

Walking in Freedom: What It Really Means to Live by the Spirit

Freedom is one of the most important themes in the Christian life, and it is also one of the most misunderstood. Galatians chapter five gives us a clear picture of what true freedom in Christ looks like, why it matters, and how to maintain it when life gets hard.

Why Did God Give Us Freedom in the First Place?

God could have created us without free will. He could have made us worship Him by default. But He did not do that, and there is a reason why.

God wants us to serve Him because we want to, not because we have to. True love requires the ability to choose. When God removes the chains, that is when love is revealed for what it really is.

As Galatians 5:1 puts it: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free. Therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." - Galatians 5:1

Freedom in Christ also reveals our true identity. We were not created to be in bondage to lust, addiction, shame, or the carnal cravings that so many people struggle with. Jesus came to break those chains, but we have to choose to turn from them. That is what repentance is. It is not a one-time event but a continued turning until the victory is won.

What Does True Freedom Actually Look Like?

Freedom is not the ability to do whatever we want. True freedom is the ability to do what is right.

That means keeping your word. Following through. Being the kind of person who shows up. We live in a culture that is driven by feelings, where people move on the moment something becomes uncomfortable. But real freedom produces consistency, not drift.

We were created to have dominion. In Genesis, God gave man authority over the earth. That dominion was lost when sin entered the picture, but Jesus purchased it back. Through His death and resurrection, He defeated the enemy and returned that authority to believers. We can walk in that authority today.

How Do We Maintain Our Freedom in Christ?

Guard Your Thought Life

Most problems start in the mind. When we break focus on the truth of God's Word and start living by our circumstances, things begin to unravel. One wrong thought can lead to many bad decisions. Wrong thinking spreads and affects every area of life.

This is why we have to guard our hearts with diligence. The enemy does not always come in with something massive. He comes in with something small.

Watch Out for a Little Leaven

Galatians 5:9 says, "A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough." - Galatians 5:9

Leaven, like yeast in bread, takes over everything it touches. Small compromises, small wrong thoughts, small doses of legalism mixed into the gospel can corrupt the whole message. We have to be careful about what we allow to take root in our thinking.

Stand Firm Through Difficult Days

Standing firm means being constant and persevering. Consistency is everything. Whether it is reading the Bible, praying, attending church, or simply showing up to work every day, consistency produces growth.

Difficult days are going to come. The key is learning how to navigate them without letting emotions take the wheel. Do not make permanent decisions on a hard day. Guard your heart, refuse to let feelings control you, and keep moving forward.

There is often a gap between the moment you pray and the moment you see the answer. But delay does not mean denial. That waiting period is where faith grows. Hold on to the promise.

What Happens When We Fall Back Into Legalism?

Galatians 5:4 gives a stark warning: "You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." - Galatians 5:4

Paul is not talking about gross sin here. He is talking about legalism. Trying to earn right standing with God through works rather than receiving it through grace and faith is a serious error. It is serious enough that Paul uses some of the strongest language in the entire letter to address it.

We are saved by grace through faith, as Ephesians 2 makes clear. That truth needs to be settled in us. God looks at the heart, not just the actions. He knows why we do what we do, and that is how He judges.

If you are going to fall, fall forward. Fall toward God. Get back up and try again.

Why Do We Need the Holy Spirit to Walk in Freedom?

Without the Holy Spirit, the Christian life becomes a cycle of trying and failing. The Old Testament proves this. The people had the law, but they could not keep it. They always fell short.

It was not until Jesus got on the inside, working from the inside out, that things began to change. That is what the Holy Spirit does in us.

Galatians 5:16-18 says: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." - Galatians 5:16-18

That word "walk" refers to habitual conduct, a consistent way of life. Walking by the Spirit is not a one-time decision. It is a lifestyle. It is something we develop over time as we grow in sensitivity to His leading.

The flesh and the Spirit are in opposition to each other. One glorifies God, the other glorifies self. The old nature has home field advantage because we live in a fallen world. But Jesus overcame the world, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, so can we.

What Is the Role of Love in the Life of Faith?

Galatians 5:6 says: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." - Galatians 5:6

Love must be the driving force behind our pursuit of a godly life. Not formulas. Not checklists. Love.

Faith without love is mechanical. Love without faith is unproductive. But faith working through love is unstoppable.

We are also called to use our freedom to serve one another. Galatians 5:13 says: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." - Galatians 5:13

Freedom is not a license to follow every desire. It is an invitation to love. Lust takes. Love gives. Freedom can only be maintained when we choose God over flesh. When we choose flesh, we walk back into slavery.

Life Application

This week, pay attention to your thought life. The moment a wrong thought tries to take root, do not let it sit there. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any area where wrong thinking has been influencing your decisions, your relationships, or your walk with God. He is a teacher, and He will show you what needs to change.

Choose one area where you have been inconsistent and commit to showing up faithfully this week, whether that is in prayer, in reading Scripture, or in a relationship that needs your follow-through.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Am I serving God out of love, or out of obligation and fear?
- Is there a small area of compromise, a little leaven, that I have been ignoring?
- When difficult days come, do I let my emotions make decisions for me?

- Am I walking by the Spirit as a lifestyle, or only reaching for God when things fall apart?
- Is love truly the driving force behind my faith, or have I made it mechanical?

Freedom in Christ is real, and it is available to every believer. Stand firm, walk by the Spirit, and let love be the engine that drives your faith forward.