

## Losing Our Freedom and Nullifying Christ

In the New Testament there are many words that reveal to us how Christ is everything and does everything. But there are also many words and examples that show us that we can unwittingly nullify Christ as everything. When we do not keep Christ as our focus and experience Him each step of the way, we can nullify the reality of Christ in our lives. Church history is filled with examples of seeking saints and of movements that began with a fresh revelation and experience of the Lord, but then fell into substitutes and replacements for Christ. Many groups and denominations today come under this category.

Reality in the spiritual realm is present when *Christ Himself* is living and present among us, because He is reality. Reality simply does not exist apart from Him (John 14:6; 15:5). When Christ is replaced by anything, then we no longer express Him. So we need to be aware of the kinds of things revealed in the New Testament that can nullify the reality and expression of Christ in our lives.

### *Losing the atmosphere of freedom*

One of the chief things utilized by Satan to nullify Christ is an atmosphere of legalism. This kind of atmosphere can subtly creep in among believers and was one of the primary problems that invaded the church in the New Testament. The Gospels are filled with accounts of the scribes and

Pharisees nullifying the Word of God by their tradition and detailed legalities (Mark 7:6-9). The book of Acts does not cover up the fact that the church in Jerusalem was filled with Jewish believers who were zealous for keeping the law (Acts 21:20). Many of the Epistles were written due to the battle with Judaizers, who were going about to spy out the believers' freedom in Christ (Gal. 2:4). From the New Testament days until this hour, Christ is nullified whenever believers lose the atmosphere of freedom.

In Galatians 5:1-5 the apostle Paul addresses the problem of nullifying Christ. The New American Standard Version has an accurate and literal translation for verse 1: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." Paul is saying that Christ died on the cross for the express purpose of producing a state and atmosphere of "freedom." Freedom in this verse is an atmosphere that believers are to live in. Indeed, Paul exhorts the saints to "keep standing firm" in this blood-bought freedom. To lose this freedom is to be brought again into a yoke of slavery. Paul continues in verses 2-5: <sup>2</sup>"Behold, I Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. <sup>3</sup>And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. <sup>4</sup>You have become discharged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Losing Our Freedom and Nullifying Christ — Pages 1-4
- *The Church Is Christ* – (A book on 1 Corinthians 12:12) — Page 4

### Ministry of the Word, Inc.

P.O. Box 12277  
Scottsdale, AZ 85267

Nonprofit Organization  
U. S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Scottsdale, AZ  
Permit No. 824

by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.”

For Christ to no longer “profit” us and for us to be “discharged” from Christ means that we nullify Christ. By speaking in this way Paul brings out the serious consequences of losing the atmosphere of freedom. The loss of freedom is typically characterized by believers being under an atmosphere of being *compelled* to conform to a spoken or unspoken standard or practice. This is what constitutes the loss of freedom (Gal. 2:3; 6:12). The saints in Galatia had lost that precious freedom that preserves the atmosphere where the love of God can freely flow — from God to man, from man to God, and from man to man. In order for this flow to be preserved in all its sweetness, we must preserve the atmosphere in which it can happen.

Among believers today there must always be an atmosphere of freedom where the love of God is able to flow. Love cannot and does not flow where there is no freedom. When love does not flow, Christ has been nullified (cf. Gal. 5:2, 4 with verse 6). Where there is law, where there is obligation, where there is a legal mind-set, it not only chokes the flow of love, it makes it impossible for love to happen.

For example, I may tell my wife, “You *must* love me. I am your husband. I am your head, and therefore you *must* love me.” The more I talk to my wife in this way, the more I make it impossible for her to love, even if she wanted to. How could she *freely* give love when I am over her demanding it? Love needs the atmosphere of freedom in order for it to exist. If freedom is not the atmosphere in our relationships, Christ and love are nullified.

To love God and to love one another requires the atmosphere of freedom. This is why it is so serious for the law to come into the church in any form. It kills the ability of the Spirit to be released and the ability of the divine love to flow. This happened among the Galatians. When the saints were put under a yoke of slavery, they discovered that they not only lost the love between themselves (Gal. 5:14-15), but they were also biting and devouring one another. They were “consuming” one another because the freedom was lost in an atmosphere of legalities.

By observing Paul’s interaction with the saints

in the New Testament letters, we can see that he was always careful to speak in such a way that the liberty of the saints was preserved (Philem. 12-14; Rom. 1:11-12; 2 Cor. 8:7-8). Study the fine points in Paul’s dealing with the churches, and you will see a relationship between an apostle and the saints where freedom was maintained.

Brothers and sisters, for freedom Christ set us free! We come together willingly, not because we *have* to. No! There should be no forcing or compelling. There should be no unspoken or hidden agendas. There should not be an “expected way” to meet or practice the church. Whether this way or that way, as long as Christ is not nullified, we are all happy to be in the reality of the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). We are not here with formed ideas and concepts, even about the “scriptural” way to have meetings. It is not that anything is wrong with the scriptural way concerning the gathering of believers. But what is more important is *the way* these kinds of things are handled. The *way* we handle any scriptural matter determines whether the atmosphere of freedom is preserved or lost. If freedom is lost, then Christ is nullified and the Spirit cannot operate. Spiritually speaking, everything comes to a halt even though, outwardly speaking, meetings and religious activities continue.

The apostle Paul was very much aware of the implications of practicing anything that would put people under the law. This is why he had to rebuke Peter publicly for withdrawing from fellowship with Gentiles at Antioch. Peter’s withdrawing was due to his fear of “those who were of the circumcision” (Gal. 2:11-21). Apparently, Peter was just under a little pressure to conform to some racial and cultural differences as a Jew. But actually *his way* of behaving was building up a legal system all over again under the guise of the gospel (Gal. 2:18). It needed Paul to draw out the serious and far-reaching consequences of Peter’s practice. The foundational principles of the gospel — freedom, justification by faith, being co-crucified with Christ, dying to the law, Christ living in us — all were being threatened. And the atmosphere of freedom based on these foundational principles was at stake. In other words, Christ was nullified. In fact,

Paul brings out the ultimate result of Peter's legal practice — the grace of God is set aside and Christ died in vain (Gal. 2:21). Thus, we can see that when the atmosphere of the law (in whatever form it may appear) replaces the atmosphere of freedom, Christ Himself is nullified and the church is no longer an expression of Christ in reality.

### *Christ not profiting us*

In Galatians 5:2 Paul knows he is making a crucial statement about the secret of experiencing Christ, so he draws attention to it in a special way. He starts out by saying, "Behold, I Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing." With the word "Behold" we get the impression that Paul knew how important the atmosphere of freedom was to genuinely experience a living Christ. To be circumcised or not to be circumcised does not determine whether Christ is in you. Paul does not deny the fact that the Galatians were Christians. This was not his point. His burden was that Christ would profit the believers in the realm of their experience. The way the practice of circumcision was brought in among them was the focus of Paul's concern. The way was a "compelling" and a "forcing" of a practice, which caused the atmosphere of freedom to be destroyed. Christ cannot profit us if we are under a religious system that compels and forces us.

Actually, Paul's concern was not even over the practice of circumcision. His concern was over the way circumcision was being handled by the Judaizers. For example, at one point in his ministry, Paul took Timothy with him as a co-worker and had him circumcised for the sake of not offending the Jews (Acts 16:3). That was an occasion of not abusing freedom for the sake of love and not becoming a stumbling block to any (Gal. 5:13-14). Of course, it was perfectly acceptable to be circumcised under those circumstances. However, on another occasion Paul refused to have Titus circumcised because it involved the practice of circumcision *in a way* that destroyed the freedom of the gospel (Gal. 2:3-5). Why did Paul act differently toward circumcision on those occasions? It was not because he was opposed to

circumcision as such, but because he was opposed to *the way* circumcision was being handled by the Judaizers. Paul's use of the word "compel" in Galatians makes this clear. The way circumcision was promoted and handled brought with it an atmosphere of fear and intimidation (Acts 15:1, 24). It is *that* atmosphere that nullifies Christ.

If Christ can be nullified in experience, then the reality of the church can also be nullified. Many believers have passed through church experiences similar to what happened to the Galatians. The history of the church, both past and present, is filled with examples of "new" movements that quickly turned into legalistic systems. Many points in these movements have been good and even scriptural, but *the way* they were applied and enforced so destroyed the atmosphere of freedom that eventually Christ was nullified. The reality of the Spirit was replaced with zealotry for a systematized way. Paul refers to this kind of zealotry in Galatians 4:17 and 6:13: <sup>4:17</sup> "They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them. . . . <sup>6:13</sup> For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may glory in your flesh."

