

Galatians 5:1–15

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1. From what has Christ set us free?

- “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free....” The death of Christ through belief of the Gospel has delivered us from bondage to sin (Galatians 2:4; 4:9). In Christ, we are not dominated by sin as those under the Law of Moses (Romans 8:15; *cf.* 7:6, 21–25). The children of God have turned away from the Law to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:17–18). They are walking by faith in His death as the atonement for sin; we are following Him and seeking to be conformed to His image through grace (Galatians 4:20; Romans 8:29–31; Colossians 3:9–10; James 1:21–25; 2 Corinthians 4:4–7).

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1. From what has Christ set us free?

- “And be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage...” The Judaizer was “entangling” believing Jews and Gentiles in the “yoke” which resulted in bondage (Acts 15:10; *cf.* Matthew 11:28–30). The Jew was taught that the Law was incapable of delivering them from sin (Acts 13:38–41; Romans 3:28; 7:24–25; Hebrews 7:19). That believing Jew turned to Christ for what the Law could not do (Romans 8:3). To turn to the Law was to return to that which was “weak and beggarly,” that which is strengthless leading to spiritual pauperism and slavery (Galatians 4:9; Colossians 2:20; Hebrews 7:18).

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2. How were the Galatians being “entangled” again with this “yoke”?

- “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ...” Paul is not referring to the Jews circumcised, as was Paul, prior to conversion (Philippians 3:4–5). Rather, he is referring to believing Gentiles who accepted circumcision and the Law as necessary to justification in addition to Christ (Acts 15:1, 5; Galatians 2:3–4). Such an acted repudiated Christ (Galatians 5:6; 6:15 1 Corinthians 7:18–19).
- “Every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law...” Turning from Christ to the Law reinstated the requirement of the Law (Galatians 2:21; 3:10–11; 5:4).

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3. What are the consequences of circumcision as required by the Judaizers (*cf.* Acts 15:1, 5)?
- “Christ shall profit you nothing...” Justification by Law is not compatible with justification by grace through faith in Christ. They are mutually exclusive (Galatians 4:30–31; *cf.* Romans 11:6; 6:14).
 - “He is a debtor to do the whole law...” Rejecting Christ or declaring His sacrifice insufficient by submitting to circumcision, places one under the demands of the Law (Galatians 5:4, 6; Colossians 1:9; 2:9–10). Now, justification requires absolute sinlessness by our own righteousness (Galatians 3:10; Philippians 3:9–10).

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3. What are the consequences of circumcision as required by the Judaizers (*cf.* Acts 15:1, 5)?
- “Christ is become of no effect unto you...” The death of Jesus is meaningless and ineffectual, if one must become or remain a Jew respecting justification. Christ is enough, or He isn’t.
 - “Ye are fallen from grace...” lit. driven out of the way of grace. This is apostasy. They once were in the path of grace and “running well;” but, now, they are beaten back (*cf.* 1 Thessalonians 2:18).
 - “Ye should not obey the truth...” that is, unbelief which is disobedience (John 13:36; Galatians 3:1; Hebrews 4:6, 11).

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4. What is the “hope of righteousness”?

- “For we through the Spirit...” Throughout Galatians Paul uses “through the Spirit” or “by the Spirit” to refer to the effect of the Gospel upon the believer (Galatians 3:2–5; 4:29; 5:5, 16, 18, 22–23, 25; 6:1, 8).
- “Wait for the hope of righteousness...” Paul does not imply doubt about their being righteous. Rather, it is a hope the Christian possesses as a result of righteousness. To “wait” is to “expect fully” (Acts 15:10–11).
- “Righteousness by faith...” better: justification by faith, that is, the Galatians had hope on account of their justification by grace through faith in Christ.

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5. How does Faith “work by love”?

- “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision...” What avails, has force, is able to save in Christ (remember the context: *profit, debtor, justified, hope*). Not the flesh, not circumcision or uncircumcision, not the works of the Law of Moses.
- “Not...but...” Not that, but this, faith working through love avails in Christ Jesus.
- “Faith which worketh by love...” The faith that avails is the faith that works, obeys the truth. If we love Christ, we keep His commandments (John 14:15; James 2:18–26).

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6. To what does Paul attribute the power of leaven?

- “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump...” a figure for influence, good or bad, throughout the NT (Matthew 13:33; 16:6–12; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; 13:21; 1 Corinthians 5:6–9).
- “This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you...He that troubleth you...” The doctrine which is influencing the Galatians has as its source the sect of the Circumcision (Acts 15:5, 24; Philippians 3:2; Galatians 1:6; 2:4; 5:2; Titus 1:10–11). Paul repeatedly denies this teaching is from God warning that it can do nothing but remove them from the grace of Christ (Galatians 4:10; *cf.* 1:5–9).

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BONUS: What was the offence of the cross?

- “And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision...” This was a false charge made against Paul; perhaps intended to misrepresent his actions regarding Timothy (Acts 16:1–4; *cf.* Galatians 2:3).
- “Why do I yet suffer persecution?” This is Paul’s rebuttal, basically, “If I agree with you why do you oppose me?”
- “Then is the offence of the cross ceased.” Now, he turns it on them and frames the issue. The cross is an offence because it rejects the flesh and the works of the Law as the grounds of right standing with God (1 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 4:29; 6:12, 17; *cf.* 4:17).

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7. How could one use “liberty for an occasion to the flesh”?
- “Ye have been called unto liberty...” Paul in 5:13 recalls his concluding admonition in 5:1. However, now his words take the form of a warning against misunderstanding their exalted condition. They were “free” to produce the fruit of the Spirit (5:22), but not free to sin (5:16–17).
 - “Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh...” Christians were set free from the “yoke of bondage” to sin (Galatians 5:1; Acts 15:10; 13:38–39); however, they take up the “yoke of Christ” (Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 2:7–8; 1 John 2:6; 5:3).

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8. How is all the Law “fulfilled in one word”?
- “The law is fulfilled in one word, even in this...” Paul is not reducing the Law into one single commandment but rather into an overarching principle which underlies them all. It is a principle already stated in 5:6 (Matthew 22:40).
 - “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself...” This is the Golden Rule or Second Commandment (Matthew 7:12). It is like the First because without it there is no practical evidence of the former (1 John 3:14–24). The great test of discipleship is whether or not we love one another (John 13:35; 1 John 4:20–21).

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9. How might Christians consume one another?

- “But if ye bite and devour one another...” Paul speaks metaphorically of the wrangling that necessarily followed the rise of the party spirit (Galatians 4:15–19). These sins are associated with the works of the flesh (5:20–21).
- “Take heed that ye be not consumed one of another...” Of course not literally, however, surely spiritually. How many have perished through the centuries because brethren could not act in love toward one another even in controversy (Colossians 3:12–15; Titus 1:7–10; Ephesians 4:2–3, 32; 1 Peter 4:8; James 3:13–18).