



## American Independence or Biblical Freedom?

Galatians 5:13-15

July 5, 2020

The declaration of independence, which we celebrate this weekend, has given Americans a feeling that we are entitled to be free to pursue our preferred destiny without control or interference from anyone or anything. This is so deeply engrained in us that we may assume it's what the Bible means by freedom. At the risk of sounding Anti-American, I think we need to clarify that biblical freedom is different from American independence.

1. The freedom Paul is referring to in Galatians 5 is freedom from living under the burden of trying to be right with God by keeping all the rules of the Mosaic law (v. 13; cf. 2:15-16; 3:1-6, 10-14, 23-25; 4:1-11).

This freedom lifts a heavy load from us (Acts 15:1-11). God is not a drill sergeant! We thank God for this and refuse to let others enslave us to rules and regulations from the Law or their own expectations (Galatians 5:1; Colossians 2:8, 16-23). Elsewhere, the Bible also speaks about freedom from sin and from death (John 8:31-36; Romans 6:15-23; 8:2).

2. We need to be careful, though, that our freedom from the Law does not lead us to sin (Galatians 5:13).

Biblical freedom does not mean no one can tell me what to do. Scripture is clear that there are things we should do and

shouldn't do (e.g., v. 14, 16, 19-21, 22-25 etc.). Paul does not shout these things out like a drill sergeant nor state them in law code form, but they are nevertheless commands (v. 14; cf. John 14:15, 21; 15:10). In addition, the Law of Moses is still a valuable expression of God's will (Matthew 5:17-20; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). And Christians are to be submissive the laws of the government (Romans 13:1-7). And Christians sometimes choose to give up their rights for the sake of their brothers and sisters (Romans 14-15; 1 Corinthians 8-10). Freedom does not eliminate these.

You may know Satan uses *law* as an "opportunity" for sin (Romans 7:8, 11, ESV). The word is used of a bridgehead for launching an attack. Here Paul writes that Satan also uses *freedom* as a bridgehead to attack us (Galatians 5:13, ESV).

It sounds like the sin the Galatians were committing in the name of freedom was speaking against each other (Galatians 5:15). American's take on freedom leads to many sins of the tongue, and this is very prevalent in our country right now. Though Americans have freedom of speech, Christians do not! At least not total freedom (Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 4:5-6).

3. Instead of thinking we are free to do as we please, we are called to serve one another in love (Galatians 5:13).

When relational difficulties erupted among the twelve, Jesus taught them not to seek their own glory and power but to serve each other, just as he did (Mark 9:33-34; 10:35-45). Paul says this loving service is the essence of the Law (Galatians 5:14; note here that the law is still a valid expression of the will of God). It also identifies us as disciples of Jesus (John 13:35).

In light of today's passage, it is worth noticing the last line of the Declaration of Independence: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, *we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.*"