

**GALATIANS**  
**Stand Firm in Freedom**  
**Galatians 5:1-12**

Paul has been passionately defending the Gospel in this letter to the Galatians. He has given them a compelling PERSONAL appeal to embrace the true Gospel as their ONLY means of salvation. He has also given us several Old Testament proofs of the DOCTRINAL BASIS for the Gospel truth of salvation being that which is “by faith alone, through grace alone, by Christ alone.” In this final section of the letter (Chapters 5-6), Paul will give us the PRACTICAL OUTWORKING of the Gospel in our lives. This simply means that he will demonstrate what it means to LIVE OUT what Christ PUTS IN us through salvation. **Galatians 5:1-12 NIV**

**1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. 2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. 7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? 8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." 10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. 11 Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. 12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!**

We have much to look at in this passage, but I do not want to miss the basic point of all that Paul writes here. He tells us first, **“It is for FREEDOM that Christ has set us free.”**

**CHRIST SET US FREE SO THAT WE COULD LIVE FREE.**

**Freedom was the GOAL that Christ set and accomplished for us.** He wants us to EMBRACE our FREEDOM and LIVE FREE! He wants us to EXPERIENCE everything that his freedom purchased for us. He wants us to live the life that only his sacrifice and resurrection and redemption could supply. **He does not want us to simply accept some PREMISE that we are free; he wants us to live out the PROMISE of freedom that is OURS. . . RIGHT NOW!** **Are you living in Gospel Freedom?** Maybe it will help to remember what freedom is by recalling what we have FREEDOM FROM, and what we now have FREEDOM TO DO.

**FREEDOM FROM . . .**

**\*We are free from the DEMANDS of the Law as a means of our acceptance.**

Neither the NATURAL LAW that God has placed within our CONSCIENCE, nor the COMMANDMENTS of the Law written in scripture have POWER over us in our failure and brokenness. We don't have to worry every morning that we will somehow fail God. We no longer have to "JUMP THROUGH HOOPS" in an attempt to earn God's favor or approval. **We do not have to measure our worth based on our ability to be good. We don't have to bear the burden of trying to be perfect. Christ is our Perfecter!**

**\*We are free from CONDEMNATION.**

We do not cower in FEAR or hide in SHAME when we fail any longer. We realize that sin no longer holds us captive to the PENALTIES of our sin because CHRIST has endured those penalties and that PUNISHMENT for us! There is no "hammer" poised above us to strike us down when we fail, even after MULTIPLE failures!

**\*We are free from BONDAGE to SIN.**

We are no longer bound to sin. We can begin to experience freedom from sinful failures in increasing measure as we look to Christ and live by his grace. **[Hebrews 12:1-2]** *There was a time when I thought that I would never be free of bondage to pornography, but I have experienced freedom from domination of that sin by the grace and patience of God!* I must always be on my guard, but I am no longer under the assumption that I am BOUND to fail. I know better, because I am FREE!

We are not just FREE FROM these things (this was just a start!), but we are also FREE TO experience so much more that Christ has provided for us.

## **FREEDOM TO . . .**

**\*We are free to LIVE in RELATIONSHIP with the Living God as our FATHER.**

We are no longer outsiders. We are children of the Living God. The Gospel of Jesus Christ has brought us into the family of God where we are given everything we will ever need. Most importantly, we call God, "Abba, Father." We have the joy and privilege of an intimate relationship with God through Christ. This means . . .

**\*We are free to ACCESS the PRESENCE of God at ANY time!**

The book of Hebrews teaches us that we can walk right into the presence of God in prayer. God invites us to come to his THRONE OF GRACE with any NEED that we may have, ANY TIME we want! In fact, we actually are free to LIVE in the presence of God, knowing that he is WITH US because he now dwells IN US. We have access to his PEACE, his LOVE, his JOY, and his very LIFE! That is freedom!

**\*We are free to CONFESS our sins with the confidence that God will FORGIVE our sins and CLEANSE us from unrighteousness by his grace.**

This does NOT mean that we disregard the evil of sin, or that we sin with an attitude that "I can do whatever I want to do," but that we know that God will cleanse us when we do stumble and fall in our sinfulness. It is not a LICENSE to do EVIL, but a

LIBERTY to receive FORGIVENESS from that evil. This also means we have the GUARANTEE of God's FAVOR on us even when we stumble.

\*We are free to live for the GLORY of God by the GRACE of God for our growth in God. God's grace not only SAVES us, it also ENABLES us to do the things that God calls us to do. **Grace gives us both the DESIRE and the POWER to live godly lives in an ungodly world.** This is what we will learn next week when we study the FRUIT of the SPIRIT! He frees us to DESIRE HOLINESS and GOODNESS!

Paul has reminded us of the fact that Christ has freed us so that we can live in freedom, but now he gives us a STRONG WARNING about what we must do now that we are free.

**KEEP STANDING FIRM IN THE FREEDOM OF CHRIST.**

**Every child of God must realize that their freedom in Christ will ALWAYS come under attack!** The Gospel is HATED by Satan and by the world, and they will do whatever they can to steal that freedom from us. That is why Paul wrote this letter! **Galatians 2:4-5**

<sup>4</sup> This matter arose because some **false believers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves.** <sup>5</sup> We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

**We must STAND FIRM in the freedom that we have been given, and NOT be pulled into some OTHER kind of SLAVERY. To "stand firm" means to "dig in your heels" so as not to be pulled away from something.** We cannot be PASSIVE about this! We are told to **"not let ourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."** This is passive submission to someone else's pressure. The FAILURE to stand firm like this will lead to some horrible things.

