

## A Practical Study of

### GALATIANS: You Were Running Well

#### "Freedom vs. Legalism: The Truth Shall Set You Free"

#### Study #10 – Galatians 5:2-15

#### UNTIL: You Said, "Don't Confuse Me with the Facts"

Key Verse: Galatians 5:8

This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.

#### TEXT:

v. 2 Behold, I, Paul am saying to you that if you are receiving circumcision, Christ will benefit you nothing.

v. 3 Now I am witnessing again to every man who is being circumcised that he is under obligation to do the whole law.

v. 4 You have been rendered inoperative from Christ. You who are trying to be justified in the law, you fell out from grace.

v. 5 For we through the Spirit on the ground of faith are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.

v. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love.

v. 7 You were running well; who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth?

v. 8 This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.

v. 9 A little leaven is leavening the whole lump.

v. 10 As for myself I have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord with respect to you that you will take no other view than this. But the one who is troubling you shall bear his judgment whoever he is.

v. 11 And I brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? Then the stumbling-block of the cross has been rendered inoperative.

v. 12 I would that they who are upsetting you would have themselves mutilated.

v. 13 For you, brethren, were called upon the basis of freedom. Only do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the flesh. But through love keep on serving one another.

v. 14 For the whole law in one word has been fulfilled: (namely) in this: Love your neighbor as (you do) yourself.

v. 15 But if you are biting and devouring one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

(A Gathering by Hal Cannon) Layton, UT: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc. Copyright – Gibbs M. Smith, Inc., 1985.

### **GREASIN' THE MILES**

NICK JOHNSON

When night comes slippin' up the valley  
And you've quite a ways to go,  
And you just can't say for certain  
Whether you'll make her in or no—  
Oh, it ain't no use comparin'  
Your snug cabin or your bed  
To a bivouac near a windfall  
With your saddle 'neath your head.

No use wishin' for the taters  
Or the beefsteak that you'd get,  
Nor comparin' them with water  
And a homemade cigarette.  
But just lift your head a trifle;  
Try to sing some darn fool song,  
And it's really quite surprisin'  
How you'll grease the miles along.

And your pony, say, he'll get it  
And start pullin' on the bit  
Just to let you know he's with you  
And still feelin' pert and fit,  
And remember God Almighty's  
Been about a million years  
A pointin' us back to Eden  
Through this sinsunk Vale of Tears.

And he's taught the grass and flowers  
And the tress and waters, too,  
How to laugh and sing and burble;  
Come on stockhand, why can't you?  
Cause we've got to learn to do it  
'Fore we reach the millennium.

Me – I’ve done some heavy figurin,  
If you’re ready, here’s the sum:

He gave to Nature the winter  
So she could recuperate;  
And the night he give to us folks  
To forget our pains and hate.  
So if we learn to all be joyful,  
“Just the way we like her, see,”  
Why the trail will be lots shorter  
And the quicker we’ll be free.  
pp. 112-13

## Cowboy Paul

This cowboy was aridin'  
 Along the range  
 Singin' his song  
 Feelin' no pain

When all of a sudden  
 Life bucked him off  
 In a prickly pear he did land  
 Spittin' out chaw and a mouthful of sand

Sharp needles imbedded  
 His whole bod' did ache  
 What did God want to teach him  
 For heaven's sake?

Walkin' along, pickin' at the pain  
 Knowin' his bod' will never be the same  
 With the hot sun scorchin' his head  
 He wondered a while and looked up and said:

"Please tell me the lessons  
 You want me to see  
 These cacti splinters  
 Are ahurtin' me"

Like thunder from a cloudless sky  
 The Lord He done spoke, I promise, no lie  
 I heard Him say: "Come ride with me  
 Living water I'll supply, I'll pull out the spines, I'll set you free"

I wondered a while, thought I was dreamin'  
 God said it again, now stop yer schemin'  
 "I have a plan for yer dusty road  
 Now pick up yer hat, or I'll teach you like Job"

"Fewer cacti, less snakes for sure  
 I'll remove those spines and show you a cure  
 I'll put you on yer horse again  
 But follow Me—you'll be a leader of men"

I considered the cacti, cow patties, and snakes  
 There's not much here, so I didn't wait  
 I took Him up on His offer that day  
 Not one regret, I have to say

"His plan, not mine" I learned to say  
 He changed my life that hot summer's day  
 Refreshing waters, a few trials too  
 But I'm not alone, my ridin' partner's Jesus, a Jew

Learnin' and growin' I think I'll stay  
 He's transformed these boots of hardened clay  
 My plans have changed ... but I'm glad to say  
 Come ride with me ... please don't delay

He's acomin' back, that's what they say  
 He's takin' me home ... one fine day  
 In His presence ... glad I'll be  
 So come along and ride with me

Kick off those boots, get rid of those spines  
 He'll change yer life, just like He did mine  
 Cowboys, cowgirls come on let's ride  
 Let's tell the world 'bout the other side

by Gable Carrell

(source unknown)

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright—Brees Company, Inc., 2010.

The next time you're up against one of those difficult times, you might not be able to see it as an opportunity to gain power and confidence, but it is—you can bank on it. You have to prepare now to trust and have faith that it's happening for a reason. And when it comes, you can lean into the adversity, put your shoulder down, push through it, and learn from it. Through those experiences, God will mold you into the person he wants you to be. The person you're meant to be.  
 p. 188

(If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil by Randy Alcorn)  
 Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah. Copyright– Eternal Perspective  
 Ministries, 2009.

Brian says, “An 80-ton 757 came through at 530 miles an hour with 3,000 pounds of jet fuel and I’m still here and the plane isn’t,” and adds, “You don’t survive that because the Army made you tough. You survive it because the Lord’s got something else in mind for you.”<sup>4</sup>

4. Brian Birdwell, quoted in Fred W. Baker III, “9/11 Survivor Returns to Tell Story of Hope,” American Forces Press Service, September 11, 2007, [www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=47411](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=47411) (accessed May 2, 2009).

p. 43

(Choosing to See: A Journey of Struggle and Hope by Mary Beth Chapman  
with Ellen Vaughn) Grand Rapids, MI: Revell. Copyright– Mary Beth  
Chapman, 2010.

I know you've heard me say these words before  
But every time I say I love you the words mean something more  
I spoke them as a promise right from the start  
I said death would be the only thing that could tear us apart  
And now that you are standing on the edge of the unknown  
I love you means I'll be with you wherever you must go

I will take a heart whose nature is to beat for me alone  
And fill it up with you—make all your joy and pain my own  
No matter how deep a valley you go through  
I will go there with you  
And I will give myself to love the way Love gave itself for me  
And climb with you to mountaintops or swim a raging sea  
To the place where one heart is made from two  
I will go there with you

I see it in your tears—you wonder where you are  
The wind is growing colder and the sky is growing dark  
Though it's something neither of us understands  
We can walk through this together if we hold each other's hand  
I said for better or worse I'd be with you  
So no matter where you're going I will go there too

I will take a heart whose nature is to beat for me alone  
And fill it up with you—make all your joy and pain my own  
No matter how deep a valley you go through  
I will go there with you

I know sometimes I let you down  
But I won't let you go—we'll always be together

“Go There With You”

Words and music by Steven Curtis Chapman

p. 68



(Finish Strong: Amazing Stories of Courage and Inspiration by Dan Green)  
Naperville, IL: Simple Truths, LLC. Copyright– Simple Truths, LLC,  
2008.

*“How you respond to the challenge  
in the second half will determine what you  
become after the game, whether you are  
a winner or loser.”*

LOU HOLTZ

p. 63

*“Keep on going, and the chances are that you  
will stumble on something, perhaps when you  
are least expecting it. I never heard of anyone  
ever stumbling on something sitting down.”*

CHARLES KETTERING

p. 75

(The Treasures of Fanny Crosby by Fanny Crosby) Uhrichsville, OH:  
Barbour. Copyright– Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Never give up, never give up,  
Never give up to thy sorrows,  
Jesus will bid them depart.  
Trust in the Lord, trust in the Lord,  
Sing when your trials are greatest,  
Trust in the Lord and take heart.

p. 78

(The Treasures of Fanny Crosby by Fanny Crosby) Uhrichsville, OH:  
Barbour. Copyright— Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2003.

Never be sad or desponding,  
Lean on the arm of thy Lord;  
Dwell in the depths of His mercy,  
Thou shalt receive thy reward.

Weeping may endure for a night,  
but joy cometh in the morning.

PSALM 30:5

O child of God, wait patiently when dark  
thy path may be,  
And let thy faith lean trustingly on Him  
Who cares for Thee;  
And though the clouds hang drearily upon  
the brow of night,  
Yet in the morning joy will come,  
and fill thy soul with light.  
pp. 78-79

There are just some things in life that we make up our minds about and no matter what anybody says or fact that are presented, it will not change our position.

We are looking together at the theme: “You Were Running Well” taken from Galatians 5:7:

1. You Were Running Well UNTIL: No Runs, No Hits, and a Big Error (Galatians 1:1-9)
2. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Forgot What God Was Doing in Your Life (Galatians 1:10-24)
3. You Were Running Well UNTIL: Divine Direction Was Not Discerned (Galatians 2:1-10)
4. You Were Running Well UNTIL: Peer Pressure Postponed Progress (Galatians 2:11-21)
5. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said, I Do It Myself (Galatians 3:1-14)
6. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Failed to Read the Instructions (Galatians 3:15-29)
7. You were running well UNTIL: You Didn’t Graduate (Galatians 4:1-11)
8. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Got the P.B.A. Disease (Pretty Bad Attitude) (Galatians 4:1-11)
9. You Were Running Well UNTIL: “Whee! I Am Free” Became, “Boy! I Am in Bondage” (Galatians 4:12-5:1)

We now come to:

10. You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said, “Don’t Confuse Me with the Facts” (Galatians 5:2-15)

Galatians 5:1 (DAV)

For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

If the Galatians do not find pleasure in following the Apostle Paul's advice there are going to be some serious ramifications to this:

Galatians 5:1

“Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage”

The apostle is reminding them of some of the things that will happen if they go in this direction:

1. **PERSONAL**—verses 1-2
2. **DOCTRINAL**—verses 3-4
3. **PRACTICAL**—verses 5-6

Anders says:

Legalists in our churches today warn that we dare not teach people about the liberty we have in Christ lest it result in religious anarchy. The Christian who lives by faith in 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 on man-made rules.”

Warren Wiersbe

p. 60

Anders says:

In chapter 5, Paul explains to the Galatian Christians: Through grace, Christ has set you free. Stand firm, and do not fall back into the slavery of the law. Yet do not use your freedom as an opportunity to sin. Do not give yourself over to the deeds of your carnal desires but rather to the deeds of the Holy Spirit.

p. 60

Anders says:

Walk in the Spirit

**MAIN IDEA:** *The Christian is freed from external control by the law to internal control by the Holy Spirit.*

p. 62

Anders says:

### **Freedom from the Law and Its Negative Consequences (vv. 1–12)**

**SUPPORTING IDEA:** *The Christian is set free from the negative effects of the law, so don't return to it. You would have to keep the whole law perfectly, which you cannot. In Christ, only faith working through love avails anything.*

p. 62

Barker & Kohlenberger title this section and then say:

### **B. The Danger of Falling From Grace (5:2–12)**

The reader may think that in the opening verses of ch. 5 Paul reverts back to a theme he has already covered and so departs from his purpose to move on to the ethical section. But such reasoning misses an important point—that even the ethical life must begin by recognizing that the foundation of God's dealings with us is grace through faith rather than obedience to the law. “Do you wish to lead a holy life?” Paul seems to be asking. “Then begin with the principles of faith and shun legalism. Holiness will never come as the result of insisting on adherence to either man-made or even God-made regulations.” He makes this point twice here: first, from the viewpoint of those who, like the Galatians, seem about to fall into legalism (vv. 2–6) and, second, by referring to those who teach such false doctrines (vv. 7–12).

p. 735

Baxter says:

. . . it is the liberty of a *love-service* instead of a law-bondage. In verses 2 to 12, which are practically a parenthesis, Paul shows with a new drastic finality the alternative to this liberty in Christ: it is to be “debtors to the whole law” and to be “fallen way from grace.” Then, at verse 13, connecting up again with verse I, he shows that the true liberty of the Gospel is the liberty of love, not of licence (in answer, probably, to the insinuations of the false teachers, that Paul’s doctrine of so-called liberty gave licence for sin).  
p. 148

Bickel & Jantz say:

### *You Can’t Stand Firm Alone*

No matter how hard you “try” to stand firm against sin, legalism, and the world, you can’t do it on your own. Paul gives us at least three ways we can and should stand firm:

- We need to stand firm in our faith (1 Corinthians 16:13); . . .  
p. 116

Dunnam says:

Throughout the letter Paul has been making his case: Salvation is the grace-gift of God. We are not worthy of it. We cannot earn it. We are justified (made right) with God by God’s grace and our faith-response to that grace. In the Cross Jesus has purchased our pardon, doing for us what we could never do ourselves.

The remainder of his letter enunciates the practical implications of the gospel. Christian liberty is not a license to keep on sinning. To receive salvation is to begin a process of working it out in life. Though the yoke of the law has been removed, the Cross has been accepted, and life becomes a rhythm of death and resurrection. Christian freedom makes us slaves of Christ. The only way to use this freedom is by self-investment in the lives of others for Christ’s sake, by ongoing dying to those things to which Christ died, and by the continuous production of the fruit of His Spirit.  
p. 95

Gutzke says:

This is what happens when a person becomes a Christian. Paul was anxious that Christians should realize this freedom. Believers are set free, by “being raised in the newness of life” in Christ Jesus.

To place this freedom that they have in Christ Jesus under rules is to stifle it. Rules were designed for the old human nature. When I become a Christian, I have the Ruler in my heart. I do not need a set of instructions; I have the Great Instructor in my soul. I am no longer responsible to keep regulations; I have the Regulator Himself inside me.

p. 108

Hendriksen says:

It was a *gain* of incalculable value that Christ obtained for his people, namely, freedom. Over against this stands the frightful *loss* that is incurred by those who refuse to recognize him as their all-sufficient Savior.

p. 195

Lightfoot says:

‘Let there be no misunderstanding. I Paul myself declare to you that if you submit to circumcision, you forfeit all advantage from Christ. I have said it once, and I repeat it again with a solemn protest. Every man, who is circumcised, by that very act places himself under the law; he binds himself to fulfil every single requirement of the law. You have no part in Christ, you are outcasts from the covenant of grace, you who seek justification in obedience to law. There is a great gulf between you and us. We, the true disciples of Christ, hope to be justified of faith, not of works, in the Spirit, not in the flesh.’

p. 203

**Lucado says:**

To the Christians in Galatia who were being told that acceptance with God required them to not only believe in Jesus but also observe Jewish rituals. Paul writes this strong warning: It's not a "both-and" proposition. It's an "either-or" deal. You can try to keep the law (but you will have to do so perfectly): or you can acknowledge your need for Christ to be your substitute and Savior. There is no middle ground.  
p. 92

**MacArthur says:**

This passage begins the third section of the letter. After defending his apostleship (chaps. 1-2) and his message of justification by faith (chaps. 3-4), Paul now applies that doctrine to practical Christian living (chaps. 5-6), emphasizing that right doctrine should result in right living.  
p. 131

**Machen says:**

Finally, Paul concludes the central section of the epistle by emphasizing the gravity of the crisis. Gal. 5:1-12. Do not be deceived. Circumcision as the Judaizers advocate it is no innocent thing; it means the acceptance of a law religion. You must choose either the law or grace; you cannot have both.  
p. 205

Let's now dig into the text of **Galatians 5:2-15** and see what the Lord has for us.



**v. 2 Behold, I, Paul am saying to you that if you are receiving circumcision, Christ will benefit you nothing.**

The NET Bible translates verse 2:

Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all!

Peterson paraphrases verse 2:

I am emphatic about this. The moment any one of you submits to circumcision or any other rule-keeping system, at that same moment Christ's hard-won gift of freedom is squandered.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**5:2.** Taking up a prime example of such entanglement, namely circumcision, Paul issued a strong warning to the Galatians who were considering submitting to that rite. If they did, and were thereby seeking righteousness by works, Paul declared that **Christ will be of no value to you at all**. It is not that the apostle condemned circumcision in itself, for he had Timothy circumcised (in Galatia) so that the young man would have a wider ministry (Acts 16:1-3). But Paul was strongly opposed to the Judaistic theology which insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Anyone who was circumcised for that reason added works to faith and demonstrated that he had not exercised saving faith in Christ.

This is the problem with many Christians. They **LIMIT CHRIST** to the saving of their souls and they think that it is their responsibility to keep themselves saved by doing certain things which are prescribed by the society in which they live.

It was Ian Thomas who said:

Godliness is nothing more than God's activity in our lives. It is God Himself behaving in and through you.  
(source unknown)

Performance is often an excuse for not yielding.

Many believers quench the Spirit by performing.

If you have not yet entered into this rest, then you submit yourself to these outward regulations which you have chosen and you hope they will make you acceptable.

Paul realizes the seriousness of this situation so he reminds them of who is doing the speaking:

**"BEHOLD, I, PAUL AM SAYING TO YOU."**

It is either circumcision or Christ at this point. If you are receiving circumcision, Christ will benefit you nothing.

Anders says:

**5:2.** Those who return to the law face six negative consequences. First, it invalidates Christ's work on the cross for **Christ will be no value to you.** By submitting to circumcision, a person demonstrated that they were not fully trusting in Christ. Instead they added their own works to what Christ had done, thus invalidating the sufficiency of Christ for salvation.  
p. 62

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

2 Paul wants the Galatians to take careful note that if they allow themselves to be circumcised (the verb tense used here implies that they had not yet taken this step but were considering it), then Jesus Christ will profit them absolutely nothing. Circumcision was, of course, the particular form of legalism that was a problem in Paul's day; the choice was between Christ and no circumcision at all, or circumcision and no Christ at all.  
p. 735

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Rather, what Paul condemns is the *theology* of circumcision, which makes works necessary for salvation and seeks to establish conformity to some external standards of behavior as a mark of spirituality.

