



Lesson 12 May 21st, 2021

The Nature of Christian Freedom

Study Scripture – Galatians 5:1-15

Background Scripture – Galatians 5:1-15

Key Verse:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:14

INTRODUCTION

Our Study focuses on the facts about a deadly compromise.

It addresses believers as Freedom Fighters who are free by the fact of their union with Christ having been justified or declared righteous legally by God the Father.

They therefore love Freedom, They Love freely. They concentrate on building up Treasures in Heaven and not on the earth for they know moth and rust will consume the treasures they accumulate on the earth. They do what God wants them to do and they are free to display their determination to serve for they are free.

They are therefore free to stand and fight the good fight. They see the person of Jesus in need when they see others dying from hunger, languishing in prison, naked and unclothed.

Having passed the true/false test they stand their ground. They persevere in the grace of God given to them by God. They will never fall from this Grace, this gracious and compassionate positioning by God, which has been totally due to God's initiative to save those that He has willed to belong to Him.

So consider carefully where you stand. Examine yourself to see if you are really in the faith brought to you by the Lord Jesus Christ. Confirm that you have rejected all other Gospels and all other methods of justification for you know those will lead you away from the true God.

In these previous two chapters in the Book of Galatians the Apostle Paul emphasized the fact that the Galatian believers had taken on a new identity, which would of necessity lead to a totally new behavior. They had been born of the Holy Spirit, and now had a great freedom in Christ, having been freed from the curse of the Law.

The Apostle Paul also warned that the power of the 'flesh' was great, and posed a danger to the freedom that they had in Christ. There was constant warfare between the 'flesh' and the Spirit. Believers should therefore be careful that their behavior reflected their freedom against slavery

under the Law, and their walk should show that they were not influenced or overcome by the desires of the flesh.

The problem is that most new believers and certainly many of the older believers have tension and struggle for the sinful nature (the Greek word *sarx*) which is the sinful nature is deep-seated, sourced from the inside and relentlessly keeps pouring out its sinful antagonism toward God. This nature will not go away or give up easily for it is committed to make you prefer yourself above everything else. It will never change. The presence of God inside the believer which comes about because they are now indwelt by the spirit, leads to the believer's life having real tension, questions, and struggles.

Unfortunately the people of Israel made a poor choice. The alternative facing them was either living under the Mosaic code or coming under the teachings of the Messiah that told them that there is a New Covenant law for favor with God.

It was easy for the rulers whose were blind and whose eyes were closed to misinterpret the teachings of Messiah saying that the freedom that He taught would leads to license.

In

We know that in the Christian Church history we see Antinomians, those that were supposedly against law, and they often struggled and castigated those on the opposite side for what they proposed. They wanted to be so free to do what they felt was right in their own eyes that they rejected the idea of the law existing to make believers aware that there were standards relevant for the daily life of believers. In modern church history these antinomians faced people like the Puritans who struggled over the place of law in the life of the believer.

This has always been a bitter struggle and it is not yet over. But we must hopefully come to understand that the Apostle Paul even though he expressed that idea or view that Jewish believers are not under the Mosaic law, they are still under the law of Christ and in this law of Christ there is no license to sin. Life under the Spirit, the Apostle Paul insisted would fulfill the righteousness that was in the law that has been revealed to us, for those laws expressed the righteousness and holiness of God.

The Apostle therefore spoke to believers about the freedom when under the Spirit but pointed out it was not a freedom that could lead them to violating the righteousness contained in the Mosaic law even though they were not under the Mosaic law's code. Believers then should remember that the author of the Law was the Holy Spirit and now He made them free from bondage and made them free for obedience to God out of the love which was implanted in the human heart through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit had taught them and introduced them to the significance of the death of Jesus Christ. For the Christian freedom was freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.

In chapter 4 the apostle Paul reminded the Christians that had come out of paganism that when they did not know God they served those who by nature were no god. They had learned that these were ungodly elements.

We will of course therefore look at some of what these ungodly elements were that the Galatians and many people nowadays follow.



Unlike those “weak and beggarly elements” the God of the Gospel was not an angry God hurling thunderbolts of judgment from heaven on men, but instead through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father had offered a righteous standing before Himself to those that came to Him by the same Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul knew the Galatians needed an urgent kind of pastoral and kind concern so that they would be delivered from error brought by heretics who were insincere men proclaiming false doctrines in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in fact they were insincere and unreal in their hearts. They were making attempts to entrap and keep people in the systems of religion that could not bring salvation and the Apostle called the Galatians foolish for becoming fascinated by these troublemakers who were teaching a false gospel.

