

STUDIES IN GALATIANS

Study #10: Galatians 5:2-15

“You Were Running Well” (Until You Said “Don’t Confuse Me with the Facts”)

You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said “Don’t Confuse Me with the Facts” – Galatians 5:2-15

Key verse 5:7 —“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?”

This is study #10 in the series. This is one of those awesome passages that everybody argues over so I’m looking forward to teaching it to you today.

And then remember, next week is the works of the flesh and the fruitage of the Spirit so get ready for a great ride on that one. Then we’ll finish up with Galatians chapter 6.

You Were Running Well UNTIL: You Said “Don’t Confuse Me with the Facts”

This is a great subject for a senior audience. We get our minds made up and we don’t want anybody to confuse us with the facts.

In this particular study the key verse will be verse 8, chapter 5 and verse 8. But we're also going to have the key verse to the whole book: Galatians 5:7. "You were running well..."

So back to back we'll have key verses that focus on some neat things.

Well you needed a little laughter today. This is the way to maintain a healthy level of insanity.

At lunchtime, sit in your parked car with sunglasses on and point a hairdryer at passing cars. See if they slow down!

In the memo field of all of your checks write "for smuggling diamonds."

Finish all of your sentences with "in accordance with prophecy."

Five days in advance tell your friends you can't attend their party because you're not in the mood.

When the money comes out of the ATM machine scream "I won! I won! I won!"

When leaving the zoo start running towards the parking lot yelling "Run for your lives! They're loose!"

I love the last one.

Tell your children over dinner “Due to the economy, we’re going to have to let one of you go.”

This is one of my favorite golf stories.

A nun is sitting with Mother Superior, chatting and confessing. “I used some horrible language this week and feel absolutely terrible about it.”

“When did you use this awful language?” asked the elder.

“Well, I was golfing and I hit an incredible drive that looked like it was going to sail 250 yards but it struck a phone line that was hanging over the fairway and then fell straight down to the ground about a 100 yards down the fairway.”

“Is that when you swore?” asked Mother Superior.

“No Mother,” said the nun. “After that a squirrel ran out of the bushes and grabbed my ball in his mouth and began to run away.”

“Is that when you swore?” asked Mother Superior.

“Well, no” said the nun. “You see, the squirrel was running and an eagle came down out of the sky and grabbed the squirrel in his talons and began to fly away.”

“Is that when you swore?” asked the amazed elder nun.

“No, mother. Oh no, not yet. As the eagle carried the squirrel away in its claws it flew near the green and the squirrel dropped my ball.”

“Did you swear then?” asked Mother Superior.

“Oh no, mother. My ball fell on a big rock, bounced over a sand trap, rolled up on the green and stopped about 6 inches from the hole.”

The two nuns were silent for quite a time then Mother Superior sighed and said “You missed the putt didn’t you?”

Aaron Rodgers is a wonderful Christian gentleman on the Green Bay Packer team. His accountability brother is a Young Life staff member and also his pastor. And there are a number of Christians on the team.

You know, I wonder when some of these NFL coaches are going to wake up that when you’ve got a Christian quarterback it makes all the difference in the world. You know, somebody to look up to and somebody to inspire them.

Of course Drew Brees is a great illustration of that and the year before in his witness. I want to read just a statement from Drew today from his book to start the study.

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry)

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 I mention 9-11-01 you think of Todd Beamer, of course. But I also think of Brian Birdwell. Brian was in the Pentagon, along with his two secretaries, when that plane crashed into the Pentagon. He is alive today because he got up to go to the bathroom. The other two secretaries both lost their lives in that. But I want you to hear Brian, what he has to say.

(If God Is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil by Randy Alcorn)

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."⁴

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 (accessed May 2, 2009).

(p. 43)

And he and his wife have got a wonderful ministry to people who have experienced severe burns. And God is really using them.

One more story. You remember I shared with you *Choosing to See* by Mary Beth Chapman. Steve, her husband, is a songwriter. And this is one of the most beautiful songs that comes out of the death of their little 5-year-old adopted daughter. I want you to hear the words and tell me if it isn't worth it to go through some pretty difficult circumstances and to grow up to be able to write some words like this.

