

**08.15.10 / Galatians 5:1-15****Passage Insight**

Anything other than Christ is slavery. The freedom that Jesus has brought us by His death on the cross and subsequent resurrection is nothing short of complete and total freedom from all bondage to that which would hope to pull us away from Christ. Romans 8:38-39 say this: "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." When we have faith in Jesus, we are freed from these things and free to live in Christ alone.

When Paul was writing this passage to the Galatians, there was some misinformation being taught. In short, some Jewish Christians were saying that when the Gentiles were being converted to Christianity, they needed to be physically circumcised in order to be fully accepted by God. The problem with this trend was that it put some of the work of salvation on the people being saved, rather than entirely on God. In other words, in seeking justification by something in addition to the work of Christ, the Christians to whom Paul was writing were adding something to the work of Christ. The truth is that it is actually the Lord's Spirit, who lives inside of those who trust in Jesus, who actually carries us and keeps us sealed for the Lord (verse 5, Ephesians 1:13, and elsewhere). We also see in verse 5 that we gain the Lord's salvation only by faith, not by works, and we see this same truth conveyed also in John 3:16, Romans 3:28-30, Romans 5:1, Romans 10:9, and in other places in the Bible as well.

There was a stumbling block in front of those to whom Paul is writing, and it's clear that the deceptive persuasion came from something or someone other than God. The implication here is that anything that is not from God cannot point us toward the truth, which should cause us to constantly check our motives to see if they are of God or of something else. Though it may have seemed insignificant at the time, the requirement that Gentile believers be circumcised like their Jewish counterparts was extremely destructive. As mentioned above, it suggested that there was something that we must add to the work of Christ in order to fully accepted by the Father. Additionally, it's clear that even something small, when not from the Lord, calls much attention to itself and distraction from the freedom and truth that are found in the gospel. We are not immune to this today, and we would be wise to ask the Lord to reveal to us where we ourselves may be adding leaven to the lump and causing others to pay more attention to the leaven than to the finished, freedom-giving work of Christ. Thankfully, Paul corrects this problem and reminds them (and us) that our efforts to save ourselves, rather before or after we begin to follow Jesus, are quite pointless and lead only to bondage, not freedom.

Finally, re: loving your neighbor as yourself, as mentioned in verse 14, if you are to love others as you yourself are loved, this begs the question, "How are you loved?" When you look at how you are loved by Christ, you will see that this love is full, lacking nothing, infinite, deep, pure, selfless, and complete. How are you ever going to love this way?! It will only be by the power of God's own Holy Spirit living inside of you, never by your own power. Remember 2 Corinthians 12:9, the words of Jesus, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." It is simply your inability to do anything that causes the perfect love of God to work in and through you to love others. There is nothing we can add to the finished, complete work of Jesus Christ, which has redeemed us when we have faith in Him alone.

### Application Questions

#### Adding Leaven

- 1) What do you add to the cross – in other words, where are you adding leaven to the lump and causing others to pay more attention to an ungodly distraction rather than the finished work of Christ?
- 2) What is the long-term impact on those who are paying attention to your life?
- 3) What corrective action should you take in repentance?
- 4) If you are saved by Christ, Jesus offers grace when you focus on something other than Him. How does this truth shape the way you live?

#### Bondage to Sin

- 1) Where do you feel bound by something other than the Lord?
- 2) If this passage is true, then there is likely some persuasion from something / someone other than the Lord that is lying to you. What is this lie that you're believing?
- 3) How would your life look different if you were freed from this bondage?
- 4) How would you treat yourself differently?
- 5) How would you treat others differently?

#### Freedom to Love Others

- 1) How do you currently use your freedom in Christ to serve yourself?
- 2) This betrays a mistrust in God to provide what you need. What would it take for you to trust God to provide for you the way He promises to?
- 3) Where has the Lord given you unique opportunities to love others?
- 4) How are you doing this well?
- 5) Where could you do it better?
- 6) What specifically would it take for you to love others as you yourself are loved?

#### Sources

- Prayer
  - Tyndale
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