The Apostle Paul therefore made it abundantly clear there was only one gospel that he had preached and would defend. He stressed that all other collection of doctrines are false, and were perversions designed to seduce believers as well as those who did not understand reality. Paul had to insist that justification came only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not by works of any kind. Salvation was by grace alone.

As well as pointing the Galatians to their experience with the Holy Spirit, and the power and blessing that the Spirit had brought to them, Paul made it clear that Christ had come in fulfillment of the promise to the Fathers, and that the law given to Israel had been designed to point men to Christ. Christ has redeemed them because of His work, Gentiles would be justified through belief and faith in Jesus, and receive the blessings promised Abraham. They were therefore sons of God, and heirs of God, united with Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Before Christ saved them, many Gentiles were pagans, living an abominable lifestyle under the *elements* of the world, controlled by ungodly forces, and behaving in an ungodly manner. A.C. Bouquet, in his famous book “**Everyday Life in New Testament Times**”, describe life lived by the pagans in those days:

“Anybody can see that names of the days of the week in some languages of Continental Europe show that they were called after the heavenly bodies. Monday (Lundi) is the Moon’s day. Tuesday (Mardi) belongs to Mars, Wednesday (Mercredi) to Mercury, Thursday in French (Jeudi), Italian, and Spanish, is under the sway of Jove or Jupiter, and Friday in the same way belongs to Venus (Vendredi).

When St. Paul in some of his letters speaks of people being enslaved under the *stoicheia*, for a long time it was uncertain what he meant, because *stoicheia* can mean ‘the alphabet’ or ‘the rudiments of knowledge’, and to translate the word in this way does not seem to make any good sense of the passages in Galatians 4 and Colossians 2.

***Stoicheia* is, however also used for “the elements” in the sense of the “signs of the Zodiac” or “the planets”, and if we use this translation we get very good sense.**

What St. Paul aims at showing is that until people become Christians they are enslaved by a belief in astrology, that is to say they think that the planets controlled the events of life from day to day, and as he says, they observed days and months and seasons and years, and are



always on the lookout for lucky and unlucky, auspicious and inauspicious days and even omens, and therefore they have no real freedom, but are just puppets.

How this worked we know a little bit from the books on astrology that were written. The poet Juvenal actually wrote a satire (No. 6) against ladies who regulate every action by their astrology books. There were astrological predictions made in connections with every Roman Emperor from the time of the crucifixion to the martyrdom of St. Peter, and one whole poem called "The Astronomica" on astrology was written by a writer called Manilius (believed to be first century). He is not very well known, but Professor Housman, who wrote "The Shropshire Lad" , was a great authority on his work, and was the first to edit it properly.

Mr. F.H. Colson has given a good example of the sort of guidance that astrologers provided for the public (Although the source from which he draws is a little later than the first century, it is quite typical).

It takes the hour at which he is writing, namely, about 12:30 PM on a Friday, 20 November. At this time of year the sun rises half past seven and sets shortly after four, and the day- hours, according to Roman reckoning, would then be about 43 minutes each. At half past 12 one would be in the eighth hour. Venus is therefore the ruler of the hour as well as of the day. What may happen to me at such a time? According to the handbook quite a number of unlucky things.

It would seem that the planets rather enjoyed tormenting human beings. Thus my slave may run away (this is a thing that is predicted in nearly all astrological books of the period, and no doubt corresponds rather with your daily help not turning up in the morning).

Then I may fall ill, or I may lose or break something, or I may have a burglary, but the influence being that of Venus, the burglar will be a soft womanish kind of person, and will steal my earrings, and if my slave runs away he will probably be found hiding with a woman in a public house. It is a relief to know that although the illness will be a serious one I shall recover.

In about half an hour one passes into the next or ninth hour of the day ruled by Mercury (i.e. Hermes). In this case the property stolen will be parchments or gilded vessels, and the thief will be an educated or literary person. The runaway slave will take refuge in a temple : but alas, any illness contracted may end in death!

One may well judge what a relief it must've been to be delivered from bondage to this pernicious nonsense by the fresh clear proclamations of the gospel. Nevertheless, astrology dies hard".

This should make it clear to us exactly what Paul was speaking about in Galatians. He certainly was not attacking the Law given to Israel, for he had elsewhere describes this as holy, just, and good. It is therefore quite illegitimate and inaccurate to use Paul's statement "***Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years***" in chapter 4: 10 to refer to the Jewish Sabbath, but that is exactly what people who should know better had been doing. But they are simply in error. These interpreters have started out with incorrect and erroneous presuppositions about Israel, the Commandments, the Law, and the place of Gentiles in God's plan, and then read all kinds of anti-Judaism meanings into the Text and therefore may Paul appear hostile to Jews and to the Old Covenant.



