

LAW AND LIBERTY IN GALATIANS 5–6

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Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe in agency, or the right to make choices. The scriptures and modern-day prophets have repeatedly taught us the central role of agency in the plan of salvation. The scriptures also teach us that agency in this life was guaranteed by the outcome of the war in heaven during the premortal life. That war was initiated when Satan rebelled against God “and sought to destroy the agency of man, which I, the Lord God, had given him” (Moses 4:3). The Doctrine and Covenants teaches us that a third of the hosts of heaven were lost in that war because they exercised their agency unwisely (see D&C 29:36). That agency, which was secured in the premortal life, is central to the plan of salvation and our mortal existence. In fact, President David O. McKay has said, “Next to the bestowal of life itself, the right to direct our lives is God’s greatest gift to man.”¹

As important as the doctrine of agency is, we would do well to heed the caution of Elder Dallin H. Oaks. He taught that “few concepts have more potential to mislead us than the idea that choice, or agency, is an ultimate goal. For Latter-day Saints, this potential confusion is partly a product of the fact that moral agency—the right to choose—is a fundamental condition of mortal life. . . . The test in this postwar mortal estate is not to secure choice but to use it—to choose good instead of evil so that we can achieve our eternal goals.” He then goes on to remind us that “in mortality, choice is a method, not a goal.”² Thus Lehi taught his son Jacob that “men are

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free according to the flesh; and all things are given them which are expedient unto man. And they are free to choose liberty and eternal life, through the great Mediator of all men, or to choose captivity and death, according to the captivity and power of the devil" (2 Nephi 2:27; see also 2 Nephi 10:23). President Gordon B. Hinckley stressed, "This, my brethren and sisters, is our divine right—to choose. This is our divine obligation—to choose the right."³ In other words, it is not enough that we have choice or liberty; what is really important is that we use that liberty to make the right choices in our lives. One of the difficulties of mortality, however, is learning how to successfully accomplish that obligation in a world of competing calls for allegiance.

These competing calls were certainly an issue for the early Christian Church, in which some members struggled to understand the concept of liberty in a Christian context. In other words, they struggled to understand what liberty they were afforded because of Christ and His Atonement and also how to use that liberty. Paul deals with this issue throughout his epistles,⁴ but I would like to concentrate our discussion primarily on his teaching in Galatians, particularly chapters 5 and 6. In this epistle, Paul reacts to a group of Christian teachers who came to Galatia and taught, at least in part, that even Christian liberty was grounded in the law of Moses.⁵ In the last two chapters, he identifies four important elements that help Saints of all ages to understand the nature of their liberty. These elements include the use of liberty in relation to the law, the Spirit, the principle of love, and the need to understand the relationship between our use of liberty and our need to follow the Brethren.

THE HISTORICAL SETTING FOR GALATIANS

One of the difficulties of understanding Paul's epistles is that they are like hearing only one-half of a telephone conversation. If we are to understand what Paul is saying, then we must re-create the other side of the conversation. In other words, we need to put Galatians 5–6 in its historical context. To do that, we need to understand the tensions of the early Church, including what Paul's opponents were teaching in Galatia that upset him and caused him to write this epistle.⁶ In Acts, Luke tells us that after Paul and Barnabas returned from their successful first mission, "certain men which came down from Judæa" taught their Gentile converts, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Luke then goes on to record that when Paul and Barnabas found out what

was happening, there was “no small dissension and disputation with them” (Acts 15:1–2). Paul later claimed that the confrontation was not just about the law of Moses but that it was also centered on the issues of liberty and bondage. He told the Galatian Saints that these men “came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage” (Galatians 2:4).

