

Freed Slaves and Enslaved Sons: Sacral Manumission Formulae and Servile Metaphors in Galatians 5



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I. INTRODUCTION

As many major works and commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians have generally noted, this letter is pervaded not only with Paul's biting rhetoric, but also with a preponderance of servile language and imagery.¹ Given the reputation of Galatia in this regard, one can easily understand why Paul appealed to such terminology and metaphors

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¹ See John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (WUNT 2/162; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Robert A. Bryant, *The Risen Crucified Christ in Galatians* (SBLDS; Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2001); Justin K. Hardin, *Galatians and the Imperial Cult* (WUNT 2/237; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Bruce W. Longenecker, *The Triumph of Abraham's God* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998); Mark D. Nanos, *The Irony of Galatians* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002); Sam Tsang, *A New Rhetoric Analysis on Paul's Slave Metaphors in His Letter to the Galatians* (Studies in Biblical Literature 81; New York: Peter Lang, 2005); G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians* (IVP New Testament Commentary Series; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (AB 33A; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1997); Frank J. Matera, *Galatians* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier Books, 2007); Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996).

in his epistle (e.g., 4:8-11, 30-31; 5:2-4).² In fact, John Byron notes that “Galatians contains the second highest occurrence of slave terms in the Pauline corpus.”³

Concerning current scholarship on Galatians, Byron and others’ works contain a great amount of information on general slave metaphors and language in the epistle. However, this is also precisely the problem: most of these treatments operate according to *generalized* slave terminology, and consequently overlook the finer and weightier nuances of the underlying servile metaphors and formulae within this letter. For instance, in his dissertation, Sam Tsang examined servile metaphors which occur in nearly every chapter of Galatians; however, Tsang did not give any true attention to Galatians 5.⁴ Such a practice is only symptomatic of much research on Galatians that has not realized the specific servile language at work in a great part of this chapter.

What follows in this article is a comparative examination of Galatians 5 in light of sacral manumission practices and servile metaphors in the ancient world. This investigator contends that Paul portrays the life of believers as one that expresses the dual notions of full emancipation from the “Law” as well as complete enslavement to God. In doing so, the apostle combines both sacral manumission formulae and servile language to establish a paradoxically mixed metaphor that is unparalleled in ancient Greco-Roman texts.

First, the writer will explore the context leading up to Galatians 5. Second, the language of emancipation in the chapter shall be investigated, with special emphasis on the term “ἐλευθερία” and its utilization in slave manumission texts. Next, terms and idioms connoting slavery in the chapter will be examined, with special consideration given to their correlation with emancipation language. Finally, a concluding synthesis will be offered.

II. GALATIANS 5 IN CONTEXT

In the material preceding chapter 5, Paul heavily emphasizes the superiority of faith over law-keeping, which is couched within the larger argument concerning true sonship and inheritance rights.⁵ In 3:1-5:6, he

² Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 399; Susan Elliot, *Cutting Too Close for Comfort: Paul’s Letter to the Galatians in its Anatolian Cultic Context* (JSNTSup 248; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2003), 159-229.

³ Byron, *Slavery*, 181.

⁴ Tsang, *Slaves to Sons*, 63-131.

⁵ Cf. especially Betz, *Galatians*, 28-33; Bruce, *Galatians*, 147-229; Longenecker, *Galatians*, 98-219.

repeatedly makes the case that the status, freedom, and blessings of sonship only come through the Spirit to the ones who have faith in Christ (3:2, 6-7, 9, 14, 26-29; 4:6-11, 30-31; 5:5-6). On the contrary, Paul states “those under law” do not have the Spirit, are not true sons of Abraham, have no inheritance rights, and are slaves (4:8-11, 30-31; 5:2-4).⁶ Thus the apostle erects a dichotomy: those who exercise faith and have the Spirit of genuine sonship versus the ones under law (4:21) who practice legal works (2:16). From the context we may conjecture that Paul is seeking to answer the underlying but crucial question, “Who is a true son/heir of Abraham?”⁷

Within the immediate context of Galatians 5, Paul also utilizes a noteworthy rhetorical feature, which begins in 4:20 and carries over into 5:2f. This device not only establishes a connection between chapter 5 and what precedes, but also illuminates the specific issue Paul desires to address. The apostle wishes to hold a conversation with the Galatians, or, as he puts it, “exchange my voice” (ἀλλάξαι τὴν φωνήν μου)⁸ (4:20). Hence, in 4:21, he (in rhetorical fashion) poses his question and demands a response concerning the role of the law: “Tell me, you who desire to be under law (ὑπὸ νόμον), do you not hear the law?” In 5:2, however, Paul forcefully retorts, “Behold, I Paul say to you....” In this manner the apostle has an exchange of voices with the Galatian believers.

