

## HOW SHOULD WE LIVE?

### Galatians 5:1-15

At end of Civil War, slavery was abolished

Some states established laws that treated blacks as 2<sup>nd</sup> class citizens.

In struggle for rights, theme:

*"We won't return to slavery!"*

As God's children, Paul wants *us* to issue that cry:

*"We won't go back to slavery!"*

Paul's presenting doctrinal basis of his view:

*People justified by faith are free from slavery to law!*

Returning to slavery doesn't make sense!

We don't need supervision by a "pedagogue".

*Why go back to one now?*

**Doctrinal** basis => 3-4

How *doctrinal* truth relates to **practical** daily living => 5-6

How our liberty and daily conduct come together.

***When we walk by the Spirit,  
instead of walking by our desires,  
life becomes an act of thanksgiving!***

**WE ARE FREE!**

5:1-12

**We ought to stand firm  
in our liberty.**

**We shouldn't allow ourselves to be enslaved!**

5:1-6 Conflict between 2 systems

Doctrinal truth applied to issue that stirred discussion.

1<sup>st</sup> practical issue: circumcision

–immediate problem of Gal

Judaizers: "to please God,  
we must live by God's laws"

=>Therefore, we must be circumcised.

Problem isn't circumcision itself! **5:6**

*“In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.”*

Problem is what circumcision *represents*: *legal system*.

*Why would we go back  
and get circumcised now?*

**Problem: system tries to earn favor, by works.**

*2 systems contradict each other*

*–both can't be true!*

**Either we please God**

**walking by faith**

**–in power of the Spirit**

**– or we earn our way by *our* efforts.**

*You can't have it both ways!*

*No one earns God's blessing by law.*

*Anyone who tries to live by law ends up guilty!*

Passage misinterpreted because point isn't understood.

*–interpreted so it contradicts what Paul's trying to tell us.*

**LAW: I have to do something to earn God's favor**

**GRACE: I can't do anything to earn God's favor; it all depends on Him**

2 statements contradict!

Accepting one, rejects other!

**Summary 5:1** *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, & do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”*

Principle: Christ freed us 2 so we might enjoy liberty.

Application: *Don't go back  
& submit to yoke of slavery.*

***If we submit to legalism,  
we go back to bondage, to rules!***

**Don't give in to this temptation!**

Remain firm in Christ!

*Negative focus:*

**Alienation by law 5:2-4**

**Problem: law separates.** We couldn't keep law before we're saved; we can't do it now either.

When we make law the norm,  
we show we're still sinful—still guilty!

**4 implications of following law system:**

=> When we submit to legalism,  
we pull away from benefits in Christ

**1<sup>st</sup> If I try to *earn/make myself worthy* of God's blessing, Christ becomes *useless* to me 5:2**

*“Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.”*

Christ died, because I'm *incapable* of earning God's favor! If I can earn points myself, death of Christ wasn't necessary. So *why should He die?*

My effort to prove *my* worthiness makes statement: *“I don't need Christ”* or I can't trust Him to do *all* for me.

=> Christ's death 2 is made meaningless/useless.

**2<sup>nd</sup> impl: If I try to earn God's favor, I'm obligated to obey the whole law 5:3** *“Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.”*

Circumcision is *entry way* to join God's people under law.

If we *enter* law system, we have to keep *all* of it.

Like immigration laws that make us citizens

When I obey *those* laws,  
I'm obligated to obey all laws!

**3<sup>rd</sup> impl: If I try to *earn* blessing, I'm separated from Christ 5:4a** "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ"

When I depend on law, I pull away from Christ & His work

**4<sup>th</sup> impl: If I try to *earn* favor, I've "fallen from grace" 5:4b**

"...you have fallen away from grace"

Can't mean what some say: we can lose salvation.

Whole passage affirms the opposite conclusion!

*Denies* that what *I* do affects my relationship with God

If I can disobey God and *fall from grace*,  
salvation depends on works.

**If I place myself under law, I move away from grace!**

**Positive focus: Justification by faith 5:5-6** "But **by faith** we eagerly await the righteousness for which we hope. <sup>6</sup>For **in Christ Jesus** neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The **only** thing that counts is **faith** expressing itself through love."

For people in Christ, law has no value; we come to God *by faith*.  
Same contrast exists re. salvation & our walk with God!

People who try to perfect ourselves by our effort *fail*.

People who rely on work of the Spirit by faith *grow/prosper*.

We're waiting for the hope of righteousness

–by *the Spirit*, not by *flesh*;

–by *faith*, not by *law*. 5:5

Faith isn't seen by legalistic efforts,  
but by works of love

flowing out of our *faith*,

& from *the Spirit's work* in us

**SUMMARY:** circumcision represents legalistic system  
–trying to obtain God's favor by works.

This system contradicts **by faith** salvation **& walking**

When you accept one, you annul the other.

When we trust Christ, we base our status before God on His work & annul any **effort** to draw near to God.