(Choosing to See: A Journey of Struggle and Hope by Mary Beth Chapman with Ellen Vaughn)

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)

You know, you recognize just the opposite so many times
when you have tragedy in families with people who are not
believers.

For instance, we have a graphic experience of this in Tyler
where a 15-year-old son committed suicide and the husband
was not at home and blamed the wife. And it ended up in
divorce. And that's the way different people cope with
adversity in their lives. But it's so refreshing to see believers

who know Christ and realize that the curriculum is designed to give a greater witness for Christ and to glorify and honor Him.

I think you've felt some of that in these chapters in the book of Galatians.

You Were Running Well. And we've gone through several of them. And I want to pick up now at chapter 5:2.

Remember chapter 5:1? He said that we have been set free.

Galatians 5:1

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

Now, remember what I told you last week? Each one of these little epistles is divided into 3 parts. You have the PERSONAL, then you'll have the DOCTRINAL (or the teaching part of it), and then you'll have the PRACTICAL.

Chapters 1 and 2 were the PERSONAL.

Chapters 3 and 4 we've been dealing with the DOCTRINAL. And we've finished it last week when we got to chapter 5:1 we finished the doctrinal.

And now everything he has to say is PRACTICAL.

It's like he's coming down the home stretch and he is going to say it for all he's worth in order to accomplish his purpose.

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

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

Why does he start out and say “Behold, I, Paul”? There's a lot of authority that goes with the word “Paul” and he's reminding them he is an apostle. He's not saying it like he did in chapter 1, but he's making it quite clear that he has the authority to say what he's saying. So therefore listen.

Peterson in *The Message* sometimes really catches it right. He says:

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.

Is that pretty clear? That's the feelings and the emotions from the apostle now that he's trying to help them understand, from a practical point of view, the serious problem.

Now there's nothing against circumcision, all right. That's only a ritual that introduces you into a legalistic life. And so

these Judaizing teachers... Just like, you know, when you go to church and if you're going to join a Baptist church you're going to be baptized. You're going to go through the ritual of baptism in order to become a member of the church. Well, to these Judaizing teachers, the ritual of circumcision was the ritual that introduced the family into a legalistic lifestyle.

So Paul is just saying, the minute that you submit to this, you're entering a lifetime of performance. And that isn't all there is to it.

Ian Thomas said it well:

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

You know, I really think (having been a believer for all of these years) that people who perform and are using that as an excuse that they're really trying to be all that God wants them to be are really basically giving an excuse for not yielding.

You know, because of our pride we want control. Because of our pride we want to be appreciated. Because of our pride we want to do something that will help the Lord thinking that He will appreciate it.

I'm going back to Oswald Chambers again:

"Beware of refusing to go to the funeral of your independence."

(source unknown)

Many of us quench and grieve the Holy Spirit by our resistance of complete and total surrender to the adequacy of Christ and the power of the Spirit to produce Christlikeness in our lives. And remind yourself that He uses all of the adversity and all these circumstances to make us more like Him and to provide an opportunity for a witness.

“Behold, I, Paul am saying to you.”

And it’s not an issue of being against circumcision as such. But it’s an issue of entering into it.

And there’s verse 3. That’ll tell you.

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

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

In other words, it’s not just the entrance. It’s the commitment to a life with the entrance.

There are at least 618 laws in the Mosaic system. So we’re just talking about the very first thing. And that’s what Paul is trying to remind them of what they’re doing.

I'm telling you, you are "under obligation to do the whole law" not just part of it.

Do you remember when we studied the doctrinal section in Galatians 3:10? What we read?

Galatians 3:10

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."

In other words, you can't pick and choose. You've got to go with the whole system. You've got to be totally committed to it.

James 2:10

For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

No one has been justified by the perfect performance of keeping the Law.

Now let's use an illustration here to see if we can throw a little light on this.

Let's say that we're going to solve the immigration problem—the illegal immigrants in the United States—by making a campaign to ask them all to become United State citizens.

