

Gospel Therefore

Refusing to Live Like “The Main Thing” is The Only Thing

Gospel Serving

Using Freedom to Serve Others

Sun, 19-Feb-2012 / Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Peter LaRuffa

Galatians 5:1-13

1. Our freedom in Christ doesn't mean we do what we want! (Gal. 5:13)

Galatians 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,…”

“Christ does not give freedom to believers so they can do what *they* want but so that they can, for the first time, do what God wants, because of love for Him.”

MacArthur, John. *Galatians*, p. 146.

The Greek word translated “opportunity” is *aphorme* which refers to “a base of operations” (just like a military base). In other words, Paul is telling us to not use this new-found freedom as a starting point for going back to our old ways by indulging our flesh.

Prov. 26:11 “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.”

2. Freedom in Christ means we're no longer under the law, but now have the freedom to serve one another in love! (Gal. 5:13)

Galatians 5:13 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, **but through love serve one another.**”

The word rendered “serve” in Galatians 5:13 falls a bit short of what the original recipients of Paul's letter would've read. The original Greek was something like this:

“... be **slaves** to one another in love.”

As slaves, we give up our rights to claim to words like “I,” “Me,” “Mine,” and “Myself.”

“Have it your way.’ ‘Do yourself a favor.’ ‘You owe it to yourself.’ ‘You deserve a break today.’ We constantly applaud the I-me-mine-myself philosophy in subtle as well as overt ways. We make books on the subject of selfishness bestsellers by buying them by the millions. We put the gifted on a pedestal and secretly (if not publicly) worship at their shrine. And we make every effort to ‘look out for number one’ at all cost. Let's admit it, ours is an age of gross selfishness. The ‘me’ era. And we get mighty uncomfortable even when God begins to make demands on us. After all, this business of wholesale commitment to the cause of Christ needs to be kept in proper bounds!”

Swindoll, Charles R. *Improving Your Serve: The Art of Unselfish Living*, 16.

3. If presenting our lives as living sacrifices is our reasonable service of worship (Rom. 12:1), then failing to sacrificially is an unreasonable response to the Gospel and the freedom we've been given in Christ! (Gal. 5:13,14)

Romans 12:1 “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.”

Galatians 5:13-14 “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Common Excuses Reasons People Give for Not Serving their Church –

“I don’t have time.”

“I’m too busy.”

“I home school my children.”

“I don’t know what my gifts are.”

“Sunday is our family day. Being here for more than one service would be difficult for us.”

“I’m too old for that.”

“I used to serve in _____, so I’ve done my time.”

“Our week is so busy. This is our time and place to rest.”

“Serving really isn’t my gift.”

“I didn’t think the church needed help.”

Etc., etc., etc.

Questions for Personal/Small Group Reflection:

- (1) Which of the following statements best describes your current status when it comes to serving the church and being served by the church? Explain your answer.
 - a. I am consistently served by being part of the body at Grace Fellowship Church.
 - b. I consistently serve the body at Grace Fellowship Church.
 - c. All of the above.
 - d. None of the above.

- (2) Are there adjustments God is calling you to make in your life in order to live as a “reasonable” Christian and sacrificially serve one another?

- (3) Review the list of service opportunities at our church (see enclosed booklet or log on to www.graceky.org/serve). How will you make serving the Lord and His people at church a consistent part of your spiritual life?