

Don't Fall From Grace

Galatians 5:1-12

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We come to the third and last section of Paul's letter to the Galatians. In Galatians 1 and 2, Paul defended the gospel of God's grace—it was personal. In Galatians 3 and 4, Paul explained the gospel of grace—it was doctrinal. Tonight we begin Galatians 5 and 6 where Paul applies the gospel of grace. There are three main divisions in these six chapters of Galatians. Chapters 1 and 2, gospel of grace defended; chapters 3 and 4, the gospel of grace explained or doctrinal; and then chapters 5 and 6 are God's grace in living. They are practical as he applies the doctrine of the gospel of God's grace.

Why was Paul defending, applying, and explaining the gospel of God's grace? The answer is that in the churches of Galatia false teachers known as Judaizers had entered into the churches of Galatia telling the Gentile believers that you cannot be saved unless you become Jews. They were Judaizing (that's how we get that term "Judaizing") Gentile believers. They were telling them that you have to be circumcised, you have to keep the law of Moses, you have to follow dietary laws, you have to worship on certain holy days, you have to follow these rules and regulations in order to be saved. It wasn't just that we should keep God's moral law as believers, it was you cannot be saved—you cannot be a Christian, you can't go to heaven—unless you do these things. They were actually denying the gospel of God's grace by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Paul does what we call a very, very stern epistle which sets forth the argument that we're saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Scholars call it a polemical argument. That means a very confrontational and a very stern argument where he gets in their face and argues with them that the gospel of grace is the only way that we can be saved; that if those are teaching that we can be saved by being Judaized, then they are teaching false doctrine. It comes to meet us today with, "You can't be a Christian unless you're baptized," or "You can't be a Christian unless you take Communion," or "You can't be a Christian unless you go to our church," or "You can't be a Christian unless you follow these rules and regulations and do these things. You gotta go through catechism and you gotta be initiated into our group." They have their rules and regulations. This is what's called legalism, meaning man-made standards in order to be saved and in order to be considered righteous.

The Judaizers were, no doubt, saying this about Paul...and we haven't really touched on this yet. We get it tonight in this practical section. They were actually saying that Paul was kind of flip-flopping in that once in a while he would preach circumcision when he was with the Jews, and when he was with the Gentiles, he wouldn't preach circumcision. They were saying that he was kind of a religious or spiritual chameleon—he just adapts to whatever situations he's in. This was the accusation they were bringing against Paul, that he was changing his doctrine; so Paul is going to defend the doctrine of grace again in Galatians 5:1-12 as he transitions into the practical.

The first five verses of the practical section are somewhat still doctrinal as well as practical. Beginning in Galatians 5:13, it really gets practical and applicable on how we live by the Spirit, love other people, and we serve others. We're not to practice license, we're not to practice legalism, we're to live in liberty—walking in the Spirit, loving other people, serving other people, and bringing glory to God by the way that we live.

In these first twelve verses, Paul deals with the idea of the liberty we have in Christ. Look at Galatians 5:1 real quickly. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Then, glance with me quickly at verse 13. He says, "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh," and here's the second half of the chapter's theme, "but by love serve one another." Then, he goes on to talk about the Holy Spirit, and it becomes the Spirit chapter of the book of Galatians, how that love is produced by His Spirit—it's called the fruit of the Spirit—and we're to lovingly serve others for the glory of God. So, we're to, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty," we're to not use our liberty for occasion to serve the flesh but out of love we should serve one another, verse 13.

The gospel of God's grace frees us from legalism and license and allows us to live in liberty. If I were doing a chart on the screen (which I did not do a chart), you would have in the middle "Liberty," off to the left you would have, "Legalism," and off to the right you would have, "Liberty," on the other side. This is also known as license. License means that since we're saved by God's grace and forgiven by God's grace, and we're in Christ, then now we can be free in Christ to live however we want. "If I want to go out and sin and disobey God, I'm saved, I'm forgiven, I'm going to heaven, I'm free in Christ, and I'm going to live however I want to live." That's called license, and those are the Libertines. They are with us still today. They are Christians that are what's also known as (I'm just giving you these terms so that when you run into them you'll be aware) Antinomianism. That means they are against the law. They are opposing anything that has any standards of righteousness. It's kind of a hyper-grace kind of a concept that, "We can live however we want, we're under grace." Certainly, God's grace is not a license to sin. God doesn't save us to sin, which will take us back into bondage, God saves us to live in liberty. Amen? That's the theme of these twelve verses. Stand fast in that liberty. Christ has set you free, "and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage," the flesh and the law.