And so we're very successful. We get quite a crew. And they go down and they fill out all the forms and they do all the stuff that they need to and the judge declares them as authentic, genuine citizens of the United States of America. Now is that all there is to it?

You go right to them right away and say, "Now listen friend, you signed up for something. You're going to pay some taxes too. And you're going to learn to drive according to the rules of the road." And on and on and on we go with the responsibilities of being citizens of the United States.

These folks are caught up in an ordinance and they think that it's going to implement their salvation because these Judaizing teachers have told them that a Gentile must enter into these things of the Law in order to insure his salvation.

And so Romans 3:20 is the verse I put there:

Romans 3:20

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

Now we're getting into theological deep water. Are you ready?

Some of you have had this taught before and you're sitting here wondering how in the world we're going to get around this. We're going to get around it by just going right to it.

Let me read it now. What is the context? The context is a group of Gentile believers who've been deceived to be keeping the Law and to submit to circumcision, and the keeping of the Law. And we know they've done that. Remember? Because we looked at their Daytimers a couple of weeks ago and they had days and seasons and feasts and all those things that they were accomplishing, which were part of the Law.

Now look at verse 4.

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

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

It doesn't say “you lost your salvation.”

You choose the “Law way” rather than the “grace way.”

I just changed the valentine's friendship flag just before I came up because Pearl wasn't quite ready yet. And I put up the new one—Amazing Grace How Sweet the Sound! I thought that fit my whole message for the next couple or three

weeks until this thing is over. And it passed muster. We drove by and she liked it so we're good to go.

“You who are trying to be justified in the law.”

You can't do it both ways. That's all it's saying. So when you chose “to be justified by the law, you fell out from grace.” It's no longer grace. You are now those who are trying to be declared righteous by the keeping of the Law.

It was my privilege in seminary to get to sit under Dr. Charles Ryrie—as you know the Ryrie Study Bible. He is one of the finest theological teachers that I've ever had the privilege of sitting under. He's so simple and so plain. When he deals with this passage, this is what he says:

(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 known)

That helps you understand why people get confused and they immediately put this as losing your salvation.

And this is the way I summarized my notes:

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.

That's basically what's being said here.

The choice for the Galatians is the wheelbarrow of Law or the Cadillac of grace. And if you want to go first class you're going to go grace, because it's all His doing and it's God's way of accomplishing His purpose.

I don't know who wrote this little poem but I put down a couple of verses of it:

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.
(source unknown)

“You have been rendered inoperative”—now I’m going to read this and I’m going to see how well you’re doing. Okay? I’m going to read this. Give me the HOT WORD. You know, in verses you find the word that just summarizes it all and it’s right there if you can get it.

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

Inoperative? That’s not it.

Justified? That’s not it.

Trying!

They’ve committed themselves to a whole life of trying. These poor people will never know until they show up at the pearly gates whether they made it or not. And they won’t show up at the pearly gates either. Because the Law, it is impossible to be justified by trying. That’s the bottom line.

So your key word, your hot word there, is “trying.” And because you tried, “you fell out from grace”—if you want to put it all together.

Well, you did a good job. That was a hard question.

Pure Pleasure by Gary Thomas—I reviewed this book in our Spring *Grapevine*.

(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good? by Gary Thomas)

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)

You know, that's the whole difference. "Trying" tells you it's no longer relationship but performance. Doesn't it?

You've brought it over into this realm. There are only two choices. You've got to choose one or the other because they are like oil and water. They will never mix.

You can choose to perform the works of the Law. Or you can accept God's gracious gift in His Son and He will declare you righteous and present you spotless before the throne of His grace. Which do you want? You make a choice.

I quote the old cowboy:

"There are two chances, slim and none. And slim is saddlin' up to leave town."
(source unknown)

And that leaves you with NONE.

Verse 5. Oh man this gets so good. I'm so glad you're here today.

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

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

Now there’s a little bit of a problem with my translation of that verse because when you use the term “hoped for” you still feel like it’s up for grabs.

“Hoped for” means that he’s never broken a promise, he’s never been unfaithful to break one or failed to fulfill one. So, yes, it’s “hoped for righteousness” on good grounds.