This dispute in Antioch eventually led to the convening of the Jerusalem Council, where Peter declared, “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples [i.e., the Gentiles], which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:10–11; see also Acts 15:19–20; 28–29). Paul tells the Galatian Saints that it was also at this conference that the decision was made to have two missions: Paul and Barnabas would be responsible for the Gentile mission, while Peter would have stewardship for the Jewish mission (see Galatians 2:7–10). Yet even the decree of the Jerusalem Council did not put to rest the tensions between the two Christian groups.⁷

We find one of the most significant examples of this tension in Paul’s epistle to the Galatians. When Paul originally arrived in Galatia, he taught the people the gospel of Jesus Christ (see Galatians 1:6–11). The letter suggests that he taught the gospel in a context of the fulfillment of the law of Moses.⁸ It is difficult to pinpoint exactly who Paul’s early converts in Galatia were,⁹ most likely they were God-fearing Gentiles; that is, Gentiles who were attracted to the moral teachings of the law of Moses, attended the synagogue, and obeyed their kosher laws without ever fully converting.¹⁰ Acts tells us that this group was an important source of converts for Paul during his early missions (see Acts 13:26; 16:14). Two textual clues suggest that the Galatian Saints were God-fearers. They were Gentiles because they once worshipped pagan gods (see Galatians 4:8–10) and they were not circumcised.¹¹ If the Galatians were Jews, the debate in chapter 5 over the value of circumcision for them would have been a moot point. But if his audience was Gentiles, why did Paul and his opponents feel the need to argue over the law of Moses and its relationship to the gospel? Surely that discussion would have been more at home with a Jewish audience, unless the Galatian Saints had been God-fearers who were already familiar with, and impressed by, the law and its teachings.

The identification of the Galatian Saints as God-fearers helps make sense of two issues. First, it explains why Paul would plead with the

Galatians to not be “entangled *again*” in the law (Galatians 5:1; emphasis added). The word *again* indicates that they had previously been “entangled” in the law. This would not have been the case for most Gentiles. Second, if the Galatians were God-fearers, then we can perhaps better understand why the Gentile and Jewish missions intersected in such a volatile way in Galatia even after the pronouncement of the Jerusalem Council.¹² Paul would have identified the Saints as Gentiles and therefore under his stewardship, whereas his opponents would have viewed them as part of the Jewish mission because they had previously committed themselves to the law of Moses. It seems that the best way to reconcile all of this data is if his audience was composed of God-fearing Gentiles.¹³

After Paul had taught the gospel to these Saints and left to continue his missionary journey, another group of Christian missionaries arrived on the scene and began teaching. Paul argues that their teaching is “another gospel” (Galatians 1:6), but then he immediately clarifies this statement by declaring that it is not really “another gospel” because its teachers “pervert the gospel of Christ” (Galatians 1:7). It appears that these teachers were still in Galatia when Paul wrote his letter and that what they were teaching was appealing to the Saints.¹⁴ What we know about this “other gospel” is what we can glean from Paul’s epistle because it seems that he is reacting to specific things that the new missionaries were teaching.

We know from the force of Paul’s letter that the new missionaries, like the men in Acts 15, were teaching that the gospel must include the law of Moses and circumcision. From their perspective the law was the equivalent of provisions needed for the journey to salvation.¹⁵ One scholar described their teaching in this way: although Christ’s Atonement and Resurrection provided the gate for salvation, the law provided the provisions and directions once a person had entered the gate.¹⁶ It also seems, given Paul’s response, that they argued that the law is what enabled the Saints to exercise their Christian liberty. The law was not just a system of rules and regulations; it was a system that enabled its followers to be free from sin and tyranny.