But it is to be noted that Paul makes it clear that in Christ believers have a New Covenant, in which the Law is written on the heart. The life of Christ is now lived through the believers, and therefore they would never violate the principles of the Law.

The believer in Christ is therefore no longer a slave to the rulers of the world, the things of the flesh, or the things of the world, but is now free in Christ. The apostle Paul therefore moves on very insistently and emphatically demand that believers show the practical results of this freedom in Christ.

We are therefore now given a clear picture of the Christian life, a life lived according to the Spirit, apart from what was not contradictory to law, but definitely a life not lived according to license.

Note that this life is being lived in a world which is treacherous, which has powerful temptations, and in which many tragic circumstances occur. There are afflictions persecutions, the risk of martyrdom, ridicule, ostracism, and many other hard trials.

But it is a life characterized by warm and intimate love for Jesus and for the brethren. Integrity is always maintained. There is never any compromise with the things of the world. There is no immorality. This life reflects total faithfulness to God. He or she consistently does the work of God, and never lives on past glory and achievements. It is always alert to opportunities, compassionate even to their enemies, and always seeks the true riches found only in Christ.

Opposed to this life is the deadly sin of legalism. Our Text makes it abundantly clear that those who are in Christ will live in a certain way, no exception. This is practical living demanded of every true believer. But some persons do not like what they consider to be rules for living.

Before we look at our Text we should address this matter, and differentiate between legalism and obedience to the commandments of God. Legalism is false Christianity and a fake though it uses biblical terms and Christian language. It is different from a true belief in God or to Christianity, for in true belief there is genuine behavior led by the Spirit of God, and motivated by a love for the glory and honor of God.

There is a Law, or a code to which God expects us to conform. When there is true belief there is freedom not from the Law, but from the ***curse of the law.***

The entire universe is governed by Law, a Law which reflects the character of God, for God is behind all things, and His character is the Law that governs all things. The 10 Commandments simply describe the nature of God's character, and so the character of God is the standard by which believers should live. True Christianity therefore cannot be freedom from the existence of Law.

The contrary position is both illogical and against the teaching of Scripture. That position is reflected in what is called antinomianism, which is considered to be a deadly error.



It is important to realize at this stage that a person must have sufficient and adequate power to live according to the character of God, or the Law. This is where the gospel comes in, for God has given us the Good News (the Gospel) that by faith in Jesus we have His power living in us, always available to us, so that we will obey God.

This Spirit of God always works to guide us to glorify and honor God. This power makes it possible for us to demonstrate this outward standard or code of behavior, and we have this overwhelming compulsion to do that.

The true believers therefore know that there is always a standard, and that this standard, the Law of God, never changes and is always right. True believers therefore know that it is wrong to murder, lie, commit adultery, covet the things belonging to your neighbor, do idolatry, steal and so on. Those things can never be right. Those fundamental Commandments of God, coming from the creation, has never changed, for God is immutable.

Note therefore that legalism is really therefore the following of the flesh or the old life, for there a person tries to do many religious things outside of the power of the Holy Spirit. It does what the Scriptures do not require, creating its own rules, laws, standards, and limitations on behavior. Its motives are all wrong. One writer puts it this way:

“The flesh is the old life, the natural life inherited from Adam, with its apparent resources of personality, of ancestry, of commitment, of dedication, and so forth. You can do all kinds of religious things in the flesh. The flesh can preach a sermon. The flesh can sing in the choir. The flesh can act as an usher. The flesh can lead people to Christ. The flesh can go out and be very zealous in its witnessing and amass a terribly impressive list of people won to Christ, scalps to hang on a belt. The flesh can do those things, but it is absolutely nauseating in the sight of God. It is merely religious activity. There is nothing wrong with what is being done, but what is terribly wrong is the power being relied upon to do it. That is legality.

It is paramount that we understand that. Because other Christians around you approve of what you are doing is no sign at all that what you’re doing is acceptable to God. What you are doing must be done out of a reliance on the power he provides or else it is nauseating, religious hypocrisy, in his sight, and it will ultimately prove to be that in the eyes of others as well.

You can go wrong in the motives which moves you to do things. Legality is also the fulfilling of external requirements for reasons of self-exaltation or personal merit.

Why do you do things? Are you trying to build a reputation for yourself? Do you want a name as a spiritual Christian? And so will you let it be known how many Bible verses you memorize each week, how many hours you spend in prayer, and how much you give to the missions.

That is exactly on par with the religion of the Pharisees.

Legality is a mechanical and external behavior growing out of reliance on self, because of a desire to gain a reputation, display a skill, or satisfy an urge in personal power. It is a religious performance, scrupulous and meticulous in its outward form, both, inwardly, as Jesus described it, “filled with dead men’s bones”. It is relying on self, personality, background, training, and talent or skill instead of the Spirit of God. And it is operating for and on behalf of one’s personal glory.

The thing that is appalling to us is to remember that there is no way to cheat in this matter. God knows our hearts..



The Scriptures suggest a very simple and unfailing remedy: Repent and believe-that is all. Repent of it. Change your mind about it. Don't justify it. Don't call it something else. Don't try to cover it up and pretend that it is something acceptable. You may fool the people around you, but you won't fool God. He knows. So repent of it. Admit it. Legality is hypocrisy. Legality is phony Christianity. It is a false way to trying to appear right, and therefore, it is a stench in the nostrils of the God of truth who loves to have people be honest and true as he made them to be".

Remember that the Apostle had reminded the Galatians of the profound truth that they had died with Christ, and that the *'old life'* had died with them. They had then been resurrected with Christ, and were now dead to sin, but alive and in fellowship with the pure life of the risen Lord.

God had graciously changed them and had given them the power of the Holy Spirit to live in newness of life. The believers had been raised to life by the Holy Spirit, and therefore must now live by the Spirit, and walk by the Spirit.

The Galatian believers had been emancipated from slavery because of the redeeming work of Christ, and now they were firmly anchored in the path of life in the Kingdom of God.

As discussed therefore in the previous lesson, the Apostle Paul listed many of the *'works of the flesh'*, and warned that those who did such things would never inherit the Kingdom of God.

In contrast to those evil works, the believers should show the fruit of the Spirit, which he described as love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Those persons who possessed and lived showing the fruit of the Spirit would have no fear of the Law. They belonged to Christ, and had crucified the flesh with its evil affections and lusts. There was great and natural freedom in showing the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul had clearly warned that a worldly Christian is a useless Christian, for behaving like the world, and being friendly with the world, indicated enmity with God.

Note that this worldliness was not simply a matter of doing this thing and not doing another thing. It was a matter of the attitude of the heart, an attitude of life which determined how one thought and therefore how one dealt with things.

Being led by the Spirit meant that a person was distinct and different from the world, not thinking like the world and not having the attitudes of the world.

The believers were to represent Christ in the world, and to influence the world without being corrupted by the ways of the world.



Note that the letter to the Seven Churches written by the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation emphasized the same points that the Apostle Paul had stressed. These teachings therefore had immense practical significance.

John had warned the church in Ephesus to recover, maintain and preserve the warm and intimate love of Jesus that they had had when they were first saved. It is only this genuine and warm love for Jesus that will take the believer through the perils of life.

John had encouraged the church in Smyrna not to give up their faith, but to endure affliction, persecution, mocking, and ridicule, even if it meant death. They were not to be intimidated by their enemies, but were to maintain their distinctiveness under pressure.

John had next encouraged the church at Pergamos to maintain their integrity, and resist being seduced by false doctrines.

He had then encouraged the church at Thyatira to reject compromise, to resist the introduction of idolatry and its attendant immorality by Jezebel.

John told the church in Sardis that by living on their past success they had become dead and did not even know it. They should throw off their lethargy, come alive, and work consistently. Phony achievement was the same as death.

Laodicea was warned about their lack of full commitment, their inaccurate self-image and their complacency. They thought they were self-sufficient, but they were only good for the scrapheap.

Therefore, when we read Paul's warnings and instructions, we must understand that this is a deadly serious discussion.

The works of the flesh are many and deadly. Believers can only survive if they live as commanded, by the Spirit, continuously and consistently displaying the fruit of the Spirit.

Note again that the fruit of the Spirit is one fruit, that is, all the qualities indicated in the one 'fruit' operate together, and must all be shown. They come spontaneously, and are shown by those possessing the Holy Spirit.

Let us also remember that the fruit of the Spirit must be shown by both Jew and Gentiles believers. Both are called out of the world, designated as a holy people, called to be saints or holy persons, lively stones built up a spiritual house, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ. They must both *show forth the excellencies of him who called them out from darkness into his marvelous light*. There can be no excuses from any believer in Christ.

THE TEXT

Verse 1. Here Paul raises the regretfully common situation of a believer who is literally "caught by a sin". The picture is of someone running away from sin, but sin is faster than he is, and so overtakes and catches him. He is seized without warning, suddenly invaded, and grabbed before he is aware.



This is not a picture of someone who is gone into sin as a result of sinful premeditation. There's a great difference between a person suddenly attacked unawares and falling into sin and a man who sinned because he 'walked in the counsel of the ungodly and stood in the way of sinners'.

Given that, the believers in Galatia are therefore encouraged to hold fast to their position in Christ and not become entangled in heathenism or in slavery to any system outside of Christ. They are to stand firm in their loyalty to the Gospel, and resist anyone who teaches a false Gospel.

One writer points out that the literal translation of the Greek would be, ***Christ has liberated us for freedom.***

Remember Paul's point that the Mosaic law was given as a pedagogue, to guide, to teach the people of Israel as a kind of schoolmaster. There was a yoke in the Laws which confronted them, whether they were Jewish or whether they were Gentiles, for even the laws of Moses were quite detailed and restrictive and the disciples admitted that, but they should not submit themselves again to that yoke of slavery so that they were in servitude.

The apostle Peter admitted that the detailed Mosaic law was very restrictive and that they and their fathers were not able to bear those restrictions and so the restrictions that law had could not be sensibly placed on Gentiles now that Messiah had come and had borne the sins of man on the Cross therefore eliminating the need for the sacrificial system and its many detailed requirements.

Freedom given by Christ sets you free and so the Apostle Paul was very concerned that the people in Galatia that he loved might lose their freedom. So Paul wanted to encourage them to value this freedom that they had been given and not to let anyone take it away from them.

We know that there are many different forms of freedom or liberty. There is the freedom that nations desire as they throw away colonial rule. There are many economists who want the freedom of free trade. There are capitalist businessmen who dislike central controls because they think it hinders free enterprise. Then there are others that emphasize freedom of speech in almost everything. Others emphasize the necessity of freedom from want or poverty. Others emphasize freedom from fear, and this is of course quite prominent when people live under terrible dictatorships. Then there are communists that claim that their system will set the proletariat free from capitalist exploitation.

The apostle Paul however is thinking about spiritual freedom, and it not only has to do with the freedom from the detailed Mosaic law, but it also involves the freedom that pagans had from the pagan systems that oppress them.

The atoning work of the Lord therefore has brought real freedom to Jews as well as to Gentiles even though some would like to confine it to one group. Certainly to Jews the law of Moses was a rule for life and so the apostle Paul had to point out to them that freedom from the law then is freedom from a false understanding of the law as a means of salvation. That unfortunately



was what many Jews believed given that they had twisted the law and made it into a means of salvation.

Some however thought then and think today that not being under the law as a rule of life means that they were free to sin. But the apostle Paul responded to that belief with the reaction, **God forbid!** Paul certainly taught that the moral law in the 10 Commandments which was part of the law of Moses would always represent the fundamental revelation of the holiness of the God of Scripture, and it would remain there for a test of the righteousness which the Christian believer should exhibit all throughout life. This is clearly stated in Romans chapter 8. People who are born in sin are certainly weak and quite unable to please God and so we read how God the Father dealt with this problem:

“What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit”.

Verse 2. One kind of the entanglement that indicated that something serious had come to make the believers fall away from faith in the salvation Jesus had brought would have come from submitting to a demand for circumcision.

Now it is well known that some tribes at the time of Abraham practiced circumcision for different reasons. God instituted that practice for Abraham as a sign of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants. But it was never really thought that he was justified and declared righteous in the sight of God by circumcision. Scripture is clear that Abraham believed God and that was counted to him for righteousness.

But the people of Israel had somehow developed the tragic position that salvation and justification would come through circumcision. It being a sign of the covenant separated them from other nations. Following that idea there were many other laws created by the elders that would keep them separate and would guarantee redemption for them. Certain teachers from Jerusalem had come to Galatia offering a kind of super- Christianity that taught that not only Christians love the Lord Jesus and benefit from His sacrifice but to complete salvation they had to bring their own contribution to add to the beauty of salvation. That involved being circumcised. The ancient impressive Jewish culture and religion was available to Gentiles so that ordinary Christians could graduate and be fully accepted by God. These teachers taught that even though they well knew that the prophet Jeremiah had spoken about a New Covenant where it was the heart that would be circumcised. Israel needed a heart circumcision.

Knowing this the Apostle was firmly against the idea that justification by anything other than or in addition to the saving work of Christ made any sense. By doing circumcision they would be seeking to achieve righteousness by doing a work, believing that justification came by a work and not simply by being declared righteous through faith in the work of Christ. Circumcision was not necessary for salvation, and anyone who became circumcised believing that this was necessary for salvation, was adding works to faith and showing that they did not have faith in the sufficiency of the work of Christ. This the false teachers did fully well knowing the failure of Israel to live up to the law they had been given and the repeated warnings of the prophets.



Paul declared emphatically that therefore thinking being circumcised was unimportant and would profit nothing. By believing this about the importance of circumcision the believers would be making that believer a debtor to the whole law.

Secondly, Christ will therefore become of no effect. Thirdly, it meant that that believer had fallen from grace.

He believers would be confused by thinking that they were justified by the grace of God by what Christ did. Instead some religious activity such as circumcision was the means to justification.

We too face that problem for some people will add to the grace of God by baptism, church ordinances, or other kinds of things which confuse grace and law. That means falling into legalism and away from the grace method of salvation.

When you think about it carefully you realize that when you turn to Christ you are saying in effect that you need somebody else apart from you to save you. You are confessing the fact that you are impotent to be saved through your own activity and so you turn to Jesus for salvation. It is a confusion and a contradiction when you think that you have to do something on your own to be saved for you cannot have both; you cannot have grace and works as a means of salvation. Salvation is a free gift and if you add something to it whether it's education, good works, belief in church ordinances, you are acting contrary to the message of Scripture and the apostles.

When you think about it you realize that there are only three ways to be saved. You can be saved by God, or you can be saved by man, that is by yourself. Or you can be saved by some combination of God and man. But note carefully that if you are a sinner you cannot save yourself for you need salvation yourself.

If you think that there must be some combination of God's work and man's work a determination must be made on how much God does and how much you are to do. How do you define that contribution without denying yourself any assurance of salvation? How can an impotent sinner with a mind twisted by sin make that kind of determination? If for example God does 80% and you do 20% how do you determine that and in addition what would happen if God did only 70% and you were supposed to do 30% and you did ONLY 20%. You could never have any assurance of salvation under that system.

In addition, if you were to reach Heaven you could be grateful to God for doing his 80% for salvation but you would have to tell Him that the other 20% was your work and you were obviously proud of what you have done. But we know that that for God sharing of glory and honor is impossible. Not even manufacturers on earth want you to tamper with their product. So how could you expect God to want you to tamper with His free gift and claim some of the value in this gift for yourself for you made a contribution to what the gift did.

Adding your contribution shows that you do not have faith in the sufficiency of the work of Christ.



Verse 3. The apostle declared that the law itself does not allow for compromise. All you relied on for observing the law are under a curse. He states in 3:10 it is written, ***Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the book of the Law.***

The Law is an all- or- nothing proposition and you have to do everything, not just circumcision but every detail of every commandment or you will have failed if you cannot do them all. One writer comments that there is no “most improved player” category. The Law does not give you points for trying hard or having good intentions. The Law does not allow for circumcision plus grace. It’s either law or grace. One writer comments: ***“It’ either keeping the rules, doing the cosmetic fixes, or trusting the Savior to rebuild you. And if you are seriously giving in at any important point, you have removed yourself from the gospel. You have fallen away from grace”.***

The true way to righteousness is through the Spirit received by faith. The promised Seed has come and has brought redemption and it makes no sense to revert to the Old Covenant instead of the New Covenant brought by the Messiah. The person that prefers that old covenant has actually rejected the word of God, prefer to seek his salvation by doing the works of the law, believing that he is able and has sufficient power to himself to satisfy the perfect demands of God. That person has assumed an obligation of obeying the entire law perfectly, obviously possessing an extraordinarily high opinion of himself. He thinks that he is better than Messiah, and can, like Messiah, keep the entire law perfectly.

Verse 4. Circumcision and dependence on other such things are not reversible. But circumcision is seen by God as submission to the law and not submission to Christ. Christ therefore has become of no effect, for the one that believes that circumcision gives them justification with God are seeking justification by their own works, as if there was no Christ, no righteousness in Him and they did not need Him. They trusted in themselves. They were regarding themselves as being righteous even when they were not clothed with the righteousness of Christ. These people accepting circumcision in that way would therefore have fallen away from the God appointed method of salvation by grace, choosing instead an ineffectual route to salvation. Circumcision by itself means nothing.

The love of God, and the peace of God brought by Jesus Christ had been rejected, and so it was clear they had fallen from grace.

Verse 5. Therefore they had put themselves in opposition to and separate from those among whom the apostles included himself, who operated in the power of the Holy Spirit, and not in the flesh.

The Spirit had been given to believers as a down payment on life in the future. They therefore wait for the full consummation of righteousness, the ***crown of righteousness laid up for them.*** Their hope was laid up in heaven.

For these Christ is the hope and believers therefore wait for His appearance, for He will bring eternal glory. That is the anticipation of the believers for they possess the Holy Spirit. The Spirit continually gives believers the foretaste of that glory that they will have. This faith exists in every genuine believer, for they look forward for receiving the end of their faith. (1 Peter 1:9).



Believers therefore wait with intensity according to the language. They're waiting and though it might seem passive it is not passive. They eagerly await and so they are active. They are serious, and energetic in their waiting and look forward to the future.