One's motivation is the important thing. Paul was in no sense condemning those Jewish Christians who had been circumcised. His advice to such people is given in 1 Co 7:17–20: circumcised Christians should remain circumcised; uncircumcised Christians should remain uncircumcised. Particular forms of legalism are not themselves the important issues; the critical issue is works versus grace, or, as we will soon see, spirit versus flesh. Paul's concern was that nothing should cloud perception of this central Christian doctrine.  
p. 735

Bartlett says:

The righteousness of works and justification by faith cannot coexist. We must choose one or the other. Christ brooks no rival loyalties. Divided dependence forfeits claim to His enabling grace. He is of benefit only to those who rely upon Him alone for their standing with God.  
p. 93

Calvin says:

*Behold, I Paul.* He could not have pronounced a severer threatening than that it would exclude them entirely from the grace of Christ.  
p. 147

Calvin says:

The expression *Behold, I Paul*, is very emphatic; for he places himself before them, and gives his name, to remove all appearance of hesitation. And though his authority had begun to be less regarded among the Galatians, he asserts that it is sufficient to put down every adversary.  
p. 148

De Haan says:

We go on now into the succeeding verses for Paul's argument to stand fast in the liberty and freedom of grace: . . .  
p. 155

Eadie says:

The particle occurs frequently in the Gospels, ἰδοὺ being commoner in the Epistles; and here it sharply summons attention to what follows, as a warning of highest moment.  
p. 379

Eadie says:

Of course, when the apostle asserts his authority, he virtually puts himself into opposition to the false teachers, and the name might suggest many associations in connection with his previous residence among them. But the phrase especially places his personal or official authority in abrupt and warning emphasis.  
p. 379

Eadie says:

The present subjunctive indicates the continuance of the habit. He says not, that they had been circumcised, but “if ye be getting yourselves circumcised.”  
p. 380

Eadie says:

Circumcision and salvation by Christ are asserted to be incompatible.  
p. 380

Eadie says:

But when heathens were circumcised, they wore a lie in their flesh, for they had no connection with Abraham; and to declare circumcision to be essential to their salvation was not only enforcing a national rite on those for whom it was never intended, but was giving it a co-ordinate value with the death of Christ—as if that death had failed to out a complete salvation.  
p. 380

Gutzke says:

When Paul says “if ye be circumcised,” he means that if the believer accepts Jewish circumcision to help him in his Christian living, “Christ shall profit you nothing.” By this Paul means to say that a person will not get any help from the Lord Jesus Christ about living that way. However, if the believer was to yield himself to Christ and let Him work His will in him, he would receive the blessing. If the Christian is seeking to establish his own righteousness, he will be without the grace of God and without the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit. This is a very solemn truth.  
p. 109

Hendriksen says:

Since the Galatians were already yielding to the Judaizers in the matter of observing “days and months and seasons and years” (4:10), the danger was great that they would yield also in the matter of circumcision, and that, as a result, their whole religion would be reduced to ritualism with a slightly Christian tinge.

p. 195

Henry says:

I. Their submitting to circumcision, and depending on the works of the law for righteousness, were a forfeiture of all their advantages by Jesus Christ . . .

p. 1843

Hogg & Vine say:

The new section begins here: the Apostle becomes more personal again, and, as he sets before the Galatians in the plainest terms the inevitable end of the path that was attracting them, his language takes on warmth with the vigour of his expostulation.

p. 238

Ironside says:

“Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” That is, if they depended upon the rite of circumcision for the salvation of their souls they were ignoring Christ. He is not saying that if somebody had been misled for the moment and had accepted the teaching of these Judaizers, he lost Christ; but if their dependence was upon these things, they have set Christ at naught.

p. 177

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

**Behold**—i.e., Mark what I say. **I Paul**—Though you now think less of my authority, I nevertheless give my name and personal authority as enough by itself to refute all opposition of adversaries.

p. 1273

Lange says:

Rousing personal attention with “Behold” and with the interposition of his personal authority,\* “I Paul,” he warns them against the final step, not yet taken by them, which would bring them completely under the yoke of the law, namely, the receiving of circumcision. [It is highly probable that some of them had been circumcised, and that the present points to the continuance of this course of conduct among them . . .

p. 126

Lenski says:

With the words “I myself , Paul,” the apostle puts forward all the authority at his command. There are times when this must be done. Apostolic and ministerial authority is to be used at the proper time.

p. 253

Lightfoot says:

At this point St Paul assumes a severer tone in condemning the observance of the law. It is not only a useless imposition, a slavish burden; it is pernicious and fatal in itself.

p. 203

### Luther says:

Paul is incensed at the thought of the tyranny of the Law. His antagonism to the Law is a personal matter with him. “Behold, I, Paul,” he says, “I who have received the Gospel not from men, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ: I who have been commissioned from above to preach the Gospel to you: I Paul say to you, If you submit to circumcision Christ will profit you nothing.” Paul emphatically declares that for the Galatians to be circumcised would mean for them to lose the benefits of Christ’s suffering death. This passage may well serve as a criterion for all the religions.  
p. 197

### Luther says:

Let us bear this in mind when the devil accuses our conscience. When that dragon accuses us of having done no good at all, but only evil, say to him: “You trouble me with the remembrance of my past sins; you remind me that I have done no good. But this does not bother me, because if I were to trust in my own good deeds, or despair because I have done no good deeds, Christ would profit me neither way. I am not going to make him unprofitable to me. This I would do, if I should presume to purchase for myself the favor of God and everlasting life by my good deeds, or if I should despair of my salvation because of my sins.”  
p. 198

### MacArthur says:

**5:2 circumcised.** See notes on 2:3. Paul had no objection to circumcision itself (cf. Acts 16:1–3; Phil. 3:5). But he objected to the notion that it had some spiritual benefit or merit with God and was a prerequisite or necessary component of salvation. Circumcision had meaning in Israel when it was a physical symbol of a cleansed heart (cf. Deut. 10:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:24–26) and served as a reminder of God’s covenant of salvation promise.  
p. 1673



MacArthur says:

The atoning sacrifice of Christ cannot benefit anyone who trusts in law and ceremony for salvation.  
p. 1673

MacArthur says:

Rather than looking on **circumcision** as God had given it—as a symbol of His covenant of promise (Gen. 17:9-10)—most Jews looked on it as having spiritual value in itself. To them it was not a reminder of God's gracious and sovereign blessing but a means of humanly guaranteeing His favor.  
p. 132

MacArthur says:

Paul's warning about **circumcision** pertained only to the false idea that in itself it carried spiritual benefit or merit. The Judaizers were saying, in effect, that faith in Jesus Christ, although important, was not sufficient for complete salvation. They taught that what Moses began in the Old Covenant and Christ added to in the New Covenant had to be finished and perfected by one's own efforts—the centerpiece of which was **circumcision**.  
p. 133

McGee says:

Circumcision was the badge of the Law. A badge indicates to what organization or lodge you belong. Perhaps Christians should wear a badge because that is about the only way you could tell that some people are Christians. But Paul says that if you so much as put on the badge of the Law, which is circumcision, then Christ does not profit you anything.  
p. 183

McGee says:

The way Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer put it always impressed me. It was something like this: “I want to so trust Christ that when I come into His presence and He asks me, ‘Why are you here?’ I can say, ‘I am here because I trusted You as my Savior.’ If He asked me, ‘Well, that is commendable, but what have you done? I happen to know that you were president of a seminary, and that you were baptized. You were also a member of a church. You did many fine things during your ministry,’ then I would reply, ‘It is all true, but I never trusted in any of it for salvation. I trusted only You, my Lord.’” My friend, is that the way you are trusting Christ? Paul makes it very strong when he says, “if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.” If you trust anything other than Christ, you are not a Christian.  
p. 184

Ridderbos says:

With the greatest possible force Paul now lets his apostolic authority come to expression: *Behold, I Paul say unto you*. He puts his readers before the dilemma: circumcision or Christ, everything or nothing. Do the false teachers want to persuade the Galatians that they must seek out the right combination of the two? Paul denies the possibility. The issue is not circumcision as such, as though circumcised persons could not be saved, but circumcision as the Judaists were demanding it of the Gentiles as a condition for obtaining salvation. The sufficiency of Christ’s work is what is being challenged. True, the Galatians have not yet entirely yielded to the opponents, but they are being prodded in that direction and seem turned that way (*cf.* 4:10). Hence it is necessary now to set the whole matter in sharpest focus and consistency, and to see through its implications.  
p. 187

Vos says:

To such individuals Paul declares: “Christ shall profit you nothing”; that is, His provision of salvation cannot really profit you if you do not fully trust in it.  
p. 91

Wuest says:

The words “if ye be circumcised,” present an hypothetical case. The Galatians had not yet submitted to that rite, but were on the verge of doing so. The words “Christ shall profit you nothing,” must be interpreted in their context. Paul is not speaking here of their standing in grace as justified believers. He is speaking of the method of living a Christian life and of growth in that life. Thus, if the Galatians submit to circumcision, they are putting themselves under law, and are depriving themselves of the ministry of the Holy Spirit which Christ made possible through His death and resurrection, and which ministry was not provided for under law.  
pp. 137-8

Wuest says:

Behold, I, Paul, am saying to you that if you persist in being circumcised, Christ will be advantageous to you in not even one thing, and I solemnly affirm again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to do the whole law.  
p. 208

**v. 3 Now I am witnessing again to every man who is being circumcised that he is under obligation to do the whole law.**

The NET Bible translates verse 3:

And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

Peterson paraphrases verse 3:

I repeat my warning: The person who accepts the ways of circumcision trades all the advantages of the free life in Christ for the obligations of the slave life of the law.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles this verse and then says:

TURNING TO LAW MAKES MAN A DEBTOR (5:3).

**5:3.** In addition to the fact that turning to the Law ruins grace, it also creates an entirely new obligation: a person **is obligated to obey the whole Law**. The Law is a unit, and if a person puts himself under any part of it for justification, he is a “debtor” (KJV) to the entire code with its requirements and its curse (cf. 3:10; James 2:10).

The law is a unit and you cannot just pick out parts of it and keep them, and then expect to gain acceptance before God, and disregard the rest of it.

Galatians 3:10 (DAV)

For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse. For it is written “Cursed is everyone who is not remaining in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”

James 2:10 (NASB)

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.

Suppose that a man wants to become a citizen of the United States so he carefully carries out all the rules and regulations as they affect his becoming a citizen. He cannot stop there for after he becomes a citizen, there are laws of the country, highway, etc., that he must also abide by.

Circumcision is just the introduction. All the rest of the laws come too.

The law is like a pane of glass—broken in any place it is broken.

Romans 3:20 (NASB)

because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

Anders says:

**5:3.** The second negative consequence of returning to the law is obligation. Once a person submits to one part of the law (circumcision), he is **obligated to obey the whole law.**

p. 62

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Paul has already stated that to fall into circumcision is to lose the value of Christ's death both for salvation and for living the Christian life. Now he adds another reason why the Galatians should remain firm in the freedom Christ has given them: to choose circumcision is to choose legalism, which in turn involves taking on the burden of the entire law—something that the legalizers had probably not warned the Galatians about.

pp. 735-6

Calvin says:

He who is *a debtor to do the whole law*<sup>1</sup> will never escape death, but will always continue to be held as guilty; for no man will ever be found who satisfies the law.<sup>1</sup>

pp. 148-9

Eadie says:

He has said, if ye be circumcised; and now he obtests to every one not as having been circumcised, but as now submitting to circumcision; not simply assuming the possibility of the occurrence, or regarding it as actually accomplished, but vividly representing every one who gets himself circumcised as putting himself under covenant to obey the whole law.

p. 381

Eadie says:

But the object of the apostle seems to be, not to prove that by being circumcised a man places himself under stipulation to obey the whole law—an impossibility, and therefore subjects himself to the curse,—but rather to show the utter incompatibility between the law and the gospel, or that any one so acting places himself under the very yoke from which Christ came to redeem him.

p. 382

Hogg & Vine say:

**to do the whole law.**—the unity of the law is asserted categorically by James, who declares that to offend in one point is to transgress the law as a whole, and so to become guilty of all; see 2. 10, 11. In that case it is clear that zeal in one direction will not compensate for failure in another. The law is not to be conceived of as a bundle of separate strands, whereof if one be broken the rest may still remain intact, but rather as a sheet of glass which, if it be broken in any part, is broken as a whole.

pp. 240-1

**Ironside says:**

If you take the first step, go the whole length, for the law is one. You cannot take from it what you please and reject the rest. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Of course the real meaning is, that if one is seeking justification by law, he is seeking to be right with God on the basis of his own human efforts.  
p. 177

**Lenski says:**

The preceding, "I, Paul, say to you" is now varied to "I testify." A witness is to tell the truth, and this Paul does in the most simple and direct way.  
p. 255

**Lightfoot says:**

The argument is this; 'Circumcision is the seal of the law. He who willingly and deliberately undergoes circumcision, enters upon a compact to fulfil the law. To fulfil it therefore he is bound, and he cannot plead the grace of Christ; for he has entered on another mode of justification.'  
p. 203

**Luther says:**

The truth is that by circumcision you have become debtors and servants of the Law. The more you endeavor to perform the Law, the more you will become tangled up in the yoke of the Law."

The truth of this I have experienced in myself and in others. I have seen many work themselves down to the bones in their hungry effort to obtain peace of conscience. But the harder they tried the more they worried. Especially in the presence of death they were so uneasy that I have seen murderers die with better grace and courage.  
p. 199

MacArthur says:

**5:3 a debtor to keep the whole law.** God's standard is perfect righteousness; thus a failure to keep only one part of the law falls short of the standard . . .  
p. 1673

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

The legalistic Jewish teachers in Galatia were urging believers to be **circumcised** (6:12, 13). Paul points out that being circumcised changes the entire orientation of salvation away from God's grace to one's own actions. One who is circumcised in an attempt to gain God's acceptance is obligated **to keep the whole law**, which history has abundantly demonstrated no one can do (Rom. 3:10–18). It is a double loss: No one can be **justified by law** (2:16), and the person who attempts to do so is completely **estranged from Christ**, deriving no **profit** from Christ's redemptive death on the cross. What the Jewish legalistic teachers did with respect to circumcision is not different in principle from legalistic teachers in every age.  
p. 1526

Wuest says:

This verse continues the argument of verse 2. Not only would the Galatians lose the aid of the Holy Spirit in the living of their Christian lives, but they would be assuming the burden of the entire legalistic system. Paul warns them that the acceptance of circumcision would be in principle the acceptance of the whole of that system.  
p. 138

Wuest says:

Translation. *And I solemnly affirm again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to do the whole law.*  
p. 139



**v. 4 You have been rendered inoperative from Christ. You who are trying to be justified in the law, you fell out from grace.**

The NET Bible translates verse 4:

You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace!

Peterson paraphrases verse 4:

I suspect you would never intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles verses 4-6 and then says of verse 4:

TURNING TO LAW IS TO FALL AWAY FROM GRACE (5:4-6).

**5:4.** Turning to the Law and accepting circumcision as a meritorious work has further dire implications which the Galatians were called on to consider. Anyone seeking justification **by Law** has **been alienated** (katērgēthēte) **from Christ**, that is, such a person would not be living in a sphere where Christ was operative. The KJV has a helpful rendering, “Christ is become of no effect unto you.” In addition, said Paul, they would **have fallen away from grace**. The issue here is not the possible loss of salvation, for “grace” is referred to not as salvation itself but as a method of salvation (cf. 2:21 where “a Law” route is mentioned as an unworkable way to come to Christ). If the Galatians accepted circumcision as necessary for salvation, they would be leaving the grace system for the Mosaic Law system. The same error is repeated today when a believer leaves a church that emphasizes salvation by grace through faith and joins one which teaches that salvation depends on repentance, confession, faith, baptism, and church membership.

When you submit yourselves to the law, you leave the sphere of grace and take your stand in the sphere of the law as your hope for salvation.

(The Grace of God by Dr. Charles Ryrie)

Since grace is God's way of making a man righteous, to seek any other way is to fall from the right way. The grace way does not need supplementation by the law and particularly by circumcision. Thus, in the Galatian epistle we find that grace is the answer to all the arguments of the Judaizer. All of grace, not of law; and grace for all, even uncircumcised Gentiles.

(source unknown)

**FALLING FROM GRACE** simply means that we are not willing to trust what God has done as sufficient for our salvation, and that we in turn must add some merit by doing certain things.

Gutzke points out:

"Ye are fallen from grace" means this: You've stopped depending on the grace of God and have started depending on your own observances, your own regulations. You are not depending on inward strength to do the will of God, but are depending on outward compliance with rules and regulations. This is what Paul is emphasizing.  
p. 112

Vos points out:

"Fallen from grace" has nothing to do with the Arminian doctrine that a Christian can lose his salvation. Whatever one may say about that subject in connection with other Scripture passages, it is not the topic of discussion here. If one has stood in grace he has fallen from it at the moment he seeks justification by legalism. To put it another way, if one is perched on the high platform of grace, he may be said to have fallen from it on to the ground of self-righteousness when he puts himself under law.  
p. 93

C. S. Lovett points out:

**FALLEN.** To understand this correctly, it is necessary to distinguish between those who sought salvation through Christ PLUS keeping the Law (the Judaizers), and those ALREADY SAVED, but in danger of being entangled in Jewish legalism (the Galatian Christians). This verse is NOT teaching that a born again Christian can lose his salvation by accepting circumcision and submitting to the Jewish code. Why? The grace of God brings MORE than salvation to a person. It also brings him the “glorious liberty of the sons of God.” The believer who voluntarily places himself under the legal yoke, does NOT forfeit his sonship, but he does FALL from the higher estate which his salvation brought him—FREEDOM. Whereas Christian sonship is NOT negotiable, Christian liberty can be traded for legalism anytime. The Christian who falls from grace (freedom) not only abandons his precious liberty, he also forsakes the privilege of growing in Christ. Legalism stifles Christian growth.

p. 61

Romans 4:4-5 (NASB)

Now to the one who works, his wage is not reckoned as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,

The choice open to the Galatians was between:

- a CADILLAC and
- a WHEELBARROW.

May I say, God’s way is by the “Cadillac of grace” and not the “Wheelbarrow of the law.”

Grace is flowing like a river,  
 Millions there have been supplied;  
 Still it flows as fresh as ever,  
 From the Savior's wounded side.  
 None need perish, all may live,  
 Since Christ has died.  
 Millions have reached that blissful shore,  
 Their trials and their labors o'er.  
 And still there is room for millions more.