Historically, there are examples where the people of the covenant sought for political and religious freedom through recommitting themselves to the law. For example, Ezra recommitted his people as they returned from the Babylonian exile so that they would never have to experience bondage again (see Ezra 9–10), Mattathias instituted the Maccabean revolt so that his people would have the freedom that comes from living

the law (see 1 Maccabees 1–2), and the people of Qumran fled into the wilderness so that they would also have freedom to live the law as they understood it.¹⁷ So we know that many looked to the law for freedom. Perhaps the new missionaries in Galatia shared similar feelings with groups such as these. They surely argued that liberty can never exist in an absence of law. If there is no law, then it is anarchy that prevails, not liberty! It also appears that they, like their counterparts in Rome, interpreted Paul's teachings about the law to actually be "an occasion to the flesh," or a license to sin (Galatians 5:13; see also Romans 3:8; 6:15). Nothing could be further from the intent of Paul's teachings. With this background established, we can now turn to Paul's teachings about Christian liberty.

LIBERTY AND LAW

It would be inaccurate to think that Paul's view of Christian liberty was independent of law. The force of his teachings in Galatians is specifically directed to those who claim that the law of Moses is the means of achieving liberty. Certainly he recognized the important part that the law of Moses had played in its time: it was a "schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ" (Galatians 3:24). Six hundred years before Paul, Nephi taught the same principle: "Behold, my soul delighteth in proving unto my people the truth of the coming of Christ; for, for this end hath the law of Moses been given; and all things which have been given of God from the beginning of the world, unto man, are the typifying of him" (2 Nephi 11:4). But even in its pure form, Abinadi taught that it was only "a law of performances and of ordinances, a law which they were to observe strictly from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him" (Mosiah 13:30). By the Christian period, the Pharisees had greatly expanded those laws to include a complex system of oral traditions, which acted as "fences around the law" to protect their sanctity (Talmud, *Aboth* 1.1). Although Peter judged it impossible to live under such a yoke (see Acts 15:10), Paul told the Galatian Saints that he had been "more exceedingly zealous" than his peers in living "the traditions of my fathers" (Galatians 1:14). He knew what it took to try to live that law.

So it seems that the question for some in Galatia was if they weren't to have the law of Moses to guide them in making right choices, how were they to achieve liberty? Paul understood that this whole idea of the law was to bring covenant Israel to a point where they were spiritually

prepared to accept the higher law—a law that they had already rejected once at Mount Sinai. That’s why he described the law as a schoolmaster.

Jeremiah had plainly taught that the time would come when the Lord would “make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah,” but this new covenant would be written “in their inward parts,” and He would “write it in their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:31–33; see also 2 Corinthians 3:1–3). Paul recognized this new covenant as the new law—the “law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2; 1 Corinthians 9:21). This was not a law of performances and ordinances or, as one scholar noted, “a detailed code which has a ready-made answer for every circumstance.”¹⁸ Instead, the law of Christ, a higher law, centers on eternal principles (see Matthew 5:21–48).

As Richard Longenecker said: “Paul would have agreed with E. F. Scott’s understanding of the ethical teaching of Jesus at this point: ‘Instead of framing laws [Christ] stated principles, and made them so few and broad and simple that no one could overlook them. . . . It is true that he enounced a large number of precepts which appear to bear directly on given questions of conduct. . . . But when we look more closely into the precepts we find that they are not so much rules as illustrations. In every instance they involve a principle on which all the stress is laid; but it is applied to a concrete example, so that we may not only grasp it as a principle but judge for ourselves how it works.’”¹⁹ Latter-day Saints are familiar with this concept because of the Prophet Joseph. When asked how he governed such a vast people, he replied, “It is very easy, for I teach the people correct principles and they govern themselves.”²⁰

The difficulty with this higher law is that while it provides us with a greater liberty to choose, it also comes at a much higher individual cost because it requires that we have a relationship with, and recognize, the promptings of the Spirit.

