

STAND FAST IN LIBERTY

INTRODUCTION: Paul begins this section by letting the Galatians know the importance of remaining firm in the freedom they have found in Christ. He emphasizes the dangers of returning to the law and the requirement to keep the entire law if they endeavor to keep one point of the law. He concludes by stating that the true nature of the gospel is to live by faith which works through love.

Galatians 5:1-6

I. THE CALL TO STAND FIRM IN FREEDOM v.1

A. Christ is the one who has set us free from the yoke of bondage.

1. Jesus truly is the author of our freedom. *Hebrews 12:1-2, Matthew 23:4*
2. Believers are set free specifically for the sake of enjoying and living in that freedom. *1 Peter 1:8-9*
3. Liberty is derived from the Greek word *eleutheros* which means "freedom from restraint and obligation". *Matthew 17:24-27*

B. He tells the believers to stand firm in that freedom.

1. Freedom is not passive as it requires a vigorous, daily commitment to guard one's position in grace.
2. Believers must resist being swayed by false teachings or personal tendencies toward legalism. *Galatians 3:3*
3. To be "entangled in" means to bring yourself into a place of accusation. *Luke 11:53-54*

C. The believers are to reject the yoke of bondage.

1. The “yoke” refers to the burdensome system of trying to earn salvation through the law or human effort. *2 Corinthians 1:20*
2. Paul warns that returning to the old religious rules is a return to a life of imprisonment that Christ has already abolished.
Ephesians 2:14-15
3. Remember, we are to forcefully reject adherence to the law, just as the bondswoman was to be cast out. *Galatians 4:30*

II. THE DANGERS OF RETURNING TO THE LAW vv.2-4

A. Accepting legalistic requirements like circumcision makes Christ of no value.

1. Paul uses his own authority to underscore the gravity of the situation.
2. He puts forth that if adherence to the law brings righteousness, then they don't need Jesus. *John 14:6*
3. One cannot trust both the work of Christ and human ritual.

B. Choosing one part of the law as a requirement for salvation binds a person to keep the entire law perfectly. v.3

1. Paul tells them they cannot pick and choose parts of the Mosaic law. *Leviticus 19:19*
2. Since no human can keep the entire law perfectly, this path leads only to failure and condemnation. *Revelation 12:11-12*

3. Failing in one point of the law is the same as failing in the entirety of the law. *Matthew 5:48*

C. Attempting to be justified by the law results in being “alienated from Christ” and falling from grace. v.4

1. Deciding to adhere to the law, means you have decided to remove yourself from grace.

2. This is an abandonment of God’s free gift of salvation in favor of human achievement.

3. Paul makes it clear that grace and law are opposing methods of relating to God.

III. THE NATURE OF TRUE GOSPEL LIVING vv.5-6

A. Believers stand in faith for the “hope of righteousness” through the power of the Holy Spirit rather than human effort. v.5

1. A true walk with Jesus is not achieved by human effort or adherence to the law, but it is initiated and sustained by the Holy Spirit. *2 Corinthians 3:7-8*

2. One of the main functions of the Holy Spirit for the believer is that He reminds us of our righteousness. *John 16:8-11*

3. “Eagerly wait” comes from the Greek word *apekdechomai* which means to expect fully.

B. In Christ Jesus, external rituals such as circumcision hold no spiritual value. v.6

1. Paul emphasizes that there is no spiritual weight given to the one who is circumcised or not circumcised.
2. External signs, traditions, or cultural backgrounds count for nothing in terms of achieving a right standing with God.
Colossians 2:8
3. This highlights that the era of relying on Mosaic rituals for justification has been completely ended by Christ. *Romans 10:4*

C. The definitive mark of the Christian life is when true faith naturally produces loving action. v.6

1. Paul identifies the single most important characteristic of the Christian life, which is faith working through love. *John 13:35*
2. Genuine saving faith is not a passive mental agreement, but is active or energized, naturally producing outward deeds.
1 John 3:16-18
3. The ultimate proof of a relationship with Christ is a life defined by agape love – serving others as a response to God's grace.

CONCLUSION: Paul encourages the Galatians to remain firm and has further made the point that it's all about what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. The blessing for us is the presence of the Holy Spirit and the outflow of God's love as He flows through us.