Surrounding the retort of 5:2 is the climax of the apostle’s discussion regarding sonship (5:1-6), where the reader is also first informed of exactly how the Galatians “desire to be under law” (4:21). In Paul’s estimation, such a submission to law involves nothing less than returning to a “yoke of slavery” (5:1) by receiving circumcision. Although scholars debate the precise meaning of the phrase “yoke of slavery,” the above rhetorical feature, in tandem with the fact that Paul explicitly cites circumcision in the context, seem to indicate that the apostle’s line of reasoning specifically focuses on submission to Mosaic law as submission to slavery.⁹ “Here,” as Susan Elliot notes, “Paul paints a

⁶ See especially Longenecker, *Triumph*; Tsang, *Slaves to Sons*, 105-143.

⁷ For a brief but informative extrapolation of this major theme, refer to Longenecker, *Triumph*, 128-142.

⁸ See *BDAG*, s.v. “ἀλλάσσω,” for this nuance of the term.

⁹ For instance Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Interpretation; Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 111, suggests “the phrase ‘yoke of slavery’ may reflect a common rabbinic expression ‘yoke of Torah,’ used of proselytes as they assumed the responsibility of Judaism...” Contra Wayne Coppins, *The Interpretation of Freedom in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2/261; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 115, who holds that the “yoke of slavery” refers not to the Jewish law exclusively, but rather more generally to the “elements of the world”

picture of the consequences of circumcision for the audience's status: inheritance of a relationship of slavery."¹⁰ Therefore, the language of slavery in the immediate context comes into sharp focus. If the apostle's comments in the body of the letter are any indication of the situation at Galatia, it would be safe to assume that circumcision was being hailed by his opponents as a critical marker of Abrahamic sonship and legitimate inheritance rights. However, it was nothing of the sort; it was, in fact, submitting to a relentless slave master summed up by Paul under the name "Law."

III. GALATIANS 5 AND THE LANGUAGE OF FREEDOM

To counteract what he views as the Galatians' desire to be "under law," the apostle, in 5:1, employs a very telling phrase, which is closely akin to slave manumission texts: Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ. Although the exact phrase in manumission is ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ, the fact that Paul links it with "emancipation" and "slavery" in this passage, plus the realization of the actual usage of the phrase ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ itself in 5:13, lend themselves to the phrase's probable manumission connotations. Galatians 5:1 seems to imply as much: "Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε" ("For freedom Christ emancipated us; therefore stand firm and do not again be subject to a yoke of slavery"). The import of Paul's use of this expression, however, needs to be supported by an analysis of ancient slave manumission.

IV. SLAVE MANUMISSION IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Various contemporary works on slavery have noted that the freeing of slaves was one of the most socially significant regulations in the ancient world.¹¹ However, an adequate accounting of the diverse types of

(Gal. 4:3, 9), thereby rendering the "yoke of slavery" applicable to both Jew and Gentile.

¹⁰ Elliot, *Cutting*, 279.

¹¹ See B. H. McLean, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine (323 B.C.-A.D.337)* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 289-299; M. I. Finley, *Slavery in Classical Antiquity: Views and Controversy* (Cambridge: Heffer, 1974), 27-8; T. E. J. Wiedemann, *Slavery* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 45-60; Michael Grant, *A Social History of Greece and Rome* (New York, NY: Scribner's 1992), 121; Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, 187ff; K. R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press: 1987), 81-112; Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

manumission is necessary for the present study, given that the forms and degrees of the practice continued to evolve from ancient Greece through the Late Roman Empire.¹² In an effort to efficiently categorize the process, Bradley McLean has noted two principle kinds of manumission: formal and informal.¹³ In this scheme, a slave could be *formally* freed by his master's last will and testament, dedication to a god, a fictive sale to a third party (e.g. a deity), or sacral manumission (a variation of the fictive sale).¹⁴ However, the slave could also be manumitted by *informal* means, such as a simple, public declaration of freedom by the master.¹⁵

