

Title: Don't Let Them Kidnap Grace! / or "Can a Christian Fall from Grace? – YES!"

Text: Galatians 5:1-12

Subject: Grace; freedom in Christ; legalism

I. Introduction

A. Attention-Getter

1. Drugs for compulsive shopping – We like to deny any responsibility for our own behavior.
 - a. Deceived by *pharmakeia*.
2. But we like to take credit for anything that goes right.
3. Yogi Berra:
 - a. "It ain't over 'til it's over."
 - b. This is probably the single most famous quote from baseball legend Yogi Berra. It's simple but elegant and must have come to him in a rare moment of linguistic clarity, because he is much better known as the master of confusion and doublespeak like this:
 - (1) "This is like *deja vu* all over again."
 - (2) "You can observe a lot just by watching."
 - (3) "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there."
 - (4) "I knew I was going to take the wrong train, so I left early."
 - (5) "Baseball is 90% mental -- the other half is physical."
 - (6) "A nickel isn't worth a dime today."
 - (7) "It was impossible to get a conversation going; everybody was talking too much."
 - (8) "If you come to a fork in the road, take it."
 - (9) "If the fans don't come out to the ball park, you can't stop them."
 - (10) "It ain't the heat; it's the humidity."
 - (11) "You should always go to other people's funerals; otherwise, they won't come to yours."
 - (12) "I didn't really say everything I said."
 - c. Yogi's not the only guy to ever get confused though. It can be a confusing world out there, even the most important things in life can be confusing. The whole point of Paul's letter to the Galatians was to clear up some confusion that was the result of false teaching that was going on in their churches.

B. Textual

1. Judaizers made a cafeteria out of the Old Testament – pick and chose what they wanted.
 - a. Quakers don't believe in violence – one found a burglar in his house at night – "Friend, I would do thee no harm for all the world, but thee standest where I am about to shoot." (Tan, 3045)
2. Would keep circumcision – one time deal – and holidays. But ignored the

weightier matters of the law. In fact, the law is powerless to help you keep the duties of the law.

- a. Tan, 3035 – More and more people want to decriminalize behavior (marijuana, prostitution, gambling, pornography, etc.). Organization called LLLL (Less Lawlessness Through Less Laws). “Hiring policemen, imposing curfews, building new prisons, enlarging the judiciary—these measures only treat the symptoms of the crime wave. . . . If we’re every going to have a genuine improvement in the situation we’ve got to attack the root cause of crime – the laws.” – Bargood Fie – LLLL spokesman.
3. Took credit for their righteousness and ignored those things they could never do.
4. The Judaizers had come to kidnap Grace! Before they just gave up grace, Paul wanted them to realize what they would be giving up to go back to a life of Do’s and Don’ts and legalistic provisions.
5. Legalism has ALWAYS BEEN A PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH:
 - a. Galatians 1:6 "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:"
 - b. Galatians 3:1 "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"
 - c. Galatians 4:11 "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."
 - d. Galatians 4:20-21 "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?"
 - e. Galatians 5:7 "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?"
 - f. The church at Galatia had those who were guilty of mingling grace and works. They taught that in order for a person to be a Christian they had to believe in Christ by faith, but also had to submit to and observe the rituals and regulations of religion – i.e. circumcision, the Levitical Law.
 - g. "What must I forsake?" a young man asked. "Colored clothes for one thing. Get rid of everything in your wardrobe that is not white. Stop sleeping on a soft pillow. Sell your musical instruments and don't eat any more white bread. You cannot, if you are sincere about obeying Christ, take warm baths or shave your beard. To shave is to lie against him who created us, to attempt to improve on his work." Quaint, isn't it -- this example of extra-biblical scruples? And perhaps amusing. The list has constantly shifted over the 1,800 years since this one was actually recorded. Jim Peterson, Living Proof, NavPress, 1989, p. 106.
 - h. There's something comfortable about reducing Christianity to a list of do's and don'ts, whether your list comes from mindless fundamentalism or mindless liberalism: you always know where

you stand, and this helps reduce anxiety. Do's-and-don'ts-ism has the advantage that you don't need wisdom. You don't have to think subtly or make hard choices. You don't have to relate personally to a demanding and loving Lord. - Robert C. Roberts in *The Reformed Journal* (Feb. 1987). *Christianity Today*, Vol. 31, no. 9.

