

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Imagine being a person who has driven for 40 years –

You are a good driver.

Never speeds, always comes to a complete stop, turns his blinker every time you are going to change lanes or make a turn.

You don't drive in the passing lane on I19 and have cars pass you on the right.

One day, you are running late to work and you try to make up a little time and then you here the sirens behind you.

The police officer approaches your car and tells you that he clocked you going 3 miles over the speed limit in a school zone.

You respond to the officer by explaining to him that you have been an excellent driver for 40 years and you have kept the rules but admit that you did fail this one time.

You then continue to plead your case by telling him that you are a good spouse, that you contribute to charity, you serve in your church, you don't cheat on your taxes and you don't kick your dog.

The officer patiently listens to your story and then he responds – just sign the ticket.

The law was broken – you must now pay the consequences.

This same argument will be made by many legalists on judgment day when they stand in front of God Almighty.

They will attempt to point out all they had done –

“I tried to follow the rules”

“I was good”

and God will point out every time they failed to keep the law.

They sought to be justified by works and they will fail because they were unable to keep the entire law.

They fell out of grace when they abandoned God’s grace.

This morning, we are continuing our study through the book of Galatians.

Paul continues to be adamant in his letter to the churches in the Galatia region that they must turn from legalism and return to the gospel of grace.

Let’s pray...

[Gal 5:7-15 NKJV] 7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8

This persuasion does not [come] from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven

leavens the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will

have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. 12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off! 13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not [use] liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Once again, Paul is writing this letter in response to these Judaizers / these legalist that had infiltrated the churches in the Galatia region.

They started to add to what Jesus Christ did on the cross.

"You accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior – good. But in order to be truly saved you first have to become a Jew.

You have to be circumcised and start adhering to the rules"

But returning to adhering to the 600 laws was a burden to the people.

Paul in his writing had been painting this picture that returning to the law was the same as returning to bondage – the same as returning to slavery - having to carry that burdensome yoke of making sure that we keep the list of do's and don'ts.

However, the gospel of grace has given us liberty.

Liberty from having to adhere to rules in order to be saved –

Liberty from condemnation –

And also, the gospel of grace gives us liberty from sin itself.

You see, one of the arguments that these Judaizers were making was that grace alone gives the believer a license to sin – if you are not following a list of rules, you can do whatever you want.

You see, a license to sin and legalism are polar opposites from each other right.

One says you do what you want and the other one is a list of do's and don'ts.

However, that is not the case church, when we truly understand what grace is – that it is not about what we do but what Jesus did, and we respond to that grace – we will have liberty over sin.

That is what Paul's focus is here in chapter 5.

Let's look at our text again.

[Gal 5:7 NKJV] 7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

Paul describes the Christian life as a race. Not as a sprint – but more of a marathon.

When Paul first came to the region of Galatia and introduced the gospel of grace to them, initially they ran well.

They started out good as they responded to the gospel of grace.

Everything was well as long as they obeyed the truth.

Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 9,

Because Paul uses this illustration of running over and over again in his epistles.

[1Co 9:24-27 NKJV] 24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain [it]. 25 And everyone who competes [for the prize] is temperate in all things. Now they [do it] to obtain a perishable crown, but we [for] an imperishable [crown]. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as [one who] beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring [it] into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

In the same way that he wrote to the churches in Galatia, he writes to the church in Corinth that our Christian walk is like a race.

And one of the things that he point out here in 1 Corinthians is the necessity to condition ourselves to be able to run the race.

I cannot wake up one morning and decide to run a marathon without conditioning my body first.

I would have to lose a few pounds.

I would have to watch what I eat – lay off the cheese burgers for a while.

I would have to endure training to condition my muscles.

Without conditioning, my chances of finishing the race are going to be slim.

And for the believer, this conditioning involves removing things in our lives that will hinder our ability to run the race.

Sin in our lives is the added weight we attempt to run the race with.

And sin will hinder our chances of completing the race.

We see example after example of people in the scriptures that started well and but couldn't finish.

When we studied 1 Samuel – we saw the life of King Saul – how did he start when he was anointed king? he started well.

He was humble - initially.

But then pride and envy got to him and it derailed his walk with God.

He was more concerned with what the people thought of him than he was being obedient to the word of God.

Demas, one of the individuals that Paul shared the gospel with.

Paul says that Demas was one of his fellow laborers in Philemon 1:24

He started well.

Turn with me to 2 Timothy 4,

[2Ti 4:10 NKJV] 10 for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica--Crescens for Galatia, Titus for Dalmatia.

Once again, Demas didn't finish the race – something caused him to drop out. The love of the world.

The churches in the Galatia region were following in the footsteps of Saul and Demas – they started well but something hindered them. Something held them back.

And the thing that hindered them back was bad doctrine.

The word that is used here for hindered is a military term where the roads are blocked or broken up in order to prevent someone from continuing.

The Galatians were doing well until someone came in and broke up the path they were on.

That is what the Judaizers were doing when they came in to the churches and started preaching legalism.

These Christians were so caught up in their (legalist) bad doctrine that they were no longer being obedient to what the truth says.

[Gal 5:8 NKJV] 8 This persuasion does not [come] from Him who calls you.

The teaching that these Judaizers were proclaiming – legalism - it did not come from Jesus.

Church, Jesus doesn't give us bad doctrine!

If someone comes into the church and receives a revelation that goes contrary to God's word, that person did not receive it from God!

We are to test the spirits!

We are to judge the prophets!

Everything that is spoken – we are to verify against the word of God.

That is why we bring our bibles – don't take my word for it.

God calls us to liberty not legalism

God calls us to faith not works

And God calls us to Jesus not the law

[Gal 5:9 NKJV] 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

When we think of leaven we tend to think of yeast that is used in order to make bread or dough.

