fight, there is always fulfillment. As Psalms 126:5-6 says, *"Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! He who goes out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, bringing his sheaves with him."* And you give your life in service to others as Revelation 14:13 says, *"your deeds will follow you."* Therefore, as Galatians 6:9 encourages us

later, *"Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."* As I look back on the years that God has given me, I look back on delight of how the Lord has brought me and continues to bring me from freedom to love, from love to service, and from service to fulfillment.

Many faces come to my mind that I've had the privilege to be a part of. I think of a mother who grew in her love for God's Word. A pair of children who found a place of safety and peace in our nursery and Sunday school rooms. I think of a father who was raised up into the pastorate. I think of several young men and women finding godly spouses and raising godly families. I think of more young men and women being sent out into multiple fields of harvest. I think of marriages restored, sinners saved, believers baptized, individuals committing themselves in love to their brothers and sisters in Christ in a local church. And I think of the small role that I've been able to have in all of it. And I think to myself, I don't deserve any of it.

As Luke 17 says, *"We are but unworthy servants, we have only done what was our duty."* But I'm humbled, I'm thankful, and I'm fulfilled just as God has promised. As Proverbs 11:25 states, *"Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and he who waters will himself be watered."* And as Isaiah 58:10-11 promises, *"if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness... and you shall be like a watered garden."* Satisfaction. This is the path that God leaves out in front of his children, from freedom to love, from love to service, from service to fulfillment, as we give ourselves more fully and fully to him. Thank you, God, for calling us into your freedom. Thank you, God, for calling us into your love. And thank you, God, for calling us into your service.

And so, as the final application for this message, just as I asked you if freedom is producing this type of love in your life, just as I asked you if this love is producing this type of service in your life, so also, I want to ask you, is service producing this type of fulfillment in your life or have you started to retreat from service into cynicism? I would encourage you, and especially those who have been serving the Lord here for many years, to take time this morning, during this ministry fair, and just look back, and just look around. Take time to look back at God's grace, at God's grace in calling you to Christ, calling you into his body, and calling you into his service.

And then take time and look around at God's results, at the people that God has raised up, the people that God has gathered around you, and the people who are so much a part of your life, even as you are so much a part of theirs. And then dive back in this morning, knowing that this satisfaction through service will only get better and better until we hear these wonderful words someday, Matthew 25:21, *"Well done, good and faithful servant.... Enter into the joy of your master."* May God make this day a day where we as a body together go one step further from freedom to love, from love to service, and from service to fulfillment.

This ministry fair is just a humble tool to help encourage that, and so for those of you who don't know, let me tell you how this will work. In a few short minutes, I'm going to say a closing prayer, and then you're all going to be dismissed for the rest of the time through these side doors into Grace Hall. There, we have some finger food and snacks set up for you to enjoy. I would encourage you, with some announcements



first, be sure to grab yourself a plate and then explore the rest of the room. When you go get the plate first before anything else, that gives the volunteers a chance to get to all of their booths in time before you show up, okay? Parents, we would encourage you as well to pick up your children so that the children's volunteers can participate in the ministry fair as well. And also, parents, make sure that your children are accompanied. Please limit them to one plate until everyone can get one. This is a snack, not a lunch, okay? Just wanted a reminder.

Second thing I want you to know is that you will see various booths set up around the outskirts of Grace Hall. Each one of these booths represent one of the major ministry opportunities you can learn about and that believers involve themselves in regularly here at our church. These booths will be hosted by a few representatives from every ministry who can tell you more about that ministry, can answer any questions that you might have about it. And though each booth will be slightly different from the others with signage and decorations and resources, there will be a sign-up sheet that you can put your name down on for whatever ministries you might be interested in serving in. And so, if you're interested in exploring and participating in a certain ministry, put that down, put your name down on the sheet so that we can know that you have an interest in serving there, and then we can reach out and contact you from there.

But, brothers and sisters, thank you for listening this morning as we've got the rest of our service time to explore those booths. What a life God has given to us by His grace. From freedom to love, from love to service, and from service to fulfillment, may we take this next step together as a church for His glory and through love serve one another for the glory of God. To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

This is the word of God from Galatians 5:13-15, which I consider a great privilege to have been able to share with you today and which I now commit to your further study and your faithful obedience in the fervent care of one another until He who has set us free by His love returns.

To that end, let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for the opportunity we have this morning to hear your word. Father, I thank you for reminding us of the good life you have given each one of your children. Father how truly did Jesus speak when He said, your Father knows how to give good gifts to His children. And it is true as we consider the life that you have set before us. Father, we thank you for the freedom that we have in Jesus, freedom from condemnation and even freedom from the selfishness that would destroy everything around us. Thank you for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Father, we thank you that it is in Jesus that we see your heart. It is a heart of great love towards us.

So, Father, I pray that you would foster our love for you here at Grace Chapel, that our testimony as a church would be one who loves you supremely and deeply. And Father, I pray that that love would not just be an empty emotion, but that it would be expressed in concrete ways in lives that are laid down in sacrifice for you and in service for your people. And Father, I pray that as we remain faithful in sowing the seed, in loving one another and in serving one another, you would show us the great delight that exists as

we give our lives to you and to your people. Father, I thank you that you didn't have to call us into your service, but you have so that we might have your joy in us and that our joy might be fulfilled. Father, take us one more step in that direction today.

For your glory and by your grace we ask this in Jesus' name, amen.

Available online at: <https://gracechapelwl.org>