

INTRODUCTION.

1. Paul now turns from argument to application, from the doctrinal to the practical.
2. The Christian who lives by faith is not going to become a rebel. Quite the contrary, he is going to experience the inner discipline of God that is far better than the outer discipline of man-made rules.
3. No man could become a rebel who depends on God's grace, yields to God's Spirit, lives for others, and seek to glorify God. [WWW]

A. THE SLAVE--YOU LOSE YOUR LIBERTY (5:1).

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

1. When the believers in Galatia became Christians, they lost the yoke of servitude to sin and put on the yoke of Christ (Mt. 11:28-30). The yoke of religion is hard, and the burdens heavy; Christ's yoke is "easy" and His burden is "light." That word easy in the Greek means "kind or gracious." The yoke of Christ frees us to fulfill His will, while the yoke of the Law enslaves us. [WWW]
2. The unsaved person wears a yoke of sin (Lam. 1:14); the religious legalist wears a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1); but the Christian who depends on God's grace wears the liberating yoke of Christ. [WWW]
3. It is Christ who has made us free from the bondage of the Law. He freed us from the curse of the Law by dying for us on the tree (Gal. 3:13). The believer is no longer under the Law; he is under grace (Rom. 6:14). [WWW]
4. This simply means that we no longer need the external force of Law to keep us in God's will, because we have the internal leading of the Holy Spirit of God (Rom. 8:1-4,14). [WWW]
5. "Stand ... therefore ..." Paul, by this admonished the Galatians to hold their ground, resist the Judaizers and reject the persuasions of those who would entangle them in such things as Sabbath days, feast days, circumcision and all other Jewish regulations. [JBC]

B. THE DEBTOR--YOU LOSE YOUR WEALTH (5:2-6).

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

1. Paul uses three phrases to describe the losses the Christian incurs when he turns from grace to Law:
 - a. "Christ shall profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2).
 - b. "...a debtor to the whole Law" (Gal. 5:3).
 - c. "Christ has become of no effect unto you" (Gal. 5:4). [WWW]
2. In 5:3, it was no small thing at all the Judaizers had in mind. They would impose the whole corpus of Jewish law-keeping on the Christian converts of Galatia; and in the process, the gospel of Christ would be totally neglected and replaced. [JBC]
3. This leads to the sad conclusion of Gal. 5:4; "You have fallen from grace." It is bad enough that legalism robs the believer of his liberty, but it also rob him of his spiritual wealth in Christ. The believer living under Law becomes a bankrupt slave. [WWW]
4. The present tense in this verse must be read as indicating that some of the Galatians had actually defected from Christianity in the manner indicated, with the result that they had "fallen from grace." Apparently, Paul was no Calvinist. [JBC]
5. In 5:6, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is relevant to Christianity." The question of true justification does not regard such a thing in any manner whatever. Some have wondered why Paul included "uncircumcision" in this declaration; but, as many of the Galatian converts had been won from

the Jewish synagogues (where Paul always went first with the gospel), it was mandatory that none of them should be concerned with the fact that they had been circumcised long ago, nor concern themselves with trying to undo it. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision:

- a. But faith working through love (5:6).
 - b. But a new creature (6:15).
 - c. But keeping of the commandments of God (1Cor. 7:19). [JBC]
6. When you became a Christian, you became spiritually rich:
- a. You share in the riches of God's grace (Eph. 1:7).
 - b. You share in the riches of His glory (Eph. 1:18; Phil. 4:19).
 - c. You share in the riches of His wisdom (Rom. 11:33).
 - d. You share in the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8).
 - e. In Christ we have "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).
 - f. We are complete in Him" (Col. 2:10).