Will you grow?  
 Grace is the sweetest sound  
 That ever reached our ears,  
 When conscience charged and justice frowned,  
 'Twas grace removed our fear.  
 (source unknown)

**"YOU HAVE BEEN RENDERED INOPERATIVE FROM CHRIST. YOU WHO ARE TRYING TO BE JUSTIFIED IN THE LAW, YOU FELL OUT FROM GRACE."**

The emphasis in verse 4 is on the word:

**"TRYING."**

They are laboring, they are struggling, they are working at being made righteous, and they are doing this **"IN THE LAW."** And because they are doing this and have not quit trying, they:

**"FELL OUT FROM GRACE."**

Anders says:

The third negative consequence of returning to the law is that it removes a person from the sphere of grace. While the legalist is insecure because he cannot know if he has done enough to merit salvation, the believer is secure because he has placed his **faith** in Christ and will **eagerly await** righteousness.

p. 62

Arthur says:

So often the phrase “fallen from grace” is taken out of its context and used to teach that people can lose their salvation. When you see this phrase in its context in Galatians 5, what do you think it means?

p. 38

Barclay says:

It was Paul's position that the way of grace and the way of law are mutually exclusive. The whole basic fault of the man who took the way of obedience to the law was that he assumed that something that he could do could win him merit in the eyes of God; the way of law makes salvation dependent on human achievement. On the other hand, the man who takes the way of grace simply casts himself and his sin upon the mercy of the love of God. Now Paul went on to argue that if you accepted circumcision, that is to say, if you accepted one part of the law, then logically you had to accept the whole law. Suppose that a man desires to become a naturalised subject of a country; suppose he carefully carries out all the rules and laws and regulations of that country as they affect naturalisation; then he cannot stop there; he is bound to accept *all* the other rules and laws and regulations as well. So Paul argued that if a man were circumcised he had put himself under an obligation to the whole law to which circumcision was the introduction; and, if he took that way, he had automatically turned his back on the way of grace, and, as far as he was concerned, Christ might never have died.

p. 47

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Paul again states his points, this time dropping the hypothetical “if” for the strong assertion that those who want to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ and have fallen away from grace. Christ is of no value to them and the burden of keeping the whole law is theirs.

p. 736

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

What does “You have fallen away from grace” mean? Does it mean, as some claim, that salvation can be lost if a Christian falls into sins? Not at all. There is a sense in which to sin is to fall into grace, if one is repentant. But to fall from grace, as seen by this context, is to fall into legalism. Or to put it another way, to choose legalism is to relinquish grace as the principle by which one desires to be related to God.  
p. 736

Bartlett says:

*“Ye are fallen from grace.”* Probably few statements in Scripture have been more misunderstood and twisted than this one. These words do not, as so many seem to think, militate against the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer. Paul is warning the Galatians that they have slipped from the doctrine of grace. To lose our hold upon the precious truths of grace entails, of course, the most serious consequences in our Christian living. While nothing can destroy the believer’s relationship with God, if he has truly been born again—once a son, always a son—much can injure his fellowship with God and cripple his usefulness for God. The doctrine we adopt governs the practice we pursue. If a believer has temporarily lost his hold upon the doctrine of grace, his progress for the Lord and in the Lord has come to a dead stop. The car will not move an inch until the operator puts the trolley on the electric wire again. To fall from the truth of Christ is to fail in a life for Christ. Increased productiveness for God will follow upon a renewed grasp of the great truth of salvation by grace alone.  
p. 94

Calvin says:

They were not so grossly mistaken as to believe that by the observance of the law alone they were justified, but attempted to mix Christ with the law. In any other point of view, Paul’s threatening would have utterly failed to produce alarm. “What are you doing? You deprive yourselves of every advantage from Christ, and treat his grace as if it were of no value whatever.” We see then that the smallest part of justification cannot be attributed to the law without renouncing Christ and his grace.  
p. 151

De Haan says:

The legalistic teachers had insisted that the Gentiles, to be saved must become Jews and submit to the rite of circumcision. This Paul vigorously opposes and says, “If you submit to circumcision you become debtor to the whole law and are under its curse and condemnation. Christ then can profit you nothing.” It is not law AND grace—but law OR grace. It must be all grace, or it is not grace at all. To look to the law for justification is to miss the grace of God.  
p. 155

De Haan says:

The word “fallen” in this verse is “ekpipto” and means literally “to have been driven out of one’s course,” as of sailors who have been driven out of their normal lane. It is the same word used in Acts 27, in the account of the shipwreck. Luke says in Acts 27:17 that the sailors feared—

. . . lest they should FALL into the quicksands, strake sail (lowered the sails) (Acts 27:17).

Then fearing lest we should have FALLEN upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day (Acts 27:29).

From this we may see the meaning of the expression, “fallen from grace.” You who think you can be saved or kept by the law—you have been driven out of course, and missed the grace of God.  
pp. 155-6



Dunnam says:

Once in grace always in grace, some would insist. But Paul is clear here. *“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace”* (v. 4). The KJV is “Christ is become of no effect unto you” and the RSV is “You are severed from Christ.”

The issue is not eternal salvation, but *effective relationship with Christ*. This is rotted in Paul’s thinking in terms of wholes, structures, and in terms of opposites. On the Damascus Road his vision of Christ so radically changed him that he is forever contrasting what belonged to the old life and what belonged to the new. He “died with Christ” to all the evil powers which were ruling in the present age, and he rose with Christ to live, even in this sin-cursed existence, the new life “in Christ.” He was liberated from law.  
pp. 98-99

Dunnam says:

To fall from grace is to move from one domain of power to another; to seek salvation in any other way than through Christ; to move out of the realm of participating in His death and Resurrection as the source of our life and hope.  
p. 99

Eadie says:

Law and grace are in direct antagonism. Justification by the one is of debt, by the other is of favour. The justified person works out his acceptance in the one case; he simply receives it in the other. If a man then imagines that he is justified by law, he has renounced grace as the principle of justification. He who is circumcised comes under the pledge to obey the whole law; but obedience to law is wholly different in nature and operation from faith in Christ, so that he who looks to law renounces connection with Christ. Christ’s method of justification is wholly of grace, and those who rely on law and merit are in opposition to grace—are fallen out of it.  
p. 384



**Fergusson says:**

The reason of the consequence is, that grace and works are not consistent in the justification of a sinner; if the one have any hand in it, the other hath none, Rom. xi.6.

p. 86

**Gaebelein says:**

Going back to the law for righteousness, they had fallen from grace. This is the only time “fallen from grace” is used in the Bible. It has been strangely misapplied by a certain system of theology to deny the security of the believer in Christ. It is generally used to describe a Christian who has fallen in sin and, as it is claimed, lost his relationship as a child of God and is, therefore, once more under judgment. Falling from grace does not mean this; it means to give up the grace of the gospel in order to satisfy the requirements of the law. To go back under the law and its bondage is falling from grace.

p. 224

**Gutzke says:**

“Ye are fallen from grace” means this: You’ve stopped depending on the grace of God and have started depending on your own observances, your own regulations. You are not depending on inward strength to do the will of God, but are depending on outward compliance with rules and regulations. This is what Paul is emphasizing.

p. 112

### Harrison says:

So very many hold a superficial conception of grace. They think of grace as a sort of booster, or bracer, a spiritual vitamin to insure against failure. Do the best you can; God won't fail you; He'll see you through: God helps those who help themselves. Not so. God has but two ways of dealing with men, two great principles: law and grace. Grace is God finding a way to set aside the demands of law and our deserts under it, having taken those deserts upon Himself, that He may be free to pour out upon us His goodness and kindness, even His very life.

"Falling from grace," better understood by translating it "falling away from grace," is crossing the line—changing sides—to come under the requirements of law, thereby forfeiting the provisions of grace.

p. 84

### Harrison says:

Falling from grace is giving up God's provisions under grace, as much as to say, "I'd rather depend on what I can do for myself, or on what some one does for me." In the case of these Galatians it was circumcision. This seemed a harmless thing to do; but they had it done because the law prescribed it. Paul says, "That one thing labels you; you're under the law as a system of life; you've obligated yourselves to keep the whole law; you 'are severed from Christ'; you've served notice on God you are going to do the best you can for yourself; you've cut the supply-line of His grace."

pp. 84-85

### Henry says:

Thereby they renounced that way of justification which God had established. They became debtors to do the whole law, which required such an obedience as they were not capable of performing. Having thus revolted from Christ, and built their hopes upon the law, Christ would profit them nothing. He will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour.

p. 1843

Hogg & Vine say:

. . . for the Apostle's mind is still upon the initial act which committed them to the works of the law. They had surrendered any hope based on the grace of God when they submitted to circumcision themselves or consented to its imposition upon others. The Apostle is not here dealing with conduct or character, but solely with the ground on which justification is sought. Such defection is not primarily moral; a man may continue in the most rigorous obedience to law and in the cultivation of even the distinctive Christian virtues, striving earnestly to please God in his own strength and in accordance with his own ideas, when he has already fallen away from grace.  
p. 242

Ironside says:

It must be one or the others. Either you earn your salvation by efforts of your own, or you accept it as the free gift of God. If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour you have received it as a gift. If you did anything to deserve it, if you worked for it, if you purchased it, it would not be a gift. So we read, "To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:4, 5). Therefore, if you turn back to law after you have known Christ, you are deliberately setting your Saviour to one side. "Ye are fallen from grace."  
p. 178

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

. . . **fallen from grace**—Ye no longer "*stand*" in grace (Rom. 5:2). Grace and legal righteousness cannot co-exist (Rom. 4:4, 5; 11:6). Christ, by circumcision (Luke 2:21), undertook to obey all the law, and fulfil all righteousness for us; any, therefore, that now seeks to fulfil the law for himself in any degree for justifying righteousness, severs himself from the grace which flows from Christ's fulfillment of it, and becomes "a debtor to do the whole law" (vs. 3).  
p. 1273

### Luther says:

But when it comes to justification, I say, we must concentrate upon Christ alone, or else we make Him non-effective. You must choose between Christ and the righteousness of the Law. If you choose Christ you are righteous before God. If you stick to the Law, Christ is of no use to you.  
pp. 200-01

### MacArthur says:

The Greek word for *estranged* means “to be separated” or “to be severed.” The word for *fallen* means “to lose one’s grasp on something.” Paul’s clear meaning is that any attempt to be justified by the law is to reject salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Those once exposed to the gracious truth of the gospel; who then turn their backs on Christ (Heb. 6:4–6) and seek to be justified by the law are separated from Christ and lose all prospects of God’s gracious salvation. Their desertion of Christ and the gospel only proves that their faith was never genuine . . .  
p. 1673

### MacArthur says:

Paul’s primary point in this passage, as throughout the letter, is that **law** and **grace** cannot be mixed. As a means to salvation they are totally incompatible and mutually exclusive. To mix **law** with **grace** is to obliterate **grace**. For a believer to start living again under the **law** to merit salvation is, in fact, to reject salvation by **grace**.  
p. 135

McGee says:

If you have been saved by trusting Christ, then go down to the low level of living by the Law, you have fallen from grace. This is what “falling from grace” actually means. I can remember as a student in a denominational seminary hearing one theologian say, “Falling from grace is the doctrine which the Methodists believe and the Presbyterians practice.” However, falling from grace does not mean falling into some open sin or careless conduct, and by so doing forfeiting your salvation so that you have to be saved all over again. It has no reference to that at all.

p. 184

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**Fallen from grace** is understood by some to refer to the loss of salvation. However, *fallen from* may refer to their attitude and to the message that it communicates, rather than to their eternal salvation.

p. 1526

Ridderbos says:

If the Galatians again seek to be justified through the law—for such is the meaning of their drift towards circumcision—they give evidence of being separated, estranged, cut loose from Christ. The apostle faces them with this logic in order to bring them to the point of reflection (*cf.* verse 10). This is the force of *ye are fallen away from grace*. In this, grace proves to be the life-principle, a grace wrought by Christ and received through faith.

p. 188-9

Vos says:

The first part of verse 4 almost defies translation. The better attempts include: “your connection with Christ became void” and “you are served from Christ.” The main idea is “to make idle, inactive” so there are no results. Rendall comments that the word “denotes the paralysis of spiritual life by severance of union with Christ. This paralysis produces a deadening effect on the whole spiritual nature, and results in the continuous craving for legal justification . . .”

p. 92

Vos says:

“Fallen from grace” has nothing to do with the Arminian doctrine that a Christian can lose his salvation. Whatever one may say about that subject in connection with other Scripture passages, it is not the topic of discussion here. If one has stood in grace he has fallen from it at the moment he seeks justification by legalism. To put it another way, if one is perched on the high platform of grace, he may be said to have fallen from it on to the ground of self-righteousness when he puts himself under law.

p. 93

Wiersbe says:

No, to be “fallen from grace” does not mean to lose salvation. Rather, it means “fallen out of the sphere of God’s grace.” You cannot mix grace and law. If you decide to live in the sphere of law, then you cannot live in the sphere of grace. The believers in Galatia had been *bewitched* by the false teachers (Gal. 3:1) and thus were *disobeying* the truth. They had *removed* toward another gospel (1:6-9) and had *turned back* to the elementary things of the old religion (4:9). As a result, they had become *entangled* with the yoke of bondage, and this led to their present position: “fallen from grace.” And the tragedy of this fall is that they had robbed themselves of all the good things Jesus Christ could do for them.

p. 120

Wiersbe says:

***Are you falling*** (4)? To fall from graces does not mean to lose one's salvation. It means to move out of the sphere of grace into the sphere of law. It means to substitute regulations for a personal relationship with the Lord.  
p. 769

Wuest says:

The Galatian Christians had lost their hold upon the grace for daily living which heretofore had been ministered to them by the Holy Spirit. God's grace manifests itself in three ways, in justification, sanctification, and glorification. The context rules. All through chapter five, Paul is stalking about the Holy Spirit's ministry to the believer. Therefore *grace* here must be interpreted as the daily grace for living of which the Galatian Christians were depriving themselves.  
p. 140

Wuest says:

Justification is a judicial act of God done once for all. Sanctification is a process which goes on all through the Christian life. *Just because the process of sanctification is temporarily retarded in a believer's life, does not say that his justification is taken away. If that were the case, then the retention of salvation would depend upon the believer's works, and then salvation would not depend upon grace anymore. And we find ourselves in the camp of the Judaizers, ancient and modern.*  
p. 141

(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good? by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Gary Thomas, 2009.

Seeking pleasure apart from God, or outside the will of God, is like giving a toddler a blowtorch to light a birthday cake.  
p. 138

François Fénelon warns that our spirituality must not undercut our evangelism, particularly as to how we handle “dangerous pleasures.” He writes:

I believe that it is enough to take part in them with moderation, and in the sight of God. More severe, more constrained, less agreeable and disarming manners would only give a false idea of piety to the people of the world, who are already only too prejudiced against it, and who would think that a person can only serve God by a grim and gloomy life.<sup>3</sup>

3. François Fénelon, *Christian Perfection* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1975), 7.  
p. 154



(One Month To Live: Thirty Days To A No-Regrets Life by Kerry & Chris Shook) Colorado Springs, CO.: Waterbrook Press. Copyright – Kerry and Chris Shook, 2008.

Recently my family and I went to a motocross track and were amazed at all the bumps and turns, curves and switchbacks packed into the rolling hillside before us. As our turn to ride approached, we were instructed on how to control our bikes—with 250cc, they pack a big engine with a lot of power.

Then it occurred to me: what if I just *pushed* my motorcycle around the motocross track? Suppose I never kick-started the engine, never tapped into the engine's power, but just pushed the bike around the track and over the hills and around the sharp curves. That would be crazy, wouldn't it? Yet this is the way so many of us face life. A critical transformation takes place when we realize we have all God's power available to us. His limitless store of strength provides the oomph we need to power our lives. We have God's horsepower to help us, to heal our marriages, to restore our finances, to save our families, to intervene in our workplaces, and to rescue our lives. His power is available to help us live the lives for which He created us, but so much of the time we live in our own strength. We try to climb the hills and tackle problems without adequate power to finish the course.

People facing the end of their lives are forced to recognize their powerlessness and limitations. The weaker they get, the more they have to depend on others to take care of them. At the end of the day, they know that much of their lives is out of their control. Ultimately, they're forced to turn to God. The ironic thing is that when they finally stop struggling and rely on His strength, they discover real power to live the rest of their lives to the fullest.

p. 56

**“TRYING”** in verse 4 also helps us understand that these Galatian Christians have switched over:

from **RELATIONSHIP**

to **PERFORMANCE**.

Biblically there are only **TWO CHANCES**:

1. try to **PERFORM** the works of the law or
2. to **ACCEPT** God’s gracious gift in His Son who will declare us righteous and present us spotless before the throne of His grace.

It reminds me of the old cowboy who said:

“There are two chances, slim and none. And slim is saddlin’ up to leave town.”

(source unknown)

v. 5 For we through the Spirit on the ground of faith are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.

The NET Bible translates verse 5:

For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness.

Peterson paraphrases verse 5:

Meanwhile we expectantly wait for a satisfying relationship with the Spirit.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**5:5.** In contrast with legalists, true believers **by faith** (not works) **eagerly await** (*apekdechometha*; used seven times in the NT of the return of Christ: Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28) the consummation of their salvation (cf. Rom. 8:18-25). Then **the righteousness for which we hope** will be fully realized (cf. 1 Peter 1:3-4, 13). At the coming of Christ believers will be completely conformed to all the requirements of God's will. The inward and forensic righteousness which began at justification will be transformed into an outward righteousness at glorification. God will then publicly acknowledge all believers' full acceptability with Him.

The difference between verse 4 and verse 5 is the difference between:

**TRYING** and

**TRUSTING.**

**“FOR WE THROUGH THE SPIRIT”**—here the Spirit replaces the law in the life of the Christian.

It is the **FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** to:

**BLOW CONVICTION** upon the heart,

**REGENERATE** or to give life,

**INDWELL** the believer,

**GUIDE** him into all trust, and

**PROTECT** him from those things which are not pleasing to the Lord.

**“FOR WE THROUGH THE SPIRIT ON THE GROUND OF FAITH.”**

It is **“ON THE GROUND OF FAITH”** and **NOT OF WORKS.**

We are **“EAGERLY AWAITING A HOPED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

The law observers cannot await a **“HOPED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS”** for they might be weighed in the balances and found wanting in the end. But since those who walk in grace as a result of their relationship to Jesus Christ, have a righteous standing before God that never changes, Paul can say those who are **“ON THE GROUND OF FAITH”** are:

**“EAGERLY AWAITING A HOPED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

Romans 1:16-17 (NASB)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the righteous man shall live by faith.”

Titus 3:5-7 (NASB)

He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

The essence of that message of the Gospel is now brought forward in the last full statement of the principle of justification by faith in this letter. Up to this point Paul has been talking only of the Galatians (cf. the pronoun “you”), warning them about what they seemed to be doing. Now he changes to “we,” emphasizing something like this: “But, on the other hand, we Christians do not choose legalism; rather, we wait in faith through the Spirit for the full realization of God’s righteousness.”

p. 736

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

In the Bible, “hope” (GK 1827 & 1828) refers to that which, though certain, is not yet fully realized.

p. 736

Fergusson says:

1. The riches of a believer are not so much in possession as in expectation and hope: "We wait for the hope," or, for heaven hoped for.  
p. 87

Hendriksen says:

What Paul is saying then amounts to something along this line, "Those who yield to the Judaizers have fallen away from grace *because* they refuse to give due credit to the work of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, as to ourselves, we recognize that Spirit as the source of all our striving and of our ultimate victory."  
p. 197

Hogg & Vine say:

That faith expresses itself in love. The general teaching of Scripture is that faith is a living and active power, inasmuch as it brings a man into vital union with the source of all life, and so of all spiritual activity. But God is not only the source of spiritual life and power, God is love, and in the heart of the man who trusts in God His love is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit, . . .  
p. 252

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

"We" is emphatical, and contrasted with "whosoever of you would be justified by the law" (vs. 4). . . .**the hope of righteousness**—"We wait for the (realization of the) hope (which is the fruit) of the righteousness (i.e., justification which comes) by (lit., *from-out of*) faith," Rom. 5:1, 4, 5; 8:24, 25, "*Hope . . . we with patience wait for it.*" This is a farther step than being "justified"; not only are we this, but "wait for hope" which is connected with it, and is its full consummation.  
p. 1273

McGee says:

“The hope of righteousness” is the only prophetic reference in the entire epistle. This is quite remarkable, because in all Paul’s epistles he has something to say about the rapture of the church or about Christ’s coming to earth to establish His kingdom. But here in Galatians he says only this: “the hope of righteousness by faith,” and the hope of righteousness is the Lord Jesus Christ. The only hope is the blessed hope, and Christ is made unto us righteousness.

p. 185

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**Faith** in Christ brings about not only justification before God, but also growth in the Christian life until we are completely glorified by God and freed from the presence of sin. This is **the hope of righteousness**. We can be assured that we will be declared righteous before the Lord on that last day, because we have a foretaste of that righteousness from the Spirit who lives within us (2 Cor. 5:5).

p. 1526

Vos says:

“For we.” In grand contrast Paul introduces the experience of the true believer. Rather than groveling around on the level of works-righteousness with accompanying fears of acceptance before God, we by the Spirit “wait eagerly by faith for the hope of righteousness.” Faith is a kind of catalyst that engenders a sure hope.

p. 93

The old cowboy says:

“Experience is another word for mistakes.”  
(source unknown)

The sad, sad picture in verse 4 is that those who are “being circumcised” and **PURSUING THE LAW:**

1. “have been rendered inoperative from Christ,”
2. “are trying to be justified in the law,” and
3. “[they] fell out from grace.”