Sunday at Hide-a-Way was the afternoon of farewell for Pearl and I. And it was a refreshing time just to feel so much love from the congregation. And the statements Pearl and I kept hearing [were] “our lives have been changed because of the teaching of the Word.”

When you have 7 ½ years you cover a lot of material in 52 weeks a year. And so that was the refreshing part of it. But the saddest part of it all was this dear lady—see I was there 14 years before and then from ’75-’89 first and now 7 ½ years this time on this tenure of service. And Doris Clemmons, bless her sweet heart, she’s always been there. You know, for most of the 22 years. How precious she is. And I said, “Doris [she’s 95 or 96, something like that] you know, really let’s face facts. We’ll probably see each other in heaven.” And she said “I hope so!” I said “Sweet Doris, please! I know so!” But isn’t that the

way it is? We still are uncertain and we just need to understand that He's taken care of the whole thing.

I have framed sign on the back of my computer:

“Don, trust me, I have everything under control. [signed] Jesus”

That, on so many days, when you're in agony and concerned, the sweet peace that pervades at that point. And you notice it's on the grounds of faith and it's through the Spirit that we're waiting for this “hoped for righteousness.”

So we're not “TRYING,” we're TRUSTING.

Now why does it say “we through the Spirit”?

You're going to learn a lot more about the Spirit next week as Paul brings that into play. But the function of the Holy Spirit basically is to blow conviction upon our hearts. It's His function to help us realize our need and the fact that we are dead in trespasses and sin.

Then He is the one who gives life, regenerates, the giver of life at the moment we, by faith, receive Christ.

Then He comes to permanently indwell us and He is our Master Teacher. He is functioning in your hearts today as He guides You into truth and helps you understand what's been written here.

But then He's also available to guide us. The more we trust and the more we're quiet with our own plans and imaginations of things we think we need to do, the Spirit of God will see to it that we're exactly where we need to be at that time.

And then He's there to protect us from those things which do not please the Lord. He convicts our hearts so that we are restrained from those.

“For we through the Spirit on the ground of faith [it's not of works] are eagerly awaiting a hoped for righteousness.”

Now you sing it don't you?

Dressed in his righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before His throne.
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

Yes. You'll never have that if you're pursuing the Law rather than the relationship.

I mentioned Gary Thomas. Part of the reason I like him so much is he stops every once in a while in his book and he prays. And this prayer is so beautiful.

(The Beautiful Fight: Surrendering to the Transforming Presence of God Every Day of Your Life by Gary Thomas)

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)

Boy that's just an awesome statement to start a day, to be greeted with a prayer like that.

Now, when you get to verse 6:

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

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

See that's the function of the Spirit as you're going to see next week. He produces the fruit of love in our lives. And that love is free to operate when the Spirit is in control.

Oh this gets convicting! It's not those external rituals. It's “faith operating through love.”

Now take that word “love” for just a minute and put it back in the upper room, just before they go down to Gethsemane. What were some of the last words that He said in the upper room?

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give unto you, that you'll love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. [Why?] By this shall all men know that you are My disciples [my learners] if you have love one for another.

What was it, when you and I were studying the letters to the 7 churches, that Jesus got very upset about in the very first letter?

Ephesus, you have left your first love. (Rev. 2:4)

You see, that's the mark. That's the characteristic of us as believers. And how careful we must guard the function of the Spirit in our lives so that He is free to produce that love in our lives. And it's faith operating through love.

Oh, I like that.

When Christ came into our lives:

LIFE took the place of DEATH and

LOVE took the place of the LAW.

I jokingly have shared Pearl and I now will have been married 58 years in August, and I play a joke once in a while with folks to say that I have put Pearl on performance rather than on faith operating through love. And so, whenever I leave the house I put some messages on the refrigerator.

Pearl, I want you to listen. I've got these things jotted down for you to do:

While I'm gone you're 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 the children.

While I'm gone, you shall keep the house clean.

While I'm gone, you shall wash and iron all my clothes.

I want you to punch in on the clock at 7:30 in the morning and punch out at 5:00 in the evening.