In verses 1-12, Paul explains what the believers lose when they turn from God's grace to legalism, and we find he uses three pictures. If you're taking notes, you can write them down. He uses three pictures of what we lose as believers if we turn from God's grace and go back into legalism. The first is the picture of a slave under a yoke, and the idea is that we can lose our liberty in Christ and go back into bondage. That's seen in verse 1. Paul says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," notice that past tense there. The moment you were converted, you were born again, you were set free in Christ, "and be not entangled again," that's the bondage, the servanthood, "with the yoke of bondage."

There are two commandments given in verse 1—one is positive and the other is negative. The positive is in verse 1 where Paul says, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm,

then.” I was reading that from the NIV, and I did it intentionally. Maybe some of you have the New International Version or a modern version or a New Living Translation. This statement here in verse 1 in the King James translation has, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free,” it’s a little ambiguous. It’s not as clear as it should be. What it’s actually saying, and what it means to communicate, is that Christ has set you free for a purpose. Do you know what that purpose is? To live in freedom. The reason He set us free is so that we will be free. It’s kind of like, “Duh! What else would He do?” But that’s what that statement is actually saying. This would actually be the way it’s translated, I like the NIV, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then.” It is because of freedom that He’s freed us. He freed us so that we could live in freedom, not so that we can be going back into bondage, which is what happens if I try to live in legalism and I try to follow that path; or if I go to the other side of the spectrum and try to live in license, then I’ll also go back into bondage, like the sin that I was living in before Christ set us free.

Literally, Paul commands them, this is an imperative, “Stand,” which literally means to take a stand and to keep on standing. In the Greek tense, it’s stand; and it means to resist legalism, resist license, and to keep standing. Don’t be waffling. Don’t falter. Don’t waver or fall. “Stand,” and notice it’s “the liberty.” He doesn’t just say, “Stand in liberty,” it’s a specific kind of liberty. It’s the liberty that Christ brings, and the only true liberty is the liberty that Christ brings. Amen? Whom the Son sets free, is free indeed. In John 8:36, Jesus said, “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” The sad and tragic thing is that people can experience the rebirth, they can be saved, and then they can come under the influence of false teachers who lead them either into legalism or into license, and both of them will take you back into bondage. So, Christ has set you free, go on living in the freedom that Christ has brought into your life. He’s freed us from sin, He’s freed us from self, He’s freed us from Satan, and He’s freed us from the law; so stand strong in that freedom.

In verse 1, it took place, I believe, at the moment you were born again. This is one of the blessings of the believer. You were actually redeemed. Now the word “redeemed” means that He bought us and not only bought us but it means He took us out of the slave market and set us free. If He went into the slave market, we were slaves to sin, He bought us; and the price that He paid to buy us was His own precious blood that He shed upon the cross. Again, we have the cross and His redemptive blood. Then, He takes us out of the slave market of sin, out of the condemnation of law, and sets us free. Paul says, “Look, if you follow these false teachers, you’re going to be a slave again. You’re going to go back into bondage, so stand in the liberty where you have been set free.”

Notice the negative command now, too. He says in verse 1, “...be not,” so the positive, “Stand fast,” and the negative, “...be not entangled again,” and he uses another imagery of a yoke in the idea of bondage. A yoke was a binding device that they would use to put two oxen or two cattle together and hook to a plow to plow their fields. It spoke of a heavy, binding device. He actually says, “Don’t go back to that legalistic lifestyle trying to think that you can be saved by keeping the law or sanctified by keeping rituals or rites because that’s just going to lead you back into a yoke of bondage.”

It's interesting that when Peter was dealing with the problem in Acts 15, as well as Paul and the other apostles, as to what the Gentiles' relationship would be to the law, Peter stood up in this meeting that they had with Jews and Gentiles and said, "Why should we as Jews put a yoke," and he uses the same imagery, "of bondage upon the neck of the Gentiles which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?" It's kind of like, "Why are we going to make them keep the law, become Jewish in order to be saved, when we and our fathers were never really able to bear that?" I think of Jesus' use of this imagery as well when He gave that beautiful promise when He said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden...Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly...and ye shall find rest unto your souls." No doubt, Jesus is actually uttering that promise to people that were into the heavy yoke of legalism. The religious leaders of the Jews had put them under all these rites and rituals and laws, and no one could keep them. It was impossible. It was like a heavy burden, a heavy yoke, so Jesus said, "Come to Me if you're weary, heavy laden. Take My yoke, it's light, and I will set you free." What a beautiful picture that is! The first danger of falling into legalism is that you go back into slavery and lose your liberty.

