

8-7-22

Galatians 5:1-15

Ever read or heard something and thought, “umm, what do I do with that?”

I am a visual learner, I like to see how it works, or goes, reading or hearing someone describe it isn't enough.

Communication illustration (object lesson)

Paul turns now from argument to application, from the doctrinal to the practical. The Christian who lives by faith is not going to become a rebel. Quite the contrary, he is going to experience the inner discipline of God that is far better than the outer discipline of man-made rules.

No man could become a rebel who depends on God's grace, yields to God's Spirit, lives for others, and seeks to glorify God. The legalist is the one who eventually rebels, because he is living in bondage, depending on the flesh, living for self, and seeking the praise of men and not the glory of God.

Read verse 1.

Paul has used two comparisons to show his readers what the Law is really like: a schoolmaster or guardian (**Gal. 3:24; 4:2**), and a bondswoman (**Gal. 4:22**). Now he compares it to a yoke of slavery. You will recall that Peter used this same image at the famous conference in Jerusalem (**Acts 15:10**).

The yoke of Christ frees us to fulfill His will, while the yoke of the Law enslaves us. The unsaved person wears a yoke of sin (**Lam. 1:14**); the religious legalist wears the yoke of bondage (**Gal. 5:1**); but the Christian who depends on God's grace wears the liberating yoke of Christ.

In making his appeal for living the Spirit-filled life of freedom rather than reverting to the futile self-effort living, Paul begins with a warning against false doctrine and false teachers. He continues from there to show the spiritual dangers of false doctrine and the corrupt character of the false teacher.

I. Dangers found in false teaching. (Verses 2-6)

- As Paul combats the false doctrine that circumcision leads to salvation, he points out four of its tragic consequences.

A. Jesus is of no benefit.

- *“Christ will profit you nothing” (v.2)*

- Christ perfect and complete sacrifice cannot benefit a person who trusts in anything else.
- Paul in v. 2 is addressing both the lost and the saved.
- To the lost, he is telling them that they could not be saved if they continued to trust in their circumcision.
- To the saved, he is saying to believe in circumcision is not consistent with salvation and they could not expect to grow in Christ.
- To trust in Christ for salvation is to acknowledge that one cannot save himself.
- A person becomes acceptable to God only by placing 100% trust in His Son, and after they are saved, they live a life acceptable to God by continuing to trust in Christ alone.

B. Obligated to keep the whole law.

- ***“He is a debtor to keep the whole law.” (v.3)***
- A second consequence of trusting in circumcision is that the person is now obligated to keep the whole law.
 - To live by part of the law as a means of attaining righteousness demands living by all of it, this is impossible.

James 2:10 says, “Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”

- Because God’s standard is perfect righteousness, fulfillment of only part of the law falls short. Christ is the only way.
- It’s all or nothing. Anyone in here perfect? I didn’t ask, anyone thinks he is almost, or close to perfect.

C. Severed from God’s grace.

- ***“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (v.4)***
- When you trust in anything other than God, you become severed from Christ and fall from grace.
- Paul is not dealing with the **security** of the believer, but with the **contrasting** ways of grace and law, works and faith, as a means of salvation.
- Paul’s primary point in this passage and the whole letter, is that law and grace cannot be mixed. As a means of salvation, they are totally incompatible and mutually exclusive.
- To mix law and grace is to obliterate grace. For a believer to start living again under the law to merit salvation is, in fact, to reject salvation by grace.
- Legalism does not please God or bring a person closer to God. It offends Him and drives Him away.
- Legalism constantly screams at God, look at me, I am earning my keep.

D. Excluded from Christ's righteousness.

- **Read verses 5-6.**
- The Judaizers hope of righteousness was based on adding imperfect and worthless works of law, to complete the work of Christ which they saw as incomplete.
- As believers we already possess the imputed righteousness of justification, but the righteousness of total sanctification still awaits us.
- Paul here mentions three characteristics of the godly life, the life that continues to live by grace through salvation.
- It is a life lived through the Spirit rather than the flesh.
- It is a life lived by faith rather than works
- It is a life lived in patient waiting and hope rather than in anxious uncertainty.

That is the fate of all human religion. Nothing a person does to earn God's favor can leave the room of this earth where self-made works are created.

