

## 31. The Book of Galatians 5:2-4 (Topical)

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### *Liberty For Life-Part 2*

a message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier  
(9-8-24)

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We have been studying the Book of Galatians here at Calvary on Sunday mornings going through the book topically based on its main theme.

The main theme of Galatians is liberty—the liberty (or freedom) that is ours in Christ.

The book divides itself into 3 main areas of liberty that Paul brings up in this epistle—

- I. Liberty from Lies—verses 1:6-10
- II. Liberty from Law—verses 1:11-4:31
- III. Liberty for Life—verses 5:1-6:15

In our study this morning, we find ourselves entering into the third main division of the book—“**Liberty for Life.**”

The Key Verse of the Book is Galatians Chapter 5 verse 1—

#### **Galatians 5:1 (NKJV)**

<sup>1</sup> Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

The next few verses are written by Paul in such a way that is very forceful and become a warning of grave danger for all who violate what he is about to say.

#### **Galatians 5:1 (NASB 95)**

<sup>1</sup> It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.

Paul is saying that, Jesus shed His blood on Calvary's Cross so that we could be free from the Law (religion/legalism) as a basis for making us right in God's eyes.

#### **Romans 3:20 (NKJV)**

<sup>20</sup> Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

To go back to the Law for righteousness in light of Jesus' death on the cross to pay for our sins is not only useless—it's dangerous!

The Greek word for “**entangled**” [with “*a yoke of bondage*”] means “*to be ensnared in such a way so that you can never get out.*”

Once a person commits themselves to religion as a basis for being right with God and earning His favor and blessings (on earth and in heaven)—they begin to work fervently to keep all the laws and ordinances of their religious system.

And once they begin to pour themselves into their religion—with each holy day and sacrament they keep; with each candle and rosary they light and pray—they become more and more in *entrenched*, more and more in *bondage*, more and more *invested* in their religion to the point (as Paul put it)—they become so entangled and enslaved that they usually never escape, and wind up being condemned to hell forever.

Paul is coming against the teachings of a group of false teachers known as the Judaizers.

The word *Judaizer* comes from a Greek verb meaning “*Those who teach others to live according to Jewish customs and laws.*”

As we said last time, the Judaizers taught that, in order for a Gentile to become a Christian—he first had to become a Jew.

In other words, had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses—then he could put his faith in Christ and be saved.

**Galatians 5:2 (NKJV)**

**<sup>2</sup> Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.**

There are hygienic reasons for a baby boy to be circumcised—but that is not what Paul has in mind here.

When he says that if a Gentile submits to circumcision (as an adult), as a way of observing a religious ritual to earn salvation—Paul is saying emphatically that—what Jesus did on the cross in shedding His blood for you to pay for your sins—will profit you nothing!

Let me repeat again what Paul is saying—If you put your faith in a ritual to make you righteous—then what Jesus did for you won’t be of any benefit to you—in other words: grace + anything = no salvation. And that includes water baptism, confirmation, lighting candles, praying the rosary, keeping holy days, going to church—listen to what Paul is saying here!

Many groups treat faith in Jesus as a good starting point for *earning* their salvation—but faith by itself, they maintain—is not enough!

Paul’s argument is, “*Either Jesus is sufficient for salvation or not!*”

What Jesus refuses to be is “part of the solution” because that would mean that the other part of salvation belongs to us—and God will not share His glory with man for our salvation—“*That no flesh should glory in His presence*”. (1 Corinthians 1:29)

Jewish scholar and believer in Yeshua, Arnold Fruchtenbaum said—

“In this verse, the Apostle states that if they *receive circumcision* with a view to justification (salvation), it means that *Yeshua* has “profited them nothing,” because circumcision—in view of justification by the works of the law—will lead automatically to a rejection of justification by faith.”

#### **Galatians 5:3 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.**

If you’re not going to believe in Jesus exclusively for salvation and receive eternal life by grace alone through faith alone but are going to try to add some law or laws (good works) to the equation—then know this, you have to keep the whole law.

➤ “Why will I be required to keep the whole law?”

Because if we come to God on the basis of our own law keeping—then our law-keeping must be perfect—because perfection is required for a person to enter into heaven (keep that in mind, we’ll come back to it).

*“Yes, but when I do something wrong, I try to make up for it by doing extra ‘good’ things to ‘erase’ the bad things.”*

One author put it well—

*“No amount of obedience makes up for one act of disobedience; if you are pulled over for speeding, it will do no good to protest that you are a faithful husband, a good taxpayer, and have obeyed the speed limit many times. All that is irrelevant. You have still broken the speeding law and are guilty under it.”*

#### **James 2:10 (NLT)**

<sup>10</sup> For the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as a person who has broken all of God’s laws.