Here's the second picture Paul gives and tells of the danger is that of a debtor. He tells us if we go back to the law, we will lose our wealth that we have in Christ, verses 2-6. He says, "Behold, I Paul say unto you," that's an expression that Paul would commonly use. It's believed, and I think rightfully so, that he uses that statement, "I Paul say unto you," when he really wants to get heavy and lay something down very important. Paul was an apostle, and he's in a sense kind of reminding them that, "I'm the apostle speaking with apostolic authority. I want to tell you something very important." He says, "...if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." This is some radical stuff here, and I think it kind of goes right over our head. We don't realize how radical it really is.

I hope I can kind of unpack it a little bit for you and shed some light on it. If you go back and perform the rite of circumcision, then basically you are actually saying no to Christ. You're saying no to God's grace, and no to your only hope of salvation, "Christ shall profit you nothing." I don't know about you, but I want Christ to profit me all I can. I need all of Jesus and all that He's provided and all He can do for me! Amen? But I don't want to try to do something to replace Him with my own works. Now, circumcision, let me say this before I maybe go on and forget about it, was more than just a physical rite because you say, "Well, what's the big deal? It's just a little physical rite and ritual. What does it really matter?" Paul is arguing against it because it also represented a system and a method of salvation which actually speaks of human effort and saved by your own works. That's big. It wasn't just, "Oh, it doesn't really matter. It's just a little rite. What's the big deal?" No. It represents a system of saving yourself. You either save yourself, which you cannot do no more than pull yourself up by your own bootstraps, or Christ saves you—which He can and He's the only One who can. Paul says it's very important that you don't go back to these rites and rituals because then Christ will profit you nothing. I'm going to come back to that.

Verse 3, Paul says, "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law," you can't pick and choose which portions of the law you want to obey, you

have to obey all of it. "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law," or literally, you're trying in self effort to be saved by your good works, "ye are fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit," now he speaks about the blessings of the true believers and uses that "we" there because Paul is talking about himself and the true believers in Galatia, "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

There are two sections in verses 2-6. The first is in verses 2-4. I want you to see it. Paul points out the problems of trying to mix law and grace. Lots of people try to do that still today. They try to combine law and grace. I want you to note three things that you will lose if you try to combine law and grace. First of all, "Christ shall profit you nothing," we saw there in verse 2. "... if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing," because it represents a system of salvation by good works. This is why the gospel of God's grace is so very important. When Jude says, in his little one-chapter epistle, "...earnestly contend," that phrase actually means fight with all you've got, "for the faith which was once," and for all, "delivered unto the saints," because if you get the gospel wrong, then you have salvation wrong; and it can damn your souls to hell. Remember what Paul said in Galatians 1, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed," anathema, which means cursed to the lowest hell. Paul takes this very, very seriously.

Write this down, "Christ shall profit you nothing." Before Christ, we were spiritually dead and bankrupt. At our conversion, we became rich in Christ. Read Ephesians 1 where it says that in Christ we're, "...blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Jesus. We were chosen by God the Father, redeemed by God the Son, we were sealed by God the Holy Spirit. In chapter 1, Paul talks about all the blessings that are for all believers because they're in Christ. Do you want to lose that? Do you want to become spiritually bankrupt again?

I believe that Paul is, in context, talking to people who have not really been saved and are in danger of substituting faith in Christ for good works. It's a very dangerous thing because their souls will be damned and lost. There are a lot of religious systems today under the label of Christianity that have salvation by rites, works, and rituals—catechism, confirmation, the sacraments, baptism—all of the things that they combine to say, "You must do these in order to get to heaven," when the Bible actually says Christ did it all on the cross, and His work is finished. Amen? All that's left for us to do is open our hearts and hands by faith and receive that finished work of salvation that Christ has given to us. On the cross, Jesus paid it all.

Write down Colossians 2:10 and kind of spend some time in that verse meditating on it. Paul says, "And ye," as a believer, "are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." That word "complete" in Colossians 2:10 is a nautical term. It means you're shipshape, fully rigged, and ready to sail; so you don't need circumcision, baptism, all these rites and rituals because you're complete in Christ and you have salvation. What more do you need?

Notice the second thing that we lose if we try to mix law and grace. You become "...a debtor to

do the whole law,” this is that imagery of becoming a debtor or you’re bankrupt and have nothing. Notice verse 3. “For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.” When he talks about fallen from grace, in just a minute, he talks about you’ve fallen from the sphere of grace; but here, you’re living in the sphere of law, and you’re a debtor to the entire law. Do you know that if you’re going to live under law, you’re going to have to keep it all? You can’t pick and choose and say, “Well, I’ll take a little of that, and a little of that, and a little of this.” It’s like a smorgasbord or something like that—when you go to a restaurant and kind of pick what you want to eat. You try to decide what is going to be best and kind of pick and choose. You can’t do that with the law of God. Either you are keeping God’s law entirely or you are saved by God’s grace.

There’s no way anyone can keep God’s law. For one thing, God also looks at our attitudes. Remember when Jesus said, “If you look lustfully after someone, you can actually commit adultery in your heart. If you have anger and hatred towards somebody,” the Bible says, “Thou shalt not murder.” You say, “I’ve never murdered anybody.” If you’ve driven the freeways in California, you’ve murdered somebody. It’s like the little boy that said, “Mommy, why when Daddy drives, all the idiots come out? There are never any idiots on the highway when Mommy drives.” If you have anger in your heart, you’ve committed murder. God looks at the heart. We’ve all fallen short of God’s standards. You can’t pick and choose the laws you want to keep. Someone used the illustration of someone driving their car and they run a red light. The policeman pulls them over, and the driver says, “Officer, I know I ran the red light, but, you know, I’ve never committed adultery,” I don’t recommend you try to use this to get out of a ticket, “I’ve never robbed a bank. I’ve never murdered anyone. I’ve never done any of those horrible things. Why are you going to ticket me because I’ve run the red light?”

I shouldn’t confess this, but I thought about this today. When I was in South Carolina several weeks ago, I don’t know what it was, the rent-a-car, just jet lagged, or whatever it was. I was convinced that their yellow lights are shorter than our yellow lights. About every other intersection, all weekend that I was there, I was running a red light. It’s a miracle that Pastor Miller wasn’t put in jail in South Carolina. I’m thinking, Man, those yellow lights are so short and quick. In California, they last longer than they do here. I went through so many red lights, it was crazy. Thank God I didn’t get caught. I did confess my sin, and God has forgiven me, 1 John 1:9.

You can’t, you know, “Well, I know I ran a red light, but I haven’t done this and I haven’t done that.” Whoever breaks one law has broken the whole law. You’re a law breaker. How many links in the chain does it take to break the chain? Just one link, and so we are condemned by our own sin. We become a debtor to the law.

The third thing, verse 4, is that we also fall from grace. This is the phrase that really concerns a lot of people and confuses many. What does it mean to fall from grace? I don’t know that I can say with absolute certainty, there’s three or four different interpretations of this concept, but what I can say with certainty, at least I am firmly convinced, is that he’s not saying that you can lose your salvation. That’s not the topic of the text. That’s out of context with the whole tenor of

the verse that is being written here to the Galatians. He's talking about falling into legalism and trusting legalism to be saved, which cannot save. He's talking about people who aren't saved, who are trying to be saved by their own works. He's not talking about people who are saved that will be lost if they don't continue in God's grace. I believe that once you've been regenerated, once you've been born again, that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of promise and that you cannot be unregenerated, you cannot be separated, from the love of God.

What I do think that Paul most likely is saying here is that you fall from the sphere of grace and the concept of living in grace. First, he's actually speaking to nonbelievers that instead of trusting Christ for salvation, would trust circumcision and their own good works, and they fall from grace. If he's talking to a believer, he's saying that you are going into legalism and you're going to live in bondage rather than the liberty where Christ has set you free, which is most likely what Paul is referring there to. He's not saying you lose your salvation. He says you're not living anymore in the sphere of grace. We're saved by grace, we're sustained by grace, everything we do is the grace of God, and that's how we're to live or else we can fall from grace and go back into bondage and become spiritual debtors and not be able to enjoy the benefits and the blessings of our salvation and growing in sanctification in likeness to Christ.

Paul closes, verses 5-6, with these two quick privileges of the true believer who trusts Christ by faith and relies on the Holy Spirit. The first one is the "hope of righteousness," verse 5, and the second one is faith that produces love. He says, "For we through the Spirit," and he's going to have a lot to say about the Holy Spirit in the next section, but continues, "wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." I believe that Paul is talking about the third phase of our salvation known as glorification, when we get to heaven. He's not talking about justification, which is by faith, he's talking about glorification—that's when we get to go to heaven, and it's the completion of our salvation. When he says that by the Holy Spirit's power, we're waiting for the hope of righteousness which comes to us because of our faith in Jesus Christ, he's actually saying that we live by faith, and we look by faith, to be finally and fully, completely redeemed and glorified and in the presence of the Lord, and we stand before the throne in Him complete.

