

(1) For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

(2) Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole Law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the Law; you have fallen away from grace.

(5) For through the Spirit --- by faith ---we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

(7) You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

(10) I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

Think on these things:

- 1) Why did Jesus set you free from your sins (v.1)? Now that you have been delivered from your sins, what does Paul urge you to do?

We have been set free from sins to enjoy “freedom in Christ.” That being accomplished, we are to “stand firm” in this freedom and NOT return again to a life of slavery (God’s Law).

- 2) What is returning to “religion by obedience to the Law” compared to? (V1b) To be “yoked” is to be tied together in actions (we have done this with horses, mules, cattle, and oxen for years). Remember, in context, we are talking about trying to become righteous by living according to the Old (Jewish) Covenant of laws like the 10 Commandments --- i.e., God will be pleased with me and deliver me if I successfully obey His laws. Paul doesn’t think turning back to this kind of relationship with God is a good idea; he considers it a form of what?

Paul considers a life of returning to living by rules, instead of by faith, as a form of slavery.

- 3) From the Jewish perspective, what kind of people were the Galatians (see Romans 3:27-31)? How does a non-Jew become an accepted member of a Jewish synagogue (see Exodus 12:48-49 and Acts 13:43), a proselyte who comes to faith in the Living God of Israel?

The Galatians would be considered Gentiles by the Jews. To convert to Judaism, a non-Jew male had to be circumcised (and also all the males in his household)

- 4) Skim Genesis 17:1-14. What is the intent of circumcision? Who did it begin with?

Circumcision began with Abraham. God established it as a physical sign to remind all Jewish males of His everlasting covenant with Abraham and his heirs throughout all generations. It could not be undone (God’s covenant with Abraham will never end).

- 5) We know the conflict dynamic in Galatia is that the Circumcision Party (2:12) wants Gentile Christian believer's to be circumcised like the Jewish Christian believers are. What does Paul say that does in relation to Jesus Christ (v.2, 4)? Why is this (v.3)?

Choosing to be circumcised --- after reconciling with God through belief in Jesus --- eliminates that faith advantage and, actually, severs us (cuts us off) from Christ's help. One is choosing the salvation path of perfect obedience to God's Law (self-righteousness), rather than repenting of sin, asking God's forgiveness, and receiving His grace (Christ's righteousness). This decision requires one to keep ALL of God's Laws, something even the Jews could not do.

- 6) Again, if you seek to be justified by the Law, you fall away from what (v.4)? **Grace**
Paul says you have been deceived and led astray.
- 7) By what do Christians eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness? **Faith**
- 8) To Jesus Christ, being circumcised or uncircumcised is a **moot** point today; it counts for nothing (v.6)! What is important to Jesus about your Christian life?

Faith that works (expresses itself) through love.

- 9) Paul says, "You were running well. Who hindered you...? (v.7) V.8 clarifies that this change in their understanding is not due to a message from God; rather, he asks them "who" led you astray? What is the meaning of v.9 in this context, "a little leaven leavens the whole lump?"

It doesn't take much error, much deceit, to begin to corrupt many in the church family. Like leaven, the corrupting influence begins to spread through all.

- 10) When one person in a church, or a small group of people, have an unusual belief that ministers and lay leaders have rejected or not heard of before --- and these want everyone else to accept their belief --- should we be cautious? How do you think we should approach the matter (see Galatians 6:1)?

Yes, we should be cautious. 1 John 4:1-3 tells us to 'test the spirits' to see if they are of God. We should test new teachings or beliefs against recorded scripture. Gal. explains that godly leaders should gently, but carefully, work to restore folks in error --- and be careful not to be tempted in the same way they were.

- 11) Did Paul preach that Christian converts should be circumcised? How do we know (v.11)?

No, he did not require converted Gentiles to be circumcised to be saved. Rhetorically he asks them, "If I am still preaching circumcision, why am I being persecuted?"

- 12) How does Paul conclude this matter about a person misleading the congregation (v.12)? Yes, it does seem harsh, but consider it in the sense of birthing new converts to a bad teaching!

Stop doing this!! Why don't you just emasculate yourself --- rather than mislead people?!

People and situations I want to pray for this week: