



Picture yourself as an impoverished prospector, tirelessly searching for fortune on your small farm in South Africa during the 1930s. After a heavy storm, you walk up and down your land to see if the rain washed up anything. Eventually, you come across an unusual stone the size of a hen's egg. As you wipe the mud from its surface, it begins to look like a diamond in the rough. Trembling with excitement, you rush home to show the stone to your family. A few days later you sell the "rock" – a 726-carat diamond – for \$315,000. Sound incredible? Yes, but it actually happened to a poor prospector named Jacobus Jonker.¹

What if this had really happened to you? Would you do everything you could to protect that stone? You bet you would! You'd probably lock it in the most secure vault you could find.

But what if you found something even more precious than a huge diamond? Suppose you discovered the priceless gift of liberty in Christ. Through Him, you realized you could be free – really free. So you reached out your empty hands and received the precious gem. Would you guard your new-found treasure? Would you do all you could to keep thieves from taking it away?

The Galatians Christians did have this jewel, yet they allowed legalists to break into their lives and rob them. Shocked, Paul sent a letter to the Galatians, defending the free life and urging them to take back what was rightfully theirs.

Paul starts Galatians 5 with a declaration of our liberty in Christ and a command we should obey as a result.

In **Galatians 5:1a** he opens "*It was for freedom that Christ set us free.*" Jesus died for us on the cross so that through faith in Him, we could live as free people. He has liberated us from the penalty and guilt of sin, divine wrath, satanic domination, the Law's curse, and the fear of ultimate judgment. And He has freed us to enjoy a new kind of life – one in which we can live by the Spirit's power, joyfully obey God, love and serve others, come immediately in the Lord's presence through prayer, and grow in our walk with God. **We have the gem of promise.** We didn't pay anything for it; Christ paid for it in full.

Freedom comes with a command found in the second half of that verse. "*Therefore,*" Paul says, "*keep standing firm and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.*" **V.1b**

God never commands us to submit to everyone regardless of who they are or what they say or do. We are called to exercise wisdom – to discern between truth and error, right and wrong, and the genuine article as opposed to the fake.

Matthew 7:15-23 says "*Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.*"¹⁶ *By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?*¹⁷ *Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.*¹⁸ *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.*¹⁹ *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*²⁰ *Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.*²¹ "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord,*

Lord, ' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

And John tells us in **1 John 4:1-6** *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ² This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world. ⁴ You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵ They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶ We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.*

So when people tell us we need to follow their works-centered plan to become acceptable to God, we must “*contend earnestly for the faith*” as Jude tells us, and flatly refuse to give up our priceless gift of freedom.

¹Diamonds Eternal by Victor Argenzio (New York, N.Y.: David McKay Co., 1974), pp.50-52