

**Message #16****Galatians 5:1-6**

When it comes to the matter of what you believe about your own salvation, it comes down to one of two choices:

- 1) You believe you can earn your salvation by your own efforts and works.
- 2) You believe your salvation is a free gift of God found by trusting totally in Jesus Christ.

There are no in-betweens. One must decide what one believes. One must make a choice. The choice is: 1) Hagar or Sarah; 2) Ishmael or Isaac; 3) Commandments or Promise; 4) Wrath or Mercy; 5) Old Covenant or New Covenant; 6) Sinai or Zion; 7) Earthly Jerusalem or Heavenly Jerusalem; 8) Law or Grace; 9) Bondage or Freedom.

Romans 11:6 says it is one or the other. The two systems are mutually exclusive: works is works and grace is grace. The two systems are opposites. They are mutually exclusive. The way of the Law makes salvation and sanctification based on human achievement. The way of grace makes salvation and growth due to God's grace.

Now the point Paul wants to communicate here is this:

**YOU ARE JUSTIFIED AND SET FREE FROM THE LAW BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND NOT BY KEEPING THE LAW; AND ONCE YOU COME TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, YOU MUST NOT EVER PUT YOURSELF BACK UNDER THE O.T. LAW.**

Now there are many people who do not grasp this point. They think they can make their salvation a little more secure if they do not eat or drink certain things, if they wear certain clothing, if they are baptized, if they give a certain amount of money, if they read a certain version of the Bible or do some work. There are those who believe if they deprive themselves of certain things one day a week it will enhance their salvation. It is all a lie. **Our salvation is secured by the finished work of Jesus Christ.** It is not secured by anything we do or don't do. It is secured by Jesus Christ. That is exactly Paul's point in this text.

There are six theological points that Paul communicates in this section:

**THEOLOGICAL POINT #1** – Jesus Christ died to give us a permanent freedom from the O.T. Law so do not go back into slavery to it. **5:1**

When you try to live life under the Law, you are living life with a “yoke of slavery.” A yoke was what a farmer used on animals to control and guide them. It limited their movement and freedom. The yoke was a heavy burden to bear.

The Jews counted all of the precepts of the Law and concluded there were 613 total laws. The 613 laws were divided into negative and positive commands—365 negatives and 248 positives. This was a heavy yoke for people to live by.

Paul says in view of the fact that Jesus Christ set you free from the slavery yoke of the Law and legalism and works, do not ever again submit yourself to it again.

You should love your freedom and not ever want to be under legal O.T. law again. Christ has set you free from the Law and from your guilt and from your sin.

There is an interesting story about an American/Canadian boxer whose name was Hurricane Carter. He was wrongfully convicted of a triple homicide and spent nearly 20 years in prison and was finally set free. When he was released, he spent the rest of his life trying to find others who had been wrongfully convicted so they could be set free. In prison there is no freedom. It is a horrible place to be.

Now just imagine if he got out of prison and said, you know I love being locked up in a cell. I love having no freedom. You would conclude there is something wrong with his mind. That is what Paul says about believers who want to go back under the Law. There is something wrong with their minds.

Jesus Christ went to the cross to set us free from our guilt, sin, and the Law. Now you will notice the conjunction “therefore” in the middle of **verse 1**. That conjunction introduces us to two continual actions that should exist due to the freeing work of Jesus Christ.

**Continual Action #1** - We need to stand firm in grace.

The verb “stand firm” is an imperative. This is a command to God’s people to stand firm in the freedom of grace of God. This refers to standing in a fixed spot and the fixed spot is God’s grace.

A N.T. believer is to stand firm in the faith (I Cor. 16:1); stand firm in a unified spirit (Phil. 1:27); stand firm in the Lord (4:1); here we are to stand firm in freedom (**Gal. 5:1**). God wants His people standing firm in the freedom they have in Jesus Christ. He does not want them to be swayed to any law or legalistic system. He does not want them under a yoke of men’s traditions or denominational codes.

**Continual Action #2** - We must not ever be subject to the Law again.

It is interesting to me that the noun “yoke” is anarthrous (no article) which means not only are we not to be enslaved to the O.T. Law, but to the character and quality of any legal code or system.

Do not be involved in a church that tries to tell you that you must abide by their laws or legal rules to be right with God. Stand firm in freedom.

**THEOLOGICAL POINT #2** – If a believer puts himself back under the O.T. Law, he cancels out the benefits of a relationship with Jesus Christ. **5:2**

Dr. Warren Wiersbe said it is bad enough that legalism robs a believer of his liberty, but it also robs him of his spiritual wealth. Now the Galatians were contemplating circumcision as a means of making them a little more spiritual. The future tense of the verb “will be of no benefit” indicates that this had not happened yet.

Paul warns these believers not to do this. Paul himself had been circumcised and he had been proud of that fact (Philippians 3:4-7). But he came to realize this meant nothing in comparison to Jesus Christ. **He realized that everything he had in his relationship with God was because of Jesus Christ, not because of ceremony or law.**

The greatest danger to a lifeguard is that a drowning person tries to save himself. If the person just gives up and surrenders to the lifeguard, he will be saved; but if he struggles and works himself, he can drown. That is the way it is with the salvific work of Jesus Christ. If a person wants to struggle and work and rely on himself, he will drown in his sin; but if he will stop and just place all of his faith in Jesus Christ, he will be saved.

Now the point here is if you are looking to anything other than Jesus Christ for salvation and spirituality, you are missing the benefits of what Jesus Christ gives you in grace.