I do want you to note in verse 5, Paul doesn't say that we work for the hope of righteousness by faith, but "...wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." That hope is our future hope of being in heaven with Christ. It comes to us by faith in Christ, and it's confirmed, witnessed to us, by the Spirit of Christ. In verse 6, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Saving faith produces love. If you have truly been saved by faith, and you have God's Holy Spirit living in you, you will actually produce the fruit of the Spirit, the love the Spirit brings. We're going to get that as we come to the end of the chapter of Galatians 5. Basically, he's saying that we are true believers, we have a hope of one day being in heaven, we wait in the power of the Spirit by faith for that to happen, not by working or performing rites or rituals, and that our faith will actually produce love, which is the work of the Holy Spirit. It's a way of saying, at the end of verse 6, that we work out our own salvation or that we bring it to completion, that is, living by faith, producing works, not to save us, but as a result.

The last, and third, section, verses 7-12, we see the picture or the image of a runner. If you try to mix law and grace, or you go back to legalism, you'll lose your direction. You actually fall out of the race. He says, "Ye did run well," here's the image of a race, "who did hinder you," which means they cut in front of you and knocked you out of your lane, "that ye should not obey the truth? 8 This persuasion," and in the context here, this is a reference to this teaching, this doctrine that comes from the false teachers, "cometh not of him that calleth you," in other words it's not from God. Verse 9, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you," referring to the false teachers, "shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. 11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. 12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you." I'm not going to tarry on these verses because we'll come back to them in a couple of weeks when we pick up our study in Galatians.

I want you to note these six dangers of the false teachers in this text. In verse 7, they hinder you; in verse 8, they persuade you by their false teachings; in verse 9, they're corrupting you; in verse 10, they're troubling you; in verse 11, they are persecuting Paul; and in verse 12, they're unsettling you. Those are the influences that the false teachers had upon the believers that were there in Galatia and maybe even some Gentiles who were not yet saved and were not true believers.

Notice in verse 7, real quickly, he says, "...who did hinder you," these false teachers, these Judaizers, have knocked you out of your lane. I love this expression in verse 7. Paul loved to draw analogy from the athletic realm. In Greece they had the Greek athletic games. They had running and would run in a race. They had a lane that they would run in, like racing today on a track. He says, "These teachers are like someone who has cut into your lane and knocked you out of your lane and cut you out of the race, preventing you from running well." They, "...hinder you," that phrase literally means they cut you off, they cut into your lane and disqualified you from running the race because you stepped out of your lane as well. They hindered them. This legalism hinders these believers.

Secondly, verse 8, they seek to persuade you. "This persuasion," this teaching, this doctrine, it is not from God. If it doesn't align with Scripture, if it's not the true gospel, it's pretty simple, it's not from God. It's not God's Word. For the believer, the authority lies in the Scriptures. It sounds so elementary and so basic to me, I chuckle a little bit, yet it's so sad that so many believers, so many spiritual leaders, so many churches today do not look to the Bible for their source of authority. They go everywhere else—church tradition, experience, intellect, culture, you name it—but they don't turn to the authority of God's Word because they don't have a high view of Scripture that it's the inerrant, infallible, Word of God, that it's sufficient and it's clear for us today. All that we believe and all that we practice must be clearly founded on God's Word or else we're not really following God, hearing from God, or doing the will of God. We need to make sure that we're biblical. There is nothing more important for you as a Christian than to be biblical in your thoughts and in your view of life, to have a Christian world view that is filtered through the lens of Scripture because this persuasion, this doctrine, this teaching, is not from God, verse 8, "...not of him that calleth you."

Thirdly, verse 9, it was corrupting them. Paul says, "Don't you know that, 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.'" He uses another imagery here that we're not that familiar with. In Judaism, leaven...which by the way was a little piece of fermented dough. It would be what we call yeast today. It was a little piece of fermented dough that they would actually put in the bread when they baked it to soften it and cause it to rise. It was a symbol in the Bible of evil, that's why in the Passover their bread was unleavened. They would take the leaven out of their bread, and even in some of the offerings that did include leaven, it was just a reminder of man's sin and that the blood of Christ would forgive and cleanse it. Leaven, in this case and in other cases of Scripture, is a reference to evil. "Don't you know that they're influencing you in a sinful, evil way?"

