

I. Introduction.

II. Stand firm in your freedom. v. 1

A. Christ set us free. v. 1a Jo. 8:32,36

1. He freed us from slavery under the law. 4:7,5,31 Acts 15:10
2. Jesus set us free from the punishment our sins deserve. 3:13 Rom. 5:1 8:1-3
3. We are free from bondage to the world, the flesh and the devil. 1:4 Heb. 2:14
4. Freedom from the law does not mean that we are free to sin. 5:6 Ro. 6:17-18

B. False teachers seek to drag the Galatians back into slavery. 1:6-9 5:7ff Acts 15:1,10

C. Keep standing firm! v. 1b 2:4,11 1:8 2 Thess. 2:15 Phil. 4:1

1. Why would anyone be tempted to go back to the law? 4:9-10
2. Jesus' yoke is easy and His burden is light. Mt. 11:29-30

III. If you turn to the law you will lose Christ. v. 2-4

A. Warning – If you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. v. 2

1. Paul is not saying that circumcised people can't be saved. v. 6 Acts 16:3
2. His concern is that they might receive circumcision as contributing to salvation. 2:3-4 Acts 15:1,5
3. Such an act would be a declaration that the work of Christ is insufficient and that our law obedience must finish what Jesus began.
4. You only have two options – seeking to be saved by your law works or receiving salvation through Christ's work. You cannot mix the two. 2:21,16 Eph. 2:8-9
5. Any trust in what you have done cuts you off from the saving benefit which comes from Christ.

B. Consequence – By receiving circumcision you place yourself under (the impossible) obligation to keep the entire law. v. 3

1. Receiving circumcision is an initiation to living under the law. 4:10 Acts 15:1,5
2. Those seeking salvation through the law must keep it perfectly. Js. 2:10
3. No-one can be justified through the law because we all sin. 2:16 Acts 15:10
4. The law was never intended to save, but rather it was intended to show us our need for God's gracious salvation in Christ. 3:23-26
5. Those who seek to be saved by law are under the law's curse. 3:10-14

C. Consequence – You have fallen from grace. v. 4

1. What does it mean to "fall from grace"? Not moral failure, but falling from the principle of grace (justification by faith) into legalism (justification by works).
2. Trying to be justified by law cuts you off from Christ and grace.
3. Is Paul saying that people can lose their salvation? Rom. 8:31-39
 - a. Those who are truly saved are kept by God's power. John 10:27-29 1 Pe. 1:5
 - b. Some who profess faith fall away, thus proving that they were never truly saved. 1 John. 2:19,3-4 Mt. 7:23 13

D. Since circumcision isn't a big issue in our day, how does this apply to us?

1. Trusting in any human work or ceremony for salvation cuts one off from Christ.
2. Even those who claim to believe in justification by faith can fall into self-righteousness.

IV. We stand firm in the true way of salvation. v. 5-6

A. Our hope of righteousness comes by faith through the Holy Spirit. v. 5

1. We are saved through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. v. 5a 3:2 4:22-26
John 3:5-8 1:12-13
2. We are saved by faith (alone). 2:16,21 3:7,11,14,22,24 Eph. 2:8-9
3. We eagerly await our (certain) hope of righteousness.
 - a. The perfect righteousness we have already received through faith will be fully experienced and realized. 1 John 3:1-2 Phil. 3:20-21
 - b. Through the Holy Spirit we already have a foretaste of glory. Rom. 8:23-25

B. True faith works through love. v. 6

1. The physical state of being circumcised or uncircumcised has no impact on your standing with God. v. 6a 6:15 3:28 1 Co. 7:19 8:8 Rom. 2:28-29 14:17
2. While we are saved by faith alone, saving faith is never alone – it is always accompanied by love (and other works). 1 Co. 7:19
 - a. Paul is not saying faith + love/works > justification. 2:16 3:6
 - b. Nor is Paul saying that obedience and works are unimportant. 6:9 Ro. 13:10
 - c. He affirms that saving faith produces a new life of love. Faith > justification + love/works. John 13:34-35 14:15 2 Cor. 5:17 Js. 2:11ff 1 Jo. 2:3-4 4:7-8
 - d. Faith in Christ produces love and obedience far surpassing anything that mere law can do.
 - e. What should we conclude if someone claims to have saving faith but has no love? 1 Jo. 4:8 John 3:35 Js. 2:11ff

V. Concluding applications.

A. Why should God let you into heaven?

B. Are you living consistently with the faith you profess?

1. Do you often feel defeated because you don't feel that you measure up to God's expectations (or the expectations of others)? 2:16 Phil. 3:9
2. Are you defensive? Can you accept criticism without fearing that your self-righteous identity is under attack? 2:22 Pr. 9:8 1 Tim. 1:15
3. Are you critical/judgmental because you regard others as less righteous or not as wise as you? Mt. 7:1-5 Eph. 4:31-32 1 Tim. 1:15
4. Do you actively and joyfully love others (family, co-workers, friends) not because they deserve it, but as a reflection of God's love for you? 5:6,22 1 Jo. 4:19,7-9

Discussion questions

1. In what sense has Christ set us free?
2. How in practical terms can we stand firm against those who would enslave us under law?
3. Why would have been so wrong for the Galatians to receive circumcision?
4. Why can't the law save? What then is the purpose of the law?
5. What does it mean to "fall from grace"? v. 4
6. Who can fall from grace? Can a true Christian lose his salvation?
7. How does the warning against falling from grace apply to us, given that circumcision isn't a big issue in our circles.
8. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in saving us?
9. In what sense is our righteousness a future hope?
10. What is the relationship between faith, love and salvation? Are we saved by faith + love?