LIBERTY AND THE SPIRIT

Paul taught the Galatians that “if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law” (Galatians 5:18). Later, in his epistle to the Romans, Paul expanded this concept:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* (Romans 8:1–4; emphasis added)

Paul makes it clear here that he is not just talking about the law of Moses but any law that is imposed because of our fallen nature. Righteousness is not a function of following law per se, but it is a function of following the Spirit. President Ezra Taft Benson taught that “righteousness is the one indispensable ingredient to liberty.”²¹ With righteousness comes liberty from the demands or consequences of the law. So Paul taught the Corinthian Saints that “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Why is the Spirit so critical to our Christian liberty under the law of Christ? The simple answer is that it is the Spirit that guides us in applying the principles Christ taught in our everyday life. But what does that mean for Saints struggling to use their liberty to “choose the right”? Sometimes it seems easier to make choices when there is a specific law to draw upon. The onus is then upon God, parents, or the government to determine how we should act rather than on us. Whereas in the time of Christ the law of Moses had become a complex system of laws to judge actions by, the law of Christ enabled individuals to use their Christian liberty through the promptings of the Spirit. Remember that the Savior promised His disciples that He would “not leave [them] comfortless” because He would send them a Comforter who would “teach [them] all things, and bring all things to [their] remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:18, 26). In other words, Christ could teach principles because the Spirit would help His followers both remember those principles and teach them how to use them in any given situation.

There are two major advantages to a pedagogy that relies on the guidance of the Spirit. First, it recognizes that what is good for a people to do at one time is not necessarily right for them to do under different circumstances.

The law of Moses exemplified that concept for Paul. For centuries it had been “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24), and Paul had once lived that law zealously. As a result, he had progressed in Judaism further than many of his Jewish contemporaries (see Galatians 1:14). But now Christ had come, and all of Paul’s righteousness in living the law of

Moses was no longer applicable. “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter” (Romans 7:6).

One of the clearest applications of this principle in the scriptures is Nephi’s experience with Laban when he found him “fallen to the earth . . . drunken with wine” (1 Nephi 4:7). All of his life, Nephi had been taught the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13), but now the Spirit was telling him to do the exact opposite. No wonder he hesitated. But the law could not help Nephi make the right choice in this instance; only the Spirit could do that.

Second, relying on the Spirit enables people at different levels of spiritual progression to journey along the path to salvation. This leads Paul to tell the Galatians that all people, regardless of their background, are children of God. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27–28). Paul considered himself to be one of the chiefest of sinners (see 1 Timothy 1:15) and “the least of the apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle because [he] persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9). Even so, he “press[ed] toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:14). How is it possible to hope for exaltation when a person is just at the beginning of a personal spiritual journey? The Spirit guides them. For new members, keeping the Sabbath day holy may mean attending Church and refraining from Sunday shopping. But as new members progress spiritually they come to realize that keeping the Sabbath holy also means much more.

Elder Oaks gave the following instruction to gospel teachers: “Teachers who are commanded to teach ‘the principles of [the] gospel’ and ‘the doctrine of the kingdom’ (D&C 88:77) should generally forgo teaching specific rules or applications.” He continues, “Once a teacher has taught the doctrine and the associated principles from the scriptures and the living prophets, . . . specific applications or rules are generally the responsibility of individuals and families.”²² One of the benefits of such lessons is that members of the class can be uplifted and motivated regardless of where they are spiritually. Another benefit is that members, after being reminded of the principle, can then use their liberty to exercise what President Hinckley defined as their divine obligation: to “choose the right.”

Note also that in Galatians 5:25 Paul makes a distinction between having access to the Spirit and walking in it. It is not enough to be confirmed a member of the Church and commanded to receive the Spirit. The law of Christ can only help us use our Christian liberty when we have paid the price to recognize the Spirit's promptings in our lives. Thus President Joseph F. Smith taught, "The only safe way for us to do, as individuals is to live so humbly, so righteously and so faithfully before God that we may possess his Spirit to that extent that we shall be able to judge righteously, and discern between truth and error, between right and wrong."²³ Likewise, President Wilford Woodruff taught that "there is nothing that we ought to labor more to obtain while in the flesh than the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, which we are entitled to receive by reason of our having obeyed the requirements of the Gospel. When you get acquainted with the Spirit, follow its dictates, no matter where it may lead you; and when you do that, it will become a principle of revelation in you." Then he bore his testimony and implored the Saints: "I know by experience the value of it. You . . . should live in such a manner as to be entitled to the operations of the Holy Ghost within you, and, as I have said, it will become a guide as well as a revelator to you, and never leave or fail you."²⁴ Paul says that the fruit of living by the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance" (Galatians 5:22–23). Note that he doesn't say that these are "the works of the Spirit" that people do when they follow the Spirit; rather, they are the rewards that come to those who follow the Spirit.²⁵