- i. There are people (in churches) who do not want us to be free. They don't want us to be free before God, accepted just as we are by his grace. They don't want us to be free to express our faith originally and creatively in the world. They ... insist that all look alike, talk alike and act alike, thus validating one another's worth. Without being aware of it we become anxious about what others will say about us, obsessively concerned about what others think we should do. We no longer live the good news but anxiously try to memorize and recite the script that someone else has assigned to us. We may be secure, but we will not be free. – Eugene Peterson.
- j. **Rigidity is the trademark of legalism, the archenemy of any church on the move. Let legalism have enough rope, and there will be a lynching of all new ideas, fresh thinking, and innovative programs. – Charles R. Swindoll (1934-)**
- k. **It was Billy Sunday who said, "Some persons think they have to look like a hedgehog to be pious." – LACK OF JOY!!!!!!!**
- l. The bite of legalism spreads paralyzing venom into the body of Christ. Its poison blinds our eyes, dulls our edge, and arouses pride in our hearts. Soon our love is eclipsed as it turns into a mental clipboard with a long checklist. Charles R. Swindoll (1934-)
- m. A bishop said to Louis XI of France, "Make an iron cage for all those who do not think as we do, an iron cage in which the captive can neither lie down nor stand straight up." The awful instrument of punishment was fashioned. After a while, the bishop offended Louis XI, and for fourteen years he was in that same cage and could neither lie down nor stand up. It is a poor rule that will not work both ways. "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." - Rev. W. W. Landrum

C. Relational

- 1. But the reality is that we ARE responsible for our behavior.
- 2. And the reality is that if there is any righteousness in our lives worthy of being accepted by God – it isn't a righteousness of works but of grace.
- 3. "Your doctrine of grace and liberty is dangerous!" Paul's enemies argued. "Why, if Christians are free from the Law, they will live wicked lives! We need the Law to control them!"
 - a. So people have argued down through the centuries, little realizing that grace, not law, is the greatest teacher and "controller" in the world (Titus 2:11-12).
 - b. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, **12Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,***

we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

- c. You won't become a rebel to God's standards living in Grace – no one becomes a rebel who depends on God, yields to God's Spirit and His will, lives for others and is looking for a way to glorify God. But legalists eventually rebel because they are living in bondage, depending on the flesh, living for self, and seeking the praise of men rather than the glory of God.
4. So let's look at what you give up by living life as a legalist instead of living by grace. Then let's take a closer look at what it means to live by grace.

II. **The Slave – You Lose Your Liberty (5:1)**

- A. Yoke of slavery
 1. Acts 15:10 – *Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?*
 2. You're going to wear someone's yoke, but Christ's yoke (Matthew 11:28-30) is easy and His burden is light.
 - a. EASY = "kind, gracious"
 - b. Yoke of sin (unsaved) / bondage (legalist) / liberating yoke of Christ – the "graced" Christian.
- B. God's grace TEACHES us how to keep His law (doesn't negate it) and removes from us the external force to keep us in His will. We obey because we want to, because we love Him.
- C. Stand for liberty or you'll lose it!
- D. To abandon grace is like losing your adulthood and going back to grade school where someone else makes all the decisions for you.

III. **The Debtor – You Lose Your Wealth (5:2-6)**

- A. "It profits you nothing. . . a debtor to do the whole Law . . . No effect unto you . . . fallen from grace."
- B. We owed a debt we could not pay.
- C. God graciously forgives (regardless of our initial debt – see Luke 7:36-50)
- D. We become spiritually rich when we're saved.
 1. "Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled My Soul" – "blessings supernal"
 - a. God's grace (Ephesians 1:7) – *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*
 - b. Riches of His glory – Philippians 4:19
 - c. Ephesians 3:8 – "unsearchable riches of Christ."
 - d. Colossians 2:3 – "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"
- E. Judaizers want us to believe we are missing something if we aren't practicing some rules / regulations with its demands and disciplines. Law adds nothing because nothing can be added to grace. (Feel sorry for my friends that have to keep laws to be spiritual or maintain their salvation – they are trying to add to the

grace of God.”