When the proper atmosphere of freedom is replaced with a forcing and compelling atmosphere, Christ no longer profits us. This means Christ is of no use to us. He is of no supply to us. There is no practical advantage to having Christ. This is what happens when He is replaced by the law.

When Christ is nullified in our experience, we find ourselves not knowing how to act or behave. Thus, an atmosphere of pretense and outward behavior takes over. Instead of that Christ-filled freedom that supplies life to you, a straitjacket atmosphere takes over and you are brought into bondage. It is like David trying to put on Saul's armor, when he does not know how to manage it. In other words, when freedom is our atmosphere, Christ is living and operating, but when the law comes in, Christ is nullified experientially.

### *Shutting Christ down*

Paul's word in Galatians 5:4 is very strong

concerning how we can shut Christ down in our experience. He says, "You have become discharged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." To be discharged means to be "brought to nought from Christ," to be "separated from Christ," or to become "idle in relation to Christ." Of course, this does not mean we lose our eternal salvation. But it does mean, according to the Greek word *katargeo*, we can nullify Christ, or put Him out of operation in our daily life.

In my computer I have what is known as the "system folder." This folder is the key to the operation of all the computer's programs. If the system folder is up and running, then everything else runs fine; but if something goes wrong with the system folder, everything on the computer shuts down. Even though I have many good programs that can do a lot of things, if the system folder is damaged in any way, then nothing works for me. In the same way, if you and I come under the law in any form and are brought again under a yoke of slavery, we are discharged from Christ and He is nullified in our experience.

### *The freedom Christ died for*

In Galatians 2:19-21 the apostle Paul shows how our relationship with the law has changed: <sup>19</sup>"For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. <sup>20</sup>I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. <sup>21</sup>I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

In verse 19 we see how God dealt with us in our relationship to the law — we died to the law in the death of Christ. When Christ died on the cross we also died (2 Cor. 5:14). Indeed, Paul makes it clear in Romans 7:3-4 that when the body of Christ was hanging on the cross, we not only died with Him but we died *to the law* with Him. The law demanded that the sinner die for his sin (Ezek. 18:4). Thus, in our co-crucifixion with Christ, we legally

and judicially died. We were all judged on the cross in His death. The law effectively put us to death in Him and dealt a final blow to our law-breaking flesh. This is the meaning of Paul's statement, "I through the law died to the law."

Now that we have died to the law in the death of Christ, we no longer have a relationship with it in ourselves. This is our freedom that Christ died for — freedom from the self that strives to keep the law. Our relationship to the law is now Jesus Christ Himself. He is not only the end of the law for righteousness to us who believe (Rom. 10:4), but He is the fulfiller of the righteous requirement of the law in us as we walk according to spirit (Matt. 5:17-18; Rom. 8:3-4). We are no longer occupied with living to an impersonal law and demand that has no life in it. We are living to God in a Person who is life and who gives life! It is no longer the law-keeping "I" that lives, but Christ who lives in me. This means I am forever delivered from bondage, legality, impotence, and fear. Christ died to give us *freedom as a gift* so that in His inner workings in us He would never be nullified.

— Bill Freeman

\* This month's article is taken from the book *The Church Is Christ* by Bill Freeman. This book of 238 pages deals with Paul's unique utterance in 1 Corinthians 12:12 — "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ." *The Church Is Christ* may be ordered for \$ 7.95, postpaid, from **Ministry of the Word**, P. O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 • Phone: (480) 948-4050 • Fax: (480) 922-1338 • Email: [MinWord12@aol.com](mailto:MinWord12@aol.com)

## *the Christian*

*the Christian* is a nonprofit monthly publication of **Ministry of the Word, Inc.** This paper is for the spreading of the truth of God's Word and the building up of the Body of Christ.

Subscriptions to *the Christian* are sent without charge upon request. However, gifts to further the domestic and foreign publication of this paper are much appreciated and are tax-deductible. Checks may be made out to **Ministry of the Word, Inc.**, P.O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267 – USA.

**Ministry of the Word:** (480) 948-4050 / (800) 573-4105

**E-Mail:** [MinWord12@aol.com](mailto:MinWord12@aol.com)

**Internet Address:** <http://www.thechristian.org>