**Christ will become of NO VALUE to you. Galatians 5:2-3**

**2 Mark my words!** I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. **3** Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

(Piper) This verse is the FIRST TIME that Paul says out loud that the Judaizers were trying to pressure people into circumcision. They were saying it is ok to accept Christ, but you need to be circumcised as well. This is a DEADLY DECEPTION. You cannot ADD anything to the Gospel of Christ. If you choose circumcision (or any other act of self-effort) as a means of justification before God, Christ becomes of NO BENEFIT to you. You cannot combine self-effort with faith in Christ. This means that if any true believer starts down this path, he will LOSE his sense of the WONDER of God's GRACE in Christ. He will live at the "mercy" of his own failures and will be in complete bondage to the Law.

**Galatians 5:4 NIV**

4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

The possible meanings of this verse are all awful! Neither mean that you can LOSE your salvation, but both mean that you will experience DEEP or even ETERNAL LOSS in one form or another. At best, this verse states that true believers who add to the Gospel will be unable to access the GRACE of God for their daily growth and maturity. The fruit of the Spirit will not be present in their lives. Tony Evans says it this way:

“For believers to be alienated from Christ and to have fallen from grace is (5:4) not a reference to losing salvation. The phrase refers to ceasing to operate from a grace standard and adopting a works-based mentality rather than a relationship-driven one. Doing so leads to nothing but a life of slavery and spiritual defeat—a life lacking joy, love, true obedience, spiritual intimacy, and the power that only grace can provide.”

**The Tony Evans Commentary – Galatians 5**

That is a life of confusion and emptiness. This is an outright declaration that there will be NO INTIMACY with Christ as Savior and God as Father for those who move back toward trying to EARN God’s favor and forgiveness. Is that what you want?

**The other possible meaning of this verse is horrifying in a very different way. It is the concept that those who choose to add self-effort to the Gospel DEMONSTRATE that they NEVER belonged to Christ in the first place!** This phrase may refer to people who were EXPOSED to the light of the Gospel and the work of God so much so that it even affected their emotions and behavior for a while, but it was not complete! They are pictured by the PARABLE of the SOILS that Jesus taught about those in whom the Gospel seed seemed to sprout, but ultimately was UNPRODUCTIVE and DIED. When they walked away from their faith, they made it evident that they had never truly belonged to Christ in the first place. [1 John 2:19]

Contrast that with the BEAUTY of how we experience practical righteousness in our lives by faith in the power of God by his Spirit. **Galatians 5:5-6 NIV**

5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope.

6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

We do not become righteous by our own efforts. We stand righteous by the decree of God, and we live righteous by the grace of God. **The work of SANCTIFICATION is accomplished just as the work of JUSTIFICATION is accomplished – by faith through grace!** We do not WORK for righteousness, we WAIT for righteousness. The Spirit of God leads us into more and more righteousness in this life, but we are all waiting for the DAY when we will all be made PERFECTLY RIGHTEOUS by Christ in glory. This is our CONFIDENT EXPECTATION. As we wait for that day, we live in LOVE with Christ by faith. **This is a relational sanctification that reveals itself through LOVE for God and love for others, all by the grace of God.** This verse also acknowledges that we LONG to live righteous lives, because we “eagerly await” it!

After this very bold series of statements about the emptiness of self-effort, Paul seeks to encourage these believers with some affirmations. **Galatians 5:7-12 NIV**

**7 You were running a good race.** Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? **8** That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. **9** "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." **10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view.** The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty. **11** Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. **12** As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Paul wants these believers to know that he believes that they will stay true to Christ and not forsake Christ for another gospel. He states that they were "running a good race," and that he is "confident that they will not take another view" of the truth. He is cheering them on to keep walking with Christ and not be pulled into error. But he is deeply concerned! Someone has "cut in on them" to hinder their race. This is not to be taken lightly! **Their deceptive PERSUASIVENESS does not come from the Lord Jesus who called them to himself.** How could it? It actually pulls them away from Jesus! What these false teachers are doing will work like LEAVEN if they do not actively oppose it!

**LEAVEN – This is a small, seemingly harmless invader that will ultimately TAKE OVER if not stopped in its tracks!**

Leaven was a picture of EVIL in the Old Testament, but it actually produces some things that we as humans like: Leavened bread! Leaven pictures evil simply because it spreads quickly and infects everything that it touches. But the product appeals to our FLESH. **We tend to accept counterfeit doctrines that teach that we can produce things that make us WORTHY of salvation and God's blessing.** We don't want to be completely broken. We want to prove that we are self-sufficient. But we must throw out that leaven, and we must realize that those who teach such error will "pay the penalty" for their evil influence! **Paul even says that he wishes that those "agitators" would go all the way and emasculate themselves so that they could no longer PROPOGATE their error!** Harsh words, but fitting in this context!

Paul makes the statement that he is still being persecuted because he does not preach circumcision. **Instead, he is offending people with the message of the cross. This is the BEAUTY of the OFFENSE OF THE CROSS; it reminds us that we are desperately broken, and Christ is our only hope. The cross NULLIFIES human effort.** We must never be ashamed of the cross. When people say to us that we are just as bad as them, we must not deny it. We KNOW we are broken, and we KNOW that Christ is our only hope. I love what Jonathan Edwards said about our part in our salvation:

**"The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that made it necessary!"  
Jonathan Edwards**

Are you living in the grace of God and standing firm in the freedom he has given to you? Are you growing CLOSER to Christ in these days, or are you drifting into a life of self-reliance and self-effort to make you feel worthy of acceptance by God? **Don't leave any leaven in your heart!**

Let's pray.