

Galatians
“Living Free”
Main Teaching: 1:10-6:10
C. 5:1-6:10 Responded Grace
1. 5:1-12 Practical position

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“Practical Position”

I. Intro.

II. Vs. 1 Lost their freedom

III. Vs. 2-6 Lost their wealth

IV. Vs. 7-12 Lost their way

I. Intro.

Freedom is noble ideal, but its practice is a much more difficult reality. With emancipation come personal responsibility and many a person, once freed, has wished to return to their former status where the master provides for all their needs. *The Jews in the wilderness frequently stated their preference to return to the slavery of Egypt to flee the personal responsibility of trusting a benevolent God.* Freedom demands that the freed person make their way, making their own decisions, suffering their own consequences for wrong choices. They themselves are responsible for their choices not someone else! This prospect can be overwhelming and frightening to the immature, regardless of how attractive the absence of restraints may be. What many want in our society is called the “*Peter Pan Syndrome*” of the benefits of freedom without the responsibilities it carries, whereby they never grow up. Thus legalism appeals to folks as a way of claiming superiority over that Peter Pan’s of this present day. The Church battles legalism today for much the same reasons the early church did. Leaders in the

Church fear that if you do away with rules and high standards, then the Church will fall into “Never Neverland” becoming a congregation of Peter Pan’s. **The error is not so much in legalism as it is in not understanding grace.** Paul clarified this in his letter to Titus (2:11-12) saying that “*the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.*” His argument in these 12 verses is to show his readers what they lose when they follow legalism instead of grace:

1. Vs. 1 They lose their freedom
2. Vs. 2-6 They lose their wealth
3. Vs. 7-12 They lose their way

II. Vs. 1 Lost their freedom

Vs. 1 Notice that Paul doesn’t merely tell these believers to intellectually agree with grace, he admonishes them to live by this truth. It boils down to a choice of how each believer chooses to live out their relationship with God, in bondage or freedom, in fear or love! Jesus bore the yoke of bondage for us as He carried His cross up the hill to Calvary. Paul uses words like liberty but we need to define what he meant by that word in his time not ours.

- Liberty today has the meaning of the pursuit of doing whatever a person wants to do. Not denying any desire! But this isn’t what Paul was speaking by the use of this word. The liberty Paul speaks of is the freedom from the tyranny of having to earn our own way to God. It also includes the freedom ***from*** sin, not the freedom to sin.

Paul wants them to “*stand fast*” which suggests that they were already in the right place when they received Jesus and that they need to make sure that they stayed there. Jesus Christ has given us an “*Emancipation Proclamation,*” but our “old master” tells us that we are still slaves to a legal relationship with God. These Galatians lived in bondage because their “*old master*” has deceived them. Jewish teachers of that day spoke of the Law of Moses as a yoke, but they used the term in a favorable light, but Paul sees it as a yoke of bondage. It was related to slavery, not liberty, as it entangled them.

In the mitzvot the Rabbis count 613 commandments to keep in the Law of Moses. One sight on Judaism commented that “*Judaism is more of an action-based than faith-based religion, performing mitzvot, or God's commandments, is central to leading a Jewish life.*” Even remembering all 613 would be a chore but to keep all 613 each and every day is an impossibility. The moment you try to do so you become a law breaker and enter back into slavery.

III. Vs. 2-6 Lost their wealth

Vs. 2-4 Paul uses three phrases to describe the loses if they turn from grace to the law as the basis of their acceptance before God:

- a. Vs. 2 “*Christ will profit you nothing*”
- b. Vs. 3 “*He is a debtor to keep the whole law*”
- c. Vs. 5 “*You fallen from grace*”

Those three phrases tells us the consequences of choosing the law over grace as, “*It will not profit you anything and make you a debtor to the law having fallen from grace!*” Paul is not suggesting that the Galatians had “*lost their salvation*” as 9 times he calls them brethren. What he is saying is that they had fallen out of the influence of grace and were

no longer enjoying the benefits of grace. To receive circumcision as a gentile, (*which was the sign to the Jews that that they were under the law*) was a sign that the gentile no longer trusted in Jesus as the sole basis of their right standing before God; they now trusted in themselves instead. Notice the words “*Indeed I, Paul...*” as he is making a personal appeal so that these beloved believers would know what is at stake: **If you try to make yourself worthy you make Christ worthless!** Furthermore, you are debtor to keep all 613 commandments each and every day for the rest of your life without fail or excuse. The Judaizers from Jerusalem were trying to convince these Galatian believers that they were only bound to keep some of the law not all of it. James wrote in his letter in 2:10 that “*whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*” If we come to God on the basis of our own law keeping, then our law-keeping must be perfect. **Think of it this way:** *If you are pulled over for speeding, it will do you no good to protest that you are a faithful husband, a good taxpayer, and have obeyed the speed limit many times in the past. That’s irrelevant; you have still broken the speeding law and are guilty under it. Literally, this phrase reads “you have fallen out of grace.”* Most people think of “*falling from grace*” in terms of immoral conduct, but we are not saved by our conduct. We are saved by our continuing reliance by faith on the grace of God. Boice remarked on this phrase saying, “*The phrase does not mean that if a Christian sins, he falls from grace and thereby loses his salvation. Or to put it another way, to choose legalism is to relinquish grace as the principle by which one desires to be related to God.*”

Vs. 5-6 The answer is not more laws and effort in our strength but greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit as we wait for the hope of practical righteousness by faith which is

the fulfillment of positional righteousness. No one can be into self effort if they are dependent upon the Holy Spirit! You aren't better if you are circumcised or uncircumcised. You aren't worse if you circumcised or uncircumcised. It doesn't matter if you worship on Saturday or Sunday, whether you eat meat or feast on birdseed, drive a V8 S.U.V. or cruise on your Schwinn as far as a relationship with God everything is irrelevant except faith in Jesus alone.

IV. Vs. 7-12 Lost their way

Vs. 7-12 The word "*hindered*" in verse 7 is a military term that means to "*break up a road to make it impassable.*" As the saying goes it's not how you start a race It's how you finish it that matters. These believers were in danger of leaving the race because the false teachers had torn up the path throwing the debris of legalism on the road making in impassable. It hadn't taken much to get them off track, as a "*little leaven leavens the whole lump.*"

But as corrupting an influence as legalism is Paul was far more confident in the resurrection power of Christ to restore what had been destroyed. It also sent a warning to those who were get them off course that they will be judged no matter who they are. James warned in 3:1 "*...let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*" Just because someone is a popular teacher doesn't exclude such judgment if they are taking people away from Jesus onto other things.

It seems as though some falsely accused Paul of still preaching the necessity of circumcision but Paul says if this is true then why is he still enduring persecution from the very ones that were saying this? The whole point of Jesus dying on the cross was to say, "*You can't save yourself. I must die in your place or you have absolutely no hope at*

all.” Paul’s idea here is: “*If cutting will make you righteous, why don’t you do like the pagan priests, go all the way and castrate yourself?*” Circumcision stands for a religion of human achievement, of what man can do by his own good works; ‘Christ’ stands for a religion of divine achievement, of what God has done through the finished work of Christ. The Christian faith is not founded upon a book but upon a person; its dynamic is not obedience to a law but love of Jesus!