

Galatians 5:1-12

"Stand Fast, Stay The Course"

Some would say that "grace" is a dangerous doctrine. After all if I tell you that you don't need "do's & don'ts", "rules & regulations". That you're saved by grace through faith & that salvation isn't based on what you do (or don't do) but it's based entirely upon what God has done *for you* in the Person of J.C., well, I'm signing off on the certificate that gives you license to sin! It'll be "Christian chaos", I'm justifying total anarchy, "pandemonium in the ring!" Such couldn't be farther from the truth...

People that have that particular perspective really don't understand grace at all. Not to mention the fact that in Christ, the opposite of law isn't "license", it's *liberty*. In Christ, the absence of law doesn't leave you floundering w/out direction; it leaves you free to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, to walk w/Christ intimately & to know Him Personally. Believe me when I tell you that when it comes to connecting w/God; being right w/Him & drawing near to Him, grace takes you further & does more for you (in every way) than the law ever could.

You see, if in your mind "grace" is a passive attribute or something that's just sort of sitting idly by, waiting for you to mess up so it can run to your rescue, patch you up, or cover your shame & then kind of prop you back up... I need to tell you that, that's not a proper understanding of grace at all. The bible teaches that *far from passive, grace is a very active component in the Christian life. God's grace not only makes for our salvation, it makes for our sanctification as well. It's that component that God uses to mold us, change us, grow us & make us more like Jesus.*

When Paul was writing to Titus he said it like this, *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works."*¹ So as you can see "saving grace" is anything but passive; it's actively teaching us. It teaches us that to the negative we're to deny ungodliness & worldly lusts, & that to the positive we're to live soberly, righteously & godly in the present age. It "has appeared" in the past, it's working in us in the "present" age & it's preparing us for the future, "looking for the blessed hope & glorious appearing of our Great God & Savior, J.C." It actively saturates every detail of our lives.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Tit 2:11-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

God's grace isn't a license to sin, to the contrary it has a "purifying" affect in our lives. It's that element through which Christ "purifies" for Himself His own special people, *zealous* for *good* works. So in Christ, it's not that we're free *to* sin, it's that we're free *from* sin.

Vs 1 of Ch 5 actually concludes the thought of Vs 31 of Ch 4. Paul has just developed the fact that grace makes us children of freedom, but law places us back into bondage. We've been called into grace, don't regress into law (relating to God through a man made or self-imposed system of "do's & don'ts").

Vs 1

The *revelation*? Christ has made you free. The *exhortation*? Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which He has made you free. In other words, salvation is free, but it isn't cheap. It cost God greatly to give you this grace freely therefore be who He's called you to be. **Don't insult the Spirit of grace & enslave yourself (shackle yourself) after Jesus (through His blood) has broken the chains from your life that otherwise bound you. Live as you've been called. You've been called as sons (not slaves) you've been made free, stand fast (stand firm) in that freedom.**

Now forgive me for perhaps pointing out the obvious here but if we're being exhorted to "stand fast" that indicates that it's going to take some effort on our part. We weren't exhorted to "stand idle", or to "stand passive", "be still" or any of that. **The word translated "Stand fast" is a verb (meaning it's an action), it's in the present tense (meaning it's something we gotta *keep* doing), it's in the active voice (again implying action being performed) & it's in the imperative mood (meaning it's not a suggestion, it's a command). We have to be deliberate about our liberty.** You can be made legally free & still live in bondage. Paul is saying, "Take every effort that you not do that, insist on trusting in Christ alone, safeguard the liberty to which you've been called."

You don't need the external force of the law to keep you moving in God's direction because you have the internal leading of the Holy Spirit. Don't entangle yourself in the maze of "do's & don'ts", refuse to be rebound by the rituals, rites & religion of man.

Don't be (the phrase is) "entangled again w/a yoke of bondage." You know what a "yoke" is don't you? We're not talking about that yellow thing in the middle of an egg 😊 (that's spelled a little different). A yoke was a device put on the neck of a horse or an ox to restrict & control their movement. It forced them to go the direction of their master's desire.

It's how Peter referred to the law in Acts 15. Paul, being present at that counsel no doubt picked up on that phrase & repeats it here. It was a counsel about this very issue. Jews were trying to put gentiles under the law & Paul wouldn't have it. So they took the matter to Jerusalem to settle it w/the apostles & church leaders once & for all.

After some heated debate Peter stood up & testified of the fact that God acknowledged the faith of the Gentiles the same as He did the Jews when he was preaching to Cornelius & those in his house. & The Holy Spirit fell upon them just the same as it happened w/the Jews (w/the exception of the fact that the Gentiles weren't under the law). The point being that it wasn't the law that God was honoring, it was faith. So he said, *"Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"*² He was referring to the law as an unbearable yoke of bondage that just chokes out the joy & freedom that we have in Jesus. *It doesn't represent liberty, it's all about bondage & enslavement. The nation of Israel had the law for some 1500 yrs before Christ was born, guess how many Jews it justified? Zero, none, not one, why then place such a burden on the backs of the Gentiles?*

Vs 2-4

Wow... Paul was a hold nothing back, pull no punches kind of guy. Oh he was about love, but *in love* he spoke the truth...