- F. The Law puts you in spiritual bankruptcy – because the debt only increases.
- G. Contrast:
 - 1. Live by grace – depend on God and His abundant supply
 - 2. Live by Law – depend on my puny resources; get by without God’s supply. Paul says that to trust in circumcision in these circumstances to bring on some blessing; to curry favor with God – will rob them of the blessings of grace.
 - 3. If you are going to live by the Law, you have to live the WHOLE law! (If you keep the Sabbath, you need to keep Passover, too.)
 - a. Galatians 3:10 – *10For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*
 - b. Deuteronomy 27:26 – *6Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.*
 - 4. So if you’re going to get to heaven:
 - a. by good works THEN ALL OF YOUR WORKS HAD BETTER BE PERFECT.
 - b. By comparison to others, THEN THERE BETTER NOT BE ANYONE BETTER!
- H. Illustration – Brian stops someone to give them a traffic ticket – “But officer, I haven’t robbed anyone; I’ve never committed adultery; I’ve never cheated on my tax return.” – but they are still a lawbreaker! No amount of obedience can ever erase the fact that you broke the law.
- I. So **how can we “fall from grace?”** Paul isn’t suggesting the that Galatians have lost their salvation – because that isn’t possible.
 - 1. Hebrews 10:14; Ecclesiastes 3:14
 - 2. Jesus is the Good Shepherd – contrary to those who say “but I can lose myself” – an insult to the Shepherd. **Legalism OFFENDS God because it says, “You are not enough. You need my help.”**
 - a. Once they submit to the rite of circumcision...
 - b. they confess that they think Christ is insufficient,
 - c. ...the Spirit is not a good guide for living,
 - d. ...that Moses needs to be obeyed for acceptance with God, and,
 - e. ...that one needs, in effect, to become a Jew to be a child of God.
 - 3. But the truth is, when Christ died for our sins to repair the injury we had done to God’s honor, our debt was totally covered! Any effort to increase the deposit made for us by Christ at Calvary is an insult to its infinite value. So when we try to improve on it, we, in effect, reject it. We are always to depend on grace, not law. We are always to depend on God alone, and not our efforts.
 - 4. Paul nine times calls the Galatians “brethren” and often uses the pronoun “we” to include himself (see 4:28, 31). And 4:6 proves that they are Christians!
 - 5. 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).

6. MacArthur wrong when he writes, “They were exposed first hand to every truth and blessing of the gospel of grace but then turned away. They had “been enlightened,” had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” and had even “been made partakers of the Holy Spirit” by witnessing His divine ministry in the lives of believers. But they refused to stand fully with Christ by placing their trust in Him, and they fell away, losing all prospect of repentance and therefore of salvation (Heb. 6:4-6).” **EXPLAIN THIS PASSAGE!**
7. Some translations incorrectly put “severed from Christ.” That cannot be right – see end of Romans 8!!!! Instead, it means that Christ’s blessings are “rendered inoperative; made of none effect” in your life!!!!
8. So “fallen from grace” doesn’t mean that they have lost their salvation – but rather that they are not living in the sphere of God’s grace – they are missing God’s blessings because you cannot mix Law and Grace.
 - a. Galatians “bewitched” by false teachers (3:1)
 - b. Disobeying the truth
 - c. Gone to another Gospel (1:6-9)
 - d. Turned back to elements of the Old Religion (4:9)
 - e. Entangled with a yoke of bondage – **robbed of all the good things that Jesus Christ can do for them!** Why? Because God won’t give His glory to another.
- J. Grace depends on the power of the Spirit; Law depends on yourself. Faith works (James 2:14-26) but no flesh can ever accomplish what faith can.
- K. **Faith works through LOVE – but the flesh can’t manufacture that! Flesh produces selfishness and rivalry!**
- L. Law was useful to prepare us for 1st coming of Christ, but only grace can make you glad to see the 2nd coming!
- M. We can never get God’s righteousness by keeping rules / regulations.
- N. **Circumcision** – Has great health benefits – just reaffirmed last year in a new medical study.
 1. Illustration of “legalism” gone awry – In The Grace Awakening, Charles Swindoll tells of a missionary family who literally was forced off the mission field over peanut butter. They were sent to a location where peanut butter was not available, so they asked friends back in the States to occasionally send them some. The problem was that the other missionaries considered it a mark of spirituality not to have peanut butter. The newer missionary family considered this a matter of differing opinions, so they continued to receive and enjoy their peanut butter.
 2. But the pressure from the other missionaries to conform became so intense, the newer family finally gave up and left the mission field. Though the missionary families’ in this particular place may not have intended it, they communicated a message that said that sacrificing peanut butter will make you a better Christian and a receiver of God’s blessings. This is was the same kind of thinking the Judaizers had pressed upon the

Galatians.