**THEOLOGICAL POINT #3** – If a believer puts himself back under the O.T. Law, he is obligated to keep the whole law. **5:3**

Most people think the O.T. Law is a salad bar or smorgasbord where you pick what you like and reject what you don't like. But what Paul says is if you are going to connect yourself to the Law, you must take it all. You must keep every bit of it and no one can keep every bit of it. This law business is all or nothing.

You must go to Jerusalem and offer every legal sacrifice and you must keep every ordinance and every law and you are subject to every penalty and violation, including the stoning penalties. There are way more than just 10 commandments. In fact, even the Jewish leaders broke things down into 613 individual laws: 365 negative and 248 positive. Those laws are further subdivided into 12 families of affirmative commands and 12 families of negative commands.

**The affirmative commands include:**

- 1) God and His worship.
- 2) Sanctuary and Priesthood.
- 3) Sacrifices.
- 4) Cleanness and uncleanness.
- 5) Alms and Tithes.
- 6) Things to be eaten.
- 7) Passover and other Feasts.
- 8) Rule and judgment.

- 9) Truth and doctrines.
- 10) Women and matrimony.
- 11) Criminal judgments and punishments.
- 12) Civil case judgments.

**The negative commands include:**

- 1) False worship.
- 2) Separation from heathen.
- 3) Things sacred.
- 4) Sacrifices and Priests.
- 5) Meats.
- 6) Fields and Harvests.
- 7) House of doctrines.
- 8) Justice and judgment.
- 9) Feasts.
- 10) Chastity, affinity and purity.
- 11) Marriages.
- 12) The Kingdom.

There are laws concerning clothing. Do not mix materials together (Lev. 19:19). There are laws concerning all kinds of things from lying to coveting. If a person goes back under the O.T. Law, you must keep every bit of it.

**THEOLOGICAL POINT #4** – If a believer puts himself back under the O.T. Law, he cuts himself off from a vibrant relationship with Christ and from grace. **5:4**

Judaizers and legalists want you to think that you are missing something if you don't give in to them; but God says if you do give in to them you are missing something.

Now some believe this verse is talking about justification and others believe it is discussing sanctification.

Luther thought it was justification and he strongly asserted that if you think that Jesus Christ and the Law can live together, then Christ is not in your heart and you are not saved. In fact, Luther said if someone believed the Law could help make them right with God, they were heading to wrath, judgment and damnation (*Galatians*, p. 308).

Dr. Ironside thought it was sanctification. He believed that this verse is teaching that if a believer turns back to the O.T. Law from grace, he has just shut down any life and growth and one has taken himself out from the wonderful grace system.

Now the word “severed” is a word that means to be loosed from something like a leaf that is cut off from the life of the tree. The word “fallen” is one that means you are in something and fall out of it. For example, you are in a boat and then you fall out of the boat.

It is clear that Paul is saying that law and grace are antithetic systems. This is true for salvation and sanctification. For salvation you must choose either law or Jesus Christ. For growth you must choose either law or Jesus Christ.

“Falling from grace” does not mean falling into sin and losing salvation. You are saved by grace and the Scriptures say we are to grow in grace. But if after salvation one turns away from grace and goes back under the O.T. Law, then one has cut off a vibrant life with Jesus Christ and, as Dr. McGee said, one will be a “defeated Christian.”

Dr. Ironside said that he thought 3/4ths of the Christians had fallen from grace. They will go to heaven, but their lives are so occupied with their legal law-keeping that they don’t grow in grace at all and when they get before Jesus Christ they will be ashamed.

**THEOLOGICAL POINT #5** – The believer who is developing in righteousness does so by the Spirit and by faith. **5:5**

Everything we have in this New Testament Grace Age is due to the Holy Spirit and adjustments we make in regard to the Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit prompts us to place our faith and hope in Jesus Christ for righteousness and not in the O.T. Law. I don’t need the O.T. Law to tell me when I have messed up; the Holy Spirit does that. The O.T. Law did not bring me to faith in Christ; the Holy Spirit did that.

That phrase “hope of righteousness” refers to what a person hopes in to give them the righteousness they need to go to heaven.

The Holy Spirit prompts us to maintain our hope by faith. In other words, we trust totally in Jesus Christ to give us the righteousness to make us right with God. That Holy Spirit does not prompt anyone to believe in themselves, or their works or the O.T. Law.

**THEOLOGICAL POINT #6** – The believer in Christ knows the Law means nothing. **5:6**

The prepositional phrase “in Christ” refers to Spirit baptism in which the Holy Spirit puts one into Jesus Christ positionally.

Those who are in Christ:

- 1) Are justified (Rom. 3:24);
- 2) Have no condemnation (Rom. 8:1);
- 3) Are set free from law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2);
- 4) Are sanctified (I Cor. 1:2);
- 5) Are righteous (I Cor. 1:30);
- 6) Will be alive at the resurrection (I Cor. 15:22);

- 7) Are a new creation (II Cor. 5:17);
- 8) Have God's righteousness (II Cor.5:21);
- 9) Are adopted (Eph. 1:5-6);
- 10) Are forgiven (Eph. 1:7).

That Holy Spirit puts you into Christ and when He does, all of those things are applicable to you.

Now look carefully at what this verse says. One who has been put into Jesus Christ realizes the Law means nothing. For one in Christ, law means nothing.

But the one who has faith will discover that the Holy Spirit will work and produce a love for Jesus Christ and a love for grace.

You are saved by faith alone in Christ alone and you grow by faith alone and do not let anyone ever put you back under some legal law.

“It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.”