On the other hand, in verse 5, we see the right way:

**“FOR WE [Paul identifies with his readers] THROUGH THE SPIRIT ON THE GROUND OF FAITH ARE EAGERLY AWAITING A HOPED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

(The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings by Erwin Raphael McManus) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright– Erwin Raphael McManus, 2005.

We need both to aspire and accomplish. Without a vision for your life, without a sense of purpose, you will begin to die a slow death.

At the same time, if hope seems only an illusion, if you give up on hope, your heart, your soul, will become sick. It is not only essential to keep hope alive; it is hope that keeps us alive.

Hope is the fuel through which we create the future.

When you give up on hope, you become paralyzed in the present and begin to live in the past.

If you are not looking toward the future, you do not have one.

p. (Entry #16)



(The Best of A. W. Tozer: Book 2 compiled by Warren W. Wiersbe) Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers. Copyright– Zur Ltd., 1980, 2000.

But in the practical, everyday outworking of the believer's crucifixion, his own cross is brought into play. "Let him . . . take up *his* cross." That is obviously not the cross of Christ. Rather it is the believer's own personal cross by means of which the cross of Christ is made effective in slaying his evil nature and setting him free from its power.

The believer's own cross is one he has assumed voluntarily. Therein lies the difference between his cross and the cross on which Roman convicts died. They went to the cross against their will; he, because he chooses to do so. No Roman officer ever pointed to a cross and said, "If any man will, let him." Only Christ said that, and by so saying He placed the whole matter in the hands of the Christian. He can refuse to take his cross, or he can stoop and take it up and start for the dark hill. The difference between great sainthood and spiritual mediocrity depends upon which choice he makes.  
p. 152

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

True have His promises been, not one has failed. I bear witness that never servant had such a master as I have; never brother such a kinsman as He has been to me; never spouse such a husband as Christ has been to my soul; never sinner a better Saviour; never mourner a better comforter than Christ hath been to my spirit. I want none beside Him. In life He is my life, and in death He shall be the death of death; in poverty Christ is my riches; in sickness he makes my bed; in darkness He is my star, and in brightness He is my sun; He is the manna of the camp in the wilderness, and He shall be the new corn of the host when they come to Canaan.  
p. 263

(The Beautiful Fight: Surrendering to the Transforming Presence of God Every Day of Your Life by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– Gary L. Thomas, 2007.

*Lord, let my tongue be a blessing. Empower me so that I will speak redemptively as you guide me. May my tongue bring comfort where people need comfort; may I patiently instruct those trapped in ignorance; may I gently but forcefully challenge the rebellious; may I patiently minister to the downhearted. Use my tongue to keep re-creating your world and to glorify your name. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

p. 86

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

We press the question, “To whom belongest thou?” Answer honestly before you give sleep to your eyes. If you are not Christ’s you are in a hard service—*Run away from your cruel master!* Enter into the service of the Lord of Love, and you shall enjoy a life of blessedness. If you *are* Christ’s, let me advise you to do four things. You belong to Jesus—*obey Him*; let His word be your law; let His wish be your will. You belong to the Beloved, then *love Him*; let your heart embrace Him; let your whole soul be filled with Him. You belong to the Son of God, then *trust Him*; rest nowhere but on him. You belong to the King of kings, then *be decided for Him*. Thus, without your being branded upon the brow, all will know to whom you belong.

p. 145

**v. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love.**

The NET Bible translates verse 6:

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight—the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

Peterson paraphrases verse 6:

For in Christ, neither our most conscientious religion nor disregard of religion amounts to anything. What matters is something far more interior: faith expressed in love.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**5:6. For those in Christ Jesus**, the true sphere of salvation, **neither circumcision nor** the lack of it is of any significance (cf. 3:28; 6:15). What matters **is faith expressing itself through love** (cf. 5:13). Though salvation is by faith apart from works, faith that is genuine does work itself out “through love” (cf. Eph. 2:10; James 2:14-18).

Back in verse 5 we read:

“For we through the Spirit on the ground of faith are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.”

Now, here in verse 6 we read:

“FAITH OPERATING THROUGH LOVE.”

In our daily lives, it is by “FAITH OPERATING THROUGH LOVE” that people see Christ resident within us.

When Christ comes into our lives:

**LIFE** takes the place of **DEATH** and

**LOVE** takes the place of **THE LAW**.

Suppose I say to Pearl, my wife, as I leave for a trip:

“Now listen, Pearl, I’ve got a few things that I jotted down that I want you to do:

While I’m gone, you are to have no other husbands besides me.  
 While I’m gone, you shall not love anybody more than me.  
 While I’m gone, you shall not speak vainly about me behind my back.  
 While I’m gone, you shall feed and clothe my children.  
 While I’m gone, you shall keep the house clean.  
 While I’m gone, you shall wash and iron all the clothes.  
 I want you to punch the time clock here every morning at 7:30 a.m. and punch out every evening at 5:00.

Failure to follow these rules will result in you being severely punished by me, your husband. I may even divorce you.”

How silly to think of a love relationship like this. All of this is done and will be done, and more, too, but it is **“FAITH OPERATING THROUGH LOVE”** and not a bunch of laws and time clocks and wages and strikes. She will work long beyond the prescribed hours and even into the night and does not complain about that which she does. She gets tired but love keeps her going.

#### Galatians 6:9-10 (DAV)

Now, Let us not lose heart in doing that which is good, for at its proper season we shall reap if we are not being exhausted. So then as we are having opportunity, let us be working that which is good to all but above all to those of the household of the faith.

God, in His love and grace, has redeemed us at an awful cost, but He does not mind because He loves us 24 hours a day. Jesus Christ intercedes for us before the Father because He loves us.

If nothing else, this ought to cause us to sell out completely to Jesus Christ and let our faith begin **“OPERATING THROUGH LOVE”** in our service for Him.

Jesus, take my life today  
 And mold it in Thy precious way;  
 Oh Savior, take my life, my all  
 And make it subject to Thy call.

My heart from worldly care set free,  
 My only thought is serving Thee,  
 That day by day I may stronger grow  
 To serve the Christ who loves me so.

(source unknown)

(First We Have Coffee by Margaret T. Jensen) San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, Inc. Copyright - Margaret Tweten Jensen, 1982.

To conclude the day's program, Mama told the story of the dead plant.  
 "One day Susie came in from the playground, holding a broken pot with a wilted plant in her muddy hands.

"She begged me, 'Please don't throw away the plant.'

"'But Susie, the plant is dead,' I said.

"'Then you must love it back to life, Mother.'

"She thrust the wilted plant into my hand and skipped away, completely confident that its life would return. I placed the remains of this plant in a new flower pot filled with fresh dirt. The sun filtered through the Brooklyn skies and warmed the lifeless plant that sat on my windowsill. Every day I watered my little wilted garden and waited. One day a green shoot appeared, and now a lovely green plant thrives on my sill.

"When someone brings us a frightened, wilted, hurt child, I hear my Susie say, 'Love it back to life, Mother!' So many human relationships can be loved back to life. For me the most rewarding are those with a child, who has been wilted and abandoned in a broken flower pot or home. For a child who then is thrust into my hand, 'Love him back to life' is my highest command. You people of Norway gave me a flower pot, this lovely home, and God pours His love through us—to love them back to life.

"I thank you."

pp. 121-22

Barclay says:

The Christian's faith is never founded on a book; it is founded on a person; its dynamic is not obedience to any law, but love to Jesus Christ.  
p. 48

Barclay says:

It is inevitable that love should stand at the head of the list, for God is love (1 John 4.8), and, therefore, necessarily the greatest of these is love (1 Cor. 13.13). Love is the bond of perfection, the perfect bond, that which binds everything together in a perfect harmony (Col. 3.14), and love is in itself the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13.10).  
p. 63

Eadie says:

If I believe that the Son of God in my nature died for me, and, yet wearing that nature, in it reigns over me, pleads for me, and fills me with His Spirit that I may finally and fully bear His image—such a faith must induce love within me toward Him and towards all that bears His image. And thus the three grand graces are referred to here—faith, hope, and love.  
p. 388

Lovett says:

Can rules and rituals for being saved mean anything to the man who is already in Christ and knows it? That would be like telling a race driver how to drive a car. Similarly, the Judaizers' ideas for salvation are meaningless to those already experiencing the fantastic love of Jesus in their hearts. The man whose soul has been swept clean of sin's guilt, has no interest in how he might obtain forgiveness. The presence of the Lord within him is his new obsession and from there, he presses on to the higher business of exalting his Lord and serving Him. Loving Jesus, he discounts this world and its attractions to live for the Lord he cannot see. He does so by faith, prompted by the assurance that anyone Who loved him enough to die for him could never fail him in any way.  
p. 62

MacArthur says:

***faith working through love.*** Saving faith proves its genuine character by works of love. The person who lives by faith is internally motivated by love for God and Christ (cf. Matt. 22:37–40), which supernaturally issues forth in reverent worship, genuine obedience, and self-sacrificing love for others.  
p. 1674

McGee says:

No legal apparatus will produce a Christian life. The formula is simple: “faith which worketh by love.” As we advance in Galatians, Paul will give us the *modus operandi*, but let us remember that it is a simple formula: “Faith which worketh by love.” That is the way to live the Christian life. Faith will work by love. Love will be the fruit of the Holy Spirit.  
p. 185

Patrick & Lowth say:

There be great disputes about, and divers interpretations of, these words, which I think may be rendered, Faith working or made active by love, or excited to perform our duty to God, and to our neighbour for his sake, by that love which we bear to him; or from considerations of his great love to us, according to those words of the apostle.  
p. 740

Simpson says:

Things which come to us by faith must come without works, for faith is but the hand to receive what God bestows, and we cannot believe for a thing if we have yet to work it out. Faith recognizes the blessing as an accomplished fact and “we which have believed do enter into rest.” Sanctification by faith, therefore, is the rest of faith.  
p. 20



Paul describes his ministry and motivation to the Corinthians in:

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

Notice that it is something that should be going on all the time. It is:

**“FAITH OPERATING THROUGH LOVE.”**

(In the Arena by Isobel Kuhn) Littleton, CO: Overseas Missionary Fellowship International. Copyright– OMF International, 2006.

And now, lest you think my dear Master was too hard on me, I want to point out some things. The difficult lessons of 1942 taught me to *fear* leaning heavily on human props. I had surrendered husband, child, friends, all I possessed, long ago. But this was something deeper. This was relinquishing *my rights* to them. This was holding them, but on the open palm of my hand.

Alice Macfarlane, principal of our language school in Yangchow and a dear warrior saint, had taught me that metaphor. She said, “Keep your treasures on the *open* palm of your hand. If you hold something tight clenched in your fist, God may have to hurt you in order to open your fingers and take it from you. But if it is offered on the *open palm* of your hand, you will hardly know when it is gone.” I never found it so easy that I did not *feel* when my treasures were taken, but it did make a tremendous difference. It prevented my from collapsing or sprawling.  
pp. 110-11

Ray Stedman, in his commentary on 2 Corinthians says:

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman) Waco, TX: Word Books. Copyright – Ray C. Stedman, 1982.

*The Ultimate Motive*

The final motive to Paul, is living a life for others, motivated by love:

For the Love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Cor. 5:14, 15).

“Controls” is from a word that means “constrains,” “drives us out,” “motivates us and then guides us, setting the limits to what we should and should not do.” That, he says, comes from the sense that Christ loves him.  
p. 105

In Ruth 3:18 you hear Naomi speak about the **HIGH MOTIVATION OF LOVE.**

Ruth 3:18 (NIV)

Then Naomi said, “Wait, my daughter, until you find out what happens. For the man will not rest until the matter is settled today.”

## CHANGING THE WORLD

It's a full-time job trying to get people to change. Oh, what a perfect world it would be—if only other people would do what we want!

A plaque in our family room may hold the key to the secret of change. It's in Dutch, but translated it reads:

*CHANGE THE WORLD—  
BEGIN WITH YOURSELF*

Not what most of us want to hear!

Jesus told a parable about the problem of not seeing our own faults. He said, "How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me remove the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the plank that is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye" (Luke 6:42).

Being able to see other people's faults easily without ever noticing my own is not just an indication of hypocrisy. It can be a wake-up call that the problem in a struggling relationship may be me. Perhaps it's my attitude that needs to change. Or I'm the one who needs to apologize. Maybe I'm the person who needs a humble spirit.

It's a lesson some of us have to learn over and over. We can't change others, but with God's help we can change our own behavior. And when our attitude changes, it may seem as if others have changed as well. — Cindy Hess Kasper

*To change can be a wonderful prospect,  
Though often it's met with resistance;  
The transformation begins within us  
And will take a lot of persistence. —Hess*

**When God works a change in us  
He can change others through us.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Wednesday, April 18, 2007)

**v. 7 You were running well; who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth?**

The NET Bible translates verse 7:

You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?

Peterson paraphrases verse 7:

You were running superbly! Who cut in on you, deflecting you from the true course of obedience?

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

TURNING TO LAW HINDERS THE PROGRESS OF BELIEVERS (5:7-10).

**5:7.** Employing a metaphor he was fond of, Paul described the Galatians' Christian experience as a **race** (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-26; 2 Tim. 4:7). They had begun their race well, but someone had **cut in on** them, causing them to break stride and stumble. Though many false teachers were disturbing the Galatians, the singular pronoun (**who**) indicates the leader of the Judaizers was in view here. The result was that the believers were no longer **obeying the truth**, but were attempting to complete the race by legalistic self-effort rather than by faith.

We have come now in our study to the **KEY VERSE** for the whole book: **“YOU WERE RUNNING WELL.”**

What a haunting statement and what implications are involved. The fact that they were running well tells us that there was a time when things were better in their spiritual lives. It tells us that there was a time when they experienced the joy of sin forgiven and the fellowship of a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the apostle raises the **QUESTION**:

**“WHO CUT IN ON YOU AND THUS HINDERED YOU FROM OBEYING THE TRUTH?”**

Paul again returns to the figure of **RUNNING** which he used of himself in:

Galatians 2:2 (DAV)

And I went up in accordance with a revelation and I laid before them the gospel which I am preaching among the Gentiles. But privately to those of recognized eminence lest by any means I should be running or had run in vain.

The picture here is one of a race being run and someone cut in and caused the runner to stumble, to hesitate or to break stride.

In the 1928 Rose Bowl, Georgia Tech and California were playing and the game was pretty even. California was slightly better and had the ball when on one play they fumbled. The all-conference center from California got mixed up and picked up the ball and began to run like mad toward the wrong goal. He was tackled by one of his own men on the California 5-yard-line. The California team tried to punt but Georgia Tech blocked the kick and won the game with a touchdown.

As far as the Apostle Paul is concerned, the Galatians were still running the wrong way and he was trying to nail them before they got all the way into bondage under legalism.

There are **TWO QUESTIONS** here in our passage:

**QUESTION #1:**

**“WHO CUT IN ON YOU?”**

And in verse 11 we have:

**QUESTION #2:**

**“WHY AM I STILL BEING PERSECUTED?”**

The last phrase of the question is **“OBEYING THE TRUTH.”** This is what the Lord expects of each of us.

Vos points out:

. . . Paul’s metaphors taken from the athletic life of the Greco-Roman world. You began your race well; you started out well in the Christian life. “Who hindred you” means “to cut into,” “to impede.” The idea is, “Who has cut into your lane on the track” and caused you to stumble? Attention seems to focus on a leader of the false teachers rather than on Judaizers in general as is the case elsewhere. This individual had led them away from subjection to the truth of the gospel, which involved justification by faith and a life of Christian liberty. In this latter part of the verse Paul abandons the metaphor for the reality of his subject.

p. 95

How haunting is the statement “YOU WERE RUNNING WELL.” How many things there are to deter us from running a good race once we have become Christians. How easy it is:

for our desires to get dampened,

for our first love to be lost,

for our discipline and determination to deteriorate.

And then we hear from the lips of the Lord Jesus:

Revelation 3:16 (NKJV)

So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth

(Lord, Make My Life a Miracle by Raymond C. Ortlund)

Your danger and mine is not that we become criminals, but rather that we become respectable, decent, commonplace, mediocre Christians. The 20th century temptations that really zap our spiritual power are the television, banana cream pie, and easy chair, and the credit card. The Christian wins or loses in those seemingly innocent little moments of decision. Lord, make my life a miracle.  
(source unknown)

(Brought In by Guy King)

Let us run with “patience” and that word implies keeping on with it. The Christian race is no sprint. No, as it were, 100 yards of short spurts. I fancy that many Christians would manage life better if it were just a brief span of concentrated energy. It is the distance that bothers them, how to keep on keeping on. It was to the spiritual sprinters that Paul wrote, “You did run well, who did hinder you?” Patience, yes, for it is no sprint but a long distance race, indeed, even an obstacle race. How many temptations there are to give up. *Pilgrim’s Progress* is so in tune with holy scripture and with life’s experience when it portrays the attempt to get Christian to cease his journey.  
(source unknown)

The Christian life is not **SPURTS IN THE SPIRIT**. It is the **MARATHON**—the long, grueling miles to the finish line.

Psalm 42:1-3 (NIV)

As the deer pants for streams of water,  
so my soul pants for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.  
When can I go and meet with God?  
My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while men say to me all day long,  
“Where is your God?”

It is my prayer that as a result of these studies in the book of Galatians, the Spirit of God is stirring up within you the desire to continue to run the race and to be faithful to the completion of it, so that you too can hear from the lips of the Lord Jesus:

Matthew 25:21 (KJV)

. . . Well done, thou good and faithful servant . . .



2 Timothy 4:6-8 (NASB)

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

**DEMAS** will never be able to say those words because:

2 Timothy 4:10 (NASB)

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica . . .

## Ortlund points out:

In the fall we see flocks of geese heading south. They may land on a pond and feed for awhile but soon, however pleasant that surrounding may be, there is an instinct that calls them out into the blue and down to the south. It calls them to their home.

Christian friend, do you feel in your heart a new tugging toward God? Do you feel that longing instinct that you are not in your day by day experience all the way home yet? God is stirring you up, He is moving you up out of the pond. Keep pursuing.  
(source unknown)

Hebrews 6:1 (NASB)

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

(Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive by Harvey Mackay) New York: Ivy Books. Copyright - Harvey B. Mackay, 1988.

When I was in Japan in 1983, we had a series of seminars in which we heard speeches from the leaders of Japan's largest industrial concerns. We heard from the top officers of Honda, Sony, Mitsubishi, and the head of the biggest enterprise of all, the eighty-eight-year-old president of Matsushita Electric.

Persuading them to speak to us was quite a coup, because the Japanese system is much more rigidly structured than ours, and they regard appearing before the troops in this fashion as somewhat beneath their dignity.