LIBERTY AND LOVE

The third concept that Paul taught the Galatians was that love is an essential element in helping them to use their liberty to make right choices. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Galatians 5:13–14). Here is the irony. This commandment was a part of the law of Moses that Paul's opponents were advocating (see Leviticus 19:18). But whereas those missionaries had emphasized the law through circumcision, Paul followed Christ's lead when he taught that this was the second great commandment after loving God with all of our heart, soul, and mind (see Matthew 22:37–40). I love what President Hinckley had to say on the importance of love: "Love is like the Polar Star. In a

changing world, it is a constant. It is of the very essence of the gospel. It is the security of the home. It is the safeguard of community life. It is a beacon of hope in a world of distress."²⁶ When faced with a decision about how to use our liberty, one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves is "How will my decision affect the lives of others?" If we choose to serve others, then we will invariably choose to serve God. Thus King Benjamin taught that "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God" (Mosiah 2:17).

Perhaps for Paul the greatest evidence of our love for a neighbor was the decision to "restrict [our] personal liberty in matters which are of secondary importance for the sake of the Gospel."²⁷ This is a concept that Paul mentions in Galatians but develops most fully in 1 Corinthians. There he responds to a dispute over whether Christians should eat meat that was sacrificed at pagan temples. The ruling at the Jerusalem Council was that they should not (see Acts 15:19–20, 28–29). Even so, some of the Saints in Corinth argued that it didn't matter if they ate it because the idols weren't real gods. In one sense, Paul agreed with them: there is only one true God. But what really concerned Paul was the fact that in claiming their "right" to eat that meat these Saints had not considered the effect their actions might have on others. He counsels them:

Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.

Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend. (1 Corinthians 8:9–13)

The issue here for Paul is not that he should become a vegetarian. The issue is that he would rather put aside his liberty to eat meat than risk a new member's salvation. Thus he implores the Corinthian Saints, and all Saints, that when we are faced with these types of situations, to "let no

man seek his own, but every man another's wealth" (1 Corinthians 10:24). Then he concludes with the following exhortation:

Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience?

For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. (1 Corinthians 10:29–33)

Although Paul's message in 1 Corinthians 8 and 10 deals with the specific issue of eating meat, the real principle that Paul stresses is that we sometimes need to restrict our personal liberty so that another's salvation will not be put in jeopardy. In this way we see, as he told the Galatians, that the liberty Christ provided for us is governed by the commandment to "love our neighbour as ourselves" (Matthew 22:39).

LIBERTY AND FOLLOWING THE BRETHREN

Our final element in understanding Paul's teachings in these chapters is often overlooked. Granted, he only makes a passing reference to this element in one verse in Galatians, but I believe this verse is significant. The issue is whether a Saint can exercise liberty and still be in subjection to someone who has progressed further spiritually than they have. Is the use of terms such as *liberty* and *subjection* in the same sentence an oxymoron? Some have concluded from Paul's teachings on Christian liberty and Christ's principle-centered teaching that "not even an Apostle can tell you what you ought to do."²⁸ Some modern members have also struggled with this dilemma.²⁹ However, I believe that this conclusion misrepresents Paul. As an Apostle himself, Paul taught with authority. As one scholar has noted, "He also insisted that he could legitimately reprove, discipline, instruct, and even command."³⁰ Although he does not use the term *Apostle*, in Galatians 6:1 Paul teaches that those who are "spiritual," or who are further along in their spiritual progression, should "restore . . . in the spirit of meekness" a "man . . . overtaken in a fault." In Romans, Paul is even more

explicit: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, For he is God’s servant for your good” (Revised Standard Version, Romans 13:1–4).