It comes in a little package and you add it to warm water and you get a nice spongy bread or pizza dough.

If you don't use leaven you are going to get crackers.

The thing about leaven is that it doesn't take a lot of it to affect the entire batch.

Leaven in scripture is almost always in reference to sin or corruption.

The shortest parable that Jesus told (Matthew 13:33) the parable of the leaven spoke of the corruption or impurity that was going to plague the church.

Turn with me to 1 Cor 5,

[1Co 5:1-8 NKJV] 1 It is actually reported [that there is] sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. 6 Your glorying [is] not good. **Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.**

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth.

One of the problems with the church in Corinth was that they were not addressing sin within the church.

They were pretty much looking the other way –

And Paul writes the letter to exhort them to address the sin much in the same way he is exhorting the churches in Galatia.

You see, if you don't deal with open, blatant, sin, then it will start to spread from one person to another.

In Corinth it was this man sleeping with his step mother. In Galatia it was these Judaizers that were preaching heresies.

If the churches in Galatia did not stop the bad doctrine from being preached, it was simply going to continue to be spread throughout the church and the region.

It was a cancer that had to be stopped.

[Gal 5:10 NKJV] 10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

What Paul is saying here in verse 10 is that he knows that they will do the right thing.

Paul's confidence is in the Lord, to reveal this to the Galatians by His Holy Spirit.

Paul's confidence is that they will see these Judaizers for what they are – leaven among the wheat.

Paul's confidence is that these offenders would not escape the judgment of God for what they have done.

God's word is very clear that those who teach false doctrine will be judged severely.

[Jas 3:1 NKJV] 1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

Church, this is why we keep referencing other bible verses in our studies.

Always remember that the best way to study the bible is using the bible itself.

[Gal 5:11 NKJV] 11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.

As these Judaizers were preaching their heresies, one of the things they were telling the churches in Galatia was that Paul was also teaching that they still needed to be circumcised.

And they could have even pointed to Paul circumcising Timothy – as a means of making their argument stronger.

However, Paul wasn't preaching circumcision.

I made the point a few weeks ago that the only reason that Paul circumcised Timothy was that Timothy was already half Jewish.

It was a cultural thing in order so that Timothy would be allowed in the synagogues since Jews didn't mingle with the gentiles.

Because Timothy wasn't circumcised, it would have hindered them in speaking to the Jews.

And what Paul is saying here is – if they claim that I am preaching circumcision – then, why are these same Judaizers still persecuting me.

The fact that they were still persecuting Paul contradicts their false claim against Paul.

I asked you to make a note of the offense of the cross.

Keep in mind that Paul is being persecuted for preaching the gospel.

You would think that to preach something that is freely available to all people would be accepted, but it is not.

You see, the cross offends people.

People would rather hear a message about a salvation by works system than to hear a message about Jesus and the cross and how He is the only way.

And the reason that the cross is so offensive – especially to legalists is that it crushes human pride.

It does away with the religion of human achievement.

For the Judaizers, the cross is a stumbling block because it wiped out the idea that somehow they were saved by adhering to the Mosaic Laws.

[Gal 5:12 NKJV] 12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

The word that is used here for cut off is the word for amputate.

And what Paul is telling the churches in Galatia is that he wishes that these Judaizers would simply cut themselves off from the fellowship. That they would just leave the church.

However, Paul uses it here in a bit of irony.

Because for this entire epistle – his focus has been on circumcision, the very ritual that these Judaizers were so proud of.

And the way he writes this here – it almost as if he was saying, these Judaizers are so obsessed with circumcision – the cutting away of the flesh.

I wish they would just go ahead and take it a step further and castrate themselves.

[Gal 5:13 NKJV] 13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not [use] liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

One of Paul's concerns was that freedom from the bondage of legalism would result in returning to another type of bondage –this bondage was the bondage of sin.

Yet Paul taught that when a person came to Jesus Christ, there was a radical change in their nature, and they now had the ability to say no to sin.

[Rom 6:1-4 NKJV] 1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

God put a new nature within us. A nature that no longer has to sin.

Rather than our focus being on fulfilling the lusts of our flesh, we need to turn our focus on serving one another in love.

I think that sometimes the greatest problem I have is ME.

When my focus is too much on ME and what my needs are, I center my life around getting my needs met, and my whole focus is selfish.

But when I focus on others, I'm a lot closer to what God wants me to be like.

[Gal 5:14-15 NKJV] 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, [even] in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Isn't it interesting that Paul has made such a big deal about not being in bondage to the Law, and not trying to please God by trying to keep the Law, and now he turns around and tells us how we can fulfill the Law?

You see, the issue has never been getting rid of the Law, as if the Law were a bad thing.

Paul already told us that the law was a good thing since it pointed to us that we indeed need a savior -

The issue is only that we understand that we can't make God's standards by trying to keep the Law on our own.

But when we place our trust in Him and allow us to be led by the Spirit and not by the flesh, we will no longer follow our sinful nature.

And then Paul gives a warning in verse 15 of the opposite of love.

Infighting among the church

Apparently, due to the influence of the false teachers, the Galatians had started developing factions and bitter strife in the church.

Paul warns them that if they keep up this petty stuff, they're going to ruin the church, especially it's testimony.

Turn with me to 1 Cor 3

[1Co 3:3-4 NKJV] 3 for you are still carnal. For where [there are] envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like [mere] men? 4 For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I [am] of Apollos," are you not carnal?

Divisions and factions/cliques in the church is an evidence of carnality.

Where these divisions exist – most likely there will be gossip and malicious talk.

These divisions originate from the flesh, out of selfishness and pride.

And many times, these divisions occur because some group feels more spiritual if things are done their way –

That church is the definition of legalism.

Let's pray...

To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.



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