And if giving speeches was regarded as a crude Occidental custom, imagine how they felt about answering questions.

But when our eighty-eight-year-old headliner addressed us, he spoke eloquently and profoundly. Then came the questions:

Question: "Mr. President, does your company have long-range goals?"

Answer: "Yes."

Question: "How long are your long-range goals?"

Answer: "Two hundred fifty years."

Questions: "What do you need to carry them out?"

Answer: "Patience."

Sounds like a joke. But if it's so funny, how come every time we compete with them, they bury us?

pp. 63-64

One of my good friends gave me her definition of a goal, and it's the best one I've ever heard. "A goal is a dream with a deadline." Write yours down—because that's the only way you'll give them the substance they need to force you to carry them out.

p. 65

(Terry Fox: His Story by Leslie Scrivener)

Thursday, August 28, day 139  
3,255 miles

Today was a difficult day. Extremely hilly and I was fatigued. Two film crews were buzzing around me all day. It was a gorgeous day. Beautiful; glorious scenery. I did two interviews at night and then read the Doug Collins [a New Westminster columnist] paper, which said I rode through Quebec and I nearly blew up! Broke my heart! I have a saddened and weakening attitude toward the media and press.

This is, in part, what Terry read: "God knows, I don't want to take anything away from Terry Fox, B.C.'s Marathon Man. Would I spit on the Queen? . . . No, Terry will not have run right across Canada because he didn't run right across Quebec. And he didn't run right across Quebec because Quebecers showed almost no interest in him . . . he ran only 150 of the 700 miles from Gaspé Peninsula to Montreal. He did the rest by van, his reception in La Belle Province being so poor, and then he ran around Montreal to complete the equivalent mileage."

Terry, who read every word written about him, broke down: "I read that story when I was fully exhausted and had given everything I had that day in running; then to see that, it just degraded me and I cried. I burst right down. I punched the wall, and Bill and the others thought I was going to put a hole through it. It just burned me, tore through me. To me it was so important to be as honest as I could, to always tell the truth, and not even to miss a foot."

Terry phoned New Westminster and a retraction appeared.

"I don't know," he said later, "if I've gotten over it yet."

p. 141

(The Spiritual Life by Walter Elliott) Paulist Press. "Quotable Quotes,"  
Reader's Digest, June 1985.

"Perseverance  
is not a long race;  
it is  
many short races  
one after  
another."

p. 60

(You Don't Have to Quit by Ray & Anne Ortlund) Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson. Copyright - Anne and Ray Ortlund, 1988.

But professional leapfrogging is becoming acceptable, say these switchers:  
 "It's more like divorce. People have a right to ditch their misery."

p. 80

There was a time during World War II when American forces were pressed to the limit in Belgium. The place was Bastogne; the crisis was the famous Battle of the Bulge. American casualties were high, and the enemy seemed dominant.

Then on that fateful day in December of 1944, the Axis commander sent word to the Allied troops asking for their surrender.

Back went to the message of Commanding Brigadier General A. C. McAuliffe in a famous, one-word reply: "NUTS!"

A father once said to his boy, "Son, you gotta set a goal and never quit. Remember George Washington?"

The son said, "Yes."

"Jefferson?"

"Yes."

"Abraham Lincoln?"

"Yes."

"You know what they all had in common?"

"What?"

The father said, "They didn't quit. Remember Ozador McIngle?"

The kid said, "No. Who was he?"

"See, you don't remember him. He quit!"

pp. 83-84

"Press on.  
 Nothing in the world  
 can take the place  
 of  
 persistence"

—Football coach Vince Lombardi.  
 Favorite quotation of Ray Kroc,  
 co-founder of McDonald's hamburgers

p. 85

(Press On by General Chuck Yeager and Charles Leerhsen) New York: Bantam Books, 1988. Copyright - Yeager Family Partnership, Ltd.

A good guy, John Thornberry, but what he did wrong in that situation was to stop and imagine a worse-case scenario. And so he froze up. It's like that with a lot of things in life. Often, the possibilities are frightening, but what good does it do to stop in your tracks and start fretting? When the going gets tough, just about all you can do is keep going forward, and press on as determinedly as you can.  
pp. 9-10

(Too Busy NOT to Pray: Slowing Down to Be with God by Bill Hybels) Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press. Copyright - Bill Hybels, 1988.

The words of Nathan the prophet to King David, right after he confessed his adultery with Bathsheba, are especially poignant:

This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: "I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. Why did you despise the word of the LORD by doing what is evil in his eyes?" (2 Sam 12:7-9)

In other words, "David, I had all kinds of favors and blessings and resources and power that I was going to pour into your life. Why did you mess things up?"  
p. 22

Anders says:

The fourth negative consequence of returning to the law is that it hinders spiritual growth and development. Using the metaphor of a **race**, Paul states that the legalists had cut in on the Galatians' spiritual race and caused them to stumble spiritually. As a result, the Galatians were no longer **obeying the truth**.  
p. 63

**Calvin says:**

I have chosen to translate the Greek word . . . *obey*, rather than *believe*, because, having once embraced the purity of the gospel, they had been led away from a course of obedience.

p. 154

**Fergusson says:**

1. A Christian life is like to a course or race from earth to heaven, by the way of holiness and all commanded duties, especially the exercise of faith and love; and therefore we ought to carry ourselves in this way, as those who run in a race, . . .

p. 88

**Hendriksen says:**

Turning back once more (cf. 1:8, 9; 3:2; 4:9, 12-15) to the time when the Galatians had heard the gospel from the lips of Paul and had accepted Christ as their Savior and Lord, the apostle says: **You were running well.** They had started out beautifully.

p. 201

**Henry says:**

The life of a Christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold on, if he would obtain the prize. It is not enough that we run in this race, but we must run well. Thus these Christians had done for awhile, but they were either turned out of the way or at least made to flag and falter in it.

p. 1844

Henry says:

2. He asks them, and calls upon them to ask themselves, *Who did hinder you?* He very well knew who they were, and what it was that hindered them; but he would have them to put the question to themselves. Many who set out fair in religion, and run well for awhile—are yet by some means or other hindered in their progress, or turned out of the way. It concerns those who have run well, but now begin either to turn out of the way or to tire in it, to enquire what it is that hinders them. Young converts must expect that Satan will be doing all he can to divert them from the course they are in. The apostle tells them that by hearkening to them they were kept from *obeying the truth*. The gospel which he had preached to them was the truth. It was necessary that they should obey it, that they should continue to govern their lives and hopes according to the directions of it. The truth is not only to be believed, but to be obeyed, to be received not only in the light of it, but in the love and power of it. Those do not rightly obey the truth, who do not steadfastly adhere to it.  
p. 1844

Lange says:

The running well consisted in obedience to the truth, that is, in their going in the true=evangelical, way, seeking their righteousness in faith.  
p. 128

Lenski says:

The course of Christian faith is often likened to a race for a prize. The Greeks had their great games, and, as is the case in our athletic era, everybody knew all about them. Thus Paul's figure is natural although the running of races is vastly older than the Greek contests. The imperfect pictures the Galatians as running well with every prospect of reaching the goal.  
p. 263

### Lightfoot says:

'Ye were running a gallant race. Who has checked you in your mid career? Whence this disloyalty to the truth? Be assured, this change of opinion comes not of God by whom ye are called. The deserters are only few in number? Yes, but the contagion will spread: for what says the proverb? *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. Do not mistake me: I do not confound *you* with *them*: I confidently hope in Christ that *you* will be true to your principles. But the ringleader of this sedition—I care not who he is or what rank he holds—shall bear a heavy chastisement. What, brethren? A new charge is brought against me? I preach circumcision forsooth? If so, why do they still persecute me? It is some mistake surely! Nay, we shall work together henceforth! there is no difference between us now! I have ceased to preach the Cross of Christ! The stumbling block in the way of the Gospel is removed!

p. 205

### Lovett says:

When Paul asks who shifted them from obedience to the truth, the question is rhetorical. The answer is obvious—the Judaizers. The poor Galatians, who had everything to lose and nothing to gain from following the false teachers, were allowing themselves to be forced off the track of truth. They were running well in the Christian race when certain evil ones drew alongside and began easing them off the Gospel course. (Paul is thinking of what sometimes happened in the Greek games.) It is done so subtly it doesn't occur to them to resist. The Judaizers, using the "yeast-method" of persuasion, i.e., introducing a wee bit of legalism knowing it will take over in time, deceived the Galatians into thinking a little legalism would add to their standing in Christ. Now that Paul has exposed the danger and sounded the warning, they must flee from these men. There is still time for the Galatians to turn back to the truth.

pp. 62-63



Luther says:

This is plain speaking. Paul asserts that he teaches the same truth now which he has always taught, and that the Galatians ran well as long as they obeyed the truth. But now, misled by the false apostles, they no longer run. He compares the Christian life to a race. When everything runs along smoothly the Hebrews spoke of it as a race. "Ye did run well," means that everything went along smoothly and happily with the Galatians. They lived a Christian life and were on the right way to everlasting life.

The words, "Ye did run well," are encouraging indeed. Often our lives seem to creep rather than to run. But if we abide in the true doctrine and walk in the spirit, we have nothing to worry about. God judges our lives differently. What may seem to us a life slow in Christian development may seem to God a life of rapid progression in grace.

p. 204

MacArthur says:

Paul compares the Galatians' life of faith with a race, a figure he used frequently (2:2; Rom. 9:16; 1 Cor. 9:24). They had a good beginning—they had received the gospel message by faith and had begun to live their Christian lives by faith as well. ***obeying the truth.***

p. 1674

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**You ran well:** The Galatians' splendid start in the race of the Christian life had not continued. Their detour into legalism was certainly not God's will.

p. 1526

Wiersbe says:

***Are you running on course*** (7)? Or has false teaching gotten you on a detour?

p. 770

Paul is telling the Galatians there was a time when they were **“RUNNING [REAL] WELL”** and making progress and competing well. But now comes the **QUESTION:**

**“WHO CUT IN ON YOU AND THUS HINDERED YOU FROM OBEYING THE TRUTH?”**

This person is evidently one of the prominent Judaizers who is being called on the carpet here.

The old cowboy said:

“The water won’t clear up until you get the hogs out of the creek.”  
(source unknown)

There’s got to be some real work done for these Galatians to get back to where they were.

The **IMPERFECT TENSE** tells the tragic story:

**You Were Running Well.**

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson,  
2006.

*In each obstacle I meet today, Savior Christ, I will look for your help,  
anticipate your coming. Show me how to live in hard times with a light heart.  
Amen.*  
p. 106

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts:  
Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Our danger is lest we grow rich and become proud, lest we give ourselves up to the fashions of this present evil world, and lose our faith. Or if wealth be not the trial, worldly care is quite as mischievous. If we cannot be torn in pieces by the roaring lion, if we may be hugged to death by the bear, the devil little cares which it is, so long as he destroys our love to Christ, and our confidence in Him. I fear me that the Christian church is far more likely to lose her integrity in these soft and silken days than in those rougher times.  
 p. 235

### KEEP GOING FOR GOD!

A familiar saying goes something like this: “Old age is a matter of mind over matter. If you don’t mind, it doesn’t matter!”

That must have been John Kelley’s attitude. Kelley, who died in 2004 at the age of 96, ran in 58 Boston Marathons (that’s 26.2 miles each time)—including his last one in 1992 when he was 84 years old.

Kelley’s remarkable feat is a reminder to each of us that we must stay active as long as we can. Far too many folks hit middle age and put the body in neutral. And Christians too often put their service for Jesus Christ in the same inactive mode.

Each of us has a responsibility to God, as long as He gives us physical and mental strength, to work heartily “as to the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). We are never called to retire from life and coast home to heaven.

The psalmist said that the righteous “shall still bear fruit in old age” (Psalm 92:14). For those who are physically able, that means continuing in active service. For those who can no longer move about, that means being active in prayer and in quiet service.

Let’s make sure old age doesn’t stop us from bearing fruit. We need to keep going for God.

*Growing old but not retiring,  
For the battle still is on;  
Going on without relenting  
Till the final victory’s won. —Anon.*

**To stay youthful, stay useful.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Tuesday, March 28, 2006)

## KEEP RUNNING!

You may have heard the story of John Stephen Akhwari, the marathon runner from Tanzania who finished last at the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. No last-place finisher in a marathon ever finished quite so last.

Injured along the way, he hobbled into the stadium with his leg bloodied and bandaged. It was more than an hour after the rest of the runners had completed the race. Only a few spectators were left in the stands when Akhwari finally crossed the finish line.

When asked why he continued to run despite the pain, Akhwari replied, “My country did not send me to Mexico City to start the race. They sent me here to finish.”

The attitude of that athlete ought to be our attitude as we grow older. There is a “race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1), and we are to keep running until we reach the finish line.

No one is too old to serve God. We must keep growing, maturing, and serving to the end of our days. To idle away our last years is to rob the church of the choicest gifts God has given us to share. There is service to be rendered. There is still much to be done.

So let’s keep running “with endurance.” Let’s finish the course—and finish strong.

*It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,  
Life’s trials will seem so small when we see Christ;  
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,  
So bravely run the race till we see Christ. —Rusthoi*

**It’s always too soon to quit.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Tuesday, April 29, 2003)

**v. 8 This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.**

The NET Bible translates verse 8:

This persuasion does not come from the one who calls you!

Peterson paraphrases verse 8:

This detour doesn't come from the One who called you into the race in the first place. And please don't toss this off as insignificant.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

Such false teaching as the Galatians were beginning to embrace did not originate in the God who called them (cf. 1:6). He called them by and into grace. They were now being seduced by other voices into following a false gospel.

Their position is wrong and the apostle is straight-forward in confronting this error.

I have chosen this as the **KEY VERSE** to Study #10:

**You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said Don't Confuse Me With the Facts.**

The voice of legalism that you are listening to is not the voice of God who called you in Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:15-16 (DAV)

But when it was the good pleasure of the one who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me through His grace to reveal His Son in me. In order that I might proclaim Him among the Gentiles, at once I consulted (communicated) not with flesh and blood.

MacArthur says:

***This persuasion.*** Salvation by works. God does not promote legalism. Any doctrine that claims His gracious work is insufficient to save is false . . .  
p. 1674

There are **TWO THINGS** that need to be uppermost in our thinking as we face this particular challenge that we were:

**Running Well UNTIL: Don't Confuse Me With the Facts.**

One of the safest things in the world for we who know Jesus Christ as Savior is:

1. Never lose the **TEACHABLE SPIRIT** and
2. Never lose the **OBEDIENT HEART.**

**v. 9 A little leaven is leavening the whole lump.**

The NET Bible translates verse 9:

A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise!

Peterson paraphrases verse 9:

It only takes a minute amount of yeast, you know, to permeate an entire loaf of bread.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

And lest someone would feel that the apostle was making too much of the problem, he quoted a proverb (5:9) to the effect that false teaching, like **yeast**, spreads and permeates. Its converts may have been few but the believers must be on guard lest the error affect the entire church. Paul's point may also have been that one apparently small deviation from the truth could destroy the entire system. If circumcision, for example, were made necessary for salvation, the whole grace system would fall.

"A little yeast is fermenting the whole lump."

A little error is affecting the whole body of believers.

Paul often uses this illustration. Yeast is used to represent sin.

Here it is used of the performance of the law. Just a little yeast of the law will affect the whole lump of dough.



### Vos points out:

Verse 9 introduces a proverb quoted also in 1 Corinthians 5:6: “Alas, it takes only a little leaven to affect the whole lump,” (Phillips) warns the apostle. Leaven became a type of moral and spiritual corruption because of its fermentation capabilities. In the 1 Corinthians reference leaven applies to the corrupting influence of a bad person; some would apply it here to the leader mentioned in verse 7, but it seems rather to speak of false doctrine. The proverb could refer here to the fact that observing the law in a few points would lead to observing it in more, or it could indicate that the Judaizing infection once admitted would spread. The latter is more probable.

p. 95

### Lovett says:

Leaven in the lump was a proverb of Paul’s day to indicate the spread of evil and error. A little legalism (yeast) when mixed into the pure gospel (lump) spreads rapidly to corrupt the truth. Unsuspecting believers, who embrace a bit of legalism, are soon trapped in a legal system for it has a way of growing and taking over. Certainly God does not use such a method. He calls, He doesn’t deceive. That leaves but one author—Satan. While Paul doesn’t name the devil, his reasoning is clear. In Jesus’ day the Pharisees and Sadducees used this method. In Paul’s day the Judaizers used it. And now in our time, the cultists. Modern Christians must be alert to the penetrating power of legal leaven. It will not mix with the Gospel. Give a wide berth to those who add sabbath-keeping, water-baptism, any ritual or human act to the doctrine of salvation. The error is deadly.

p. 63

### Gutzke points out:

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (5:9). This is a repeated statement in the Bible. It would not take many tainted ingredients to spoil the batter. Just one rotten egg would spoil the whole cake. It does not take much poison to kill. This is all a very serious business, and that is what Paul is warning about here.

p. 117

Barclay says:

Once, at the beginning of things, the Galatians had known that, but now they are turning back to the law. "A little leaven," said Paul, "leavens the whole lump." For the Jew leaven nearly always stood for evil influence. What Paul is saying is, "This legalistic movement may not have gone very far yet, but root it out before it pollutes and destroys your whole religion."  
p. 48

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

False teaching, like yeast, grows and affects everything it touches. Therefore, this alone would justify Paul's alarm at the state of affairs in the Galatian churches.  
p. 737

Calvin says:

This refers, I think, to doctrine, not to men. It guards them against the mischievous consequences which arise from corruption of doctrine, and warns them not to consider it, as is commonly done, to be a matter attended by little or no danger. Satan's stratagem is, that he does not attempt an avowed destruction of the whole gospel, but he taints its purity by introducing false and corrupt opinions.  
p. 154

Henry says:

The danger there was of the spreading of this infection, is a further argument which the apostle urges against their complying with false teachers. To convince them that there was more danger in it than they were aware of, he tells them (*v.9*) that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. The whole lump of the Christian society may be infected by one member of it, and therefore they were greatly concerned, to purge out the infection from among them. The doctrine which the false teachers were industrious to spread, and which some in these churches had been drawn into, was subversive of Christianity itself, and therefore considering the fatal tendency of it, he would not have them to be easy and unconcerned.

p. 1844

Jamieson, Fausset & Brown say:

**A little leaven**—the *false teaching* of the Judaizers. A small portion of legalism, if it be mixed with the Gospel, corrupts its purity. To add legal ordinances and works in the least degree to justification by faith, is to undermine “the whole.”

p. 1274

MacArthur says:

**5:9 leaven.** A common axiomatic saying (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6) regarding the influence of yeast in dough. Leaven is often used in Scripture to denote sin (Matt. 16:6, 12) because of its permeating power.

p. 1674

Patrick & Lowth say:

*A little leaven, &c.]* That is, saith Chrysostom, circumcision, though it be but one command, brings us under an obligation to obey the whole Jewish law, as the apostle teacheth, ver. 3

p. 740

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**Leaven** symbolizes the intruders, with their false doctrine and sinister influence. They were taking the gospel of free forgiveness away from the Galatians. The one who causes such harm will experience God's **judgment** (2 Cor. 5:10).  
pp. 1526-7

Wiersbe says:

*Are you being leavened* (9)? Jesus used leaven to picture sin (Matt. 16:6-12). Like yeast, false teaching is introduced quietly, it grows secretly, and soon it affects every part of your life.  
p. 770

(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Oh, how closely did you cling to your Master then! saying, "He shall never charge me with indifference; my feet shall never grow slow in the way of His service; I will not suffer my heart to wander after other loves; in Him is every store of sweetness ineffable. I give all up for my Lord Jesus' sake." Has it been so? Alas! if conscience speak, it will say, "He who promised so well has performed most ill. Prayer has oftentimes been slurred—it has been short, but not sweet; brief, but not fervent. Communion with Christ has been forgotten. Instead of a heavenly mind, there have been carnal cares, worldly vanities and thoughts of evil. Instead of service, there has been disobedience; instead of fervency, lukewarmness; instead of patience, petulance; instead of faith, confidence in an arm of flesh; and as a soldier of the cross there has been cowardice, disobedience, and desertion, to a very shameful degree."  
p. 695

(Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy? by Gary Thomas) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright –Gary L. Thomas, 2000.