The principle Paul is trying to teach is that Christian liberty is advanced discipleship. The reality is that many of us have not yet progressed spiritually enough to a point where we are sufficiently schooled or confident in discerning the promptings of the Spirit. In such cases, we can turn to those who are further along in their spiritual progression. One of Paul’s frequent pleas with the Saints is that they imitate him because he is imitating Christ (see 1 Corinthians 11:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:7).

Is there a lesson here for Latter-day Saints? I think so. President Boyd K. Packer taught that there is no contradiction between liberty and obedience:

We are all free to choose. . . .

Choice among my freedoms is my freedom to be obedient. I obey because I want to; I choose to.

Some people are always suspicious that one is only obedient because he is compelled to be. They indict themselves with the very thought that one is only obedient because he is compelled to be. They feel that one would only obey through compulsion. They speak for themselves. I am free to be obedient, and I decided that—all by myself. I pondered on it; I reasoned it; I even experimented a little.

. . .

Obedience to God [or his servants; D&C 1:38] can be the very highest expression of independence.³¹

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Paul’s teachings on Christian liberty in Galatians came about because some members of the Church sought to undermine that liberty by holding on to the law of Moses. He implored them to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Galatians 5:1). Today modern Saints don’t keep the law of Moses, but perhaps sometimes, either

consciously or unwittingly, we bind ourselves to the things of the world. As we do so, we place ourselves in a comparable position to Paul's opponents in Galatia. President Brigham Young taught:

This is the deciding point, the dividing line. They who love and serve God with all their hearts rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks; but they who try to serve God and still cling to the spirit of the world, have got on two yokes—the yoke of Jesus and the yoke of the devil, and they will have plenty to do. They will have a warfare inside and outside, and the labor will be very galling, for they are directly in opposition one to the other. Cast off the yoke of the enemy, and put on the yoke of Christ, and you will say that his yoke is easy and his burden is light. This I know by experience.³²

Christian liberty does not come from an absence of law; it comes from willingly yoking ourselves to Christ. The difficulty comes when we refuse to give up our other yokes, as did Paul's opponents in Galatia. The yoke that they clung to was the law of Moses.

In our day, our yoke, our law of Moses, is anything that prevents or impedes our total commitment to Christ and His gospel. How do we use the liberty that Christ has afforded us? Do we use it as an opportunity to follow the ways of the world or, as Paul said, "an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13), or do we use it to choose the right and further the work of God in our own lives and in the lives of those around us? If Paul were with us today he would also implore us to "stand fast . . . in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).

NOTES

1. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, October 1965, 8.
2. Dallin H. Oaks, "Weightier Matters," *Ensign*, January 2001, 13–14.
3. Gordon B. Hinckley, *Caesar, Circus, or Christ?* in *Brigham Young University Speeches of the Year* (Provo, October 26, 1965), 8.
4. For a detailed discussion of Paul's teachings on liberty, see Richard N. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).
5. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is clearly a reaction to what his opponents were teaching in Galatia in his absence. It seems to me, therefore, that the best way to understand Paul's pointed remarks on the nature of