It has another application as well. Leaven is a small little piece of yeast that influences a whole loaf of bread and causes it to rise. It's used as a picture of something—listen carefully—that starts small and grows. You say, "Okay, I'm with you pastor. What's the big deal?" False doctrine in a church may start small, but it will grow. We can't compromise. We have to stand on truth. We cannot have "peace at any price." Purity can only come first, then unity. In a church, in your life, in your own personal, private life, if you compromise, and you make allowance for leaven—evil or lack of truth or not doctrinally sound thoughts, biblically true ideas and doctrines—it'll grow. It won't stay dormant. It won't stay alone. It will influence you. It'll end up in some kind of wicked behavior or greater doctrinal error or deviancy. It will end up in total apostasy, so you have to purge out the leaven. It's so very important.

A lot of churches don't want to deal with that kind of a thing, "Oh, it's okay. Just leave it alone. We don't care. You can believe whatever you want to believe. Let's just all hold hands and sing "Kumbaya," and love one another and all get along." We are to love each other but we are to, in love, speak the truth. Amen? Speak the truth in love, not to compromise truth for the sake of unity. Don't do it in your personal life, don't do it in your marriage, don't do it in your family, don't do it on the job, don't do it in the church. Have a standard of holiness and base it on God's Word. They were being corrupted.

Fourthly, they were troubled. This speaks of mentally and spiritually. False doctrine will trouble and upset you, knock you off balance. In verse 11, they were persecuting Paul. He says, "And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision," this is the clear reference where evidently the Judaizers that were saying that Paul was a chameleon and that he would sometimes preach circumcision when it was convenient and the grace of God when it was convenient. When he was with the Gentiles, he's preaching God's grace alone; when he's with the Jews, he's preaching circumcision. He's changing his doctrine.

There are a lot of people that do that same thing today. They'll change their doctrine to placate to people they want to win instead of taking a stand for truth. Paul says, "Okay, these guys say that I am preaching circumcision, here's the question, "...why do I yet suffer persecution?" Paul says, "Then why are they persecuting me?" He says, "The answer is because I'm preaching the cross, the finished, all sufficient work of Christ on the cross," grace alone, faith alone, in Christ alone, and that's an offense to the proud, religious heart of man. The cross is an offense to the

religious man—at least a proper understanding of the cross—because it annihilates pride. It humbles us to realize, I can't save myself. I have to come naked, empty-handed, and trust in Christ alone. Paul says, "I'm being persecuted because I preach the cross."

In closing, notice verse 12, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." This is Paul's polemic argument. He's very stern, very in your face, and we can't be clear on what Paul means here, but it could mean that he's saying, "I hope that they just get out of the church, that they cut themselves off from their relationship to you." Many biblical scholars feel that it's a play on words, and that it's actually saying they should mutilate themselves, "They run around with their knives wanting to circumcise all these Gentiles, they ought to take it to themselves and cut themselves off." If you don't believe me, you can research it yourself and check it out. It's like, "Get down, Paul the Apostle." He's like really, really smoking hot on this issue. He says, "I wish they would mutilate themselves who trouble you."

The word "trouble" there means unsettle you. The word was actually used. It's a different word from "trouble" in verse 10. The word "trouble" in verse 12 was used of unsettling someone or literally to drive someone from his house, to run them out of town, to drive them out of their house, so they are unsettling you.

Let me wrap this up. I've gone longer than I wanted to tonight. How do we stand fast in our liberty in Christ? We're going to see this all the way through the rest of the book of Galatians, but I wanted to summarize it in closing. There are three things. Write them down. First, depend on the grace of God. How do you stand in the liberty where Christ has set you free and not slip into legalism or license? You constantly live a life of dependence upon God's grace.

Secondly, you yield to the Spirit of God. You live in dependence upon the grace of God, which is tied in with the idea of living in dependence upon the Spirit of God. Thirdly, you live for the glory of God. You might throw in there that you live to serve others, but that's what it means to live in dependence on the Spirit of God, for the glory of God. You depend on God's grace, yield to God's Spirit, and you live for God's glory remembering the cross of Christ is the finished work. There's no need to look for Moses or the law to finish what Jesus Christ accomplished. When He died on the cross He said, "It is finished." He didn't say, "Wait for Moses to come and finish the job." "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," so don't lose your liberty and become a slave, don't lose your wealth and go back into debt, don't lose your direction and keep running the race that God has set before you. Let's pray.