

DEEPER LIFE BIBLE CHURCH NL | SUNDAY SERMON | 25 MAY 2025
CHRISTIAN LIBERTY WITHOUT LEGALISM OR LUST

Bible Reading: Galatians 5:1-26; Colossians 2:1-23 (with reference to Romans 14&15 and Galatians 1,2&4)

Last week, we learnt the lifestyle God expects from members of His household. Today, we focus on exercising Christian liberty to worship God acceptably without bondage to man, the devil or our flesh.

CAUTION AGAINST LEGALISM IN LIFESTYLE Galatians 5:1-12; Colossians 2:8,16-23

The Gospel of Christ is a gospel of liberty. It sets us free from sin, the devil and the world. We are saved by faith through grace. An attempt to add human works to earn salvation or 'perfect' it brings one into a yoke of bondage; it shifts the focus away from Jesus. What are the examples of such legalistic practices?

- **Circumcision, sacrifices, pilgrimage, etc. (Gal 5:1-4; 6:15):** We should not revert to that which is already abolished. Jesus is enough. We need not esteem a 'holy land', 'holy water', etc. It is backsliding.
- **Abstinence from certain foods (Rom 14:17; 1 Cor 8:8; Col 2:16,20-23; 1 Tim 4:3-5):** The Kingdom of God is not in food or drink. Food is neutral; it neither recommends us to God nor disqualifies us.
- **Observance of certain days (Gal 4:10,11; Col 2:16,17):** God esteems all days alike; no day is 'holier' than the other. Some celebrate some 'saints' on specified days; there is no scripture basis for this. We can agree as a Church to fellowship at certain times, which we should not forsake (Heb 10:25).
- **Strict rules on when to pray or not:** Prayer is good in the day or in the night. We are to pray always without fainting (Psalm 55:17; Luke 18:1; 1 The 5:17). There is no biblical rule that God only answers specific prayers at specific hours of the night; this is error.
- **Extrabiblical rules on dressing (Exo 28:42; Mat 23:5; 1 Tim 2:8-10):** God commands modesty and decency in dressing. Modesty means we do not put on "costly array", jewellery, etc. as stewards of God's treasures. We should not be shabby either. Decency means our nakedness should be covered, there should be distinction between male and female, and it should not tend towards sensuality or seduction. Beyond these, it is a question of culture/climate, profession, taste or preference.
- **Rigidity on personal preferences (Rom 14:1-3):** Conscience can conflict with the faith. We should accept people into fellowship, but not for the purpose of controversy on personal opinions. Do not despise another on things that do not matter. God accepts the weak and the strong in this regard.
- **Worshipping of angels, images, idolisation of man, etc. (Col 2:18,19):** This is idolatry. We should not speak evil of man or angel; but we do not worship them. We only worship God (Mat 4:10; Rev 22:8,9).
- **Prohibition of people to come to fellowship at certain periods:** Some would e.g. prohibit women from fellowship during their period, "too soon" after childbirth, etc. The New Testament has no such rule. We worship God in Spirit and in truth. Of course, we should observe hygiene rules!

CALL TO LIBERTY WITHOUT LUST OR LAXITY Galatians 5:13-26; Colossians 2:6-15

We are free from legalistic rules. However, liberty is only profitable when it is exercised within the provisions of the gospel. Using it as an occasion to the flesh defeats its essence. What does true Christian liberty entail?

- **Gal 5:13-16: Love is the crown of true liberty:** Liberty is freedom to please God. It is not to serve the flesh, please oneself or dominate, bite or devour others. It is to serve the Body of Christ in love.
- **Gal 5:19-21,24: Liberty is to crucify the flesh:** The Bible tells us what the works of the flesh are; they should not be found in the believer. Liberty is not to indulge in sin; rather, it is the power to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. To use liberty as a license to covetousness, worldliness, a loose tongue, disobedience, indiscipline or neglect of duty is to misinterpret the Gospel.
- **Gal 5:17,18,22,23,25; Col 2:6,7,10-12: Liberty is to walk in the Spirit:** It is through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the flesh. We see here also the fruit of the Spirit manifested in desirable qualities. To walk in the Spirit is to yield to God's word; it is to obey the Gospel. Liberty is to put on Christ, to put on the new man, to put on righteousness.
- **Rom 14:1,13,19-21; 15:1-3: Liberty is to defend the weak and follow peace:** It is to use your strength to encourage others. Do not please yourself. Be considerate and mindful of what you do so you do not make others stumble. Give up your rights and privileges to build others.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" – John 13:17