He says, "I'm straight telling you (Vs 2 NJKV☺), that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing!" Now to *me*, that's a "hit the brakes, turn this rig around" kind of statement. Because *I need* the benefit/profit of the righteousness of Christ applied to me when I stand before God! If you can demonstrate to me (which Paul has done) that for me to *add* one thing is to *subtract* another (to add circumcision for righteousness is to subtract Christ for righteousness), than I'm not *adding* anything!

Now why does Paul pick on circumcision? Because it was the entry point into Judaism, it was the "badge" (so to speak), which testified to the fact that you were subjecting yourself to the Law of Moses. *It's not that circumcision in & of it's self is wrong in anyway (Vs 6). It's when I look to it & trust in it as a means of righteousness before God, that's when it becomes the problem. Again Paul points to circumcision because that was like the "rite of passage" the ritual observance that brought you into Judaism. But he could've pointed to any aspect of the law.*

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ac 15:10]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He could've just as easily said, "I'm telling you that if you observe the Sabbath, Christ will profit you nothing!" That's a big deal in some groups. Now if you want to observe the Sabbath, knock yourself out. **But if in doing so you think it puts a gold star on your chart in heaven & puts another stripe on your belt of righteousness, that's when it becomes a problem. Because now you're trusting in *what you do* for righteousness, not what Christ has done.**

So these things in & of themselves are of no consequence, but when I consider them my source of righteousness everything changes... Today Paul might say, "If you receive baptism Christ will profit you nothing." "Wait a minute Jeff, Jesus commanded baptism." That's correct, & under the old covenant God commanded circumcision. **But never as a means of righteousness, but as an outward demonstration of the inward transformation of my heart, the cutting away of my flesh life...** Today churches may insist on baptism, on speaking in tongues, tithing, church attendance. None of which are bad & all have their place, but if I consider *any* of those things my badge or source of righteousness, it's at *that* point that I no longer consider *Christ* my source of righteousness. But what does the scripture say? ***But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in*** (his baptism, tithing, speaking in tongues or church membership? No!) ***the Lord.*"³**

So strike 1 when it comes to looking to law for righteousness: Christ will profit you nothing. Strike 2? (Vs 3) You're a debtor to keep *the whole* law. We've developed this in a previous study so we won't again. Suffice it to say that the law isn't like a salad bar or bible buffet. **"I'll take circumcision, Sabbaths & Feasts, leave off sacrificing bulls/goats, tithing..." You can't do that. You either come under *all* of the law, or *none* of the law. The law is like a chain & each command is like a link in the chain, fail at *any* of them & the chain is broken.**

Now those who are into such things have done the math & throughout the books of Moses (Gen-Duet) God issued some 613 laws. Here's the kicker, no amount of doing right can make up for 1 time doing wrong... There you are, you're driving down the road & you see the lights flashing in your rearview mirror, a policeman is pulling you over...speeding. He's clocked you going 50 in a 35. As he begins to write out the ticket you begin to explain. "But officer you don't understand, I'm a great husband, I pay my taxes, pay the bills, I've never stolen or cheated on my wife, I've never sped before a day in my life... surely all that good will cancel out this 1 bad!?" To which the officer will respond, "Sign here."

³ *The New King James Version*. (1982). **1 Co 1:30-31**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Because he's not concerned w/all the law you've kept, he's concerned w/the one law you broke & you're going to pay for it. That's what Paul is saying. Once you sign on for the law, you've signed on for all of it & to break 1 part, is to be accountable for it all. You've either broke it or not. **So you keep the Sabbath but fail to keep Passover, guess what, you're guilty. You can't pick & choose, the same God who gave the law concerning Sabbath gave the law concerning Passover. Now my suspicion is that everyone here has failed at some point in their life to keep Passover... Strike 2, you're a debtor to keep the whole law.**

Strike 3? (Vs 4) If you're attempting to be justified before God on the basis of your self imposed legal regimen, "You have become *estranged* (separated) from Christ, you have fallen from grace." Or more literally "Fallen *out of* grace."

Couple things; ultimately the idea here is that you can trust Moses, or you can trust Jesus, but you can't trust both. One commentator (Mathew Henry) said, "Christ will not be the Savior of any who will not own and rely upon Him as their *only* Savior."

2^{ndly} if estranged from Christ is to be separated from Christ, & if we fall out of the sphere of grace does speak of a forfeiture of salvation? Some guys say this is talking about sanctification, others say it's talking about salvation. You start talking about separation from Christ & falling out of grace, it seems pretty plain to me that if you trust something other *than* Jesus, than you won't be saved *by* Jesus. Either way the recommended response is that we draw near *to* & trust exclusively *in* Jesus for salvation & sanctification.

Also I might add that to "fall from grace" doesn't mean that you've fallen into some immoral conduct (though that's how many apply it). According to this you might be very religious & still fall from grace. The idea is that of looking to your own sufficiency (to keep rules or what have you) or relying on the grace of God through faith in J.C. It's law or grace & if you're trusting law, you're no longer in the sphere of grace.