Verse 6. Those in Christ recognizing who He is and know that He is the only one who brings salvation to the circumcised or to the uncircumcised. Believers know that it is only that love brought by Christ that is inseparable from faith, which is important to God. Faith therefore must express itself through love to God, which always lead to obedience to Him.

Verse 7-9. Paul congratulated the Galatians for their Christian life, which he described as a race. They had held onto the faith at first, being zealous for the truth of the gospel. They diligently did what they were supposed to do, and had great interest in the things of God. They were always cheerful and tireless in promoting the ways of Christ, following after truth and holiness.

But now they had to answer the question as to who are taking them away from the truth. They had not been told to leave the truth by the one that had saved them, and so it was important to know who was deceiving them. Who was the one that were taking them along a wrong way?

Clearly they were asking for divine discipline to correct the error that they will be going into. A little false doctrine would grow until the entire congregation was infected. Their freedom would be lost for they would then have placed themselves under the slavery that had held their friends and family in captivity.

Note that there was tremendous attraction toward being like others, friends, family, and the neighbors. People were told that they could look good, gain greater respect and admiration. But Paul pointed out if they gave in on that point of circumcision they were putting themselves into a situation where they had to keep the entire law. They would not have the advantages of Christianity because that denied the Lord and were in a very false religion and had made a very false choice.

So the warning was quite clear, Do not play around with trying to be fleshly and spiritual at the same time because everything in the flesh will get out of control. Once you begin to compromise the compromise would take over and will set you back on the course to slavery.

It should be recognized that circumcision is not an issue for most of us and it does not as a practice have tremendous spiritual significance. But one writer warns us:

“But there are plenty of places where the issue of legalism is being raised for us, situations where we are tempted to compromise with the religion that is external, one that gains the approval of men only. This is a religion that, in Christ’s name, wants to make us impressive to people, not to God. So we are faced with the very same temptation. External measures count more in this religion- money, size, numbers, social standing, titles, degrees, popularity. We love these in place of Christ, and we do so apparently in his name.

How many of us have not at some time on a weekend find that our prayer life is no longer concerned about intimacy with God, but with what people listening to us always think of our



prayer? Fellowship groups which begun for ministry in Christ's name become social clubs where newcomers are made to feel awkward, and gossip dominates conversation. Evangelism becomes a routine-- a program to generate numbers rather than the response of hearts that are burdened for the lost. A religion of externals claims have stayed in our midst as easily as it did in Galatia. We find ourselves longing to look good on the outside more than we long for righteousness.

Circumcision was a physical mark that offered the same kind of benefits that the social and psychological masks among us came to provide. And the apostle announces, once you begin to compromise you have chosen a very dangerous path... It may not have seemed such a big thing at a time, but that little flick of your wrist could send you 180° away from the direction you wanted to go. You find you are not able to stop and turn around; an apparently small failure at a crucial point needs to be an unalterable change of course. That is what Paul is saying. "Don't give in. Don't compromise. Every man who receives circumcision is bound to keep the whole law".

Remember that the influence that has caused the Galatians to turn aside were neither from God nor from the Spirit. This persuasion must've come from Satan and from his false apostles, the enemy of their souls.

They were therefore encouraged to go on and not turn aside to another gospel for nobody could prevent them from continuing to obey the truth. They had to give their consent to the error which was turning them aside.

The warning is for them and for us. The apostle Paul used a proverbial expression to warn them that the result of a small error in doctrine is increasing ungodliness. As a small infection spreads disease through the entire body, false doctrine would influence their entire conduct so that they would eventually become perverted.

Verse 10. It is not strange that the apostle could have so much faith in their reasoning powers. He was confident that they would stand and not go along any other course. They would wish to reject those that troubled them and reject his judgments whoever he was.

We must remember that when Paul came to Galatia because of some illness he stayed there. Many people guess a great deal as to what form Paul's illness took but it was obviously distasteful in some sense, and he expected people to be turned off by his appearance when he was ill. Some guess that he had an eye disease that made his face repulsive. Others guess that he suffered from malaria. But when Paul came to the cities in Galatia to bring in the gospel to them they received him "as an angel of the Lord". They were merciful to him offering gifts of mercy and cared for him throughout his illness. So from the beginning the Apostle and the people of Galatia had something to give to each other and they ministered to each other. They began a love affair of respect and giving and concern. They were showing that Christian relationships can be really nourishing.

So Paul could ask them in view of their relationship what happened to the sense of blessing, their sense of joy, the mutual caring and ministering that had happened when they met. The



Galatians had treated Paul well, despite the repulsive appearance caused by his illness. The apostle said they would have given even their eyes for him, giving him their most precious possession. So the apostle asked what happened to their joy and the kind of fellowship that they had shared.