Failure to follow these rules will result in you being severely punished by me, your husband.

You see how stupid that is? She does all that and ten times more but it's faith operating through love.

It's just such a joy. We're traveling every week now together on this one because we're restoring some relationships. We're

refueling some relationships that have been left because of all of the other pressures that we were facing.

And it's been a joy to evaluate each day and see how much God has done.

I knew what I was going to hear this afternoon when we left the office. I've had a wonderful day because there was about 6 Bible packages for prisoners done and taken care of plus the work on receipt letters and *The Grapevine* article and all of that. So, she outdid me today in what she was able to get done.

But it is "faith operating through love." It's not legalism.

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.

You know, probably one of the neatest illustrations of what I'm sharing with you in this, is what love does.

Remember the story in the Book of Ruth? And Naomi is trying to be a matchmaker? And Ruth goes down to the threshing floor in chapter 3 and she lifts up the cover and crawls underneath, basically she's proposing marriage to Boaz. And

Naomi just can't stand it. The minute Ruth gets back she's got to hear the whole story.

And do you remember what Naomi said to Ruth? I just love this. This is so cool. This is 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."

Don't you love it? Highly motivated!

You watch your kids reach puberty and how you don't have to tell them wash and comb their hair anymore and do all those things.

Verse 7—there's our key verse to the whole book. Now you're going to see how I study. Because I read the whole book over and over and over again looking for some key verse that will actually epitomize the whole message of the book. And this one happened to be it.

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

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

You know when I first read that, I almost wept. When you read “You were” it’s telling you that you aren’t what you were before. There was a time when you were running superbly but you aren’t anymore. And so, asking a question:

“You were running well; who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth?”

How did you stumble and break stride? What happened?

We know what happened. These Judaizing teachers have come in and “thus hindered you from” WHAT? “obeying the truth” is the bottom line.

“You were running well” but your desires got dampened. Your first love got lost. Your disciplined determination began to deteriorate. And you remember the church of Laodicea, don’t you?

“You are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, so you make me sick and I’m about to vomit you out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16).

That’s the picture Paul is painting of these Galatian Christians.

One thing they will never hear is “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Because they quit before they got done.

“Demas hath forsaken me because he loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10).

In Granbury I teach at a similar facility only it's quite a bit bigger than Holly Lake by a long shot. And quite a bit more sophisticated. Pecan Plantation, if you've ever been there in Granbury, is quite a facility. There are little lakes all over the property.

The other morning loading the suburban to leave, I kid you not, a flock of geese came up from the backyard of the house across the street and just came up where I could have almost reached up and grabbed them by the feet. With the whir of their wings they went just right over the house and landed on the pond on the other side because some dogs evidently scared them up on the other side.

Isn't it amazing that geese just, by nature, know that they're supposed to go south? And that they need to get down there where it's warm in the rice fields in Houston. And spend the winter and then go back north. These honkers decided that it was pretty happy camping with these lakes and plenty of pecans around to feed on that they would just not go on to Houston.

And I was thinking of myself. That horrible ice storm probably caused them to start thinking, maybe we made a mistake in coming up short.

Sometimes we grow too soon old and too late smart, don't we? And we settle for things far short of what the Lord would have for us when by nature He's redeemed us to bring us to Himself.

I read some books on corporate America. A lot of John Maxwell's books from a Christian perspective. But I read Harvey Mackay's book *Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive*—that's a corporate book—and what he says is:

(*Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive* by Harvey Mackay)

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)

(*The Spiritual Life* by Walter Elliott)

"Perseverance is not a long race; it is many short races one after another." (p. 60)

"You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?"

That's in the imperfect tense. "You were running well" means that you did it for a long time in the past and you are still

doing it. Because they're still listening to the Judaizing teachers and so the pain of his heart is seen in these words.

Eugene Peterson also has some beautiful prayers in his little devotional book. I did it a couple of years ago. He has a 365 day reading.

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)

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)

Now we come to the key verse to this study.

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

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

Now the first thing you would think of, “the one who is calling you” would be Paul. But that’s not who. It’s the Holy Spirit, isn’t it?