The manumission process was further complicated by the fact that, many times, the slave's freedom was granted with certain stipulations. Often the manumitted slave would be brought into a "staying agreement," overwhelmingly denoted in manumission texts by forms of the Greek verb παραμεινῶ ("remain/stay") and codified by the technical term *paramone*.¹⁶ Such agreements delineated a certain length of time in which the freed slave would "remain" and "serve" either his former master or else a deity (or deities).¹⁷ In many cases, this staying arrangement only lasted a few years; however, in some circumstances, the staying could last for the remainder of the freed slave's life. For instance, an inscription from Pisidian Antioch (Galatia) records the following: "Ἀὐρ(ηλία) Μαρκία Δημητρίου θυγάτηρ. Ὀλυμπιάς εἰς παραμονὴν ἵνα [[Μητρί]· και μηδενὶ ἐξέσται καταδουλώσαι αὐτὴν ἄλλα εἶναι αὐτὴν ἐλυθέραν." The ruling concerning this woman clearly stipulates that *paramone* ("staying") is to be rendered; however the account also records that "it is not lawful for anyone to enslave her, but she is to be free [i.e. emancipated]."¹⁸ From this we notice that the language of freedom (ἐλυθέραν) is utilized; however, it is mitigated by the *paramone* arrangement, since service to the master continued to be

1996), 97-102; J. A. Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (HUT 32; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 1-67.

¹² On the difficulty of reconstructing these procedures, see Harrill, *Manumission*, 53-56.

¹³ McLean, *Epigraphy*, 291.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 292-97.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 291; Finley, *Slavery*, 27-28.

¹⁶ See B. Adams, *Paramone und verwandte Texte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1964); A. M. Duff, *Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 12-21. This arrangement is similar, but quite distinct from the Roman *operae libertorum*.

¹⁷ See Finley, *Slavery*, 28.

¹⁸ *AE* 1997: 1484D; see also *GDI* II/2, 2143; *Fouilles de Delphes*, Vol. 3, 2.47; *SEG* 42.703.

rendered. Thus, *paramone* was commonly employed as a type of transitional feature in the slave's quest for complete freedom.

V. EP' ELEUTHERIA IN SLAVE MANUMISSION

As common as *paramone* arrangements were, the practice was certainly not universal. Obviously, many slaves were never freed (to any degree) by their masters. On the contrary, in certain contexts a slave was emancipated “ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία,” translated as “for freedom” or, to put it another way, “on condition of freedom.” The utilization of this phrase occurs in numerous sacral manumission texts which contain both the presence and absence of the *paramone* clause. Interestingly, these types of texts represent a fictitious sale of the slave to the deity or the dedication of the slave to the god.

One lengthy example of ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία with *paramone* stipulations occurs at Delphi in 45-51 A.D. The text reads:¹⁹

Ἀγαθῆ Τύχα ἄρχοντος ἐν Δελφοῖς Τιμαγένους τοῦ Νικάνδρου, μητρὸς Ἀμαλίου, βουλευόντων δὲ Καλλιστράτου τοῦ Νικάνδρου καὶ Σωτῆ τοῦ Εὐκλείδου, Εἰρανίων Μενάνδρου, γόνου δὲ Σωσικράτους, Δελφός, ἀπέδοτο τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Πυθίῳ σῶμα γυναικῆον ἃ ὄνομα Συμφέρουσα, τιμᾶς ἀργυρίου μνᾶν τριῶν καὶ τὰν τιμᾶν ἀπέχω πᾶσαν, ἀπέδομ<έν>αν δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖσδε ὥστε ἴμεν τὸ προγεγραμμένον σῶμα ἐλευθερον παραμεινάτω δὲ τὸ προγεγραμμένον σῶμα Εἰρανίῳν πάντα τὸν τοῦ ζῆν αὐτῷ χρόνον, ποιούσα τὸ ἐπιτασσόμενον ἀνεγκλήτως εἰ δὲ μὴ παραμῖνοι ἢ μὴ ποιῆ τὸ ἐπιτασσόμενον, ἐξουσίαν [ἐχέ]τω Εἰρανίων ἐπιτιμέων τρόπῳ ᾧ κα θέλη. . . . ἐπὶ καταδουλισμῷ, βέβαιον παρεχέτω τῷ θεῷ τὰν ὄνᾶν ὃ τε ἀποδόμενος καὶ ὁ βεβαιωτῆρ ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ὁ παρατυχῶν κύριος ἔστω συλέων καὶ ἀφαιρούμενος Συμφέρουσαν ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία, ἀζάμιος ὢν καὶ ἀνυπεύθυνος πάσας δίκας καὶ ζαμίας τίθεμαι τὴν ὄνῃν, τὴν μὲν ἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος. . .

