

**November 24**

**Scriptures:** Read Galatians 5

**Key Verse:** “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” (Galatians 5:6)

## **Overview**

Free means free — without qualification. That’s why Paul says, in this discussion of freedom (vv.1-18), that “indulging the sinful nature” (v.13) is an option available to the truly liberated. But there is a strong caution here. And it relates to the “libertines” (Gnostics) I mentioned in the introduction.

The Gnostics separated the world of matter from the world of spirit. They believed that all things material (including flesh and blood) were evil. This is why they had an erroneous view of Jesus—“how can Jesus, the Son of God (perfect in everything) take on flesh which is imperfect and unholy?” they asked, in effect. Therefore, Jesus must have been an illusion in terms of His humanity: “He could not have been born of a woman”. So they spiritualized Jesus and “dehumanized” Him. He became a kind of “super-angle” but not “God in flesh”.

This had a profound impact on their morality. Because their bodies (and all matter) were evil, all that could be expected of their flesh was evil. Thus, they indulged their fleshly appetites with impurity while, at the same time, “soaring to the heavenlies” in their spirituality. Inwardly they were “angels”, outwardly they were “devils”; all because they saw themselves as “free” in Christ Jesus.

So here you had the antithesis of legalism. Paul took issue with it as much as he did with his Judaizing “brethren”. The issue of freedom, as Paul presents it, is not how much we get out of it, but how much we give because of it. We’re not only to “serve one another in love” (v.13) because of it, but we’re also to understand that “the only thing that counts in faith expressing itself through love” (v.6).

Freedom is freedom. But it isn’t free unless it loves.

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, grant that as we’ve read in this chapter, we will “Walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Praise You, our God, for the clear Word of this chapter as to how we should live. Give us insight as we read then meditate on Galatians 5. Amen.