

Day 52, Galatians 5

by David Servant

David Servant's sermon on Galatians 5 emphasizes the distinction between legalism and true holiness through faith and grace.

Scripture: Galatians 5:3-4, Galatians 5:6, Galatians 5:13, Galatians 5:16, Galatians 5:24

Topics: "Salvation By Grace", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

David Servant preaches on the issue of circumcision for Gentiles in Galatia, emphasizing Paul's anger towards the teaching that circumcision was essential for salvation. Paul clarifies that adopting the Mosaic Law for salvation means being obligated to keep every aspect perfectly, leading to a yoke of slavery. He distinguishes those who try to earn salvation through their own efforts from those saved by grace and empowered to live holy lives. Paul highlights the importance of faith working through love, the battle between the flesh and the Spirit, and the process of sanctification in believers.

Transcript

Once again we see that the main issue in Galatia was circumcision for Gentiles, mentioned four times in this short chapter. The teaching that circumcision was essential for salvation made Paul quite angry! He wrote, (and I paraphrase 5:12): "If these fellows think that the removal of a little skin is so beneficial, why don't they just go ahead and castrate themselves?"

Paul writes that those Gentiles who do receive circumcision are "under obligation to keep the whole Law" (5:3), the emphasis being on the word whole, meaning not just the moral aspects---but every ritualistic aspect of the Mosaic Law as well. If one adopts the Mosaic Law as his means of salvation, he must keep it all perfectly, or be cursed. That is why Paul refers to it as "a yoke of slavery" (5:1).

Tragically, by twisting Paul's words and ignoring context, some make him say that those who are striving to be holy, or who think that holiness is essential, have "severed themselves from Christ" and "fallen from grace" (5:4). Remember, however, that Paul was addressing those who had believed in Jesus and were reborn, but who were now being circumcised and keeping Jewish rituals, trusting that by doing those things they were earning their salvation. Those, and only those kinds of people, are severing themselves from Christ and falling from grace. They are vastly different from the people who, having believed in Jesus, and knowing that they have been saved by the grace made available through His substitutionary death, are now striving to follow Him obediently by the power of the indwelling Spirit. The former attempts to save himself by his own efforts apart from God's grace, whereas the latter is saved by God's grace, which not

only provides forgiveness, but also the ability to be holy.

All of this is further substantiated by Paul's words in 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love." A living faith, characterized by works, particularly of loving one's neighbor, is what is essential. Moreover, Paul wrote in this same chapter that those who practice the deeds of the flesh will not inherit God's kingdom (5:19-21). Holiness, true holiness, is the fruit of saving faith and the new birth.

Clearly, freedom from the Law of Moses is not to be confused with freedom from holiness: "For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (5:13). Paul also wrote that those who are led by the Spirit are not under the Law of Moses (5:18), but obviously, the Holy Spirit leads people to be holy.

Incidentally, isn't it amazing that so many modern teachers tell us that it is impossible to forfeit salvation or "fall from grace," when Paul writes so plainly in this chapter of the danger of both?

We learn today that born again people are two-natured, and experience an inward battle between evil desires, what Paul refers to as "the flesh," and the inward-dwelling Spirit. Clearly, we decide who wins that battle. There is no magic formula or deep spiritual secret to walking in holiness. We must simply "walk by the Spirit," and when we do, the result is that we "will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (5:16).

Your flesh, or "old nature" as it is sometimes called, left unrestrained, would pull you into immorality, drunkenness, and continual strife. But true believers, "those who belong to Christ...have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (5:24). What is crucified is not yet dead, but is definitely restrained. When someone truly believes in Jesus, he makes an inward commitment to obey Him and resist sin. Although he is still tempted by the old nature, he resists it. Even if he yields, he feels an inward resistance the entire time, and afterwards, a huge sense of condemnation that pulls him towards confession and repentance. All of that is part of the process of sanctification as the Spirit works in us to make us more holy. More evidence of God's amazing grace!

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