I believe that much of the dissatisfaction we experience in marriage comes from expecting too much from it. I have a rather outdated computer—a 486—so I know there are some things I simply can't do with it; there's just not enough memory or processing power to run certain programs or combine certain tasks. It's not that I have a *bad* computer; it's just that I can't reasonably expect more from it than it has the power to give.

In the same way, some of us ask too much of marriage. We want to get the largest portion of our life's fulfillment from our relationship with our spouse. That's asking too much.

p. 25

v. 10 As for myself I have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord with respect to you that you will take no other view than this. But the one who is troubling you shall bear his judgment whoever he is.

The NET Bible translates verse 10:

I am confident in the Lord that you will accept no other view. But the one who is confusing you will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.

Peterson paraphrases verse 10:

Deep down, the Master has given me confidence that you will not defect. But the one who is upsetting you, whoever he is, will bear the divine judgment.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

But Paul was optimistic about the outcome. He was **confident** the Galatians would share his views and that the leading false teacher, whose identity was unknown to Paul, would suffer his due judgment.

Here Paul tells them how he feels they will respond to his words. He feels that they will take the view expressed in verse 6:

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith operating through love.”

Paul is confident that “**THE ONE WHO IS TROUBLING [THEM] SHALL BEAR HIS JUDGMENT**” because he pronounced a curse on him in Galatians 1:8-9 when he said:

“ . . . let him be Anathema”—**CURSED**.

Just as **HAMAN** had the desire to liquidate the Jewish race in Esther's day, and had all kinds of plans and plots devised for their liquidation. **QUEEN ESTHER** in her courage said in:

Esther 7:6-10 (NIV)

Esther said, "The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman." Then Haman was terrified before the king and queen. The king got up in a rage, left his wine and went out into the palace garden. But Haman, realizing that the king had already decided his fate, stayed behind to beg Queen Esther for his life. Just as the king returned from the palace garden to the banquet hall, Haman was falling on the couch where Esther was reclining. The king exclaimed, "Will he even molest the queen while she is with me in the house?" As soon as the word left the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face. Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king." The king said, "Hang him on it!" So they hanged Haman on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's fury subsided.

It is the desire of the Apostle Paul that he who is leading the people astray and diverting their minds from the Gospel of the grace of God bear his judgment for such action.

**Barker & Kohlenberger say:**

Even though evil spreads, God will not permit it to triumph ultimately. In fact, its end is the opposite. Paul concludes with an optimistic expression of his confidence that the Galatians will return to a right mind and the false teacher(s) will suffer God's judgment  
p. 737

Henry says:

He hoped that they might be brought to be of the same mind with him, and to own and abide by that truth and that liberty of the gospel which he had preached to them. We ought to hope the best even of those concerning whom we have cause to fear the worst. He lays the blame of it more upon others than themselves; . . .  
p. 1844

Lovett says:

**CONFIDENCE.** Paul is confident of two things: (1) that the Galatians will not fall, i.e., abandon their position in free grace (liberty, not sonship) to go headlong into slavery, and (2) the deceivers will be dealt with severely by God in the Judgment. Note how gentle he is with his Galatians, yet severely pronouncing judgment on the deceivers in the same breath. Paul does not mean to single out a particular Judaizer, but it is probable that the invaders had a leader who should indeed bear the greatest blame. Teachers today ought to be tender with the lambs who are being deceived, but they shouldn't hesitate to denounce strongly those who poison God's people against the Gospel of grace. In these days of ecumenicity, there is the danger of being tolerant of that which is false and dangerous.  
pp. 63-4

MacArthur says:

Paul expresses encouraging assurance that the Lord will be faithful to keep His own from falling into this gross heresy.  
p. 1674

McGee says:

Paul believed that the Galatians would ultimately reject the teaching of the Judaizers. He says, "I have confidence in you" that when you get your feet back on the ground, and your heads out of the clouds, you will return to the gospel that was preached to you, and you will see that the teaching of the Judaizers was an intrusion, that it was leaven.  
p. 186



Vos says:

“I have confidence regarding you in the Lord” more accurately expresses the Greek than does the Authorized Version of verse 10. The apostle reminds the Galatians of his personal claims of their allegiance and asserts his confidence in their reception of his message because his confidence is really in the Lord, who is able to give power and persuasiveness to his arguments. “That you will not be otherwise minded” is susceptible of two applications: . . .

p. 96

(What Difference Do it Make?: Stories of Hope and Healing by Ron Hall, Denver Moore, and Lynn Vincent) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Ron Hall, Denver Moore, Lynn Vincent, 2009.

“Our pastor had an explanation for why I didn’t realize until later how God had held my hand every step of the way,” Carina says. “He says sometimes you can only understand *why* things happen when you see them in the rearview mirror.”

p. 88

(199 Treasures of Wisdom on Talking with God compiled from the writings of Andrew Murray) Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour. Copyright– Barbour Publishing, Inc., 2007.

Never let me say: “I have no time for God.”  
(Quote 94)

Once I begin, I will find abundant reason for persevering in prayer.  
(Quote 100)

I want to devote my life to the prayer that can bring down God’s blessing.  
(Quote 102)

Only in humility do I depend on prayer.  
(Quote 109)

v. 11 And I brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? Then the stumbling-block of the cross has been rendered inoperative.

The NET Bible translates verse 11:

Now, brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

Peterson paraphrases verse 11:

As for the rumor that I continue to preach the ways of circumcision (as I did in those pre-Damascus Road days), that is absurd. Why would I still be persecuted, then? If I were preaching that old message, no one would be offended if I mentioned the Cross now and then—it would be so watered-down it wouldn't matter one way or the other.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles these next two verses and then says this about verse 11:

TURNING TO LAW REMOVES THE OFFENSE OF THE CROSS (5:11-12).

**5:11.** Apparently Paul was charged with **still preaching circumcision**. Certainly before his conversion he zealously proclaimed circumcision and the Law, and it is easy to see how the apostle's attitude could be interpreted as being in favor of circumcision. Paul countered with a simple question: How is it that he was **still being persecuted** by Judaizers if he preached the same message they did? If Paul were preaching circumcision, **the offense** (*skandalon*, "stumbling block"; cf. 1 Cor. 1:23) **of the Cross** would have ceased to exist in his ministry. But it had not because people still found the gospel message, which proclaims man's total inability to contribute anything to his salvation, offensive. Thus the Cross marked the end of the Law system and rendered circumcision and obedience to the Mosaic Law unnecessary.

Paul says:

“If I were preaching the circumcision, I sure would not be persecuted; but because my message is a gospel of grace, I am being persecuted.”

Psalm 116:10 (NIV)

I believed; therefore I said,  
“I am greatly afflicted.”

B. B. Sutcliffe points out:

The cross is a stumbling block to man for it is against all that man prides himself in:

His morality because it tells him that his own works will not make him righteous.

His philosophy because it appeals to his faith and not to his reason.

His culture because its truths are revealed to babes.

His sense of superiority because God chooses the poor and humble.

His will because it calls for an unconditional surrender.

His pride because it shows the exceeding sinfulness of the human heart.

To himself because it declares that he must be born again.

(source unknown)

If Paul is preaching circumcision and law works, then Christ died in vain, and why preach the cross? There would have been no significance whatsoever to the cross of Jesus Christ if a man could have obtained salvation by his own human effort through keeping the works of the law.

(Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive by Harvey Mackay) New York: Ivy Books. Copyright - Harvey B. Mackay, 1988.

As one famous political figure said, “It’s the pioneers who get all the arrows.” p. 69

(Lectures to My Students by C. H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Unknown, 2008.

Work away, then, poor brother, for you may yet succeed in doing great things in your ministry, and your welcome of ‘Well done, good and faithful servant’ will be all the more emphatic because you laboured under serious difficulties.  
p. 206

. . . I remember the sage saying, that it is better to send away an audience longing than loathing, and therefore, *Adieu!*  
p. 215

(Christ/Life by Ruth Myers) Sisters, OR: Multnomah. Copyright – Ruth Myers, 2005.

We’re to consider ourselves “dead to sin” (Romans 6:11), because “those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there” (Galatians 5:24, NLT). As Laubach translates Colossians 2:14, He nailed the account book to the cross and closed the account.

With Paul we can say, “I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20). We can glory in “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14, NKJV).  
p. 88

Anders says:

A fifth consequence when one retreats to legalism is the removal of the **offense of the cross**. Before Paul was converted, as a Pharisee, he preached circumcision. Now he is being accused of **still preaching circumcision**. Paul denies this accusation by pointing to the offense or stumbling block of his gospel. He omitted circumcision, and this omission was an offense to the legalists who attacked him.  
p. 63

v. 12 I would that they who are upsetting you would have themselves mutilated.

The NET Bible translates verse 12:

I wish those agitators would go so far as to castrate themselves!

Peterson paraphrases verse 12:

Why don't these agitators, obsessive as they are about circumcision, go all the way and castrate themselves!

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**5:12.** Speaking out of deep concern for the gospel of the grace of God, Paul uttered a strong expression. He wished that the Judaizers, who were so enthusiastic about circumcision, **would go the whole way** and castrate **themselves**, as did the pagan priests of the cult of Cybele in Asia Minor. Perhaps the resulting physical impotence pictured Paul's desire that they also be unable to produce new converts. While circumcision had once been the sign of the covenant in Israel, it now had no more religious meaning than any other ritual of cutting and marking practiced by ancient pagans.

Here Paul's wish is that the Judaizing teachers would clear out and leave them alone. Because they are upsetting the Galatian Christians by their conflicting teaching of error, he says:

**"I WOULD THAT THEY WHO ARE UPSETTING YOU WOULD HAVE THEMSELVES MUTILATED."**

Anders says:

The sixth and final consequence of turning to the law is anger. Paul is so angry he wishes the legalists **would go the whole way and castrate themselves** as did the pagan priests of the cult of Cybele in Asia Minor. This desire is not a pretty picture, but Paul is completely exasperated by these people who are preaching circumcision and sabotaging the Galatians' faith.  
p. 63

v. 13 For you, brethren, were called upon the basis of freedom. Only do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the flesh. But through love keep on serving one another.

The NET Bible titles these remaining three verses—verses 13-15—and then translates verse 13:

#### Practice Love

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another.

Peterson paraphrases verse 13:

It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom. Rather, use your freedom to serve one another in love; that's how freedom grows.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* titles these remaining verses in this passage and then says:

*A life apart from license (5:13-15).*

**5:13-14.** In verse 1 Paul spoke of the Christian's freedom and warned against the danger of lapsing into slavery. Here the apostle again reminded believers of their freedom in Christ and warned against its being converted into license. Specifically he charged the Galatians not to use their liberty as "a base of operation" for sin to gain a foothold. Rather than liberty being used for lust, the real goal should be **love**. Rather than being in bondage to the Law or to **the sinful nature**, the Galatians were to be in bondage to **one another**. ("Sinful nature" is an appropriate trans. of the Gr. *sarx*, used by Paul in that sense seven times in Gal. 5:13, 16-17 [thrice], 19, 24; 6:8.)

Having discouraged two forms of slavery as burdensome and terrible, he commended another form that was beneficial—a slavery of mutual love.

This **TAKES US BACK** to:

Galatians 5:1 (DAV)

For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

It also refers us to:

Galatians 5:8 (DAV)

This persuasion is not from the one who is calling you.

Paul gives them a **NEGATIVE WARNING** and a **POSITIVE ADMONITION**.

The **NEGATIVE WARNING** is:

**“ONLY DO NOT TURN YOUR LIBERTY INTO A BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR THE FLESH.”**

Titus 3:8 (NASB)

This is a trustworthy statement; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God may be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men.

Just because you are free, do not think you can do what you want to and give free run to the desires of the flesh.

Romans 6:15-16 (NASB)

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?



Grace does not set a Christian free **TO SIN** but **FROM SIN**. Because of his love for the Father he will keep himself clean.

2 Corinthians 7:1 (NASB)

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Have you ever noticed that when someone falls in love, Mother does not have to tell them to wash behind their ears or to comb their hair? No, they want to look their best for the one they love. So our cleanliness in living in like manner depicts our love for Christ and what He has done for us.

Our flesh is the workshop of the devil, and sin is simply Satan's activity within us through our flesh.

Sin in the life of the Christian is taken care of by discipline in:

1 Corinthians 11:31-32 (NASB)

But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

I cannot soil and stain a life that God paid for with His own precious blood.

The **NEGATIVE WARNING** here is:

**“ONLY DO NOT TURN YOUR LIBERTY INTO A BASE OF OPERATIONS FOR THE FLESH.”**

That is like taking a rattlesnake and making it a pet after it has just been responsible for killing your child.

But the **POSITIVE ADMONITION** that concludes verse 13 says:

**“BUT THROUGH LOVE KEEP ON SERVING ONE ANOTHER.”**

In verse 6 we are told to let our:

**“faith [be] operating through love.”**

Here in verse 13 we are to show our love by:

**“SERVING ONE ANOTHER.”**

Our love becomes Godlike when it begins to flow out in service to others.

(The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic by Stephen R. Covey) New York: Simon and Schuster. Copyright - Stephen R. Covey, 1989.

When we make deposits of unconditional love, when we live the primary laws of love, we encourage others to live the primary laws of life. In other words, when we truly love others without condition, without strings, we help them feel secure and safe and validated and affirmed in their essential worth, identity, and integrity. Their natural growth process is encouraged. We make it easier for them to live the laws of life—cooperation, contribution, self-discipline, integrity—and to discover and live true to the highest and best within them. We give them the freedom to act on their own inner imperatives rather than react to our conditions and limitations. This does not mean we become permissive or soft. That itself is a massive withdrawal. We counsel, we plead, we set limits and consequences. But we love, regardless.

When we violate the primary laws of love—when we attach strings and conditions to that gift—we actually encourage others to violate the primary laws of life. We put them in a reactive, defensive position where they feel they have to prove “I matter as a person, independent of you.”  
p.199

Jesus epitomizes this principle with His disciples in the upper room on the night before His hanging on Calvary:

John 13:4-5 (NASB)

[He] rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

Barclay says:

Paul's theology always ran one danger. If he declared that the end of the reign of law had come, and that the time of the reign of grace had arrived, it was always possible for some deliberate misinterpreter to say, “That, then, means that I can do what I like; that all the restraints are lifted, and I can follow my inclinations, my passions, my desires, my emotions wherever they lead me. Law is gone and grace ensures forgiveness anyway.”  
p. 49

Barclay says:

The flesh is man as he has allowed himself to become in contrast with man as God meant him to be. The flesh stands for the total effect upon man of his own sin and of the sin of his fathers and of the sin of all men who have gone before him. The flesh is human nature as it has become through sin. Man's sin, his own sin and the sin of mankind, has, as it were, made him vulnerable to sin. It has made him fall even when he knew he was falling and even when he did not want to fall. It has made him such that he can neither avoid the fascination of sin nor resist the power of sin. The flesh stands for human nature weakened, vitiated, tainted by sin. The flesh is man as he is apart from Jesus Christ and his Spirit.  
p. 22

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

Paul has already spoken of freedom several times in this letter (2:4; 4:26, 31; 5:1)—one of his central themes. But up to here, he has not defined it, at least not in practical terms dealing with the ethical life.  
p. 737

Bickel & Jantz say:

Works, being inanimate things, cannot glorify God,  
although they can, if faith is present, be done to  
the glory of God.

—*Martin Luther*

### Responsible for What We Produce

Paul has been arguing almost nonstop in favor of the true gospel—salvation based on the finished work of Christ, not our own works. Now he paints a picture that compares what these two “modes of existence” look like in real life. He will show that these two viewpoints have consequences for everyday living. The bottom line is, the way we view our salvation has profound implications for the way we live our Christian life.

What Paul is going to show in this section is that those who are free in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit will serve one another in love and will produce spiritual fruit. By contrast, those who are slaves to the law and empowered by the flesh will fight with one another and produce works of the flesh. It's a matter of different products from different sources.

And it's not like we don't have a choice in the matter. Just as we have a responsibility to stay free by not getting “tied up again slavery to the law” (5:1), we have a responsibility to produce spiritual fruit by letting “the Holy Spirit guide” our lives (5:16).

p. 126

Calvin says:

He now proceeds to show in what way liberty must be used. In the course of expounding the First Epistle to the Corinthians, we have pointed out that liberty is one thing, and that the use of it is another thing. Liberty lies in the conscience, and looks to God; the use of it lies in outward matters, and deals not with God only, but with men.

p. 158

Dunnam says:

The second thing Paul says in this passage is “do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh” (v. 13, RSV). Freedom requires discipline.

The Greek word *aphormi* translated here as “*opportunity*” is sometimes translated “opening,” and literally means “a place for jumping off.” It was a favorite word of Paul; he alone of New Testament Writers used it. Originally the word designated a point from which to launch an attack, hence was used in military parlance to mean a base of operation.

Paul knew that if freedom was interpreted merely as the removal of restraint, sin would seize the opportunity and use the weakness of human nature to launch attack against the Spirit.

Paul has more to say about *the flesh* in the next section of this chapter. Here, however, in the same breath, Paul gives a contrast to using freedom as an opportunity for the flesh: “but by love serve one another” (v. 13, KJV). This contrast characterizes *the flesh as selfish*. While in the next section Paul deals with the deeds of the flesh and fleshly indulgences which flow from lack of restraint, here he is enunciating the fact that Christian freedom accepts a willing servitude.

p. 104

Gaebelein says:

But verse 13, where the apostle speaks again of this liberty, must be brought in connection with the opening statement of this chapter. “For, brethren, ye have been called into liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” The liberty the believer has in Christ is to be used for holiness. When God redeems from the curse of the law it is a redemption unto holiness, to live a righteous and holy life; the holy Spirit indwelling the believer does not give license to live after the flesh.

p. 224

Hogg & Vine say:

The Lord Jesus is the true Servant, the type to which the servants conform; hence the Apostle writes that in His self-humiliation the Son of God took “the form, *morphē*, of a servant”, Phil. 2.7; but *morphē* means not merely the outward appearance, what meets the eye of an observer, it conveys the idea that what is seen is the expression of the essential nature that underlies the appearance. Thus the Lord Jesus not only seemed to be a servant, He had become a servant in verity. In Him, moreover, love is seen to be the motive of true service. Because He loved the Father, John 14. 31; because He loved the Church therefore He washed their feet, John 13. 1; because He loved the Church therefore He gave Himself up for it, . . .  
p. 271

Lenski says:

Here lies the danger for all the called. They are ushered into a wonderful land of freedom. Yet freedom is like a great fortune of money, it may be a great blessing if it is used aright, a curse if it is abused. It is like being a great king who must be kingly and not a tyrant. As the freedom mounts, so does the responsibility for its use. Otherwise the freedom itself disappears. The danger lies not on the side of the reborn spirit in the Christian but on the side of his flesh, the power of sin still left in him.  
p. 274

### Lucado says:

True humility is not thinking lowly of yourself but thinking accurately of yourself. The humble heart does not say, “I can’t do anything.” But rather, “I can’t do everything. I know my part and am happy to do it.”