This account concerns a female slave (σῶμα γυναικῆον) who was (fictively) purchased by the Pythian Apollo. Subsequently, although released ἐπ’ ἐλευθερία, she was bound to *paramone* “all the time of her life, doing that which is ordered.”²⁰

¹⁹ SEG 51:605.

²⁰ For Jewish inscriptions, with the conjoining of “freedom” and “staying,” in manumission texts concerning the Pythian Apollo, see Harry M. Orlinsky,

Although certain texts contain the pairing of these two elements (freedom and staying), others do not. For instance, an early 2nd century inscription reads as follows:²¹

ἄρχον[τος ἐν μὲ]γ Χαλείωι Ἀλεξίνου, μηνὸς Καρείου, ἐν δὲ
 Ἀμφίσσαι ἄρχοντο[ς] [Ἀριστά]ρχου, μηνὸς Ἀ[γρ]αστυῶνος,
 ἀπέδοτο Κλεογένης Ἀνδρονίκου Ἀλεῖος ἐν Ἀμ[φί]σαι
 ἐνεργα[ς]όμενος σῶμα ἀνδρείον, ᾧ ὄνομα Δημήτριος, τὸ γένος
 Λαοδικῆ, ἐπ' [ἐλευ]θερίαι τῶι Ἀπόλλωνι τῶι Νασιώται τιμᾶς
 ἀργυρίου δραχμῶν χιλιάων τὸν τιμὴν ἀπέχει πᾶσαν.

Here a male slave (σῶμα ἀνδρείον) by the name of Demetrius from Laodicea was purchased by Apollo ἐπ' ἐλευθερίαι (“on condition of freedom”) for “the price of one thousand silver drachmas. All the price was received.” Consider also a text presented by Deissmann, which states that the “Pythian Apollo bought from Sosibios of Amphissa, on condition of freedom (ἐπ' ἐλευθερία), a woman by the name of Nicaia, of Roman descent, for the price of 3 ½ silver minas.”²²

The main points in citing such texts as these are to demonstrate (1) that the phrase commonly occurs in sacral manumission, in which a slave was dedicated to or purchased by a god; and (2) that, no matter whether the slave was fully emancipated by the god or rendered consequent *paramone* to the deity, one fact is certain: when ἐπ' ἐλευθερία is employed in sacral manumission, the *former* master had no authority over the (former) slave (e.g. to mandate *paramone*). So certain is McLean, that he notes the following:

However, in most cases, the dedication was simply a way of stating that the master no longer had any claim on the slave, often explicitly expressed by the phrase “for freedom” (ἐπ' ἐλευθερία). Through this act of dedication, the god not only witnessed the transaction but served as its guarantor: any violation of the slave's new freedom was a violation of the rights of the god himself and constituted an act of sacrilege.²³

Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum Vol. 1 (New York, NY: Ktav, 1975), 512-514.

²¹ *SIG* 1205. See also *GDI* II/2, 2097 & 2172.

²² Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient Near East* (rev. ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1927), 323.

²³ McLean, *Epigraphy*, 292-93.

VI. FREED SLAVES, SONSHIP, AND GALATIANS 5

Returning to the biblical passage at hand, the import of this expression becomes clear: a likely reason Paul utilizes the expression is as an allusion to sacral manumission practices. However, one must be careful not to press the allusion too far, as did Deissmann when he understood all of Paul's references to emancipation and "slave of Christ" primarily in light of sacral manumission.²⁴ Nevertheless, in the case of Galatians 5, this investigator believes that sacral manumission is precisely what is in view. In light of the fact that sacral manumission was commonly practiced among both Gentiles and Jews,²⁵ and especially the fact that this phrase is most commonly employed in these types of texts, support the position that ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ was most likely employed by Paul with these connotations in mind. In fact, the slavery-freedom imagery utilized by the apostle elsewhere in the epistle coheres with such an idea in Galatians 5.

