



Devotional Study Guide Journal



February 18th

Stand Fast in the Liberty

Galatians 5:1

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

It baffles me that we did not understand this verse even after four years of reading the Bible repeatedly. Maybe it was because this verse was normally taught out of context. Standing alone, we assumed that the “yoke of bondage” was referencing sin.

“Do not be entangled again with the yoke of sin,” is what we heard. Returning to sin was the last thing any of us wanted to do. We loved Jesus with all of our hearts and were making extraordinary efforts to avoid even the appearance of evil.

It is important understand the true meaning of this verse. The first step is that we must see it in the context of Galatians and the verses that surround it.

Paul was pleading with the Galatian Christians not to follow those who were preaching “another” gospel. Notice in this passage what the true gospel is.

Galatians 1:6-9

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, ⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

While we might not yet understand from this text what the different gospel is, Paul makes it very clear that the gospel from which they were turning was “the grace of Christ.” We are saved by grace—the gospel of Christ is grace.

To substantiate that the gospel is the grace of Christ, let’s look at this verse where Paul explained the gospel of Christ which he taught.

Acts 20:24

But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

The gospel of the grace of God is what Paul taught. He taught it to the lost, AND he taught it to the saved publicly and from house to house. His letters were all teaching the gospel of the grace of God.

Then what was this “other” message he was opposed to the gospel of the grace of God? Notice below in verse 20 Paul explains the gospel of grace most eloquently, then in verse 21, he tells them what the false message was and its devastating implication.

Galatians 2:20-21

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ **I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through law, then Christ died in vain.”***

Simply stated, the other gospel which Paul condemned was the belief that after being saved by grace through faith, we are made righteous before God by keeping laws. Paul opposed this teaching, and this infuriated the Christian Jews who were embracing Jesus but still clinging to the law, including the Ten Commandments, for righteousness. (See Acts 15 According to them, Jesus was needed for salvation, but after being saved the Gentiles needed to keep the entire law of Moses to be truly righteous before God.

So, in context, what is the liberty in which Paul admonishes them to stand fast? The answer is revealed in the next verses.

Galatians 5:4-5

*You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be made righteous by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of **righteousness by faith.***

We are made righteous by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), not by keeping laws. We were not saved by the law nor are we made righteous by keeping laws. We are saved and made righteous by grace through faith. This is the liberty in which Paul admonishes us to stand fast and continue.

Since Paul warned so strongly against preaching another gospel, it is worth our time to consider if we have been taught, or if we believe, or worse, if we are teaching that same false gospel. Think about and ask yourself these questions.

1. Do you believe that you are saved by grace through faith alone and not by works or anything of yourself? Ephesians 2:8-9
2. Do you believe that after you are saved you must do certain religious practices to be in good-standing with God?
3. What are the dooties and don'ties of your current religious practices?
4. Do you believe if you practice the dooties and don'ties, your relationship with God will improve?
5. Do you feel justified (made righteous) before God if you pray and read your Bible regularly or do you feel guilty when it's been awhile since you last did?
6. Do you feel better about yourself before God when you are "living right" or doing good deeds?
7. In Galatians 5:4 (above) Paul wrote that when we feel righteous before God because of law-keeping, we become estranged from Christ. Do you sometimes feel estranged from Christ?
8. Many Christians think the key to not feeling estranged from Christ is to stop sinning and to do our Christian disciplines more consistently. What Paul is saying is the complete opposite. Can you see/explain this? When the cure we apply is actually causing the estrangement, how can we be free?
9. Think about this. In Galatians 2:21, Paul is saying that if we could be made righteous before God by keeping laws then Jesus didn't need to die. His sacrifice was in vain. Only by grace through faith in Jesus are we made or kept righteous. Consider this sincerely. Did Jesus die in vain? Are we able to save ourselves or be made righteous by law?

