

Introduction:

Mahnaz and I met 10 years ago when I visited her salon for a pedicure. We hit it off, so now I visit Mahnaz every 3 weeks for a pedi and great conversation.

Mahnaz is Muslim. I've learned a lot about what she believes over the years. And Mahnaz has learned a lot about Jesus!

Several weeks ago, I invited Mahnaz to my Bible study on Thursday night. The women I study with are a sincere and sweet community of friends.

Mahnaz is pretty afraid of Covid, and so she asked me if everyone would be wearing a mask. She also wanted to make sure no one asked her any questions about the Bible. I assured her there would be no problems with either issue.

Well, ladies, we don't wear masks to our Bible study! They make our deep and thoughtful conversations extremely difficult and uncomfortable. But I let my friends know Mahnaz might come and the concerns she had.

Thursday night came and every single lady showed up with a mask on and didn't say a word about the inconvenience. Mahnaz came and loved it! No one asked her a single question about the Bible, but boy did she have a lot of questions for us! The ladies showed Mahnaz the love of Christ in a visibly beautiful way.

Transition:

You know, my friends had the right to refuse to wear a mask. But they chose to love instead. This reminds me of Galatians 5:13-14 where we learn WE ARE

FREED TO SERVE. Say that with me: WE ARE FREED TO SERVE

Let's take a deeper view at this Scripture where Paul reminds us of three things:

1) Christ freed us

2) Freed women don't indulge the flesh

and 3) Freed women serve others in love

Please follow along on your paper as I read Galatians 5:13-14. "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Galatians is likely the earliest of Paul's letters in Scripture. He is writing to a group of new believers who have quickly deserted the true Gospel of salvation

by grace and have instead adopted a Gospel of salvation by works...namely, circumcision.

LBW #1:

Paul begins in verse 13 by giving us our 1st point:
CHRIST FREED US.

Christ freed us from what? From many different New Testament Scriptures we know Christians are freed from slavery to sin. However, this is not the freedom Paul is speaking about in Galatians 5. When he says we are called to be free, he is saying **we are freed from our slavery to the Law**. In other words, the Law is no longer our master.

Some false teachers had infiltrated the Galatian church and were teaching these vulnerable believers that they must be circumcised, like the Jewish law said, in order to be saved. Paul vehemently responds in Galatians 2 that **not even Titus was compelled to be circumcised,**

even though he was a Greek. These false teachers were suspicious of their freedom in Christ and were trying to make them slaves again.

The Old Testament law simply pointed out our sin. Like bright neon arrows flashing in the darkness, “Thou shalt not covet” highlighted the covetousness in our hearts. The law could not free me from my sin. It just highlighted my need for Someone who could. And we know that Someone is Jesus.

Jesus came to fulfill the righteous requirements of the Law. Therefore, circumcision and all other religious rules could never do what only Christ could do. Friends, Christ freed us from our burdensome slavery to the Law. This is the freedom Paul is talking about. God’s amazing grace displayed in Christ has freed us.

I've told you a little about my church growing up. It was a small but wonderful group of people. However, the doctrine of the church taught me I could lose my salvation that God has so sweetly given me when I was 9. As you can imagine, this naturally led to a lot of legalism as I worked as hard as I could to be as good as I could so I wouldn't miss out on heaven. The line to the limit of my salvation was never clearly drawn, so I did my best to stay as far away from that nebulous line as possible. The problem was, this made me very self-focused and even perversely accentuated the sexual lusts I secretly struggled with and just could not eliminate no matter how hard I tried. I lived under an umbrella of shame rather than under the sunshine of God's grace.

Transition:

Friends, Christ came so I could be free from this slavery to the rules and regulations. He fulfilled the Law because I was helpless to do so.

BUT, Christ did not free us from the Law so we could take advantage of His grace.

In the next phrase of verse 13, Paul says don't use your freedom to indulge the flesh.

LBW #2:

Our 2nd point is: Freed women don't indulge the flesh.

We learn in the Gospels that the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness where the Spirit would battle the flesh in Jesus. The same is true for us...the Spirit and the flesh are in constant conflict with each other.

We know as believers that we are no longer under sin, so why do we sin? Do you struggle, like me, with giving in to the temptation to specific sins? Maybe it's gossip,

gluttony or griping? That's the flesh! Paul is telling us, don't indulge that! We are now controlled by the Spirit, and we don't have to give in to the flesh.

Friends, freedom from the Law is not a license to sin.

Freed women don't indulge the flesh.

Transition:

So if freed women don't indulge the flesh, what do they do? Paul says at the end of verse 13 that we serve one another humbly in love. And to emphasize but also broaden his point, Paul quotes Leviticus 19 when he says to love your neighbor as yourself.

LBW #3:

Friends, our final point: freed women serve others in love.

Serving one another means to serve our fellow Christians. I serve Sarah because she is my sister in Christ.

But Paul adds that we should also love our neighbor. We learn from the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 that our neighbor is anyone we see in need.

So, Paul is telling us to humbly serve in love both Christian and non-Christian alike.

God is asking us to lay down our rights in order to become slaves in love to others. Cathy taught us two weeks ago from 1 Peter that God's gift TO you is not FOR you.

Peter and Paul agree. **Freed women serve others in love.**

Bruce Olson was a Christian teenager from Minnesota who dreamed of earning his PhD and becoming a professor of languages. But after attending a missions conference, he strongly sensed God leading him to the mission field. He says in his book, Bruchko, "Gradually my pleasant, sane dream of becoming a linguistic professor vanished into this ridiculous idea of going to other countries to talk to savages about God. I knew it wouldn't make sense to my parents; it didn't even make sense to me. But over the months...God gave me something I'd never bargained for: compassion."

Bruce served more than 30 years with the Mutilone Indians in Colombia. Because of the love God gave him for these people, Bruce endured extreme hardships. But God asked Bruce to lay down his rights, and when Bruce obeyed, God did an amazing work in Colombia.

Friends, Christ has freed us from our slavery to the Law. But we should not use our freedom to indulge our flesh, instead let's become slaves to others in love.

What personal rights have you and I been hanging onto that are preventing us from serving others in love? Is it the protection of our Saturdays from outside interruption? How about that difficult neighbor you try to avoid? Or maybe it's the right to use our seminary education to serve in the place of our choosing instead of allowing God to send us somewhere uncomfortable?

Conclusion:

My friend Mahnaz has continued to come to Thursday night Bible study. As she has heard the women discuss God's words in the book of John, she has clearly heard the gospel of Jesus again and again. She has also experienced the true love of women who are willing to lay aside their rights for her benefit. On Thursday, March 31, before her Bible study family, Mahnaz confessed her belief in Jesus as her own personal Savior.

Friends, **WE ARE FREED TO SERVE.**