Verse 11. Paul differentiated himself from those who preach circumcision as a route to salvation by pointing out that if that had been his teaching, he would not have been persecuted, and his persecutors would have no reason to follow him around and oppose him. They regarded it as an offense because he taught about the Cross, a teaching that clearly meant that man was totally unable to contribute anything in his salvation. Salvation was to be found only in Christ. The teaching of the Cross and its significance meant that circumcision was unnecessary for salvation. The Cross was an offense to them for he taught that the Messiah had to come and bear their sins. They were all sinners and were unable to add anything to the salvation God provided.

Verse 12. The apostle Paul was so concerned that the purity of the gospel be maintained that he uttered a wish that the judgment of God would come on the plans of the false teachers so that their false notions would be withdrawn. The language literally said that he wished violence on those that were undermining the faith of the Galatians. Literally interpreted he wished that since they were preaching circumcision that they would be castrated themselves. Of course some regarded this as the apostle using hyperbole and not literally meaning that the false teachers should be castrated themselves since they were preaching circumcision. Paul was having extremely strong feelings about this error.

Verse 13. The reason for this intense disapproval stemmed from Paul's desire that they stay in the liberty of the Spirit.

In this liberty of the Spirit the brethren would be led by their intense love for each other. They would serve one another and not show the evil tendencies of the flesh, do damage and hurt one another. They should use their liberty as an opportunity to show love and to serve one another.

In this freedom of the Spirit they would experience, they would focus on other people rather than on themselves. A freedom to love someone else is part of the freedom brought by the Spirit. They would love when they focused on God. Clearly for the apostle there is freedom in love when one lives by the Spirit.

Believers therefore who keep on hating others cannot really say that they are living by the Spirit even though they get up early in the mornings to read their Bible faithfully, pray eloquently, and seemed to be so holy when they walk around. The fruit of the Spirit is something that is very important for it must be displayed.

The fruit of the Spirit will never allow the believers to show what the flesh demands. That is a contradiction in terms.



Verse 14. In this relationship of love there would be no license. The liberty would not lead to the exhibitions of lust which come from the old nature.

They would pray for each other, bear one another's burdens, sympathize with each other, forbear and forgive each other, correct each other when needed, instruct and build up each other, and stir up each other to do what God required.

Verse 15. The law had said that those following God should love their neighbor as themselves. This comes from Leviticus 19:18.

We should not be continually fighting and destroying one another. No anger, ill will, unkindness, and displays of temper to destroy the peace of the soul should be shown. They should not injure one another.

They should esteem one another higher than themselves.

The apostle therefore was advising that they walk in the Spirit, a position that would rule out demonstrations of sinful actions, which predominates in the old Adamic nature.

If they continued to fight each other, they would lose their personal testimony, and destroy the church. They should walk in the Spirit and keep on walking through life depending on the Holy Spirit for guidance and power.

CONCLUSION

It is clear they should be honest and not hide behind several tricks. They should not believe that living in the flesh is not obvious to others and obvious to God.

We have a great difficulty because we are not willing to be honest for ourselves and for each other saying that our society is different. But we cannot simply change the name of OUR sin, the sins of immorality, fighting, anger, and envy for those things are of the flesh. Changing the names won't help us

Remember you are destined to be with the Lord who is perfectly holy and righteous. You're expected to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires.

We know that freedom comes with a price. Jesus died to set us free for a life of service and devotion to Him. So all we can do is encourage you to accept His gift and walk in his footsteps so that you would taste the fruits of eternal life.

Freedom in Christ has no boundaries. Even if you are in a concentration camp or lying on a beach in the Caribbean or in Hawaii you can be just as free. So as Paul said in Romans 5:3-5 you are free and can rejoice. You can carry this message of rejoicing no matter where you are. The apostle reminded us:

We also rejoice in our sufferings



***knowing that suffering works perseverance;
and perseverance, proven character;
and proven character, hope:
and hope doesn't disappoint us,
because God's love has been poured out into our hearts
through the Holy Spirit who was given to us".***

Paul told the Galatians and he reminds us that freedom in Christ is forever. Other freedoms can be given to us, but they can be taken away just like that. But once you have freedom in Christ you have real freedom, and He will keep you.

So avoid the entanglements of any system that offers you righteousness, justification, and salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ alone.

If someone tells you that joining their church or doing the ordinances that they prescribe, praying as they prescribe, doing the things that they tell you to do, just know that you are in the wrong place.

Just turn to Jesus and He will guide you in the right way. He will make you free indeed for He will give you the fruit of the Spirit. You will have amazing joy exercising the liberty in Christ.

