

Galatians 5:1-6

Introduction: Today we begin a new section in Galatians. We have seen Paul's biography (1-2), sound theology (3-4), and now the practical lifestyle that should result from genuine salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

We need to obey two important commands based upon Christ's purpose in redeeming us—5:1

- This verse is Janus-like, looking forward and backward at the same time (Moo)
- 1) The purpose—5:1a ¹ *For freedom* (the purpose of redemption) *Christ has set us free.*
 - a) As descendants of the free woman (cf. 4:31)
 - b) The shackles of sin and selfishness have been removed. The gravitational pull of the flesh has been conquered. We are now free to be what God wanted His image-bearers to be. (Gromacki)
 - c) Freedom from my silly little self, in order to live responsibly in love for God and others. (Stott)
- 2) The commands—*Therefore*,
 - a) Positive—*stand firm* [pres. act. impv. στήκω],
 - i) Genuine freedom always brings tremendous personal responsibility.
 - b) Negative—*and do not be entangled* [pres. pass. impv. ἐνέχω] *again with a* (burdensome) *yoke of slavery* [δουλεία]. (cf. Acts 15:10)
 - i) Remember that Jesus has a yoke for genuine believers (cf. Matthew 11:29-30). Compare the two.
 - ii) All people are under a yoke, either of sin/self or of Christ.

We need to understand the unintended consequences of depending on self-effort—5:2-3 ² Behold I, (emphatic) Paul, tell you^{pl} (Gentile believers) that ...

- “I, Paul” used with authority (cf. 2nd Corinthians 10:1; Ephesians 3:1 Colossians 1:23; Philemon 1:19); putting himself directly at odds with the false teachers
- 1) Possible future—*if* [ἐάν 3rd class condition] *you^{pl} get circumcised* [pres. pass. subj. περιτέμνω],
 - a) (then) *Christ will not benefit* [fut. act. ind. ὠφελέω] [ὠφελήσει] *you^{pl} at all.*
 - b) Paul is not against the physical act of circumcision in and of itself. Compare Acts 16:3 (Timothy) and Galatians 2:3 (Titus). He is against placing faith in this act as a means of becoming pleasing to God.
 - c) Circumcision seems to be step 2 in following the false-teachers, right after step one, which apparently was following a religious calendar (cf. 4:10)
- 2) Principle repeated—³ *And I testify again to every man who gets circumcised* [pres. pass. ptc. περιτέμνω]
 - a) Ongoing and full obligation—*that he is* (morally) *obligated* [ὀφειλέτης] *to keep the whole* (emphatic) *law.* (cf. Romans 2:25; James 2:10)
 - i) This shows the unity of the Law, not dividing it into 3 or more parts.
 - ii) This would place that person under God's curse (cf. 3:10-11)

People can experience two dangers because of dependence on their own self-effort—5:4 *you^{pl} who are trying to be declared righteous* [pres. pass. ind. δικαιώω] *in* [ἐν] (the sphere of) *the law*; (cf. 3:11)

- 1) Destruction part 1—⁴ *You^{pl} have been alienated* [aor. pass. ind. καταργέω] *from Christ*,
 - a) Replacing the force that was previously in effect
- 2) Destruction part 2—*you^{pl} have drifted away from* [aor. act. ind. ἐκπίπτω] (the system of salvation through Christ) *grace*.
 - a) You are off course! You are not thinking properly. It's grace, not self-effort!
 - b) You come to God through Christ either by faith and grace, or you can attempt to do so by your own self-effort. They are mutually exclusive. If we choose the second option, then Christ cannot help us and we will not receive His grace.
 - c) This is NOT the loss of a person's salvation. Why? Because genuine saving faith continues to trust God because it is God's gift to His elect.
 - i) John 6:44; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 1:29; 2nd Peter 1:1;
- 3) Law and grace stand in direct antagonism. Justification by law is a matter of debt. Justification by grace through faith is a matter of God's favor.

We need to remember the importance of faith alone—5:5-6

- 1) Genuine saving faith produces anticipation for righteousness—⁵ *For* [γάρ] ... ***we*** (emphatic shift from you^{pl}) *eagerly await* [pres. dep. ind. ἀπεκδέχομαι] *the hope of righteousness* (which they already possess by faith).
 - a) How do genuine believers wait? *through* [dative case] *the Spirit*,
 - b) Source—*by* [ἐκ] *faith*, (in contrast to self-dependent works in the sphere of law; cf. 5:4)
 - c) Self-effort never produces hope, only fear and uncertainty along with worrying. “Have my efforts been enough? What if they aren't enough?”
- 2) Genuine saving faith is demonstrated through works of love—⁶ *For* [γάρ] *in* [ἐν] *Christ Jesus*
 - a) Negative—*neither circumcision* [περιτομή] *nor uncircumcision* [ἀκροβυστία] *accomplishes* [pres. act. ind. ἰσχύω] *anything*, (cf. 6:15)
 - b) Positive—*but* [ἀλλά] *faith working* [pres. mid. ptc. ἐνεργέω] *through* [διὰ] *love* [ἀγάπη].
 - i) Genuine believers will work, not to gain or keep salvation, but rather to show his loving gratitude for all the Christ has done for him. (Gromacki)
 - ii) Faith that expresses itself in acts of love for others is the only type of faith that is valid for justification. (cf. Ephesians 2:8-10)
- 3) Note well the maturity triad of faith, hope, and love in these 2 verse.

Take-home truth: we are most free when we so trust in God that we are filled with His love, and thus enabled to love others with selfless sacrifice. (Ryken)