When Paul writes “*consider* others better than yourselves” (Phil. 2:3 NIV, emphasis mine), he uses a verb that means “to calculate,” “to reckon.” The word implies a conscious judgment resting on carefully weighed facts (Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, vol. 43 of *Word Biblical Commentary* [Waco, TX; Word Publishing, 1983], 70). To consider others better than yourself, then, is not to say you have no place; it is to say that you know your place. “Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you” (Rom. 12:3 PHILLIPS) . . .

Again, is Jesus not our example? Content to be known as a carpenter. Happy to be mistaken for the gardener. He served his followers by washing their feet. He serves us by doing the same. Each morning he gifts us with beauty. Each Sunday he calls us to this table. Each moment he dwells in our hearts. And does he not speak of the day when he as “the master will dress himself to serve and tell the servants to sit at the table, and he will serve them” (Luke 12:37 NCV)?

If Jesus is so willing to honor us, can we not do the same for others? Make people a priority. Accept your part in his plan . . . And, most of all, regard others as more important than yourself. Love does. For love “does not boast, it is not proud” (1 Cor. 13:3 NIV). (From *A Love Worth Giving* by Max Lucado)  
p. 96

### MacArthur says:

In Galatians 5:13b-15, Paul gives four purposes of God’s call to the freedom of loving Him: to oppose the flesh, to serve others, to fulfill His moral law, and to avoid harming others.  
p. 145



Radmacher, Allen & House say:

**Liberty** presents an opposite temptation from legalism. A person can be tempted to view freedom in Christ as a selfish **opportunity for the flesh**, in other words, an opportunity to do whatever one wants to do. But Paul points out that true Christian **liberty** is the freedom to **serve one another in love** (vv. 5, 6).  
p. 1527

Spurgeon says:

THE worst enemy we have is the flesh. Augustine used frequently to pray, "Lord, deliver me from that evil man, myself." All the fire which the devil can bring from hell could do us little harm if we had not so much fuel in our nature. It is the powder in the magazine of the old man which is our perpetual danger. When we are guarding against foes without, we must not forget to be continually on our watch-tower against the foe of foes within. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." On the other hand, our best friend, who loves us better than we love ourselves, is the Holy Spirit. We are shockingly forgetful of the Holy Ghost, and therein it is to be feared that we greatly grieve Him; yet we are immeasurably indebted to Him: in fact, we owe our spiritual existence to His divine power. It would not be proper to compare the love of the Spirit with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as even by implication to set up a scale of degree in love; for the love of the regenerating Spirit is infinite, even as is the love of the redeeming Son. But yet for a moment we will set these two displays of love side by side.  
p. 322

Vos says:

As Paul now launches into his discussion of the life of Christian liberty, he points out that liberty must not be allowed to degenerate into license but should be governed by love and consideration for others.  
p. 98

Wiersbe says:

***Are you serving others*** (13)? Freedom brings with it the responsibility to serve. Love motivates us to fulfill the law of God (Rom. 13:8-14).  
p. 770

Wuest says:

For, as for you, upon the basis of freedom you were called, brethren. Only do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the evil nature, but through love keep on constantly serving one another, for the whole law in one utterance stands fully obeyed, namely, in this, Love your neighbor as you do yourself. But if, as is the case, you are biting and devouring one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another.  
p. 208

### THE BOXCAR WALL

I ate breakfast the other day with a man who 60 years ago sold newspapers and shined shoes on the streets of downtown Boise, Idaho. He told me about his life in those days and how much things have changed.

“What’s changed the most?” I asked him. “People,” he said. “They don’t care anymore.”

As a case in point, he told me about his mother, who often fed hungry men who came to her house. Every day she prepared food for her family and then made several more meals because she knew homeless travelers would start to show up around mealtime. She had deep compassion for those who were in need. Once she asked a man how he happened to find his way to her door. “Your address is written on all the boxcar walls,” he said.

I wish that type of compliment could be said of all of us. In the feeding of the multitude, Jesus gave us an example of what it means to care about the physical and spiritual needs of others (Mark 8:1-9).

It would be wonderful if our homes were known as places where hungry people could find bread. But more than that, we need to pray that our homes will be known as places where spiritually hungry men, women, and children will be loved, listened to, and given the Bread of life. —DHR

*Thousands of weary ones need consolation,  
Souls of the hungry are crying for bread;  
Many have never yet heard of salvation,  
Many are waiting by you to be fed. —Anon.*

**EVANGELISM IS NOTHING MORE THAN ONE BEGGAR  
TELLING ANOTHER BEGGAR WHERE TO FIND BREAD.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Tuesday, July 30, 2002)

(The Barbarian Way: Soul Cravings by Erwin Raphael McManus) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright– Erwin Raphael McManus, 2005.

We look to Jesus not to fulfill our shallow longings or to provide for us creature comforts. We look to Him to lead us where He needs us most and where we can accomplish the most good.

p. 54

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson) San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

*Servant Christ, you show me how to serve; you command me to serve; you bless me as I serve. I praise you for the servant way, its joy and its glory. Amen.*

p. 317

(In the Arena by Isobel Kuhn) Littleton, CO: Overseas Missionary Fellowship International. Copyright– OMF International, 2006.

He that wrought effectually in Peter will continue to work in us until He has formed in us that unconsciousness of self *purchased by living* — that bloom of the touch of the Lord! For the love of Him, our life lost in His.

p. 43

(The Mentor Leader: Secrets to Building People and Teams that Win Consistently by Tony Dungy with Nathan Whitaker) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright– Tony Dungy, 2010.

Truly serving others requires putting ourselves and our desires aside while looking for ways and opportunities to do what is best for others.

p. 39

(Same Kind of Different as Me: A Modern-day Slave, an International Art Dealer, and the Unlikely Woman Who Bound Them Together by Ron Hall, Denver Moore, and Lynn Vincent) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group. Copyright – Ron Hall, 2006.

I ain't no thief and I ain't no liar, but Mr. Ron didn't know that. It just didn't make no sense to me why he gon' trust me to take all his daughter's stuff way off yonder to Colorado. Now I ain't the most intelligent man, but I can figure things out purty good, so I wadn't worried 'bout getting there. But for the life of me, I couldn't figure out why a rich white man would give me his four-by-four, \$700 cash, and all his daughter's possessions, and expect a broke, homeless man that can't read or write to go nearly a thousand miles to somewhere he ain't never been, deliver the goods—and bring back the truck!

It just didn't make no sense. I knowed he was a smart man that maybe thinks he knows what he's doin. But bein smart don't mean he'll ever see his truck again—that takes faith.

I expect I never had no more than \$20 or \$30 of my own at one time, 'cept for once when Mr. Ron slipped me a hundred. Then he gives me *\$700 cash* and a *\$30,000 truck* fulla TVs furniture, and stereos. I just couldn't let the man down.

He drew me a map, thinking I could read it, and explained the best he could what signs to look for and how to get there. After we finished loadin the truck, he pointed me in the gen'l direction of Colorado. Then, when I was pullin' out, he kept runnin by the truck, hollerin, "Two-eighty-seven! Two-eighty-seven!"

p. 149

(In God We Still Trust by Dr. Richard G. Lee) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright – Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2009.

In a speech given before the Historical Society of New York, February 23, 1852, he [Daniel Webster] said: . . .

*But if we and our posterity reject religious institutions and authority, violate the rules of eternal justice, trifle with the injunctions of morality, and recklessly destroy the political constitution which holds us together, no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us that shall bury all our glory in profound obscurity.*

p. 34

(Our Lord Prays For His Own: Thoughts on John 17 by Marcus Rainsford)  
Grand Rapids, MI.:Moody Press. Copyright – Kregel Publications,  
1985.

Child of God, you have no reason to fear the flesh, that corrupt thing you carry about with you, and under the pressure of which you groan. It may be you cannot overcome it; it may be there are risings and swellings in that corrupt heart you cannot restrain; but our glorious Christ can: “Thou hast given him power over all flesh.” Neither the flesh without, though in league with “principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places,” against which we wrestle; nor the power of the flesh within, though grievous and present, and often apparently set on fire of hell—neither the power without, nor the hidden depths within, can “separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.” He has power over all flesh. He can subdue it, though we cannot. He can control it, though we cannot. He can bind or loose it, acquit, forgive, judge it; and finally, He can and will

“Change this vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” (Phil. 3:21).

p.49

(365 Days of Hope: Encouragement for Those Facing Loss, Pain, and Disappointment) by Joni Eareckson Tada and Dave & Jan Dravecky)  
Federal Way, WA: World Vision. Copyright– Joni Eareckson Tada, Dave Dravecky, and Jan Dravecky, 2005.

#### PATH TO PRAYER

Father, it is difficult to praise you in these hard times in my life, but I know that in spite of the sadness and discouragement that I feel, you are at work in me, disciplining me and helping me to grow. And so I praise you, Lord, for the way in which you can and will bring joy out of my pain.  
(January 8)

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

A teacher asked a boy this question: “Suppose your mother baked a pie and there were seven of you—your parents and five children. What part of the pie would you get?” “A sixth,” replied the boy. “I’m afraid you don’t know your fractions.” said the teacher. “Remember, there are seven of you.” “Yes, Teacher,” said the boy, “but you don’t know my mother. Mother would say she didn’t want any pie.”

One of the most amazing character traits of a mother is her willingness to sacrifice her own desires for her family. The word *sacrifice* means forfeiture of something highly valued for the sake of one considered to have a greater value or claim. Whether it’s a piece of pie or valuable time, all mothers give up what they want for the benefit of their children. But the giving of themselves is not done in vain; there are great rewards. Having a servant’s heart is a theme throughout the entire Bible.

p. 232

God’s people must reverse the trends of our culture and begin seeing our Lord’s birth as He saw it. Can you think of a way in which you can be a selfless, submissive, sacrificing servant today?

p. 371



(Unleashing the Power of Rubber B: Lessons in Non-linear Leadership by Nancy Ortberg) Carol Stream, IL.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Copyright – Nancy Ortberg, 2008.

In the same vein, think about the particular challenge that churches often face when it comes to passion and humility. Seemingly an endangered species, humble people rightly reflect the spirit of Christ in so many ways. Humility was portrayed clearly in the Gospels, and was such a defining characteristic that the New Testament writers were still recounting its virtues in Philippians and beyond. Humility puts us in right relationship to both God and to others; it sets the tone for our biblical community and allows us to serve and releases us from the need to compare and measure. In many ways, humility frees us up to be the best followers, the best leaders, and the most content children of God.

However (and that is a key word in the world of tensions), I have encountered people in churches who use this very wonderful word as a shield to hide behind as they work to avoid change, steer clear of truth, and relentlessly maintain the status quo, even when it renders them and the message of the gospel completely irrelevant to those who need it most. Humility can become a “get out of jail free” card that protects against accountability and honesty. I have seen it used as a shameless defense for protecting a personal viewpoint and as a weapon for destroying any sign of pride in a job well done.  
pp. 76-77

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson) San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

*Holy Spirit, give me the gift of discerning hearts and being sensitive to needs, so that as I share the truth and goodness of my Lord, I may not provoke rejection by my rudeness nor encourage irreverence by my ignorance. For Jesus's sake. Amen.*  
p. 82



(Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon) Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson. Copyright – Unknown.

Christian, take this for your comfort, that there is no change in Jesus Christ's love to those who rest in Him. Yesterday you were on Tabor's top, and you said, "He loves me:" to-day you are in the valley of humiliation, but He loves you still the same. On the hill Mizar, and among the Hermons, you heard His voice, which spake so sweetly with the turtle-notes of love; and now on the sea, or even *in* the sea, when all His waves and billows go over you, His heart is faithful to His ancient choice.

p. 157

(A Resilient Life by Gordon MacDonald) Nashville, TN: Nelson Books / Thomas Nelson Publishers. Copyright – Gordon MacDonald, 2004.

Some of the world's best devotional literature was penned by early-twentieth-century author Oswald Chambers. But it wasn't until after his death in 1917 that his wife, Biddy, published much of his work, including his greatly acclaimed *My Utmost for his Highest*.

Chambers kept a journal, and in it we gain insight into his own spiritual journey. An entry in that journal reads:

A great fear has been at work in my mind and God has used it to arouse me to prayer. I came across a man whom I knew years ago, a mighty man of God, and now ten years have gone and I meet him again—garrulous and unenlivened. How many men seem to become like that after forty years of age! The fear of sloth and indulgence has come home with a huge fear and fairly driven me to God to keep me from ever forgetting what I owe him.

Two key words, both rather Victorian, make this description of a person: *garrulous*, a word which suggests someone who talks a lot but says little; and *unenlivened*, a person whose spirit seems deadened. It is not a complimentary portrait.

pp. 15-16

## **Safety Versus Purpose**

A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for.

—Philanthropist John Shedd (1850-1926)

*Citation:* Found through the online newsletters available at <http://ThisDaysThought.org/>;  
submitted by Michael Herman, Lisle, Illinois

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v. 14 For the whole law in one word has been fulfilled; (namely) in this: Love your neighbor as (you do) yourself.

The NET Bible translates verse 14:

For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself."

Peterson paraphrases verse 14:

For everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

In support, Paul quoted Leviticus 19:18 and stated that **the entire Law** was summarized **in this single command to love** their neighbors. Jesus affirmed the same truth (Matt. 22:39; Luke 10:25-28). But Paul also wanted to show that Christian love is the "fulfillment" or "the carrying out" of the Law. The apostle developed this point in Romans 13:8-10.

The Lord Jesus, interviewing a young legalist hears him as he says in:

Luke 10:27 (NASB)

And he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

If you Galatians want to fulfill the law, here is how you can do it in Christ:

Romans 13:10 (NASB)

Love does no wrong to a neighbor; love therefore is the fulfillment of the law.

Romans 8:2 (NASB)

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

You want something to do? You want some kind of responsibility? Then I have just the thing for you. Love your neighbor as you do yourself.

Patrick & Lowth say:

*The whole law is fulfilled in this, That thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.]*  
So that if thou be still desirous to fulfil the law, thou mayest do it by observing this comprehensive law of love. That's an act of true freedom.  
p. 741

Matthew 22:36-40 (NASB)

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

(Exploring the Mind & Heart of the Prince of Preachers: Five-thousand illustrations under one-thousand topical headings from the works of C. H. Spurgeon by C. H. Spurgeon) Oswego, IL: Fox River Press. Copyright– Fox River Press, 2005.

**“The way to do a great deal, is to keep on doing a little. The way to do nothing at all, is to be continually resolving that you will do everything.”** 2549.618  
p. xxx

## UNCHANGING LOVE

At a wedding I attended, the bride's grandfather quoted from memory a moving selection of Scripture about the relationship of husband and wife. Then a friend of the couple read "Sonnet 116" by William Shakespeare. The minister conducting the ceremony used a phrase from that sonnet to illustrate the kind of love that should characterize a Christian marriage: "Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." The poet is saying that true love does not change with circumstances.

The minister noted the many changes this couple would experience during their life together, including health and the inevitable effects of age. Then he challenged them to cultivate the true biblical love that neither falters nor fails in spite of the alterations that would surely come their way.

As I witnessed the joy and excitement of this young couple, a verse came to mind from James: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (1:17). God never changes, and neither does His love for us. We are recipients of a perfect love from our heavenly Father, who has loved us "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3).

We are called to accept His unfailing love, to allow it to shape our lives, and to extend it to others.

*Unfailing is God's matchless love,  
So kind, so pure, so true;  
And those who draw upon that love  
Show love in all they do. —D. De Haan*

**God's love still stands when all else has fallen.**

(From *Our Daily Bread*, Monday, July 30, 2007)

## **Loving Your Neighbor Reasonably**

Love your neighbor as yourself; but don't take down the fence.

—Carl Sandburg, American poet, novelist, and historian (1878-1967)

*Carl Sandburg, The People, Yes*

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(Signs of Life: Back to the Basics of Authentic Christianity by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson. Copyright— David Jeremiah, 2007.

In 1990 Robertson McQuilkin resigned from the presidency of Columbia Bible College in order to care for his ailing wife, Muriel, which he did until she died in 2003. His motivation was his belief that God has planned the strength and beauty of youth to be physical, but the strength and beauty of age to be spiritual.<sup>4</sup> We gradually lose the strength and beauty that is temporary, so we'll concentrate on developing the strength and beauty that lasts forever.

We might lose some of our vigor, but none of our zeal. Our strength may ebb, but our enthusiasm for the kingdom should grow stronger with time. We might have some golden years and some golden tears, but remember that gold is precious and highly valued.

4. Dennis J. DeHaan, "Life's Seasons" in *Our Daily Bread*, March 17, 2004, [www.rbc.org](http://www.rbc.org), p. 205

**v. 15 But if you are biting and devouring one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another.**

The NET Bible translates verse 15:

However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

Peterson paraphrases verse 15:

If you bite and ravage each other, watch out—in no time at all you will be annihilating each other, and where will your precious freedom be then?

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary* says:

**5:15.** That such love needed to be mutually expressed in the Galatian churches is made clear here. As a result of the inroads of the false teachers the church was divided and engaged in bitter strife. The followers of the legalists and those who remained steadfast were **biting and devouring each other**. This was far from the biblical ideal of believers dwelling together in a loving unity, and threatened the churches with destruction, that is, the loss of their individual and corporate testimonies.

Pinnock points out:

Evidently the Galatians had not grasped the principle of loving service. Paul refers to savage infighting which went on in their congregation (v. 15). He speaks of them biting and devouring each other. Both verbs are used of the habits of wild animals. Apparently the behavior of the Galatians at times resembled the conduct more fitting to untamed beasts than to brothers in Christ. Paul may be thinking of the savage scavenger dogs which fed on the garbage of cities in his day. That kind of behavior promotes self-destruction. We have been called to love and serve people, not to use and abuse them as objects for our own advantage.

p. 74



Paul is speaking of **CHRISTIAN CANNIBALISM** here, if you please, and this is in contrast to verse 14.

Someone has wisely said that the Christian army is the only army that attacks its own wounded.

Whenever the **FLESH IS IN CONTROL**, there is going to be:

**BITING** and

**DEVOURING.**

When the **SPIRIT OF GOD IS DOMINANT**, there is going to be:

**LOVE,**

**UNITY,** and

**PEACE.**

There is an old story of two snakes who grabbed the tail of the other and each swallowed the other.