One instance where Paul utilizes the imagery of slavery is 4:3-5. Here the Apostle affirms that "we were once enslaved to the elementary principles of the world," being "under the law" (4:3, 5). Of note is that Paul unites slavery with the law. However, in 4:5 Paul states that Christ came to "redeem" (ἐξαγοράζω) (cf. 3:13) "those who were under law so that we might receive the adoption."²⁶ This language of "redeeming" was very common in the ancient world for redeeming or buying a slave, but may also refer back to Exodus 6:6, where God says that he will redeem (קָדַם) His people from slavery to the Egyptians.²⁷

In 4:6-9, the apostle reminds them that they are no longer slaves but sons. Yet, at the same time they have come to know God, or rather, to be known by God, they are desiring to once again be enslaved by returning to law. Hence, the apostle connects their freedom from slavery (and consequent sonship) with the divine agency of God through Christ crucified. The Galatians should realize that their emancipation from the master, "Law," came by virtue of God in Christ; they now belong to Him as children.

²⁴ Deissmann, *Light*, 318-30.

²⁵ See B. Nadel, "Actes d'affranchissement des esclaves du royaume du Bosphore et les origines de la manumission ecclesia" in *Vortrage zur griechischen und hellenistischen Reschtsgeschichte*, (ed. Hans Julius Wolff (Cologne: Bohlau, 1975), 265-291, who records Jewish manumission with consequent *paramone* rendered to τῆ προσευχῆ.

²⁶ Interestingly, the word ἐξαγοράζω is only used twice in Galatians (3:13; 4:5), and both times with reference to being "redeemed" from the law.

²⁷ On the possible connection of Galatians with the Exodus account, see Byron, *Slavery*, 187-99.

In this manner, the freedom (cf. 5:1-13) into which the Galatians were brought can be directly attributed to divine means. This would explain why Paul employs the language of sacramental mission in Galatians 5:1 and 5:13. The Galatians have been freed “for freedom” (ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ), and Paul urges them to stand fast and not be subject to the yoke of slavery—which, in the context of Galatians, is adherence to the law.²⁸

Before delving into the text of Galatians 5, it is important to reiterate that 5:1-6 is couched in Paul’s argument that the Galatians are no longer slaves, but sons. Here, the apostle unites their freedom from slavery with their sonship—which is another way of saying that the Galatians were emancipated to be sons. As such, Paul issues the stern warning to those who would be circumcised that “Christ will be of no benefit” to them (5:2), they will be “a debtor to practice the whole law” (5:3), will be “annulled (κατηργήθητε) from Christ” (5:4),²⁹ and will “have fallen from grace” (5:4). Conversely, he states in 5:5, “For we, through the Spirit by faith, anxiously await the ‘hope’³⁰ brought about by righteousness.”³¹ By mentioning “Spirit” and “faith” once more, Paul seems to be harkening back to those concepts mentioned in the letter’s body (cf. 3:1-9, 14; 4:6-7) that denote true sonship. Only those in the Spirit-faith realm, that is, the legitimate son/heirs, can eagerly await such a “hope.”

The apostle’s grand pronouncement concerning sonship, however, comes in 5:6: “For (γὰρ)³² in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor

²⁸ See fn. 10.

²⁹ Given the sonship and inheritance themes that pervade the letter, it is probable that *κατηργήθητε* carries the connotation of being “voided” or “annulled” as a son/heir in this context, which implies that one’s claim to sonship was illegitimate. For the idea of this verb as “legally invalidate,” see *BDAG*, s.v. “καταργέω.”

³⁰ ἐλπίδα most likely connotes “that for which one hopes” (Cf. *BDAG*, s.v. “ἐλπίζω”). Furthermore, although the point cannot be pressed, the term does appear to be connected with the ideas of inheritance and sonship in some other NT instances. See Eph. 1:18; Col. 1:5-12; Heb. 6:17-18; & 1 Pet. 1:3-4.

³¹ δικαιοσύνης is taken as a “genitive of producer.” Understanding the genitive in this manner highlights the distinction between those seeking to be “justified by law” (5:4) and those who, “through the Spirit by faith” possess (true) righteousness and its consequent hope. For a discussion of this syntactical category, see Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 104-106.

