

**Galatians**  
**April 27, 2008**  
**Galatians 5:1-15**

**I. Impact of Law**

**Gal 5:1-4**

**5:1 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 law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.**

**NIV**

- Verse 1 We discussed a little last week. For Paul, freedom always relates to Jesus Christ and His grace. Basically, we are free with Christ; without Him, we are not free. Given that we have been freed, we can still take on the burden of slavery. We can still attempt to earn our way to heaven, even if we already have a fully paid ticket to go there. Since we have been crucified with Christ, the law has no effect on us any longer. It can still help us to help guide us in the way that we live by helping us to understand God's will. The spirit, though, becomes even more important in doing this.
- Verse 1 What does it mean to stand firm?
- Verse 2 Obviously, only men could be circumcised...so more than circumcision is implied by this verse. Clearly Paul had nothing against circumcision as he had been circumcised himself.
- Verse 2 The nature of this verse, and this shows through in this English translation, is that the Galatians were considering circumcision, but had not yet gone ahead and done it.
- Verse 3 There seems to be a mental or heart part here. In Acts 21, Paul appears to offer a sin offering (see Numbers 6); this sacrifice was suggested by James, the head of the Jerusalem church and therefore of all Christianity on earth, and recorded by Luke without rebuke. As such, under some circumstances, this action might be acceptable. If they did this activity, then they were showing that they did not trust fully in Christ.
- Verse 4 Where is eternal salvation? If Christ does not justify the Galatians, they cannot receive the grace that He brings to us if they trust in something other than Christ. If they have been

justified, then they neuter grace while living their lives. The continuing question is whether they have ever been a Christians.

## II. Faith, Hope, and Love

**Gal 5:5-6**

**5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit 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.**

NIV

What does “faith, hope, and love” mean to the Christian?

- Verse 5      The “we” (plus reference to “faith, hope, and love”) implies that at least some of them are still depending on the Spirit. Some might have been bowing to the demands that circumcision is necessary. The example of Peter from earlier in the book suggests this. (NOTE: The confidence in the Galatians that Paul expresses later in verse 10 of this chapter.)
- Verse 6      Clearly if Christ is sufficient, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has value because Christ has done it all.
- Verse 6      While the following passage is in a context of marriage, Paul does broaden it to include many situations:

**1 Cor 7:17-20**

**17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.**

NIV

- Verse 6      In your words, describe what really counts. Why?

## III. Continue Running the Good Race

**Gal 5:7-12**

**7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept 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 will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. 11 Brothers, 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!**

NIV

Paul often compares Christianity to a race, as in:

## **2 Tim 4:7**

**7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.**

NIV

A few other examples are Gal. 2:2, 1 Cor. 9:24-27, and Phil 3:13-14. Why is running the good race a good comparison?

Verse 8 “Kept you” in the previous verse could be translated as “being persuaded.

Verse 9 Perhaps only a small group of Galatians was at risk, or perhaps those at risk had started small and were now bigger. Jesus called this thought a parable:

## **Matt 13:33**

**33 He told them still another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."**

NIV

Verse 10 Even a good teacher should also be concerned with throwing people into confusion, vis a vis:

## **James 3:1-2**

**3:1 Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.**

NIV

Verse 11 Perhaps some were claiming that Paul agreed with circumcision. The fact that he is being persecuted shows that he is not saying this. As with Timothy, Paul seemed to still think that circumcision was ok for those who were already Jews, per the covenant with Abraham. However, it was not useful for salvation.

Verse 12 Paul gets really rude! Some other religions did castrate priests, such as pagan priests in the cult of the goddess Cybele.

## **IV. Called to Be Free...and to Love**

### **Gal 5:13-15**

**13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. 14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.**

NIV

If Christians are “called to be free,” why do they have to obey any laws?

Verse 13 While we have freedom, we should not use it for our own selfish desires, but to help others.

Verses 13 The Judaizers, and many others since them, were probably afraid that the law would be ignored if not needed for

salvation. Indeed, the antinomians were a cult that believed that they could ignore the law because of words like these. However, clearly, Paul does not indicate that a Christian can do anything that he wants. Love and the spirit are two of the restraining forces.

Verse 14 Ultimately obedience to faith fulfilled through love for others, whether God or humans, does what the law intended. Fulfilling the law so that one might gain personal eternal life is not selfless love.

Verse 14 How can you show love for your neighbor?

Verse 15 Today in our era where everyone has rights and submission/humility is only vaguely understood, we would have a church split, one taking the correct way, and the other going in the wrong direction. In this case, the Spirit intercedes through the effort of Paul and others so that the whole church stays with God's correct agenda.

#### **V. Question**

As you run your race for Christ today, how can you free yourself of unnecessary rules and regulations that hinder your progress? What are these unnecessary rules and regulations?

#### **VI. Question**

What would you gain if you had someone running with you? What would that person gain from you?