

Galatians 5

The book of Galatians has three lines of defense against the legalism of the Judiazers:

- 1) The **past history recorded in chapters 1 and 2**. It included:
 - a) Paul's own experience
 - b) The Galatian's personal experience
 - c) Paul's experience with defending the gospel message to the apostles in Jerusalem. This evidence was verifiable by many Christians of time and could be easily proved or disproved as true statements
- 2) The **teaching of scripture (the law, the prophets) and the theology developed from the study of scripture in chapters 3 and 4**:
 - a) Theology developed exegetically by traditional hermeneutics
 - b) Theology developed by allegory as used in the hermeneutics of the Rabbis
- 3) The power of the Holy Spirit in the believer to live a holy life:
 - a) Salvation by grace found in the gospel followed by the indwelling Holy Spirit produced a moral change in people that never successfully occurred in those who followed a law.
 - b) Paul was showing that the result of "true" salvation by grace and an "actual" indwelling of the Spirit is a growth in holiness and should never be misinterpreted as the basis for antinomianism.

5:1

The point is that this liberty, or freedom, is not a license to sin.

It is a freedom from law (bondage to works of the flesh) into a freedom to grow into a mature, Christ-like.

The Holy Spirit fills this freedom with power to change the believer's production

5:1 is a summary of chapters 1-4 and an introduction to chapters 5 and 6

This verse should be read in two parts:

- 1) ***"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."*** Christ set you free from sin so you can be free from the law as a means of life.
- 2) ***"Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."*** Now that you are free from the law do not let yourself accept legalistic standards.

Point: Christ set you free from sin. Holy Spirit sets you free from law.

It is a statement to resist bringing any Christian under any form of legalism.

"Yoke of slavery" is a term used by the Jews in the phrase, "taking the yoke of the law upon oneself."

The concept would be that the law was a yoke of slavery that the Christian was released from to experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke of taking "his yoke" in Matthew 11:29-30

Acts 15:10, Peter said,

"Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear."

Paul is going to discuss the Christian life, ethics and morals now.

Notice he still stays in the context of spiritual production and not strapping the believers with a legal code.

They will be righteous as the Spirit produces it by Grace.

Paul is saying if you want to be holy continue in the faith of Christianity but leave legalistic standards in the past.

Holiness never results from following man's regulations or *imitating* (act, pretend, etc.) God's holiness.

5:2

“Mark my words!” means to call attention to what is going to follow.

It is like saying, “Listen. . .” or “Look here. . .”

For a believer to fall back into legalism (“circumcision”) means that Christ’s life and the Holy Spirit will be of no use for them in their life, maturity and pursuit of God’s calling to produce spiritually.

Circumcision in itself is not wrong, but the meaning circumcision had in the believer’s life indicated bad teaching, an error in understanding, a wrong heart, and legalism in the believer’s attitude.

This is seen in verse 6.

Paul is condemning the false teaching that accompanied the practice of circumcision.

False teaching destroys the believer’s chance to:

- 1) Mature
- 2) Produce good works
- 3) Finish the race (or, calling and purpose God has for each believer)
- 4) Receive rewards (crowns, etc.) in heaven for their service

“To be circumcised” is present passive. This means they had not yet been circumcised, but were considering it.

There is no condemnation for the Jews (like Paul, Ph. 3:5) who had always been circumcised.

This principle is seen in 1 Corinthians 7:17-18,

“Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was uncircumcised? He should not become circumcised. Keeping God’s commands is what counts.”

The issue is:

- 1) LEGALISM verse GRACE
- 2) FLESH verse SPIRIT
- 3) GROWTH verse IMITATION
- 4) PRODUCTION verse DEAD WORKS
- 5) SPIRITUAL FRUIT verse WORKS OF THE FESH (production from the power of the sin nature)

Legalism, sin nature and the flesh can manifest in two ways:

- 1) Wickedness
 - 2) Good Deeds
- But, both are sinful and rebellion against the Spirit of God and God’s plan of grace.

“Christ will be of no value to you at all.”

Chrysostom (347-407) said:

*“He who is circumcised is circumcised as fearing the law:
But he who fears the law distrusts the power of grace;
And he who distrusts gains nothing from that which he distrusts.”*

John Calvin said:

“The tendency of their whole doctrine is to blend the grace of Christ with the merit of works, which is impossible. Whoever wishes to have the half of Christ, loses the whole.”

Anyone who was circumcised for salvation showed they did not understand the Christian message of salvation by faith in Christ. If they do not understand it, they cannot believe it.

If a believer turned to circumcision for their salvation they show what John writes in 1 John 2:19,

“They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”

Abrahamic Covenant: Circumcision to Abraham was the sign of the covenant or belief in the promise.