The Spirit of God is calling them by the words that Paul has been inspired to write, using the apostle’s message to bring them back.

Softly and tenderly,

Jesus is calling
Calling us home, calling us back
to where we need to be.

Their position is wrong and the apostle is straightforward in confronting the error.

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

They have gone the route of legalism to a degree. And he's hoping and praying that they'll come back.

You know, when you teach a couple hundred Bible classes a year, which I used to do in the early days with 3 different tours and 8-12 week classes, I met a lot of people. But I learned an awful lot about students in my class. I become very sensitive when I get on this stool and I can tell when the people are really listening. And I can also tell by the glow in their faces whether the Spirit of God is teaching them something new.

There are two things that you can always tell when you're in a Bible study—you can take this to the bank—after 38 years of teaching:

1. A teachable spirit—you can see it every time because they're into the text, they want to learn something new, and

2. An obedient heart.

When you put those things together, that's faith operating through love. And then you're going to see Christ in that person's heart and life. And you're going to see growth. And I've got to say through that line, Pearl and I were deeply refreshed by so many who had the teachable spirit and the obedient heart because of some of the wonderful things they said.

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

"A little leaven is leavening the whole lump."

Now you bread makers, you understand all that don't you?

Paul uses "leaven" and the Bible uses "leaven" as SIN. When sin comes in it affects the whole thing.

Do you remember in Hebrews 12 it says: "Don't let a root of bitterness spring up, spoiling many"?

It spreads. And so he's saying: "a little Law is going to mess up the whole lump." That's where he's coming from on this one. He's trying to help them see the seriousness of not just circumcision, but it's going to affect the whole body of believers there.

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.

“As for myself”—don’t you love verse 10?

When your teacher says something that is position—and that’s what he’s saying here about him. You know back a couple of studies ago he was saying “I thought this was all to no avail. I am having the birth pains that perhaps you’re not going to respond properly.” But look what he says here as he gets to the practical.

“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.

You’ll remember, he said in chapter 1: “Let him be accursed” because he was twisting the Gospel and troubling their minds.

And here he says: “May this guy be Anathema”—may he be CURSED and bear the judgment whoever he is.

You know what I thought of? The book of Esther when Esther finally gets the king’s ear at the second banquet and she’s saying to him: “It’s this wicked Haman.”

She puts him right on the spot. And then as soon as King Xerxes finds out that he had built a scaffold for the hanging of Mordecai, a part of Esther's family, he cried out "Hang him on it!" you'll remember. Let justice happen. Let it be done.

Paul has quit playing. He is telling them that this guy, whoever he is, he needs to be judged.

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.

"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."

If that's the case, but I want to tell you I am "still being persecuted."

I love what Harvey says in *Swim with the Sharks*:

(*Swim with the Sharks Without Being Eaten Alive* by Harvey Mackay)

As one famous political figure said, "It's the pioneers who get all the arrows." (p. 69)

Take the shots!

Now when you get to verse 12, don't get embarrassed when I translate literally what's being said here.

This is the Greek text ok. It is somewhat softened for mixed audiences.

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

"I would that they who are upsetting you would have themselves castrated."

He is sick and tired of a ritual and he just said, he uses a very Greek word to describe making eunuchs out of all of them. He is really, really coming right down to the final.

And then he gives you the reason, verse 13:

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.

"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 [WHAT?] keep on serving one another."

"Loving one another...serving one another."

When you are filled with the love of the Spirit, you become a person who is OTHER-ORIENTED

I was doing a study today for my *Grapevine* article on Luke 9:23: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”

I was doing a Greek study on the word “deny” and it means simply “cease thinking about yourself.” You’re thinking in another person’s realm. Here it is. Jesus illustrated it, didn’t He? In the upper room with a bunch of proud hearts and dirty feet, He gets the towel and begins to wash feet as His last act.

That’s faith operating through love in serving others. It is the process that ought to be going on in our lives as we’re being made more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Every word Paul puts down in this practical section is just loaded with truth for us. Grace does not set a Christian free TO SIN but FROM SIN. And the wonderful, wonderful thing that happens when the Lord comes into our lives. Only we’re not to turn the liberty into a base of operation for the flesh but rather to be “serving one another.”

