

Free to Love Others!

Galatians 5:13-15

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- Robert Bork's, *"Slouching Toward Gomorrah"*, analysis of the direction of our country morally and politically.
 - The pursuit of personal freedom without restraints
 - The pursuit of radical equality—everyone treated equally and share equally in the wealth.
 - Moving toward anarchy and moral corruption
- Framers of our constitution understood that for freedom to be free there must be some restraints, limits.
- First tendency in a "standard-less" world is to lay down the law—legalism
- We are to stand in the liberty which we have in Christ—Galatians 5:1

Free to Love Others

A. Freedom and License?—Galatians 5:13a

1. False teachers considered Paul an antinomian, a lawless libertine. Romans 3:8; 5:20-21; 6:1-2
2. Liberty is not an excuse for committing all kinds of sin. 2 Peter 2:19; 1 Peter 2:15-16

B. Freedom to Love—Galatians 5:13-15

1. **Joseph Fletcher and "situational ethics"**
 - a. No absolute truth, but relative truth—"what is the loving thing to do?"
 - b. The "end justifies the means"—and as long as the "end" is something positive like love or happiness, any means to achieve those ends is permissible.
2. **Paul's principles for exercising Christian freedom. Three questions:**
 - a. **First, will it be helpful or profitable in light of one's Christian testimony?**—1 Corinthians 6:12; 1-8
 - b. **Second, will it be habit forming and thus hinder my Christian commitment?**—1 Corinthians 6:12
 - 1) Sexual sin is something to be avoided.—1 Corinthians 6:18
 - 2) Our bodies belong to the Lord—1 Corinthians 6:19-20
 - 3) The principle of diminishing return—1 Corinthians 7
 - 4) God wants our undivided attention—1 Corinthians 7:35
 - c. **Third, will it tear down or build up another believer's faith?** Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 10:23
 - 1) Christian liberty is the freedom to stop being self-centered and start being other-centered
 - 2) Only debt as believers is to love one another—Romans 13:8
 - 3) Paul seeks to do only those things that will build up believers—1 Corinthians 9:19-23
 - d. **BOTTOM LINE: Legalism promotes legislating people; Liberty promotes loving people.**
3. **"Loving others" and the Law**—Galatians 5:14
 - a. Jesus' summary of the law's requirements—Matthew 22:36-40
 - b. Paul's teaching on love fulfilling the law—Romans 13:8-10
4. **Consequences for failing to love one another**—Galatians 5:15
 - a. Personal freedom must be limited. One's rights end where another's begin or else anarchy results.
 - b. For there to be peace, one must be willing to give up the exercise of one's freedom so to benefit the whole body. Romans 14:1-3, 13-16, 19; 15:1-2
 - 1) The mature, strong believer must be willing to limit the display of one's freedom and not judge those who are weak.
 - 2) The weak are not to judge those who in good conscience partake.