Mosaic Covenant: Circumcision to Moses at Sinai was an obligation to stay in the covenant nation.

5:3 *“Again I declare . . .”* is *martyromai* and means “I testify” and refers to one speaking under oath in the court of law. Paul’s training for the Sanhedrin would have prepared him to use this word only when he was presenting evidence in the Jewish court of law.

Paul now gives the second reason for not being circumcised:

“You must now obey the whole law.”

Modern Christian teachers of legalism usually only focus on their favorite legalistic issues:

- a) dress code
- b) Bible reading
- c) Baptism
- d) Tithing
- e) Style of music
- f) (please fill in your favorites here) _____
- g) (. . .and here)_____

The Judaizers had their favorite:

- h) Circumcision
- i)

In verse 3 Paul says if you accept any one legalistic standard or any one part of the law you must go back to that way of life for salvation and spirituality. You must forsake Christ and return to your own efforts in the flesh.

The legalizers were slowly running out of preaching material and would soon have to teach the next step of being “a good Christian” which would be something about the Jewish feast, obeying the Sabbath, and on and on further and further into bondage and away from the truth.

5:4 *“Fallen away from grace.”* This is the only place this phrase is used in the Bible. Yet this phrase is used over and over in the modern church, but rarely in the context with what Paul is talking about.

First, this phrase is not talking about a Christian sinning and then losing their salvation. Sin is not even in the context. It is talking about a Christian being “legalistic” or, following a legalistic code to prevent a type of sin!

To choose legalism is to reject being related to God by grace.

5:5 Pronoun changes here from “you” to “we” “we wait” and “we hope”
Greek text says,

“For we in spirit by faith hope of righteousness eagerly expect.”

Each word and its order in the sentence is important.

“We” “in spirit” “by faith” “hope” “righteousness” “expect”

In the same words, “We expect to produce the desired hope of righteous living through the Spirit.”

Circumcision is of the flesh. This above declaration in 5:5 is a statement of faith.

Notice: In verse 5 the believer is waiting, not working for righteousness.

This righteousness is not the imputed righteousness for that we have already.

It is the actual, ethical righteousness that is going to be discussed in the following chapters.

5:6

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is the answer.

True faith will express itself in love, not in circumcision, or other legal method.

This is the definition of the true Christian faith or religion:

This is faith (from verse 5:5)Faith in the truth.

This is hope (from verse 5).....Hope of being righteous.

This is love (from verse 6).....Love expressing what is in Christ, and now in the believer

No works, no legalism.

Only **faith** in the **truth**, **hope** expecting that **the Spirit** will produce God’s character of **love** in our lives.

Galatians 5:7-12

Verses 2-6 were comparing the people who had listened to the teaching of circumcision with people who did not accept the legalistic teaching.

The **pronouns** were “you” and “we.”

Verses 7-15 compares the false teachers with true teachers.

The **pronoun** “I” (Paul) **contrasted** with “the one who is throwing you into confusion.” (Judaizer)

5:7

The athletic analogy often used by Paul:

- 1 Cor.9:24-27, the runner running to get the prize.
 - Gal 2:2, “for fear that I was running or had run my race in vain.”
 - Phil 3:13,14. “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me.”
- 2 Tim. 4:7, “I have fought the good fight., I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.”

The Galatians were running a good race.

A good race involves two dimensions:

- 1) A sincere heart that has been changed to God (notice word “obey”)
- 2) An informed mind concerning the truth (notice word “truth”)

“**Cut in**” is the word *evkophen* and means “to cut in, to hinder.”

It is the image of the runner who has been blocked, or has ran off the track.

It was a military term used to describe the blocking of a road or the destruction of the road.

It involves the idea of cheating someone in a race by taking a position that is not right.

The false teachers had done this very thing.

- 1) They had blocked the Galatians progress
- 2) They had presented the Galatians with a new, false running lane which was not part of the race.
- 3) They had destroyed the road of truth
- 4) They had cheated the Galatians out of their rightful place in grace in order to manipulate the Galatians for the advantage of the false, cheating teachers.

5:8 This false teaching does not come from God.

- It originates in the sinful nature of man.
- It originates from demons. (1 Tim. 4:1-3)
- But, it is used by God to test people's hearts (Deut. 13:3)

5:9 False teaching spreads.

- It becomes the source of "light" used to interpret the next doctrinal issue or the next moral choice.
- In the "light" of a lie (darkness) nothing can be evaluated correctly.

Corrupt teaching: Jesus warned the disciples of the yeast of the Pharisees in Mt. 16:5

Corrupt lifestyle: Paul also used yeast in 1 Cor. 5:6 in reference to immorality

5:10

"Confident. . .you will take no other view."