Jesus epitomizes a principle in John 13:4-5. Why does he say that? There it is in verse 14

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

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

So it only verifies what we've learned in the other two principles:

1. faith operating through love and
2. a love which is serving others.

But you look at verse 15 and you can see the problem when the flesh gets in there, can't you?

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

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

We just love to eat each other for lunch sometimes, don't we? We get so critical and so difficult.

I was reading a deal this morning.

This pastor was bemoaning the fact that there was somebody in the congregation that was always criticizing him and he confronted him about it one day. And he said, “Well you know, I just take it as my responsibility to keep you on track and

keep things going. After all, if I didn't the weeds would start growing up."

He said, "I'm calling him the hedge trimmer. I'm getting sick and tired of all of this negative stuff."

So when the Spirit of God is dominant, what do you have? You have love. You have unity. You have peace.

When the flesh is dominant you have verse 15. Now, he's going to take that very verse and he's going to go for a ride next week. You're going to see the works of the flesh on one side. You're going to see the fruit of the Spirit on the other side. And come ready to really saturate your mind and your thoughts with what He has to say.

Peterson said:

(A Year With Jesus: Daily Readings and Meditations by Eugene H. Peterson)

"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)

Now there are 14 lessons. Obviously when you get to the practical part, this is the stuff you're supposed to do. That's why there's more lessons.

Everything he's saying is something that we need to take to heart with a teachable spirit and obedient heart and apply this to our lives.

I put Hebrews 12:1 and 2 at the end of this study. Now see if you can understand where it's coming from:

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, [Those are the things that are keeping us from running the race. You were running well. We've got to lay aside these encumbrances] and the sin which so easily entangles us, [so we've got some work to do. And then what are we going to do?] and let us run with perseverance [is really the way that ought to be translated] 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.

The beauty of it all is that we are trusting Him. And as He convicts us, we're letting stuff go. We're laying it aside and the sin which tangles our feet. We're getting freed so that we can run.

Listen to Drew Brees. Here's the way you come to the end of his book. I just love his testimony. After that horrible, looked

like season ending and career ending, accident with his shoulder:

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry)

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)

Max Lucado says it:

(The Worn Out Woman by Dr. Steve Stephens & Alice Gray)

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 to 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

9. (nothing noted)
(p. 183)

Kind of put it right down for us very close.

I wondered how I was going to respond Sunday. I was really not in favor of having a celebration of ministry. I think that's at the Judgment Seat of Christ when we're all going to celebrate. And I basically had said that I was a little bit resistant but I said I needed to come because, after all, it was a conclusion of a phase of our lives and ministry.

So I didn't know what I was going to say. It was really neat, one of the guys from the board got up and said "Well, I want to tell you something. There's four of you leaving us and the board kind of decided that we thought we'd get you a new car. But then we started thinking of the price of four new cars..." He goes hemming and hawing around and finally Pearl says "We're not getting a car are we?"

And it was a great deal that he said. And then I just said "Can I have the microphone for a minute?" And I told them a story.

The very first Sunday was March of 2007 on the second trip. And we went into town to eat at Le Peeps, that little French breakfast place that no longer exists in Tyler. And right across was this couple smiling at us and they said "We were there in service this morning and we just want you to know that my brother-in-law is a cowboy poet."

I said “Oh, is he?” Because I had read a piece of cowboy poetry.

Anyway, they became great friends—Joe and Dody Stoval. Dody survived ovarian cancer for 19 years and I had her funeral not too long ago.

The other day Joe sent the last email I got before Sunday. He said “I’m on my way to Abilene to pick up the cowboy poet and we’re going skiing in Colorado. Hope everything works out alright for you!” That’s Joe.

I want to read just a little statement from Dody just to give you an idea of what a tremendous witness she was for Christ through this adversity. We had a bunch of adversity in the beginning. I want to conclude with a couple.

“Don Dear” is what she called me. Pearl said that was okay.

Don Dear, Just a reminder that I’m praying for you this week and hope that all goes well.