In the next verses we see Paul challenge whom the Galatians are listening to. He wants to remind them of the company they are keeping. Who are you allowing to take up head space?

II. Dangers in false teachers. (Verses 7-12)

- Be careful who you listen to, choose carefully, your freedom depends on it. Remember what was said about the old man (flesh)? He seeks to rule and rob you of your freedom and joy found in Christ. So will others!

A. They will seek to trip you up.

- ***"You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" (v.7)***
- The first and most obvious characteristic of false teachers was that they distorted and hindered the truth.
- The church has always faced the danger of legalism because the inclination of the flesh is always to live for its own purposes and power.
- The false teachers who were leading the Galatians astray were far from well intentioned. Their purpose was to gain a following for themselves and to make a good showing in the flesh.
- There is nothing new under the sun. This is still the reason why false teachers seek to cause you to stumble.

B. They are NOT from God.

- ***"This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you." (v.8)***
- The Judaizers legalistic persuasion did not come from God.

- The work of salvation is entirely God's doing and none of men, and any teaching that says the gracious work of God in saving men is insufficient is false.
- Legalism is never from God. Why? Because legalism points to "merited" favor. If I act or do something a certain way, then God will love me more than, will accept me more, etc. It places what the individual does to make them more righteous to God.
- Man's only righteousness is found in God and born-again followers of God don't obey for rewards, (necessarily) we obey out love, because of the relationship. Born-again followers are thankful for what was done in their favor when they didn't deserve it.

C. They contaminate the church.

- ***"A little leaven leavens the whole lump. (v.9)***
- A small amount of falsehood can corrupt the whole congregation.
- A single false doctrine can multiply itself and spread throughout a body of believers, just like cancer.
- How many want some dog poop brownies? Even if I use just a little bit?

D. They will not get away with it.

- **Read verse 10.**

Matt 18:6, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea."

E. They come after God's true teachers.

- **Read verse 11.**
- False religion has always been and will continue to be the most aggressive and dominant persecutor of the church.
- If you remember back to the beginning of Galatians, the Judaizers tried to discredit Paul and all he had previously taught.
- The scripture points out that they often come in behind the scenes, try to build up a following.

F. They (false teachers) should be dealt with.

- **Read verse 12.**
- Paul was not expressing a crude and cruel desire for the Judaizers' punishment here.
- He is essentially saying, if what they teach about circumcision is right, then why don't they make the supreme act of religious devotion and castrate themselves like the pious priest.
- When false teachers, doctrine come into the church we must act swiftly to get rid of it.

- When believers start following false doctrine or habitual sin, the church must move swiftly to deal with it. I have learned over the years, do not ignore the warnings of the Holy Ghost.

III. **Just because you can doesn't mean you should.**

- **Read verses 13-15.**

1 Corinthians 6:12, *All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything.*

The ERV ends with, "I will not let anything control me like a slave."

1 Corinthians 10:23, *All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up.*

ERV says, "All things are allowed," you say. But not all things are good. "All things are allowed." But some things don't help anyone.

- Don't we (born-again) followers of God spend so much time justifying our own ways? Many of us like to look for the exception clause. Whether it is partaking of Alcohol, marijuana, what we allow our eyes to see, or ears to hear. We like to remind ourselves and others, if it's in moderation, or I am not convicted by it, that's so and so's issue. Or you are like me and because someone drilled it into your head that its bad, so it becomes your trigger.
- But what does the total sum of what Paul say regarding these things say? Read **Galatians 5:13-14** again. Compare to what was said in **1 Corinthians**. What can we take away from it?
- Cecil, when you are doing X, Y, Z, does it dominate you, could it control you like a slave? Does it all show your love and service to others? Does it build up others? Does it help?
- Wow, preacher, what am I to do with that? I think it is safe to say Paul was purposeful in his behavior, he weighed out the cost. Would what I am doing or placing myself, show love, allow for serve, or encourage anyone?

Conclusion

Well to summarize what we have looked at today, it comes down to this: to add any human effort or act to God's perfect gift Jesus Christ, is to exchange the saving gospel of Christ for the damming falsehood of paganism. Jesus Christ is the only way.

And to use the liberty He gave us to do what we want is not from His example either.