Paul knows their heart. The good heart will eventually reject the false teaching. It may take time. They may get caught up in a moment of bad doctrine, but the true believers will grow and eventually come around.

"throwing you into confusion" is from the word *tarasson* which means:

- to shake back and forth,
- to disturb,
- to trouble.

"No other view" refers to what?

- a) the true gospel
- b) Paul's original teaching
- c) The statement Paul just made
- d) That the legalist are dangerous

Judgment of false teachers:

Jude 4-23

2 Peter 2:1-22

5:11

"If I am still preaching circumcision. . . ?"

- a) may refer to his days in Judaism
- b) may refer to a brief period of confusion in his own doctrine (Paul had Timothy circumcised in Acts 16:3)
- c) It may just be an accusation and a lie made about Paul

“offense of the cross” refers to the hideousness of sin in man before God and the terrible death, humiliation that Christ endured on the cross. The cross shows us what we truly are. How can circumcision of any act be more effective than the cross which was the actual payment for sin.

Point: If circumcision is the answer then there is no need for the cross.

The reason man is not offended by sin is he is lacking in his knowledge of God’s character. Meaning man will always compare himself with what he can see such as other men’s actions or the way other men appreciate him.

A true evaluation of sin, the sinfulness of man and the realization of how bad off we are requires:

1. Doctrine, or teaching of the truth,
2. Faith and the revelation of who God is.

Void of doctrine and revelation it is easy to understand how men can replace the work of the cross with their own righteousness, worthiness, efforts, legalism, etc.

5:12

“Emasculate” is castration.

This is another attempt by Paul to show how ridiculous legalism is. If a little bit is good, let’s make it really good. If a little bit of legalism is good then let’s go as far as we can with legalistic rules.

Paul tells the Galatians to “man up” or else they are as good as castrated.

Pagan priest in the area of the Galatians would practice castration.

Paul once again puts the practice of Judiasm during the church age one the same level as pagan rituals.

“agitators” is from a word that means to upset or disturb someone’s mind.

Galatians 5:13-18

Freedom can go in one of two directions:

1. indulge in sinful nature
2. serve one another in love

Fulfilling the law is what legalizers tried to do. But, only in freedom can that be done.

“Freedom” is mentioned in 2:4; 4:26; 4:31; 5:1

Chapter 5 and 6 describes the life in the Spirit. Or, life free from the bondage of religious law.

A Jew without the Mosaic Law could not imagine how morality would be maintained

A Pagan without some religious system of works would be completely unmotivated and uncontrollable.

Now, a Christian has the Spirit providing both the motivation and the power.

But, even more, it is now the believers new nature.

The believer is learning to walk in their new nature. Or, walk in the Spirit.

5:13

Paul had said earlier that he believed they would have no other view and he picks up on that here by speaking to them about how to live the moral and ethical Christian life without a law.

The warning before was avoid returning to legalism or religious law after being saved. Now the warning is to avoid returning to sin after being saved. The options:

Self-service

Legalism

Immorality

Service to other:

Love

“indulge” is *aphorme* (KJ: “occasion”) means the “place from which an attack is made, a base of operation.”

Synonyms: “opportunity,” “occasion,” “advantage.”

Used in 2 Cor 11:12 twice “cut the ground. . .who want an opportunity.”

5:14

“summed up” is *peplerotai*

1- means the law can be summarized

i. Lev. 19:18

ii. Mt. 22:39

iii. Lk 10:25-28

KEY VERSE: Rm 5:5 “God has poured out his love into our hearts.”

2- means fulfilled as the Judiaizers are trying to do

The law is still “holy,” but just not attainable by the flesh.

5:15

There are no details but the legalistic teaching resulting is self-service by the mass of Galatians (not to mention the loss of any opportunity to move together in love as in Ep. 4).

Result:

a) Biting

b) Devouring means attempt to eat up

c) Destroying means consume and pictures wild animals in a deadly struggle.

5:16 If you live by Spirit you will not indulge sin nature

5:17 The Spirit of God will lead you and produce in you things contrary to the sin nature

Downside: You won’t be doing what you (sin nature) wants

Upside: You will be fulfilling the purpose of the law so you don’t need to be under the law to lead you step by step. The Spirit will be leading you step by step.

5:18 Led by Spirit or allow yourself to be led by Spirit

Called

A) Walk in 16

B) Led in 18

C) Live in 25

Not be governed or placed into bondage by Spirit

More like “teach you to walk in this new nature”

You have been formed like Christ. Now learn to live like Christ or conform to Christ.

