

THE SODOMITES SCREAMING AT THE DOOR *continued*

Whatever their medium of communication, statements of this nature should not only be deemed grossly offensive but incitements to commit criminal offences against persons, and should provoke an outpouring of public revulsion. “Art” cannot act as a cloak to successfully disguise this depravity.

While I note that the Senior Curator of the MAC has leapt to the defence of these expressions of debauchery, expressing the opinion that he, “cannot think of a better way to open our 2018 programme,” I also note that the MAC itself has hit a building and funding crisis. Expensive remedial work to the stonework on this award-winning building, which began to crumble a mere three years after it opened, is yet to be commenced. Emergency monies of £275,000 have been forwarded from the Department for Communities to prevent closure of its doors, complete with instructions to learn to live within its means.

A more pertinent warning is delivered by the words of **Isaiah 5:20, 24**: “*Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; ... Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust ...*”



MEETINGS TODAY

- Sunday School – 10.15am
- Morning Worship – 11.30am: *15th Message in the Galatians Series: “Christian Freedom = Service, Not Indulgence.”*
- Evening Service – 7.00pm:
Final Meeting in Youth Mission

INSPIRATION IN A SENTENCE

“It’s Christ; it’s the cross of Christ alone; it’s the grace of God alone and the cross of Christ alone received by faith alone that equals Christianity. And any plus to that is a minus.” [Dr Ligon Duncan]



THE SODOMITES SCREAMING AT THE DOOR

Coming off a four month run at the Metropolitan Arts Centre (MAC) in Belfast is some hideously offensive ‘artwork’ by homosexual artists Gilbert and George. It travelled under the title, ‘Scapegoating Pictures for Belfast.’ Even the MAC on its website acknowledges that, “*This exhibition contains language which some visitors may find offensive.*”

By means of giant photomontages, Gilbert and George issue repeated calls for the molestation and rape of religious figures, articulating the kind of depraved speech that would have been at home in the mouths of those sodomites whose vile actions are described by Scripture in **Genesis 19:4-5**: “*But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, ‘Where are the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.’*”



CHRISTIAN FREEDOM = SERVICE, NOT INDULGENCE

Text: **Galatians 5:13-15**.

One of Scotland's greatest heroes, William Wallace, is reputed to have challenged his men with these words: "*You are free, free from badges, free from flesh and free to love. What will you do with that freedom?*"

The apostle Paul poses a similar question through his words in **Galatians 5:13-15**: to what good uses are we putting the liberty we have in Christ; **5:1, 13?**

[1] TRUE FREEDOM IS NOT PERMISSIVENESS; 5:13.

True Christian freedom has been defined in four elements: the opportunity, the ability, and the desire to do that which will give you the most joy 10,000 years from now. The child of God's grace should never envy the apparent freedom that the ungodly enjoy since many things that people do in the name of "freedom" actually lead to their own destruction.

(a) ANARCHY OUTSIDE: Paul's day was far worse than ours; with respect to sexual ethics, it was a period of lawless chaos. Homosexuality was found in every layer of society, chastity was viewed as an ugly thing. "*It has been said that chastity was the one completely new virtue which Christianity introduced into the pagan world*" (Barclay).

The Judaisers thought the only way to combat this chaos was with rules, rules and more rules; Paul demonstrates that the solution is in Christ alone (cf. **3:24**). The target for true Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.

(b) ADVERSARY INSIDE: The word "**occasion**" (**5:13**) is a military term, referring to a base of operations which an army establishes in enemy territory. "The flesh" stays with us in one form or another until the day we die – always with us, pulling us down, dragging us back to the world, and enticing us to every sort of moral and spiritual compromise. One writer defines the flesh as, "*the inner desire for selfish gratification at the expense of God and others.*" As such, it has a penchant for antinomianism (lit. "against the law"). Anyone who subscribes to this heresy

claims that God's grace allows him to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants, and without paying any consequences. Anyone who says a Christian can do evil and God will not care is a missionary from hell. Martin Luther puts in this corrective when he explains that freedom is not the right to do what you want, but rather the power to do what you ought.

[2] TRUE FREEDOM IS NOT IDLENESS; 5:13-14.

Paul emphasises how we have a responsibility to use our freedom in a way that honours the One who made us free. Especially in the area of service and love: as Jesus loved us, so we should love one another. Christ's people are freed in order to serve – which is why the image of the bondservant, the permanent servant, is one of the favourite images of the Christian in the New Testament.

(a) INTERNAL LOVE: The Christian fulfills the law, not by keeping the ceremonial code but by living to serve – and this service is the servitude of loving one another. It is not law on the outside but love in the inside that makes the difference.

Christianity works because it changes people from the inside out. When Christ comes in, He changes everything (**Romans 5:5**).

(b) EXTERNAL LIBERTY: What starts on the inside shows itself. In His final message to His men before His crucifixion, our Lord declared that love was to be the distinguishing mark of His followers (cf. **John 13:34-35; 15:12,17**). Consider the many "one another" statements of the New Testament – all of which are but reflections and amplifications of the great command given by our Lord Himself, "*love one another.*"

[3] TRUE FREEDOM IS NOT AGGRESSIVENESS; 5:15.

Paul warns the church that if they are biting and devouring each other, they destroy each other and play right back into the hands of Satan who is looking for a way to enslave us once again.

Liberty without love leads to mutual destruction.

This destructive (devilish) work begins on a small scale (cf. **Galatians 5:9**, "*A little leaven ...*"), but has the potential to it destroy an entire church.

The default mode of the heart is self-justification (*working for your salvation*). Every child is a Pharisee in the making. We must teach them the gospel, which is counter-intuitive. Say, "*You can't, but Jesus did!*" Give them grace. **Give them Galatians!**