After last week’s chemo from Hell, I went to the head nurse in the infusion room yesterday and asked her if she would do my iv hook-up and then she could turn it over to another nurse to take care of the rest of it and she very graciously said yes and I was ready to kiss her feet. Thank you, sweet Jesus. What a difference a day makes when you get a good stick. Oh the things that become important when you live in the moment.

Since we will be going into Malachi soon [I was teaching the Minor Prophets at the time] I just wanted to share my favorite verse with you. ...

Malachi 3:16 Then those who feared and loved the Lord spoke often of Him to each other. [I love that] And He had a book of Remembrance drawn up in which He recorded the names of those who feared Him and loved to think about Him.

Is that not the coolest thing? When we talk about Him to one another, He thinks it's important enough to put it in his daily journal. Just makes you want to talk about Him some more, doesn't it? Love to Pearl and to you, Dody

(Email from Dody Stoval, October 9, 2007)

I shared with you last week that I was reading Joni Eareckson Tada's new book on healing. And I got on Joni & Friends website this morning—Pearl and I—and got the testimony that her cancer (she's been through the surgery and it was kind of cute on the little video, Ken was with her) and she said "I'm going to be cancer free!"

Ken said "Five more years" my dear. "You're going to have regular tests right along the way."

And then she said "Is it alright to say if I'm a cancer survivor?"

Ken says "Yea, and thank God you are."

It was just the sweetest testimony. So evidently they got it all. Just keep praying for them. What a witness they are for Christ.

This little story just really touched me.

(A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God's Sovereignty by Joni Eareckson Tada)

Jack Reimer, a syndicated columnist, wrote a story about the great violinist Yitzhak Perlman. Perlman had polio as a child and walks with crutches and braces on both legs. Instead of arranging to be seated on stage at the beginning of his performance, he chooses to walk across the stage methodically and slowly until he reaches his chair. Then he sits down, puts his crutches on the floor, undoes the clasps on his legs, bends down, picks up the violin, nods to the conductor, and proceeds to play. As Reimer describes it, there is a certain majesty in this ritual.

During a 1995 concert, a string on Perlman's violin suddenly snapped, and everyone in the audience could hear it. The great virtuoso stopped and gazed at the broken string as those in attendance that night wondered what he would do. Perlman closed his eyes, and after a moment of reflection, signaled the conductor to begin again.

Though anyone who knows music understands that it's impossible to play a symphonic work with just three strings, Perlman was undaunted. Apparently you could see this superb artist actually recomposing the piece in his head as he

went along, inventing new fingering positions to coax never-before-heard sounds from his three-string violin.

The sophisticated New York audience watched and listened in awe, knowing they were witnessing a truly groundbreaking performance. When the piece was over, they exploded into appreciative applause. Mr. Perlman smiled, wiped the sweat from his brow, and said in a soft, reverent tone, “You know, sometimes it is the artist’s task to find out how much music you can still make with what you have left.” (pp. 102-103)

That’s what meant so much to Joni. So she and Ken would say together, “We’re going to finish strong. We’re pressing toward the mark for the prize for the high calling of God in Christ.”

Father, we pray that we would learn how to understand and to cooperate fully with Your Spirit wanting to produce Christlikeness in our lives. Lord, we get in there and rush into things and make a mess of it and we have to ask You over and over again to forgive us and help us to be still to hear what You really have in mind for us. May Your Spirit use these lessons to encourage our hearts and prepare us for our time next week. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

STUDY NUMBER TEN – UNTIL: YOU SAID, “DON’T CONFUSE ME WITH THE FACTS” – GALATIANS 5:2-15

KEY VERSE 5:8

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.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Galatians 5:2-15 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What is the obligation of a man being circumcised, according to verse 3?

3. What do you think Paul means by the phrase “you fell out from grace” in verse 4?

4. What is the most important thing, according to verse 6?

5. To what does Paul liken the Christian life, according to verse 7?

6. Explain the meaning of verse 9.

7. What command does the apostle give in verse 13?

8. How can you summarize the “whole Law,” according to verse 14?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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).

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