Well, that is what is going on here in this passage. Love is from the Spirit and biting and devouring from the flesh. But if you snap at one another and devour one another, you must watch out that you do not end up wiping each other out.

(Out of My Mind by Joseph Bayly) Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970.

Slings we have aplenty. But we use them to mow down our fellow soldiers, not against opposing giants. The brethren are bruised, the giants unmolested.  
p. 97

“The strife is o’er, the battle done/Our church has split and our side won.”  
p. 109

(The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Restoring the Character Ethic by Stephen R. Covey) New York: Simon and Schuster. Copyright - Stephen R. Covey, 1989.

People with a Scarcity Mentality have a very difficult time sharing recognition and credit, power or profit—even with those who help in the production. They also have a very hard time being genuinely happy for the successes of other people—even, and sometimes especially, members of their own family or close friends and associates. It’s almost as if something is being taken from them when someone else receives special recognition or windfall gain or has remarkable success or achievement.

Although they might verbally express happiness for others’ success, inwardly they are eating their hearts out. Their sense of worth comes from being compared, and someone else’s success, to some degree, means their failure. Only so many people can be “A” students; only one person can be “number one.” To “win” simply means to “beat.”

Often, people with a Scarcity Mentality harbor secret hopes that others might suffer misfortune—not terrible misfortune, but acceptable misfortune that would keep them “in their place.” They’re always comparing, always competing. They give their energies to possessing things or other people in order to increase their sense of worth.

They want other people to be the way they want them to be. They often want to clone them, and they surround themselves with “yes” people—people who won’t challenge them, people who are weaker than they.

It’s difficult for people with a Scarcity Mentality to be members of a complementary team. They look on differences as signs of insubordination and disloyalty.

p. 219

Barker & Kohlenberger say:

**15** It is not hard to imagine the kind of strife that may have been present in the Galatian churches, either strife parallel to that of the Corinthians (1 Co 1:10–12; 3:1–4) or strife arising directly out of the conflict with the legalizers. Paul does not say precisely what it was, but intense strife was definitely going on among the Galatians.  
pp. 738-9

Bartlett says:

What a contrast between the fruitage of love and the wreckage of wrath! The love of law as fostered among the Galatians by the legalists was evidently fomenting dissension and strife in their midst, a result at the farthest pole from the devotion and harmony flowing from the law of love. That backbiting and bickering in a church are destructive of peace and disruptive of unity goes without saying. It is a pouring of vinegar into cream, the unleashing of a hurricane, the kindling of a fast-spreading fire. Backbiting provokes biting back. Mutual depreciation is as destructive as mutual appreciation is constructive. The church that does not keep the peace will go to pieces. Alas, when the members of any church prey on one another and do not pray for one another! Praying and preying cannot coexist. Of necessity one must yield to the other. Which shall it be?  
pp. 102-3

Calvin says:

From the nature of the subject, as well as from the language employed, we may conjecture that the Galatians had disputes among themselves; for they differed about doctrine. The apostle now demonstrates, from the result, how destructive such proceedings in the church must ultimately prove to be. False doctrine was probably a judgment from heaven upon their ambition, pride, and other offences. This may be concluded from what frequently happens in the divine dispensations, as well as from an express declaration by the hand of Moses. “Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.” (Deut. xiii. 3.)

By *biting and devouring* he means, I think, slanders, accusations, reproaches, and every other kind of offensive language, as well as acts of injustice arising either from fraud or violence. And what is the end of them? To be *consumed*, while the tendency of brotherly love is to produce mutual protection and kindness. I wish we could always remember, when the devil tempts us to disputes, that the disagreement of members within the church can lead to nothing else than the ruin and consumption of the whole body.  
pp. 161-2

Eadie says:

Here it pictures spiritual devastation and wreck, when, in consequence of brawling and contention, the spiritual life should go out, and the community itself be broken up and ended. Mutual destruction is the natural result of fierce mutual quarrel. Neither gains the victory—both perish.  
pp. 406-7

**Fergusson says:**

Here is a second argument to enforce the exercise of mutual love, taken from some dangerous effects which, doubtless, had already followed in part among those Galatians, occasioned by their debates and controversies, and would yet follow more upon the want of love; to wit, first, their bitter strifes, backbitings, railings, and reproaches, set forth by the biting of wild beasts: and, secondly, other real injuries, by fraud or violence, which seem to be pointed at by “devouring,” which is more than biting: and lastly, as a consequence of the two former, a total vastation and consumption of the whole church.

p. 93

**Hendriksen says:**

The attitude toward “one another” that is described and condemned in this passage is the very opposite of the one that was urged upon the addressed in verses 13 and 14. Here, in verse 15, people—church-members at that!—are pictured in the act of rushing at each other like wild beasts. By means of an ascending series of gruesome acts their violence and its threatening woeful result is pictured: they bite each other, “gulp each other down,” and, if they persist, will in the end be totally consumed by one another. They obey the dictates of their old self, and resemble nature “raw in tooth and claw.”

p. 212

**Hogg & Vine say:**

If they lived in mutual love they would be “knit together” and would make “increase of the body unto the building up of itself”, Eph. 4. 16, but if they were possessed by the opposite spirit they could only work havoc among themselves with the certain result that their corporate testimony would be laid in ruins.

The ideal picture of a church is of brethren dwelling together in unity because they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, Psalms 133. 1; here the Apostle presents a contrast, savage beasts making of each other a prey. Thus he warns them that party strife never ends in victory for either side, but always in mutual destruction.

pp. 275-6

Lenski says:

The negative side of the Christian's freedom in slaving for others by means of love is stated drastically: **But if you keep biting and devouring each other, take heed lest you be consumed by each other!** Freely to slave for each other is to *conserve* each other; to let the flesh (v. 13) have its way is to be *consumed* by each other. The figure is taken from the jungle and the forest where tooth and claw reign and the denizens are exterminated by each other. The first two verbs are durative: "if you go on biting and devouring"; the last is an aorist derived from . . . and states what the end will be: "you will be consumed."

p. 278

Lightfoot says:

A sort of parenthetical warning; 'The contest will not end in a victory to either party, such as you crave. It will lead to the common extinction of both.'

p. 209

Lovett says:

**BACKBITING.** Nothing is more deadly to a fellowship of Christians than taking sides against one another over doctrinal issues. The Judaizers were apparently successful in causing a division among the Galatians. Their love for the Law was so totally at odds with the law of love that bickering resulted. Paul uses the metaphor of animals snarling and snapping at each other to picture those feelings which rise during church quarrels. He warns that the final destruction of their fellowship is possible if they continue to use their freedom for partisan fighting. As a little vinegar can curdle a whole glass of pure cream, so can a little bickering utterly destroy the unit and peace between brethren. This is a terrible misuse of Christian liberty, says Paul. Besides, all their resources for growth and spreading of the Gospel are consumed in their fussing.

p. 66

**Luther says:**

When faith in Christ is overthrown peace and unity come to an end in the church. Diverse opinions and dissensions about doctrine and life spring up, and one member bites and devours the other, i. e., they condemn each other until they are consumed. To this the Scriptures and the experience of all times bear witness. The many sects at present have come into being because one sect condemns the other. When the unity of the spirit has been lost there can be no agreement in doctrine or life. New errors must appear without measure and without end.

p. 219

**MacArthur says:**

The imagery is of wild animals savagely attacking and killing each other—a graphic picture of what happens in the spiritual realm when believers do not love and serve one another.

p. 1675

**McGee says:**

I have always wanted to preach a sermon on this text, and I would entitle it “Christian Cannibals.” Did you know that in many churches today the Christians bite, eat, and devour one another? And the bite is as bad as that of a mad dog. There is nothing you can take that will cure the wound. All you can do is suffer. There are a lot of mad dogs running around today. They will bite and devour you. Unfortunately, the world has passed by the church in our day, and I’m sorry it has because there are many fine people in our churches and many wonderful preachers throughout this country. But the lives of some Christians are keeping the world away from certain churches. I personally know examples of this. I know churches in which the Christians have no love for each other, but they bite and devour one another. It is a terrible thing!

p. 187

Pinnock says:

How are the Galatians to check their tendency to devour each other? How can they control their runaway self-centeredness and learnt to give themselves freely in loving service to others? The answer is the Spirit controlled life (v. 16). If they would walk in the Spirit, they would not have to answer the call of the lower nature. Paul is not telling them to do something they have not done before. He is urging them to keep on walking in the Spirit day by day. This is the secret of Christian holiness.

Paul describes the Christian life as a conflict of opposing forces. What the Spirit yearns for in our lives is antithetical to what the lower nature desires (v. 17). A civil war rages within the believer. Peter wrote about it: "Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul" (I Peter 2:11). The Spirit and the flesh are implacable foes. Paul's teaching makes it impossible to accept "quietism," the theory that sanctification does not require effort or struggle on our part. All we have to do is surrender to God and let Him have the victory over sin. While it is true that God sanctifies us, it is not true that a person being renewed by the Spirit exists in a state of passive surrender. God has done everything to make our sanctification possible, but we must make our calling and election sure by putting to death the old life and walking in the Spirit.

pp. 75-6

Radmacher, Allen & House say:

When Christians follow their sinful desires (v. 13), they begin to criticize and contend with **one another**. Such self-centered behavior is self-defeating. Those who criticize and attack usually end up being **consumed** in worthless struggles.

p. 1527



Ridderbos says:

15. To *bite* (wound, inflict pain) and to *devour* (leave no room for) and to *consume* constitute a climax. It is to be understood of various gradations of social hatred and jealousy. Some refer this discussion to the extant differences in the churches brought on by the work of the heretical teachers. There may be truth in this, although it is very clear that Paul does not condemn, but rather commands, a resolute attack upon those teachers. Hence, we presumably are to think of the life “after the flesh” more generally. It is the life which becomes dominant when the freedom in Christ is denied or abused. Then it goes from bad to worse. This, too, could come of it, that the Galatians would drive each other wholly to spiritual destruction so that deliverance would no longer be possible.  
p. 202

Wuest says:

By consuming one another, Paul does not mean that they will lose their status as Christians, but that such altercation within the Christian churches will at length if persisted in, destroy the organic community life of the churches.  
p. 152

(Turning Points: Moments of Decision in the Presence of God by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: Integrity. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2005.

## HOW DID WE KNOW?

*The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”*

JEREMIAH 31:3

Comedian Jonathan Winters said in an interview that his life was scarred by the cruel things his parents said to him in childhood. “I’m no crybaby, but I remember things with almost total recall—there’s a lot of pain there.” His father once told him, “You’re the dumbest kid I know.”

When he joined the marines and went off to the South Pacific during World War II, Jonathan felt no support from his mother. When he came back home, he discovered that she had given away the precious, personal things he had stored in the attic. He was upset, but her response was, “How did we know you were going to live?”

Many people have scars caused by people’s words. If that has happened to you, there’s another voice you should hear. The Lord’s words are stronger than anyone else’s. He has words of love and life, words of affirmation. “I have loved you with an everlasting love,” says the Father.

God loves you so much, and He desires a deep and delightful relationship with you. Don’t be discouraged by the words of others. You are special in God’s eyes.

p. 178

(Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright – John Ortberg, 2003.

So anyone who takes God's dream of community seriously will have to come to grips with conflict. Let's start with a little pop quiz to test your IQ (irritation quotient):

*When driving, how often do you use your horn?*

1. Rarely if ever.
2. As needed; at least once a day.
3. It is the most used part of my car.

*At a restaurant, how often do you complain about food?*

1. Never.
2. Only if it's cold, or there are too many bugs in it.
3. Regularly, and I go out to my car and honk the horn until they get it right.

*While waiting in an express checkout line at the supermarket, I—*

1. Meditate quietly or visualize world peace.
2. Count to see if anyone has more than twelve items.
3. Threaten anyone who looks as if they're going to use coupons.

pp. 128-9

Jesus' command can be broken down like this:

1. If there is conflict
2. You
3. Go
4. To the person
5. In private
6. And discuss the problem
7. For the purpose of reconciliation

Dealing with conflict always involves a series of choices. With each choice, our natural inclination is to handle the conflict in a *destructive* manner. So if we want to live in the Fellowship of the Trinity we will have to be guided by Jesus into a better way.

p. 130

(Slaying the Giants in Your Life: You Can Win the Battle and Live Victoriously by David Jeremiah) Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group / Thomas Nelson. Copyright – David Jeremiah, 2001.

Psychologists tell us that the weed of bitterness is cultivated at great price. When we choose to hold on to our resentment, we relinquish control of our future. We trade the freshness of the new day and all its possibilities for the pain of the past. Quite often we eat away our hearts, one bite at a time, over someone who may be far away and totally unaware of our thoughts, totally forgetful of what happened, and—certainly—totally unaffected by anything we’re thinking or doing. Resentment, someone said, is swallowing poison and waiting for the other person to die.  
p. 125

Aristotle phrased it well: “A man who is angry on the right grounds, against the right persons, in the right manner, at the right moment and for the right length of time deserves great praise.”  
p. 110

(*“Fresh Bread”* by Dan Bolin) Wednesday, December 29, 2010.

Our pride as men explains why we fear the threat of shame, which, in turn, is why we are always trying to hide our weaknesses, our failures, our fears, our addictions, and our struggles with depression. In essence it is pride that leads to hide who we really are.

Richard Simons III, The True Measure of a Man

(The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You by John Ortberg) Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright– John Ortberg, 2010.

I think the single most common “way out,” however, involves talking about our temptations with another person. A friend of mine wrestles with gossip, but early on in our relationship he made one of the most candid confessions I have ever heard: “If you want to keep something confidential, don’t tell me—I leak like a sieve!”  
p. 138

(Lectures to My Students by C. H. Spurgeon) Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust. Copyright– Unknown, 2008.

There are also certain persons who are never so happy as when they are ‘grieved to the heart’ to have to tell the minister that Mr A. is a snake in the grass, that he is quite mistaken in thinking so well of Messrs. B and C., and that they have heard quite ‘promiscuously’ that Mr D. and his wife are badly matched. Then follows a long string about Mrs E., who says that she and Mrs F. overheard Mrs G. say to Mrs H. that Mrs J. should say that Mr K. and Miss L. were going to move from the chapel and hear Mr M., and all because of what old N. said to young O. about that Miss P. Never listen to such people. Do as Nelson did when he put his blind eye to the telescope and declared that he did not see the signal, and therefore would go on with the battle.  
p. 398

Mayow in his *Plain Preaching* very forcibly says:

If you were to see a woman killing a farmer’s duck and geese, for the sake of having one of the feathers, you would see a person acting as we do when we speak evil of anyone, for the sake of the pleasure we feel in evil speaking. For the pleasure we feel is not worth a single feather, and the pain we give is often greater than a man feels at the loss of his property.  
p. 399

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)  
San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins. Copyright– Eugene H. Peterson, 2006.

*“So let our lips and lives express the holy gospel we profess; so let our works and virtues shine, to prove the doctrine all divine. Thus shall we best proclaim abroad the honors of our Savior God, when His salvation reigns within, and grace subdues the power of sin.” Amen.*  
p. 84

**CONCLUSION:**

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: The last thing Paul said to these Galatian Christians is recorded in the first verse of chapter 5 which just precedes this study: “For this freedom Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.”

LESSON #2: Can you think of an area or areas of your life where you are unteachable, unbendable, and subconsciously saying “Don’t confuse me with the facts. My mind is already made up.”?

LESSON #3: Oswald Chambers says: “Beware of refusing to go to the funeral of your own independence.”

LESSON #4: “Godliness is nothing more than God’s activity in our lives. It is God Himself behaving in and through you.” (Ian Thomas)

LESSON #5: Paul is saying in verse 2, it is either Christ or circumcision. You must make a choice. If you choose circumcision, Christ will benefit you nothing.

LESSON #6: The true believer is declared righteous and his righteousness is the righteousness of Christ.

LESSON #7: The law is a total unit and you cannot pick and choose the parts you want to keep. God does not grade on the curve. You break one you’re guilty of all.

LESSON #8: It is either Christ or the law. You can’t have both.

LESSON #9: The top priority in our lives is faith operating through love.

LESSON #10: The Lord expects us as believers to be obeying the truth.

LESSON #11: May it never be said of any of us that we “were running well.”

LESSON #12: A little yeast of law can ruin the whole lump.

LESSON #13: The command in the passage is “through love keep on serving one another” (verse 13).

LESSON #14: Love and servanthood are the products of grace. “Biting and devouring” are the products of the law or the flesh (verse 15).

(When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back In The Box by John Ortberg)  
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. Copyright— John Ortberg, 2007.

In life, as in canasta, the secret lies in knowing what to discard. If I am not yet living according to what I believe matters most, it is no accident. There are forces or habits that have a deep hold on me that I will have to get rid of. The writer of Hebrews puts it like this: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”

We must discard whatever will hold us down. We must discard the wrong priorities that keep us from what matters most.

55: “*Therefore, since*”: Hebrews 12:1.  
p. 55

Hebrews 12:1-2 (NASB)

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House. Copyright—Brees Company, Inc., 2010.

Sometimes I wonder what might have happened if I hadn’t had that injury at the end of the 2005 season. If I hadn’t had to walk that road of recovery, I certainly wouldn’t have wound up in New Orleans and experienced the real life that sprang from that comeback. I wouldn’t have met the folks who are now my friends and teammates in New Orleans or had so many incredible opportunities that have come my way. And if I hadn’t had the injury in high school, I probably wouldn’t have attended Purdue and wouldn’t have met Brittany. God used all those things to work together for good in my life, and I’m grateful not just for the victories but also for the tough times that guided me and helped me become who I am.

p. 187



(The Worn Out Woman by Dr. Steve Stephens & Alice Gray) Sisters, OR:  
Multnomah. Copyright – Steve Stephens & Alice Gray, 2004.

*What Have You Lost?*

*A man once went to a minister for counseling.  
He was in the midst of a financial collapse.  
“I’ve lost everything,” he bemoaned.  
“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that you’ve lost your faith.”  
“No,” the man corrected him, “I haven’t lost my faith.”  
“Well, then I’m sad to hear that you’ve lost your character.”  
“I didn’t say that,” he corrected. “I still have my character.”  
“I’m so sorry o hear that you’ve lost your salvation.”  
“That’s not what I said,” the man objected.  
“I haven’t lost my salvation.”  
“You have your faith, your character, your salvation. Seems to me,” the  
minister observed, “that you’ve lost none of the things that really  
matter.”*

MAX LUCADO

p. 183

(In the Arena by Isobel Kuhn) Littleton, CO: Overseas Missionary  
Fellowship International. Copyright– OMF International, 2006.

Crucified affections lift you into a realm of child-like simplicity and relaxation. “Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). The little child takes each day just as it comes. He does not waste time imagining tomorrow’s woes. He lives a day at a time. If today has tears, they are shed and spent; but they are not carried over into tomorrow. In the days that were to be ahead of me, I would again have partings and separations from loved ones that cost heart agony for some hours. But never again did they overwhelm me. In other words, all the suffering when my little candle-flames went out, one after the other, were worth the tears they cost, for they purchased for me a permanent freedom from sprawling spiritually, from being knocked down and overwhelmed.

In other words, it was a kind Lord, and not a vicious One who blew out my candles, systematically, one after the other. He had something better for me than earthly candles.

p. 113