³² The γὰρ is almost certainly “explanatory,” thereby linking “the hope brought about by righteousness” (5:5) to the sphere of Christ Jesus.

foreskin has any validity (τι ἰσχύει),³³ but (what has validity is)³⁴ faith operating through love.” At this point Paul undermines the whole paradigm by which his opponents are operating, and demonstrates that the circumcision-foreskin dichotomy is false and valid for nothing in the Christ-sphere (5:6). On the contrary, he maintains that “in Christ Jesus” the only true validity (i.e. legitimacy as son/heirs in the context of Galatians) consists in “faith expressing itself (ἐνεργουμένη)³⁵ through love” (5:6). Hence, Longenecker is only partially correct to assume that Paul includes this phrase simply because “he needs to emphasize more directly the ethical dynamic inherent in the relationship of being ‘in Christ Jesus’.”³⁶ More likely is the thesis that Paul specifically cites “faith” in this passage because it is an indicator of genuine sonship (cf. 3:6-9, 26) vis-à-vis those seeking to validate sonship and obtain inheritance through circumcision. Additionally, this faith of true sonship expresses itself through the one virtue that fulfills the law: love.³⁷ In short, the apostle still has sonship and law-keeping in mind when making the claim that the Galatians have been emancipated ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ. The force of such an assertion in 5:1-6 serves to identify three key elements: (1) the valid locus of sonship is only in the Christ-sphere by means of faith; (2) that only through emancipation from Law can true sonship and its expression emerge; and (3) the fulfilling of law by believers only comes through love. Such is the hallmark of true sons/heirs, that is, those who have been fully emancipated by Christ from slavery to the law.

As a consequence, the necessity of law-keeping, especially circumcision, for the sake of sonship becomes invalid. Such a notion is in perfect keeping with the phrase ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ, which implies that any and

³³ In view of the forensic language in the immediate context (i.e. “annulled,” “justify” [5:4] and “righteousness” [5:5]) and the previous discussion concerning sonship and inheritance rights, τι ἰσχύει is best rendered in this context as “has any validity.” The sense here is “validity” concerning claims to sonship. See also *BDAG*, s.v. “ἰσχύω,” and Dunn, *Galatians*, 220.

³⁴ Since this is a likely case of an elided verb, the closest verb in the context has been utilized.

³⁵ Here ἐνεργουμένη is understood as a reflexive middle, and carries the notion of “power.” Cf. Betz, *Galatians*, 263.

³⁶ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 229. This, however, does not negate the ethical implications. See also Martyn, *Galatians*, 474-475, for a similar understanding.

³⁷ The assertion that Paul specifically has love “as the law’s fulfillment” in focus here is derived by viewing “love” in 5:6 cataphorically in light of its reappearance in 5:13-14 as such. The justification for doing so lies in the fact that 5:7-12 is part of a framing device utilized by Paul (having its counterpart in 1:5-10), and should be understood as a subsection of the letter itself. Moreover, given the likelihood that γὰρ in 5:13 is resumptive, Paul is probably continuing the thought unit of 5:1-6.

all authority of the former master (in this case, the Law) over the slave becomes legally voided. Thus, it is probable that, in Galatians 5, Paul weaves the imagery of sacral manumission of slaves and the language of sonship into a beautiful tapestry—one which turns the argument of his opponents on its head. However, the Apostle does not end the discussion there; he furthers his argument by maintaining that this freedom and sonship find true expression in the realm of a newly-instituted slavery.

VII. GALATIANS 5 AND THE LANGUAGE OF SLAVERY

This section picks up in Galatians 5:13, where Paul states, “For you were called on condition of freedom, brothers, only not the freedom for an occasion to the flesh; but rather, through love slave for one another.” While Paul laid heavy emphasis on the fact that the Galatians have been fully emancipated from the Law and are sons, he now states that this emancipation is not a license to self-vindicate by works of the flesh (i.e. going back to the practices under law). Moreover, slave imagery is yet again employed, but this time with a new master in view.

In this chapter, Paul progresses from full emancipation to full slavery—a combination which, at first, seems odd. To be sure, many instances exist in sacral manumission texts where a slave is emancipated but yet renders *paramone* to the deity.³⁸ However, to this writer’s knowledge, no sacral manumission text pairs the technical phrase ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ with consequent δουλεία (“slavery”); the thought is simply unheard of in the ancient world. Yet, the apostle unites this duality with utmost ease to establish the fact that the true sons/heirs of Abraham are those who possess true freedom in Christ and are yet slaves (5:1-13). This begs the question of how such a seemingly strange combination can exist.