- Christian liberty in this epistle is to understand them as a reaction to what his opponents were teaching.
6. This is the only Pauline epistle where after his introduction he doesn't commend his readers for something. Instead, he immediately chastises them: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:6–7).
 7. It should be remembered that the decision of the Jerusalem Council affected Gentile converts only. They made no decision about whether Jews could or should continue living the law of Moses. By the first century after Christ, the law had become as much a part of cultural identity as it was a reflection of spiritual commitment. In Acts 21:20, James tells Paul: "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law." The Ebionites were a group of Christians who maintained their commitment to the law of Moses. We know that at the end of the first century after Christ there were still such groups because Ignatius denounces them in his letter to the Magnesians (8:1; 10:3).
 8. Paul does not specifically mention that he taught the fulfillment of the law of Moses through Christ prior to his Galatian epistle, but the fact that the teachers from Judaea put such a heavy emphasis on it in their teachings suggests that it was in reaction to what Paul had originally taught (see the Savior's teachings in 3 Nephi 15:1–10; Matthew 5:17–48; and Stephen's teachings and the response they elicit in Acts 6:9–15).
 9. Scholars have debated this point at great length. There are two main theories for the location of the Galatian church: the North Galatian hypothesis and the South Galatian hypothesis. The South Galatian hypothesis argues that the churches are located in the southern part of the Roman province. If this was the case, then these churches may have been the ones established by Paul during his first missionary journey (see Acts 13–14). We know from that first mission that there were synagogues in many of the cities that he visited and that many of his converts were Gentiles. The North Galatian hypothesis is that the churches were located among the ethnic Galatians in the north around Ankyra and Pessinus. In this area the churches probably consisted of people of Celtic descent, with the possibility of a mixture of "some Greek and a few oriental immigrants" (J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians*, volume 34A of the Anchor Bible [New York: Doubleday, 1997], 15–16), although there was a Jewish element in this area as well (see Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979], 4–5).
 10. Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175

- BC-AD 135*), rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Martin Goodman, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 3:161-71.
11. The fact that in Galatians 5 Paul insists that circumcision was not an important issue strongly suggests that it was an important issue for his opponents. Richard Lloyd Anderson characterizes "the chief problem of Galatians" as "whether Gentile converts should be circumcised" (*Understanding Paul* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983], 151).
 12. "Paul can tolerate, and even recognize as God's doing, a *parallel*, Law-observant mission to the Jews, so long as that mission is and remains truly parallel, that is to say, so long as it does not infect the Gentile mission with the demand for Law-observance. Nothing would have been further from Paul's mind than to indicate that there was a Law observant mission to Gentiles, considered by at least some members of the church to be authorized by God" (J. Louis Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles: The Background of Galatians," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 22, no. 1 [1983]: 223).
 13. One argument against this reading is if one accepts the North Galatian hypothesis, then there were no Jews in that area for the Gentiles to come into contact with. However, archaeological discoveries have uncovered Jewish inscriptions in the north (see Betz, *Galatians*, 4-5).
 14. Betz, *Galatians*, 8-9.
 15. Perhaps these missionaries felt that Paul was acting like some members of the Church in the Americas just after the Savior was born. "And there were no contentions, save it were a few that began to preach, endeavoring to prove by the scriptures that it was no more expedient to observe the law of Moses. Now in this thing they did err, having not understood the scriptures" (3 Nephi 1:24).
 16. Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to Gentiles," 235.
 17. These actions were not just the result of oppressive acts that denied Jews the opportunity to practice their religion but also reflect the idea that freedom, true freedom, is found in living the law of Moses (see Longnecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 156-58).
 18. Longnecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 191.
 19. Longnecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 192.
 20. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (London: Latter-day Saints' Book Depot, 1854-86), 10:57-58.
 21. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 346.
 22. Dallin H. Oaks, "Gospel Teaching," *Ensign*, November 1999, 79.
 23. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 45.
 24. Wilford Woodruff, *Collected Discourses Delivered by President Wilford Woodruff, His Two Counselors, the Twelve Apostles, and Others*, comp. and ed. Brian H. Stuy, 5 vols. (Sandy, UT: B. H. S. Publishing, 1991), 4:327.

