

Galatians 5:13-15

Introduction: Paul expands on the concept of call from 5:8. He speaks to those who were hearing the cry for liberation while they simultaneously struggled with sin. Remember Peter's words in 2nd Peter 2:18-21. Consider also the words of Jesus' half-brother Jude in 1:4.

Remember one of the purposes of salvation—5:13

- 1) One purpose—¹³ *For* [γάρ] **you^{pl}** (emphatic) *were* (effectively) *called* [aor. pass. ind. καλέω] *to* [ἐπί] *freedom* [ἐλευθερία], *brothers*;
 - a) Call—cf. 1:6
 - b) Freedom/liberty—Cf. 2:4; 5:1
- 2) **NEGATIVE**; do not live a self-serving life—*only do not use the freedom* [ἐλευθερία] *as an opportunity/an excuse, a base of operations* [ἀφορμή] *for the flesh*,
 - a) Don't succumb to the temptation of those who distort Biblical grace into liberty to live as one desires because all of our sins have already been forgiven so it doesn't matter. No guilt! No bad feelings! Just grace! This is Biblically wrong!
 - b) I have heard Christians defend their drunkenness, their immorality, their use of various forms of pornography, all in the name of Christian liberty.
- 3) **POSITIVE**; live as a bondservant of others within the congregation—but [ἀλλά] ... (be in bondage to and) *serve* [pres. act. impv. δουλεύω] *one another*.
 - a) How are we to be serving others in the congregation? *through* [διά] *love* [ἀγάπη] (cf. 5:6)
 - b) What does this look like in real life?
 - i) If you are a husband, you ask yourself: How can I serve my wife and help make her stronger in the Lord?
 - ii) If you are a wife, you ask yourself: In what ways can I support and encourage my husband, so that he is strengthened spiritually?
 - iii) We all ask ourselves: What can I do with my life that will help others in this congregation mature spiritually? What can I do with my life that will help others who are not in this congregation to come to faith in Christ?
- 4) This freedom is not a freedom to do as we please (Romans 15:1-3; 2nd Corinthians 5:14-15). Rather, it is a freedom to do what is pleasing to God from a transformed heart.

Why is this selfless service of others so important? Because God's Word says so!—5:14

- 1) Paul's argument from the OT—¹⁴ *For* [γάρ] *the whole law is completed* [pres. pass. ind. πληρώω] *in one word, in this, "You will love* [fut. act. ind. ἀγαπάω] *your neighbor as (you already love) yourself."* (cf. Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:31; Romans 13:10)
 - a) We are naturally self-serving. We must serve others as we want to be served.
- 2) This is the essence of the Law. So, you want to obey the Law? Then love one another!

The dangers that arise from a lack of love—5:15

- 1) An assumed possibility—¹⁵ *But* [δέ] *if* [εἰ, 1st class condition, assumed true for sake of argument] ...
 - a) What might these believers do to each other? Partisan strife and bickering
 - i) Bring harm or discomfort to others (like snakes)—*you^{pl} bite* [pres. act. ind. δάκνω]
 - ii) Bring damage to others—*and devour* (tear the skin of) [pres. act. ind. κατασθίω] *one another*,
 - (1) Involves taking advantage of and exploiting others.
 - b) What does this look like in real life?
 - i) The word picture is that of wild animals engaged in a deadly struggle.
 - ii) It involves savagely lacerating the character and feelings of brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - iii) This is spiritual anarchy under the guise of unlimited freedom.
- 2) Then pay attention to a serious warning concerning the destruction caused by congregational cannibalism—*beware* [pres. act. impv. βλέπω] *that you^{pl} are not consumed/destroyed* [aor. pass. subj. ἀναλίσκω] *by* [ὑπό] *one another*.
 - a) Petty squabbles can bring terrible destruction to a congregation. It pictures spiritual devastation and wreckage brought about by destructive criticism

Take-home truth: Genuine believers have been set free from serving self to be serving other believers in love.