



SERIES: GALATIANS

## **GALATIANS 5:1-15**

January 18, 2010

The churches in Galatia are being plagued by false teachers who are encouraging new Christians to adopt the Old Testament law as a means of their salvation, namely that of circumcision. Paul continues to refute this thinking.

*For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.*

Through Jesus we are free from the OT law. Therefore, these Galatian Christians ought not to go back to the law as it is akin to them being freed as slaves only to return to a life of slavery. Instead, Christians are charged to stand firm in the faith of Jesus and not budge at any false doctrine.

*2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.*

Those who were promoting circumcision were doing so as a means of salvation. To accept this teaching is to reject Christ: either Jesus is the **only** way or he is not. Saying one needs circumcision is to reject that Jesus is the only way and thus that person has placed their faith in something other than the finished work of Jesus. Such a person, since they obeyed one command of the law (circumcision), is now obligated to keep the whole law. Additionally, such a person is separated from Christ and is not truly a Christian at all.

*5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

Circumcision does not lead to salvation; only faith in Jesus Christ does. Those who have faith in Jesus place their "hope of righteousness" in him.

*7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.*

Paul has strong words for false teachers, who are "hindering" the progress of the gospel and will "bear the penalty" for their sin. Paul's statement in verse 9 teaches us that a little bit of sin or error will work its way through the whole church, if left unchecked. Pastors and church leaders must be on guard and defend the flock of God against such attacks, which surely are demonic in their origin.

*11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.*



Paul is still being persecuted because he preaches the gospel of Jesus and not of the law. The gospel of Jesus' cross is an offense to people and so those who proclaim it will receive persecution.

*12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!*

This provocative statement should reveal to us the seriousness of Jesus' exclusivity. **Jesus alone is the means of salvation.** Those in Galatia who suggested otherwise, by placing their trust in circumcision, might as well go all the way and emasculate themselves. The absurdity of Paul's remark here parallels the absurdity of trusting in something other than Jesus for salvation.

*13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

Even though Christians are "free" and no longer under the law, they should not use that as an excuse to sin, but rather should use their freedom to celebrate the goodness of God and serve others through love.

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. In Galatia, some people trusted the law to save them. In today's day, what do people commonly trust for their salvation other than Jesus?
2. In what ways can we prevent leaven (sin) from infecting the whole church?
3. How does the freedom Jesus give us lead to serving and loving others?