25. Betz, *Galatians*, 286.
26. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Let Love Be the Lodestar of Your Life," *Ensign*, May 1989, 66.
27. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 206.
28. Emil Brunner, *Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), 118.
29. For one example, see L. Jackson Newell, "Scapegoats and Scarecrows in Our Town: When the Interests of Church and Community Collide," *Sunstone*, December 1993, 22–28.
30. Longenecker, *Paul: Apostle of Liberty*, 197–98.
31. Boyd K. Packer, "Obedience," in *BYU Speeches of the Year* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1971), 2–3.
32. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 16:123.

Epistle to the Galatians 5 Galatians 5. 1. 5. 6. 4. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love Christian Liberty - Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised (D)that he is [b]a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 (E)You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; (F)you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit eagerly (G)wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For (H)in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but (I)faith working through love. Love Fulfills the Law. 7 You (J)ran well. Galatians 5. Paragraph divisions of modern translations. UBS4. Liberty and Love. 5:13-15. 5:13-15. 5:6 This verse encapsulates the theme of the book of Galatians: we are right with God by faith, not by human rituals or performance—including circumcision, the food laws, and/or moral living. The concluding phrase has been understood in either a passive or middle sense (Barbara and Timothy Friberg, Analytical Greek New Testament, p. 584; Harold K Moulton [ed], The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, p. 139).

Studies in Galatians, Christian Liberty in Action. Salvation by faith liberates and motivates us to live God-centred and other-centred lives. Rather than being liberated by the Gospel from the morality and instructions for living contained in the law, the believer is empowered by the Gospel to live in increasing conformity to these laws. Indeed, on a deeper level, it is only the believer, liberated by the Gospel from a self-centred, self-preserving, self-justifying keeping of the law, who can keep these laws within their intrinsic intention: a God-centred, God-focused life that seeks to praise, honour and glorify God because he is God. As the Scripture says: 'everything that does not come from faith is sin' (Romans 14:23), and 'without faith it is impossible to please God' (Hebrews 11:6).

3. Paul is confident the Galatians will come around, and that the Lord will judge the trouble makers (10). 4. A reminder that Paul himself was not preaching circumcision - A liberty that excludes the necessity of circumcision (1-6) - A liberty that fulfills the Law (7-15) - A liberty in which one is to be led by the Spirit (16-26).

2) What does Paul enjoin which serves as the theme of this epistle? (1) - Stand fast in the liberty in which Christ has made us free. 3) What are two consequences of becoming circumcised in order to be saved? (2-3) - Christ will profit you nothing - You become a debtor to keep the whole Law. 4) What two things happen when one seeks to be justified by the Law? (4) - You become estranged from Christ - You fall from grace.

Galatians 5. Paragraph divisions of modern translations. UBS4. Liberty and Love. 5:13-15. 5:13-15. 5:6 This verse encapsulates the theme of the book of Galatians: we are right with God by faith, not by human rituals or performance—including circumcision, the food laws, and/or moral living. The concluding phrase has been understood in either a PASSIVE or MIDDLE sense (Barbara and Timothy Friberg, Analytical Greek New Testament, p. 584; Harold K Moulton [ed], The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, p. 139). Read the Passage: Galatians 5 Liberty and the Law (5:1-6) After having illustrated the difference between works- and faith-based righteousness in Gal. 4:21-31, in Gal. 5:1 Paul exhorts the Galatian believers to hold fast to the gospel of justification by faith alone. Here Paul reminded the believers in Galatia that the law is an entangling yoke. 5:1 Paul exhorts the Galatian believers to hold fast to the gospel of justification by faith alone. Here Paul reminded the believers in Galatia that the law is an entangling yoke of bondage. As he continues in Gal. 5:2, using circumcision as a metaphor for legalism, Paul noted that attempts at salvation through law-keeping actually undermine the work of Christ, and in so doing, pervert the gospel.

Christian Liberty Phil. 4:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Gal. 2:4 yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you t. 5:6 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, #1 Cor. 15:30 why do I still suffer persecution?