There is a sense in which when we sin we actually fall *into* grace. What does the bible say? **"...where *sin* abounded, *grace* abounded much more," Rom 5:20** There's no sin so great that Jesus can't set you free & forgive you. The snare lies in looking to something other than Christ to make you right. When you do *that* you're not living under grace, you've chosen law. You might write down & look up Col 1:21-23. **We're to *continue* in the faith, grounded & steadfast. We're not to be moved from the position of abiding in Christ. So one could have a completely moral & upright life & still miss heaven simply because they think their moral standards gain them access rather than relying on God's grace through faith in J.C.**

Vs 5-6

Notice, it's not through works of the law that we wait for the hope of righteousness, but through the Spirit. & When he's speaking of the hope of righteousness he's not speaking of *positional* righteousness, you already have that. God sees you righteous in Christ. He's talking about *practical* righteousness. **God sees you as righteous positionally (we're perfect in Christ), but *practically* we have a long way to go. Yet when we see Him (1 Jn 3:2) we will be like Him for we will see Him as He is. Then we'll be righteous not only inwardly/positionally, but practically as well. We eagerly await that time, (done w/this sin nature).**

In Vs 5-6 we see faith, hope & love. Commonly found together like the 3 strands of a braid, they interweave & interlock. For in Christ neither circumcision or uncircumcision avails anything, it's not about baptism or not being baptized, it's faith working through love that matters.

So you see, there will be good works in the life of the man/woman of faith. If your faith doesn't produce any change *in* you, no good works issue forth *from* you, than I'm not sure what kind of faith you have, but it's not saving faith... Yet works alone aren't enough, those works have to be couched *in*, motivated *by* love. Remember these words? "...though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing."⁴ So faith works through love, "My love for God?" Yes, but even more so responding to His love for you. The bible declares, "*We love Him because He first loved us.*" 1 Jn 4:19 So the works we do out of love for God spill out from the overwhelming love that He has for us.

Vs 7-12

"If cutting off a little is good, than maybe they should just get rid of it all!" Paul says, "You started well, what happened?" They began their life in Christ by simple faith, trusting in Jesus, enjoying God's grace, but someone hindered them, got in the way & stumbled them. It's like someone tripping you in a race, it started great, but it's gone bad.

That word "hindered" actually speaks of someone breaking up the road so that it's impassible. They were running good but someone broke up the road they were running on...

Now we know that sin can stumble us & snare us, entangle us & weigh us down (Heb 12:1). But we don't always think about bad doctrine (teaching) can trip us up as well.

You will never become a J.W. by just reading your bible.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Co 13:3]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You have to read their materials about the bible to be persuaded in that manner. You will never become a Mormon by simply reading the bible. You have to read their books to see it their way. There are many examples but the bottom line is that people seek to *persuade you* to their position rather than simply *pointing you* to the word of God.

Paul says, "This persuasion doesn't come from Him who calls you." In other words, "God isn't the One laying these trips on you, putting this snare in front of you." I'm not concerned at all about how you'll turn out if you just read your bible. It's when you start getting everyone's books *about* the bible that things can go south...

How many times you start listening to someone & they start rattling off some weird perspective; just stop them & say, "Where did you get this stuff? This persuasion doesn't come from Him who calls you." "You know, I was looking on the internet &..." Knock it off, read your bible 😊! That's all you need...

"A little leaven leavens the whole lump." Leaven in scripture is always a picture of evil or evil influence. Jesus spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees (bad doctrine). Before the days of unleavened bread the Jews were to remove all the leaven from their homes. The idea here is that of the corrupting influence that diminishes the sufficiency of Christ alone. Just a little leaven permeates the entire lump of dough. Just a little bad doctrine, just a bit of un-dealt w/sin can permeate/influence & infect the whole church.

Look at **Vs 10**

Let every Pastor, small group leader, children's ministry teacher take heed; "he who troubles you shall bear his judgment." Anyone involved in teaching, influencing others ought to be sober/careful & prayerful about their responsibility. We're to study to show ourselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth... (2 Tim 2:15) (Write down, look up Matt 18:6-7).

Evidently there were some claiming that Paul taught circumcision as a necessity. But he says here, "If that were the case these guys wouldn't be dogging me. Then the offense of the cross has ceased." The Jews couldn't comprehend a crucified Savior, it was an offense. The cross says, "You can't save yourself." It offends my fallen nature, my pride, it offends my morality, my philosophy (it appeals to faith & not reason). It offends my will, calling for unconditional surrender... Tells me I must be born again.

Stand fast, stay the course, don't deviate into religion, cultivate your relationship w/J.C. by God's grace, through faith & He will be glorified/magnified in your life...

Prayer Points:

Father help us to stay the course, that we not look to the right or to the left but keep our eyes straight ahead, fixed on You. Lord be there leaven in our lives, leaven in our fellowship we're asking You to purge & purify our lives for the glory of Your name. & Father we, through the Spirit, eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

You can try to provide your own righteousness or you can receive the righteousness of Christ through faith in Him. Don't allow the death & resurrection of J.C. to be in vain as it pertains to your life. Open your heart, believe upon the Lord J.C. & He'll forgive you of your sin & make you new today.