#### **Galatians 5:3–4 (NKJV)**

**<sup>3</sup> And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. <sup>4</sup> You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be justified by law*; you have fallen from grace.**

This is a very controversial verse—I’ll warn you; a wrong interpretation will take you down the wrong path and lead to some serious error—so it’s critical that we understand exactly what Paul is saying here.

“**Estranged**” is from the Greek word *katargeō* and could be translated ‘severed’, ‘separated’, or ‘loosed from’ to name a few ways that Greek word could be translated depending on the context.

The word is used by Paul in Romans 7 verse 2:

#### **Romans 7:2 (NKJV)**

<sup>2</sup> For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to *her* husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of *her* husband...

The Greek word translated “**fallen**” is from *ekpiptō*, which means to ‘lose one’s grasp on something.’

### Galatians 5:4 (AMP)

<sup>4</sup> If you seek to be justified *and* declared righteous *and* to be given a right standing with God through the Law, you are brought to nothing *and* so separated (severed) from Christ. You have fallen away from [or 'out of'] grace (from God's gracious favor and unmerited blessing).

Okay, so that's the exact *translation* of verse 4—but it still doesn't clarify what Paul is actually saying—and because of it this verse has given rise to three main interpretations:

#### 1. **Paul is warning that a Christian can lose their salvation by turning from grace to the Law.**

The problem with that interpretation is that Paul isn't dealing with the security of the believer in this verse—he is contrasting the way of grace with the way of law (legalism), as the means of attaining salvation. He is not teaching that a person who has been **justified** by faith can lose his righteous standing before God and become lost again by embracing (or going back to) the Law and being circumcised.

One pastor put it this way—

*“The Bible knows nothing of becoming unjustified. Those “whom [God] predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).*

Paul's primary point in this passage, as throughout the letter, is that **law** and **grace** cannot be mixed. As a means to salvation, they are totally incompatible and mutually exclusive. To mix **law** with **grace** is to obliterate **grace.**”

Simply stated—a person cannot live by both law and grace simultaneously—as one pastor put it, *“If you add one ounce of works to a billion pounds of grace you negate grace.”*

#### 2. **Paul is speaking of people who professed to be Christians but who were not truly saved.**

So, this interpretation means that when Paul said they had **“fallen from grace”**—he means that after they had been given the gospel of grace, they turned their backs on it and instead embraced a gospel of works (Law).

The Bible has a name for a person like this—an apostate!

An apostate, biblically speaking, is someone who claimed to be a Christian at one time, who continued in the faith for a while (often weeks or months—sometimes years) but then renounced the Christian faith and walked away.

Sometimes that means they walk away from the Christian faith to an entirely different faith (Hinduism, Islam, Eastern Mysticism etc.).

Or as in the context of Galatians 5:4 they still profess to be a Christian but walk away from grace to the Law as a way of being righteous in God's eyes.

### 1 John 2:19 (NKJV)

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but *they went out* that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.

### Hebrews 10:37-39 (NKJV)

<sup>37</sup> "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. <sup>38</sup> Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back [an apostate], My soul has no pleasure in him." <sup>39</sup> But we are not of those who draw back to perdition [hell], but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

One author said—

*"It bears repeating that an apostate is not a true believer who has abandoned his salvation. He is a person who has professed to accept the truth and trust the Savior, and then turns from "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Jude would not contradict what Peter wrote, and Peter made it clear that the apostates were not God's sheep but were instead pigs and dogs ("unclean animals"—2 Peter 2:20-22)"*

### 2 Peter 2:20-22 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

- The reason a dog eats its own vomit and a pig, even though it's been washed and cleaned up, returns to wallow in the mud hole is because—it's the nature of dogs and pigs to act this way.
- The reason people who come to church for a while and stop doing some of the sinful things they used to do eventually return to the filth of the world is because—that's their nature!
- These people experienced some *reformation*, but it stopped short of genuine *regeneration* (salvation) which would have given them a new nature with new desires.

When we accepted Jesus into our hearts we received a new nature—the nature of God (2Peter 1:4) and as such—*"old things passed away and all things became new"*. (2Corinthians 5:17)

The evidence of this began immediately in that the things we used to love to do (sin) we no longer desired to do; and the things we didn't want to do (church, Bible study, prayer, worship) now we love to do!

This is one of the most powerful evidences whereby we know that Jesus has moved into our heart—a changed life!

### 3. **Paul is talking about genuine Christians who had originally embraced the true gospel of grace for salvation, but then had turned to the Law for sanctification.**

So, this interpretation is referring to those who were saved by grace—but who subsequently put themselves under the law to retain their salvation or to achieve holiness (sanctification).