Outside its affinity with yet distinction from sacral manumission, a more lucid understanding of this amalgamation comes from a cursory glance at the Old Testament evidence. Repeatedly, the people of God are referred to as God’s servants, God’s slaves. Passages such as Exod 16:3, 17:3; Num 11:4-18, 14:4; 2 Chron 12:8; and Jer 3:22 (LXX) demonstrate this fact. In the ancient Jewish mind, the idea of serving YHWH and his people are as ancient as the day God chose a people for Himself. Moreover, the Old Testament also witnesses to the fact that God’s people were freed *in order to* serve Him. Proof of this is to be found in Exod 4:23, 19:4-6, 20:1-6; and Lev 25:42. Thus, the idea of being emancipated to serve has a firm grounding within ancient Jewish culture, and no doubt

³⁸ See B. Adams, *Paramone*; and W. L. Westermann, “Enslaved Persons Who are Free” (AJP 59; 1938).

serves to bolster Paul's argument that, in light of the New Covenant, an adherence to Mosaic law via circumcision presupposes no freedom at all.

With both the Old Testament and ancient sacral manumission in view, we come to Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, but (δὲ) the Spirit (sets its desire)³⁹ against the flesh; for these are opposed to one another so that you cannot do the things you desire." This paper posits that here Paul views the Spirit as the new master of the Christian slave (in contrast to self-vindicating, law-keeping flesh). Consider the phrase μή ἂ ἐάν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε ("you cannot do the things you desire") in the passage. Noteworthy is that, in the Greco-Roman world, freedom was understood most generally over against the idea of slavery. For this reason the great Roman writer Epictetus defined the free man in this fashion: "He is free who lives as he wills, who is subject neither to compulsion, nor hindrance, nor force, whose choices are unhampered, whose desires attain their end."⁴⁰ On the contrary, a slave, as was seen in the above manumission texts, was to be occupied *ποιοῦσα τὸ ἐπιτασόμενον* ("performing that which is commanded"). Simply put, a slave does what the master desires and not what he or she desires. The idiom is also reminiscent of Romans 7:14-23, where Paul is a slave to sin, and states "For the thing I desire I do not do" (Rom. 7:15). The phrase under consideration in Galatians would strike any Roman citizen as uncharacteristic of a free person, since it is more descriptive of servility. Thus, in light of the preceding slave imagery, the expression might very well have been understood in this manner by the Galatians, and would serve in this passage to highlight the existence of two competing authorities: Spirit and flesh (which Paul uses virtually interchangeably with "Law" in the epistle as its embodiment).

If the above considerations are correct, the phrase "you cannot do the things you desire" seems to be a double entendre utilized by Paul. On one hand, the idiom refers to the fact that the Galatians who possess the Spirit will not "do what they desire," namely be under law by means of circumcision (which they were allegedly "desiring" to do in 4:21). In short, if they have the Spirit, the Spirit will not allow this to take place. On the other hand, the passage speaks to the fact that they are now slaves to the Spirit of God, and consequently "do not do what they desire," since they are now slaves under His rulership.

³⁹ The elided ἐπιθυμῶν has been provided for clarity.

⁴⁰ Epictetus, *Discourses as reported by Arrian*. (trans. W. A. Oldfather; 2 vols.; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1925-28), 4.1.1. See also Philo, "Every Good Man is Free (Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit)," (*Philo IX*, trans. F. H. Colson; LCL; Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1941), 22, who describes freedom as operating according to one's own desire.

The Apostle continues in 5:18 to state “But if you are led (ἄγεσθε)⁴¹ by the Spirit, you are not under law (ὑπὸ νόμον).”⁴² Of great significance is that ὑπὸ νόμον (“under law”) is actually a phrase that was employed in slave manumission. For instance, the noted Greek epigraphist Bruno Helly remarked that ὑπὸ νόμον was used in various manumission texts to refer precisely to the *paramone* agreement. In other words, when the phrase was employed, *paramone* was in play. In like manner, Helly maintains that to *not* be ὑπὸ νόμον implied full emancipation for a slave.⁴³ Hence, when applied to the text of Galatians 5:18, two interrelated facets come into focus: (1) the phrase would imply that if one is led by the Spirit, that person is not under any obligation to render *paramone* to the old master (i.e. the law); and (2) it presses the idea that the authority of the law over the Galatian believers is permanently voided. To buttress this idea, it is noteworthy that in 5:13f Paul affirms love as the fulfilling of the law, and in 5:22—which begins his list of the fruit of the Spirit—love takes pride of place on the list. More to the point, slavery to the Spirit inherently produces that which fulfills the law (i.e. love), and hence the Christian slave has no further obligation to it. It’s authority has been voided and its demands have been fulfilled.

