

## **Galatians chapter 5, Philippians 4:4-9**

*How do you define freedom? We generally think of freedom as the autonomous right and power to do whatever we wish, without external restraint of any kind. In the West and in America especially, this definition of freedom, with autonomy itself being seen as a virtue in itself, has become the dominant view especially in the last century, starting with the Roaring 20's. And that is a good general definition of freedom, if it ignores the corrupting and self-centered slavery of human nature itself after the fall of Adam. But absolute autonomy is not how the ancients viewed freedom, nor how the Word of God views it. The ancients viewed true freedom as the actualized power and ability to restrain one's self, to subdue one's lower nature and its vices and desires, and to find freedom and glory in the expressions of the greater virtues and desires. The self-controlled soul is the free soul.*

*I think this is basically how the Scriptures present freedom. Because we are moral and spiritual beings we are forever in service to someone and something. I think Bob Dylan was right, "You're still gonna have to serve somebody." And I think, frankly, this is the divine, Scriptural prescription and a balm for much of the wound and disease of unhappiness in our Evangelical churches, and many Christian's lives in our present crisis. Our disease is rooted in a false premise: That freedom can be disengaged from one's nature and still be freedom. Freedom is not a virtue in itself. The fact is, one is either a slave to the flesh and to sin and self, or one is a slave to righteousness and the Spirit and life. There is no other kind of freedom. What we DO have a freed will to do, by Christ's death and the impartation of the Spirit, is chose who will be our master. This impacts very much on our approach to confrontation of sin and on repentance and forgiveness between believers when we sin against one another.*

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### **Galatians 5:1**

This verse, though pointed at freedom from the Law of Moses, teaches a greater principle: That there is a freedom that the Lord has in mind for His children.

### **Galatians 5:13-14**

Notice and take to heart this principle. That the Scriptures do NOT commend or recognize autonomous freedom! *One is either a slave to their flesh here, or we are free to give up our freedom to serve one another! No third option.*

*The Law can be summarized as: Elevating others and their future and happiness to a station equal to our own.*

### **Galatians 5:15**

The warning of what happens when Christians insist on exercising autonomous freedom (or what is known as our "rights" in post-modern America). Autonomy is cannibalistic, because the flesh is incorrigible!

**Galatians 5:16-18**

The cure for “freedom” and its vices is to be subject to (under the authority, mastery, blessing and joyful service) the rule of the Spirit.