

Easy As 1-2-3



Galatians Chapter 5

It's as Easy As 1-2-3. Select where you would like to begin and enjoy!

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Overall Understanding

Galatians 5¹

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

If one were to open the book not knowing the context and only read this one verse, one might conclude that when Paul speaks of the yoke of bondage to sin and that we need to stand fast against sin. BUT THAT ISN'T AT ALL WHAT HE IS TALKING ABOUT.

We will discuss its meaning next but let first look at this verse. Notice the word "therefore." This means, considering all that he had written so far...because of that, stand fast.

The main point he has made so far is this: righteousness is by faith in the One who loved us and gave Himself for us and not by the law. If righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died needlessly.

Stand fast means to keep holding one's ground. Keep standing firm in this truth: righteousness is by faith not law.

Entangled again with the yoke of bondage refers to the law. The yoke of bondage is slavery. Don't let yourselves be entangled with

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yoke on bondage to the law. It takes effort on our parts the stand fast against law-righteousness. It is everywhere in the church today.

² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Some of the Gentile believers were becoming circumcised to be even more righteous. Paul tells them that not only does circumcision profit them, but circumcision is a sign that one is to keep the whole law. He is presenting both as negatives.

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

Estranged from Christ means that they had been rendered entirely useless. The KJV says, "Christ has become of no effect unto you." They were still Christians, but they were walking in the flesh in that they were depending on the law to make them righteous. The Christian life is by grace through faith, not law.

⁵ For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

The Spirit-led life is by grace through faith. We live in the realm of faith working through love, not by the law.

⁷ You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion does not *come* from Him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Paul knew who. He was asking them to think about it. The false teachings they were receiving did not come from Jesus.

Adding law to faith ruins it all just a drop of deadly poison contaminates fresh clean water.

After all of this, Paul expresses confidence in them that they will stay in the correct teachings, and the “whoever his is” will bear judgment for his false teaching.

11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. **12** I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

Paul suffered persecution from the Jews because he taught that we are not under the law of Moses. (See Acts 21.)

Verse 12 is saying just what it looks like it is saying: amputate their privy parts. In other words, go all the way. Don't just circumcise yourself...

13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Paul is using the same word for flesh as he has up to this point. “The flesh” is trying to be made righteous by law not by faith in Christ. “The flesh” was also used to refer to the son of Hagar, the flesh, vs. the son of promise. Now Paul speaks of the flesh as the behavior he soon will list as the works of the flesh.

We are set free from the law which is why we are free from sin.

Romans 6:14

Sin will not have dominion over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.

Paul is saying, “You are free from the law, but don't use that freedom to sin. Instead, love one another.

14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

Jesus one command was to love one another as He loved us. Even the law teaches us to love our neighbors as ourselves. If you've been in a church for several years, you know the need to remind

people not to bite and devour one another. You are free. Now, love each other.

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

This may be the first time this verse has been presented to you in context. So fasten your seatbelt.

Paul has been pleading with them to reject law as a means of righteousness. Spirit, faith, and grace are nearly equated. Law, works, and flesh are also nearly interchangeable in what he has said thus far. And the two groups are opposed to each other and used that way.

It is not possible that when Paul says, "Walk in the Spirit," that he is saying, "Live a really good life. Pray. Read the Bible. Go to church." He is saying, live by faith not law. To "walk in the Spirit" is to live free from walking in the law.

17 For the flesh lusts (sets its heart upon) against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Hear this in context. The flesh/law/works lust against the Spirit/faith/grace. The Spirit/faith/grace fights against the flesh/law/works. When someone lives by the law, they cannot do what they want to do (implied, what is correct/right).

If you doubt the above paragraph, Paul makes it perfectly clear: If you are led by the Spirit, YOU ARE NOT UNDER LAW. Maybe read that again. To walk in the Spirit means you are not under the law.

Read Romans 7 again with this in mind. This is where Paul says that he wasn't able to do the good he wanted nor to refrain from doing what he wanted. Look at the context.

Roman 7:7-11

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless

the law had said, “You shall not covet.”⁸ But sin, taking opportunity **by the commandment**, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead.⁹ **I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.**¹⁰ And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to **bring death**.¹¹ For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Paul is not describing what we are to accept as the normal Christian life, that of constantly struggling to do what is right and not do what is wrong. In the chapter before this one Paul wrote: Sin shall not have dominion over you because you are NOT UNDER LAW BUT UNDER GRACE. Why would he go on to say he struggled with sin?

There was a time he struggled, but he realized it was that he, as a faithful Jew, was coming back under the commandment, the law. He was walking in the flesh/in the law, and not according to grace.

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are:

If we interpret the following list out of context and see them as a DO NOT DO list—that is to say, the law, we miss the point entirely.

Paul is saying if you walk according to the law, these works will be evident in your life. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15 that “the power (dunamis) of the law is sin.” When we live by rules and regulations you will either succeed and become self-righteous or fail and live defenseless against sin. To succeed or fail under the law are both self-righteousness and bring death. These are the sorts of things that become evident in the life of someone under the law:

adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

An unbeliever or a Christian who has come under law-righteousness will have the above works in their lives.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is

Ahh, there is hope. This hope doesn't come by refraining from the works of the flesh, but by living in the Spirit. Now, "living in the Spirit" does NOT mean being a good person and obeying the law. God forbid! Living in the Spirit in context of Paul's letter is living by faith in Jesus and not incorporating the law into a means of righteousness. Let us remind ourselves of what Paul so eloquently wrote in verse 2:21: I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through law, then Christ died in vain.

When we walk in the Spirit; that is to say, when we put our faith in Jesus for our righteousness fully depending on that faith to save us and living by faith, not mixing in law but standing firmly against it, these fruit result,

love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Not even the law of Moses would oppose the above.

²⁴ And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We who believe are Christ's. We have already crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Does Paul mean the law here or the desire to sin? Likely since they are so intertwined.

²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

If you are righteous by faith not law, then live by faith not law.

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Apparently, the teaching of adding law to grace, the "other" gospel, was causing strife among them. Lay that aside. Love one another as Jesus loves you.

For Further Study

Do You How Free from Law You Are?

Do You Know How Free from ALL Law You Are?

Topics Coming Up in Galatians Chapter Six

Paul gives some practical instruction for the body of Christ in light of all he said.

He gives a final appeal to focus on the cross of Christ and not the law.