This thought may also extend to 5:23, where Paul ends his list on the fruit of the Spirit by noting κατὰ τῶν τοιοῦτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος (“against such things there is no law”). The phrase has often confused scholars as to its meaning. Both Longenecker and Witherington assert

⁴¹ This verb may be a reference back to the sonship discussed earlier in the passage—especially in light of Romans 8:14 (“Who as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”). However, although this point is rather minute, it is interesting that the verb ἄγω is often coupled with situations where a person or group of persons is “led” in some form of slavery/captivity. As examples, consider Matt 10:18, Acts 9:2, 1 Cor 12:2, 2 Tim 3:6, which support that the verb either connotes being led in captivity or occurs in such situations. See H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1945), 10, and *BDAG*, 16, which both note that the verb, in certain contexts, denotes leading away in captivity/slavery.

⁴² Space does not permit for a detailed study of the various theories concerning the meaning of “Law” in Galatians. One formidable proposal, however, comes from Todd Wilson, who wishes to understand this phrase as a reference to not being under “the curse” of the law, and appeals to Gal. 3:13 for support. However, Wilson does not give due credit to the fact that in 3:13 as well as 4:4-5, the language used is that of a slave being “redeemed” from a master. Therefore, a more proper understanding of ὑπὸ νόμον should take this into consideration. See Todd A. Wilson, *The Curse of the Law and the Crisis in Galatia* (WUNT 2/225; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 119-20.

⁴³ Bruno Helly, “Lois sur les affranchissements dans les inscriptions thessaliennes,” *Phoenix* 30 (1976): 143-58.

that it is perhaps an early Christian proverb, meant to spur the Galatians toward ethical Christian living.⁴⁴ Wilson, who acknowledges the puzzling nature of this comment, is still more adventuresome, and chooses to render the phrase as “The Law is not against such things.” His aim in doing so is to demonstrate that the Mosaic code is not counter to the Spirit’s fruit.⁴⁵ However, such a translation does justice neither to the Greek word order of the passage nor to Paul’s rhetoric concerning the law in the epistle. Therefore, it seems better to maintain the more accepted translation (i.e. “against such things there is no law”), yet to place this phrase within the above servile-emancipation matrix. The understanding achieved by this maneuver is simply that the negation of law (i.e. οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος) would suggest, *ipso facto*, that the function of the “fruit” in the life of the Galatian believers occurs within the realm of the Spirit, and thereby connotes and expresses the complete manumission/emancipation from νόμος.

VIII. CONCLUDING SYNTHESIS

This brief contribution has sought to demonstrate that Galatians 5 operates in keeping with the dual notions of slavery and sonship within the wider context of the epistle. The apostle utilizes both emancipatory and servile language taken from sacral manumission texts to create a paradoxically mixed metaphor (i.e. full emancipation-total slavery) which runs against the common grain of slave manumission in the ancient world. However, such a notion is certainly present and finds a bedrock within Old Testament theology. Equally important, it has been noted that the phrase ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ marginalizes any notion that the Galatian believers are to continue in any type of *paramone* service to the law, which, in the context of Galatians, is the reception of circumcision. Therefore, whatever scholars may debate concerning the precise meaning and role of the law in Galatians, this much is sure: that those who are in Christ fulfill law by the Spirit’s leading through love, and owe no further allegiance to it because they have been emancipated by and have come under the authority of a new Master. Such a new slavery, in the words of John Byron, “is manifested through love and enslavement to one another and not through enslavement to the law. In Paul’s mind, believers...have been freed from one enslavement in order to enter another, that of Christ.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Longenecker, *Galatians*, 263-64; Witherington, *Galatians*, 411-12.

⁴⁵ Wilson, *Curse*, 120-25.

⁴⁶ Byron, *Slavery*, 199.