

**OUR LIBERTY IN  
CHRIST: A STUDY IN  
GALATIANS**

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Our liberty in Christ: a study in Galatians by Philip Mauro

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# Our Liberty in Christ

A STUDY IN GALATIANS

*By*

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## I.

### "THE GRACE OF CHRIST"

(Gal. 1:6)

The substance of the message of Paul to the churches of Galatia is found in the words "Our liberty which we have in Christ" (2:4). We purpose, therefore, to inquire into the meaning of that expression. As one meditates upon it, such questions as the following arise in the mind: What is the nature of the "liberty" referred to? How is it secured, and how enjoyed? What are the dangers that threaten it? and how may one who has received it be brought again "into bondage"? or be "entangled again with the yoke of bondage"? It will surely be found both interesting and profitable to seek light from the Word of God upon these matters; and in this quest the reader of these pages is invited to join.

There is special need for such an inquiry as this, because of the uncertainty among God's people as to the precise nature of their liberty in Christ, and as to what they have been freed from.

That the Epistle to the Galatians has to do chiefly with our liberty in Christ, and that its purpose is to safeguard that precious liberty by raising a warning against the dangers which threaten to rob us of it, is easily seen. The contrast between "liberty" and "bondage" runs all through the Epistle. Moreover, the conclusion which the apostle draws from the remarkable "allegory" in chap. 4

is that "we are not children of the bondwomen but of the *free*"; he having shown by the comparison between Abraham's two families, that whereas the earthly Jerusalem "is *in bondage* with her children," the "Jerusalem which is above is *free*, which is the mother of us all" (4: 25, 26, 31). Furthermore, this allegory gives occasion for the stirring exhortation addressed to the people of God: "Stand fast therefore in *the liberty* wherewith Christ hath *made us free*, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (5: 1). And again a little further on it is said: "For, brethren, ye have been called *unto liberty*" (5: 13).

The same idea of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free is expressed in other forms of words. Thus, a parallel to the phrase "called unto liberty" is found in chap. 1 verse 6, in the expression "called \* \* into the grace of Christ." These parallel expressions afford much help in our efforts to arrive at the meaning of the Spirit's message in this portion of Scripture. Believers are "called into" (or unto) something which is described as "our liberty in Christ," and also as "the grace of Christ," as "the truth of the gospel," and again as "the faith of the Son of God," and by yet other phrases. That which *calls* them into this new state of existence (a state as different from the old as liberty is different from bondage) is "the gospel." The one who thus "called" the Galatians was Paul the apostle, as appears by the words: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that *called you* into the grace of Christ" (1: 6); and by the words: "This persuasion cometh not of *him that calleth you*" (5: 8).

It further appears that the word "liberty," as used in

this portion of Scripture, defines the conditions of life and the privileges that pertain to *children* in a household, as contrasted with the condition of *bond-servants*. By taking notice of these leading points we shall find it comparatively easy to understand the scope of the Epistle as a whole, and to understand also certain passages which otherwise would be obscure or even meaningless.

But there is a matter to which we ought to give earnest heed, and which is of greater importance even than the *meaning* of the Scriptures we propose to study; and that is the *lesson* those Scriptures are intended to convey. By the *lesson* we mean that which is given for the purpose of shaping our conduct, of directing us in the *doing* of the will of God, and conforming us in our behaviour to the image of His Son. God's communications to men have ever a *practical* object; and this important fact we deem it necessary to emphasize as strongly as possible, since it is often overlooked. It is natural for men to seek knowledge or information for its own sake, for the pleasure which the quest of knowledge gives, and for the satisfaction which the possession of it imparts. For "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Cor. 8:1); and this is true of Bible knowledge as of other sorts.

On the other hand, it is *quite contrary* to the nature of man to seek information from God *for the purpose of doing God's will in place of his own*. Hence man will listen with interest and even pleasure to addresses in which Scriptures are expounded, dispensations are explained, prophecies interpreted, and the like; but "they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3). A writer commenting on Stephen's address and the quiet attention