

Ln 10 ... What Does Falling From Grace Mean

Galatians 5:1-12

Can a Christian fall from grace? It depends on what you mean by “falling from grace.” The Galatians were considering turning from their freedom in Christ to the slavery of the Law. Therefore, Paul writes: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage* (5:1).

How does Jesus describe our freedom in [John 8:36](#)?

Depending on the Law or works for salvation is to leave this *liberty* and become *entangled again with the yoke of bondage*. Because that is what the Galatian believers have done, Paul writes: *ye are fallen from grace* (5:4c). But what does *fallen from grace* mean? “Falling from grace” includes at least **three** things.

Adding the Law to Grace (5:2-4)

Paul begins this section: *Behold* (5:2a), which means, “Listen closely!” He knows what he is going to say will shock them. Therefore, he draws on his apostolic authority by saying *I Paul*, meaning *I Paul*, an inspired apostle, am going to issue a serious warning. Then, he writes: *that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing* (5:2b-c).

Apparently, the Galatians have not yet been *circumcised* but are seriously considering it. Paul tells them if they do, *Christ shall profit you nothing*. They would be like someone using a self-propelled lawnmower with the self-propelled feature turned off. When we rely on self-effort or the Law for our salvation, even though Christ is present with us, His power is “turned off” and of no benefit to us.

It seems the Galatians have not considered the consequences of being circumcised. Therefore, Paul warns every man who is circumcised as a part of salvation *is a debtor to do the whole law* (5:3).

How does [James 2:10](#) describe the dilemma of trying to keep the Law?

We cannot view the Law as a cafeteria line, where we choose what we want and leave the rest. If a man is circumcised as part of his salvation, he must also keep the Passover, the Old Testament Sabbath, etc. The Law appeals to our flesh because we like to feel we earn what we receive. Therefore, the Law seems like the right way to go.

However, of what does [Proverbs 14:12](#) warn?

If the Galatians try to be *justified*, or saved, *by the law*, then *Christ is become of no effect* to them. This is because they have alienated themselves from Christ ([5:4a-b](#)).

Since they were adding something to Christ's death on the cross, Paul writes: *ye are fallen from grace* ([5:4c](#)). This is the only time this phrase is used in the New Testament, and it doesn't mean the Galatians were saved and then lost. Eight times in this letter Paul refers to them as *brethren* in Christ ([1:11](#), [3:15](#), [4:12](#), [31](#), [5:11](#), [13](#), [6:1](#), [18](#)). Paul would not have called them *brethren* if they had lost their salvation.

Trusting in the Law, even in part, as a means of salvation sets aside grace as **the** way of salvation, and causes one to fall, or stray, from grace. The phrase *are fallen from grace* means the Galatians have *fallen from the sphere of God's grace into the sphere of the Law*. The two cannot be mixed ([Rom. 11:6](#)).

To mix the Law with *grace* is to fall from, or abandon, *grace*. "Falling from grace" is **adding the Law to grace** and...

Advocating Legalism Instead of Love (5:5-6)

To contrast the difference between the Law and grace, Paul writes: *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith* ([5:5](#)). This means we don't work to become righteous; we eagerly *wait* for God to produce His *righteousness* in us *through the Spirit*. The *righteousness* that comes from human effort or legalism is not acceptable to God.

Why, according to [Isaiah 64:6b](#)?

Paul continues his argument: *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision* ([5:6a](#)). This means, *in Jesus Christ* it is acceptable to be, or not to be, circumcised. Then, what does matter? Paul writes: *Faith which worketh by love* ([5:6b](#)).

God designed the Ten Commandments to teach us to *love*. If we *love* God, we will obey the first four commandments, and if we *love* people, we will obey the last six.

The ability to love God and other people comes automatically to those who are saved by grace through faith.

This is because of what truth found in [Romans 5:5b-c](#)?

The acid test of whether or not we are truly saved is how we *love* ([Jn 13:35](#)).

"Falling from grace" includes **adding the Law to grace, advocating legalism instead of love**, and...

Accepting False Teaching Instead of the Truth (5:7-12)

Comparing the Christian life to a foot race, Paul writes: *Ye did run well* ([5:7a](#)). The Galatians had a splendid spiritual start, but Paul asks, *who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?* ([5:7b](#)).

The Judaizers had hindered and caused the Galatians to stumble out of the “grace lane” into the “legalism lane” of their race. Therefore, Paul writes: *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you (5:8)*. God calls us to “liberated living,” not legalistic living.

Lest the Galatians think Paul is making too much of this problem, he reminds them of a well-known fact: *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (5:9)*. The point is that a little legalism or false teaching can corrupt a whole church.

However, Paul is optimistic about the Galatians and writes: *I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded (5:10a)*. Paul has *confidence* the Lord will cause the Galatians to see the truth.

This is because of what truth found in [Jude 24](#)?

Paul next writes of the consequences of false teaching: *but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be (5:10b)*. The judgment for perverting the Gospel is God’s punishment because teachers will receive a stricter judgment (Jas. 3:1b).

Apparently, part of the confusion is the Judaizers told the Galatians that Paul is an advocate of circumcision, perhaps because Paul had Timothy circumcised ([Acts 16:3](#)). Timothy was circumcised so he could have a ministry among the Jews. However, since becoming a Christian, Paul had always strongly opposed circumcision as a part of salvation. That’s why Paul writes: *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution (5:11a)*. If he is an advocate of *circumcision* as part of salvation, why are the Judaizers persecuting him? That would be ridiculous!

Why, according to [Galatians 5:11d](#)?

The word translated **offence** (SKANDALON, skan´-dal-on-) is the word from which we get our word “scandal,” which means “shock or outrage.” The Cross was a scandal to the Jews because they could not accept the idea of a crucified Messiah. However, the Cross was even more of an *offence* to their pride because it took away the need for circumcision or any self-effort to make one righteous before God. People have not changed. We still want to trust in what we can do to earn salvation. Yet, salvation is based solely on God’s grace ([Eph. 2:8](#)) and mercy ([Tit. 3:5](#)).

Why, according to [Ephesians 2:9](#)?

To show how deeply disturbed he is with the Judaizers, Paul concludes this section with one of the harshest statements made in any of his epistles: *I would they were even cut off which trouble you (5:12)*.

The word translated *cut off* means to amputate or mutilate private parts. Therefore, Paul wishes the Judaizers would mutilate, or castrate, themselves. By this he probably means false teachers would then not be able to reproduce any followers of legalism.

Paul did not write these words out of a malicious spirit, but out of deep love for the purity of the Gospel. Teaching that something more than grace through faith is needed for our salvation attacks the very heart of the Gospel.

Therefore, Paul is obeying what command the Lord inspired him to write in [Ephesians 4:15a](#)?

To trust in anything except Jesus' death is to be *fallen from grace* ([Gal. 5:4c](#)) or fallen from the realm of grace. "Falling from grace" includes:

ADDING THE LAW TO GRACE,

ADVOCATING LEGALISM INSTEAD OF LOVE,

ACCEPTING FALSE TEACHING INSTEAD OF THE TRUTH.