In this case, to **"fall from grace"** means, *"To turn from God's way of perfecting His saints by the work of the Spirit in them—and instead, to seek Christian maturity and holiness through the observance of external rites, rituals, and ceremonies—through the works of the flesh."*

➤ *Where do I come down—what interpretation do I think is the right one?*

**I believe that Paul does have the unsaved in mind** who were trying to use faith in Jesus and the works of the Law as a way of being justified (saved). And I believe that because of what Paul says to some in the church of Galatia—'**you who attempt to be justified by law.' (verse 4)**

It's obvious from that statement that Paul has unbelievers in view (in part)—those who seek justification (salvation) through law-keeping and is telling them that—they cannot have 'two saviors'; they must choose either Christ or the Law (not '*Christ and the Law*').

Paul is telling them that if they choose the Law as a means of attaining salvation, then they are severed from Christ as their only possible hope of righteousness—

**“You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be justified by law*; you have fallen from grace.” (verse 4)**

In other words, you forfeit grace (salvation is a gift of God's grace—i.e., '*getting what you don't deserve*') and have divorced yourself from the completed work of Christ for you on Calvary's Cross. (Galatians 5:2-4)

Which means that—what Jesus did in paying for your sins will not be available to you, will be withdrawn from you as an offer if you try to add to it (in any way) human works as a way of '*helping*' to purchase or earn your salvation.

**But I also believe that he had some true Christians in view as well**, who had received Jesus by faith, were saved, but had been persuaded by the Judaizers that they also needed to keep the Law to be truly holy, mature, and fruitful.

I believe that because of how Paul began Chapter 3—

**Galatians 3:1–6 (NKJV)**

**<sup>1</sup> O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? <sup>2</sup> This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—<sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? <sup>4</sup> Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain? <sup>5</sup> Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? <sup>6</sup> just as Abraham "*believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*"**

All evangelical Christians know they are *saved* by grace—but where they often stumble is buying into the false teaching (demonic lie) that after getting *saved* by grace they then think their *sanctification* falls completely on them in the way of doing good works.

Or as Paul put it: **“After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?” (verse 3—NLT)**

And so, the mentality on the part of some Christians seems to be—“*Yes, I'm saved by grace—but I still need to go to church, read the Bible, keep the commandments, help out at the food pantry—for God to really love me and bless me in my walk with Him.*”

Of course, this is completely at odds with what God's Word tells us that—not only are we saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but then once saved, “*the just shall live by faith.*” (Habakkuk 2:4; repeated in Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

When Paul said—

**Galatians 4:10–11 (NKJV)**

<sup>10</sup> You observe days and months and seasons and years. <sup>11</sup> **I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.**

I don't believe he is saying that by going back to the law—they were proving they were never really saved.

That's unlikely since in verse 9 he talks about them knowing God **intimately** (which speaks of genuine salvation) and in verse 12 he addresses them as **'brethren'**. I believe he is saying that even though they are saved, by going back to the Law, they will remain spiritual babies incapable of growing up in their faith to full maturity and usefulness for God.

But listen, even though I believe that Paul did have this in mind when it came to his opening rebuke in Galatians 3—that some of the people in the churches of Galatia who had received Jesus by faith and were genuinely saved, were now trying to use the law (religious works) in a misguided attempt to sanctify themselves for God (reach their full potential of 'maturity and fruitfulness').

However, if we look at Paul's remarks closely in Galatians—starting with the end of chapter 2 and moving through chapters 3 and 4—it's obvious that what he's coming against is the Judaizers' false 'gospel' that consisted of them blending law and grace together as being *essential* for salvation—not just sanctification.

**Galatians 2:21 (NKJV)**

<sup>21</sup> I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."

**Galatians 2:16 (NKJV)**

<sup>16</sup> knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Let me say it again—without a doubt the deadliest lie the devil has ever fed the human race is that—heaven is only for people who have gone to church their whole lives and have lived virtuous, moral lives—in other words, heaven is only for 'good people.'

**But you see the Bible defines goodness as *'moral perfection'*—and only God is morally perfect.**

Which is exactly what Jesus acknowledged in Matthew 19:17 when He said, *"No one is good but God"*—which means everyone else, all of humanity, falls into the category of 'sinners' not good people! Fallen man defines goodness as simply being better than others—and since we can always find someone worse than we are to compare ourselves to—we think we're good!

**But they aren't the standard—Jesus is the standard—and He's perfect!**

Which means there is no *"I think I'm good enough"* or *"I'm better than most..."* argument that will get a person into heaven—it's either sinless perfection or eternal rejection (hell)!

Paul the Apostle in Romans 3:23 said, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (sinless perfection)."* And then in Romans 6:23 he went on to say, *"the wages of sin is death (spiritual/eternal death in hell), but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."*

You see, **the bad news** for religious folks, is that God only lets *perfect* people into heaven. **The good news** is that anyone who receives Jesus into their heart as Savior is pronounced perfect ('positionally') by God and given the gift of eternal life in heaven.

Which means I am now 'in Christ' and God no longer sees me, He sees only Jesus!

**I am now hidden in the perfect and sinless Lord Jesus Christ, a member of His Body and the Father now accepts me into heaven because of who Jesus is, not because of who I am!**

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