Once a person is "in Christ" he has all that he needs to live the kind of Christian life God wants him to live. [WWW]

7. The Judaizers, however, want us to believe that we are "missing something," that we would be more "spiritual" if we practiced the Law with its demands and disciplines. The Law adds nothing! It comes in as a thief and robs the believer of the spiritual riches he has in Christ. It puts him back into bankruptcy, responsible for a debt he is unable to pay. [WWW]

C. THE RUNNER--YOU LOSE YOUR DIRECTION (5:7-12).

You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? **8** This persuasion *did not come* from Him who calls you. **9** A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*. **10** I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. **11** But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. **12** I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

1. It is important to note that Paul never uses the image of a race to tell people how to be saved. He is always talking to Christians about how to live the Christian life. A contestant in the Greek games had to be a citizen before he could compete. We become citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) by faith and baptism into Christ; then the Lord puts us on our course and we run to win the prize (Phil. 3:12-21). We do not run to be saved; we run because we are already saved and want to fulfill God's will in our lives (Ac. 20:24). [WWW]
2. A literal translation of Gal. 5:7 says, "You were running well. Who cut in on you so that you stopped obeying the truth?" In the races, each runner was to stay in his assigned lane, but some runners would cut in on their competitors to try to get them off course. This is what the Judaizers had done to the Galatian believers: they cut in on them and forced them to change direction and go on a "spiritual detour." [WWW]
3. Another possible translation is to break up a road, as an army before the advance of hostile forces." A paraphrase of this metaphor, is "Who tore up the race track in front of you?" [JBC]
4. In 5:9, Paul changes the metaphor from athletics to cooking. He introduces the idea of yeast (leaven) as a way to explain the influence of the Judaizers.
 - a. Leaven is powerful (1Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9).
 - b. Negative use of leaven (Mt. 16:6; 16:11-12; see also Mk. 8:15; Lk. 12:1).
 - c. Remove the old leaven (1Cor. 5:8; 1Cor. 5:7).
 - d. Positive use of leaven (Mt. 13:33). [gls]
5. In 5:11, "If I still preach circumcision ..."

This evidently refers to the allegations of the false teachers to the effect that Paul himself taught circumcision, an argument they reinforced, no doubt, by appealing to the known instance of Paul's circumcising Timothy, whose mother was a Jewess (Ac. 16:3). Paul's reason for doing that, however,

had nothing whatever to do with Timothy's salvation, but was for the purpose of avoiding and frustrating Jewish persecution. Any allegation that Paul considered circumcision as related in any manner to salvation was effectively denied by the fact that "if Paul indeed honored circumcision in any such way, the Jews would have stopped persecuting him." [JBC]

6. In 5:12, "you would even mutilate yourselves" has reference to the priests of Cybele who would make themselves eunuchs, that is practiced sacral castration. Paul was so disgusted with all the argument demanding circumcision that he uttered this outburst, which may be paraphrased, "It would be good if you fellows, always wanting to circumcise somebody, would just circumcise yourselves like those priests of Cybele!" Criticism of Paul's remark here is unbecoming, for the remark is a protest, not any sort of recommendation. [JBC]
7. The faithful believer who lives in the sphere of God's grace is free, rich, and running in the land that leads to reward and fulfillment. The believer who abandons grace for Law is a slave, a pauper, and a runner on a detour. [WWW]
8. God's grace is sufficient for every demand of life:
 - a. We are saved by grace (Eph. 2:8-10).
 - b. We serve by grace (1Cor. 15:9-10).
 - c. Grace enables us to endure suffering (2Cor. 12:9).
 - d. It is grace that strengthens us (2Tim. 2:1).
 - e. Our God, is the God of all grace (1Pet. 5:10).
 - f. We may come to the throne of grace and find help for every need (Heb. 4:16).
 - g. The Bible, is the word of His grace (Ac. 20:32).
 - h. The Holy Spirit, through the word, reveals to us how rich we really are (Heb. 10:29).
"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace" (Jn. 1:16). [WWW]

NEXT LESSON.

The next lesson on Nov. 14 is from Gal. 5:13-26; Walking by the Flesh; Walking by the Spirit.

III. Practical: Grace and the Christian Life (Chapters 5-6).

- A. Liberty, not bondage (5:1-12).
- B. The Spirit, not the flesh (5:13-26).
- C. Others, not self (6:1-10).
- D. God's glory, not man's praise (6:11-18).