When we exert our effort to draw near to God, we **annul the work of Christ** on our behalf.

**Accepting law as our standard,  
pulls us away from Christ  
and his work!**

**Rejection by legalists 5:7-12**

**Nature of teaching 5:7** *"You were running a good race. Who cut in on you & kept you from obeying the truth?"*

Teaching which distracts them is **hindrance to running the race.**

Marathon has been converted into obstacle course.

**Source of teaching 5:8** *"That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you."*

***This didn't come from God!***

God who calls us to run race won't place obstacles to hinder us!

**Danger of teaching 5:9**

*"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."*

Prov. could have 2 possible meanings:

**1.False teachers contaminate everyone!**

**2.Little false teaching ruins whole doctrinal system.**

**Judgment teaching brings 5:10**

*"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."*

Paul is confident: we won't fall in false teachers' trap

Those who set the trap will be judged!

**Twisting of his teaching 5:11** *“Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.”*

Judaizers accuse him of being inconsistent about circumcision & law

May be reaction to Paul

acting like Jew when with Jews;

like Gentile when with Gentiles

If he's teaching circumcision when with Jews, why persecute him?

Paul *never* supports legalism

–before Jews, *nor* Gentiles!

**Logical consequences of their teaching 5:12** *“As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!”*

Uses strong words; maybe not as strong as it appears.

*“I wish they would”* isn't normal meaning.

Normally introduces *logical consequence*

He compares *Jewish* practice

with *sect of Cybel*, known in Galatia.

They practice castration (=>eunuchs) to show religious devotion.

That would be work of flesh taken to extreme pagan perversion.

May be saying, "if you want system of legalistic works to please God,

*why stop with circumcision?*

Why not take it to logical conclusion?

Do like *pagans*

who want to earn the gods' favor!"

Seriousness of issue incites strong language.

Paul is patient with people who oppose him *personally*

NO patience with people who add works, for salvation, or for daily life!

**He urges us to condemn false teachers & reject their message.**

*Don't allow people who teach such doctrines to remain in your midst!*

**WE ARE FREE!** [evidence of *true* freedom:] **13-15**

**Not to Do Whatever We Want,  
but to Serve One Another!**

We ought to enjoy our liberty, but *true liberty leads to love!*

Whenever we teach salvation by faith alone,  
eternal security, or freedom from law,

**someone always protests!**

"If we teach this, some will get idea we can do *anything WE* want!  
1<sup>st</sup> 5 ch., Paul repeats emphatically: We're saved by faith alone.  
Submission to law *enslaves* us; it *never* earns blessing.

We're saved so we can *enjoy liberty*

He doesn't want confusion

by mixing it with other ideas.

Now he clarifies possible misconception:

People are inclined to confuse liberty with anarchy.

We think we can –"have things *our way*"

–do whatever we want.

We think, "No one can tell *me* what to do!"

"I'm free! I can do whatever I want!"

**Paul's theology shows us 3 kinds of slavery:**

*Everyone is slave to something!!*

**1. Some to *sin*–universal slavery**

**2. Some to *law* or **legal system**–established by personal choice, voluntarily => ends up in condemnation**

**3. Some to *serve others*,**

**whether God or other people.**

Voluntary slavery => contentment

*Everyone is slave to something!*

Final form of slavery is only one  
that enables us to enjoy *true* liberty.

**True liberty produces service to others 5:13**

*“You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature [flesh; to do what YOU want] rather, serve one another in love.”*

Godly liberty is *never* a beach head to satisfy *my* self-centered desires.

Godly liberty is liberty to *volunteer* for slave service.

Romans 6 indicates that now I can be **God's slave**.

Galatians 5 adds: now I can be a **slave to others**.

**True liberty produces slavery to God and to others**

When we're *free*, we can give ourselves in love for others.

Luther: *“The Christian is owner, totally free, subject to no one. At same time, he's a slave, totally indebted to everyone”*

**True liberty is motivated by love 5:14** *“The entire law is summed up in a single command:*

*“Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Sign of obedience to the law: circumcision

Sign of walking by faith: love.

If we fulfill requirements of this law, no one can judge us!

**Alternative to liberty: self-destruction 5:15** *“If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”*

People who have *their way*—do what *they* want  
=> end up with nothing.

Verbs refer to animal actions:

Wild beasts devour & swallow victims.

They fight to get more and have what *they* want.  
=>They end up destroying each other  
This isn't liberty; this is self-destruction.  
Our Savior *gave up* His rights to die for us.  
When we follow His example, we give up *our* rights!  
=> serve one another in love.

### **HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?**

What principles control our lives as God's adult children?  
What can we do this week to show that we're free from bondage to sin & that we're now free to serve God and others.  
**Remember:** this *isn't* about *keeping a list of rules!*  
It's allowing God's Spirit to control our life & produce His fruit in us,  
=> so He lives His life through us serving God and one another.