- O. John Piper wrote: *“Works wants the thrill of feeling itself overcome an obstacle. Faith wants the thrill of feeling God overcome an obstacle. Works longs for the joy of being glorified as capable and strong and smart. Faith longs for the joy of seeing God glorified for His strength and His wisdom. In its religious form, works accepts the challenge of morality, conquers its obstacles through great exertion and offers the victory to God for His gratitude and applause and recompense. Faith also accepts the challenge of morality, but only as an occasion to become the instrument of God’s power, and when the victory is achieved, faith rejoices that all the glory and thanks belong to God.”*
1. The GOAL – GIVING GOD THE GLORY!!!
 2. MODEL PRAYER – 1ST REQUEST – “HALLOWED (GLORIFIED” BE THY NAME)”

IV. The Runner – You Lose Your Direction (5:7-12)

- A. Contestant in games had to be a citizen. **So talking to the saved here.**
1. We don’t run to be saved; we do because we are already saved. Acts 20:24 – Paul stayed his course – *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*
- B. Galatians initially ran well.
1. Received the Gospel
 2. Received Paul as the Lord’s messenger (4:14)
 3. Received the Spirit
 4. Willing to sacrifice (4:15)
- C. But (5:7) – Someone ran into their lane to try to get them off course. Didn’t stay in the assigned lane. A spiritual “detour.”
- D. Insidious, “crept”
1. Leaven – Just a little bit leavens everything.
 2. Standards are OK, but when they become a test or evidence of spirituality, that is wrong. Then we become puffed up (1 Corinthians 5:2 – “*2And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.*” – interesting that this sin was condoned and people applauded their “tolerance” while speaking in tongues as a sign of supposed spirituality.
- E. Paul wished the offenders were “cut off” – “castrated”, “amputated” – in other words – rendered powerless to create more “children of slavery” – **CALLED PAUL’S CUTTING REMARKS!**
- F. We must purge out the leaven.

V. Conclusion

- A. Living in the sphere of grace – free, rich, and running on course
- B. Living in the sphere of the law – slave, pauper, and on a detour
- C. In January 1991, Stephen Shoemaker was being deployed to Operation Desert Storm. Before boarding the C-141 transport at Shaw Air Force Base in South

Carolina, he had to go through tight security. After a meticulous x-ray examination of his carry-on bag, he removed all metal objects from his uniform and was finally able to pass through the detector without setting off the alarm. "Just out of curiosity," Shoemaker asked the airman operating the checkpoint, "Why did you make me go through all that?" "We want to be sure you aren't carrying any weapons on board," he said to Shoemaker as he handed back his M-16 rifle.

1. The legalistic mentality will show itself, sooner or later.
 2. And the Galatians will see the nonsense of it eventually.
 3. But Paul wants to make sure they get rid of it now.
- D. Sometimes I hear Christians complaining. I know that you find that hard to believe. I often hear the words, "It is a shame that more aren't committed to this..." and they fill in the subject matter. But even that complaint betrays a works-based attitude instead of doing what you desire to do humbly. Just keep on doing it, without complaining. Do it because you want to, not because you have to and experience again the refreshment of God's Spirit. **For believers, everything that we know that ought to be done, can be done freely—in joy.**
- E. What Matters?
1. A surgical procedure doesn't matter, a dress code doesn't matter, a special diet doesn't matter, only faith matters.
 2. Yes, when that faith expresses itself through love, some of those externals may need to change, and we'll look at that in a few moments, but those externals are not the main thing, the only thing that matters is a life changing faith in Christ.
 3. Specifically it is trusting that the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross is sufficient to pay for all your sins, it is understanding that there is nothing you can do to add to what Christ has done, that your behavior can never merit God's favor. Faith is understanding that and then humbly accepting the offer of salvation.
 4. Does a change take place in your life and behavior when you reach out in faith? Always. Does that change earn salvation? Never. Why? Because Faith is what counts, Faith is the only thing that counts.
 5. (I do believe that real God honoring faith will change the way you dress, etc.)
- F. **The ENEMY WANTS US KEPT IN A PRISON OF LEGALISM, BUT GOD WANTS TO SET US FREE!!!!**
1. When Howard Rutledge's plane was shot down over Vietnam, he parachuted into a little village and was immediately attacked, stripped naked, and imprisoned.
 2. For the next seven years he endured brutal treatment. His food was little more than a bowl of rotting soup with a glob of pig fat – skin, hair, and all. Rats the size of cats and spiders as big as fists scurried around him. He was frequently cold, alone, and tortured. He was sometimes shackled in excruciating positions and left for days in his own waste with carnivorous insects boring through his oozing sores. How did he keep his sanity?
 3. In his book, In the Presence of Mine Enemies, Rutledge gives a powerful

tes-timony as to the importance of Scripture memory. Some excerpts follow:

- a. Now the sights and sounds and smells of death were all around me. My hun-ger for spiritual food soon outdid my hunger for a steak. Now I wanted to know about that part of me that will never die. Now I wanted to talk about God and Christ and the church. But in Heartbreak solitary confinement there was no pastor, no Sunday-school teacher, no Bible, no hymnbook, no community of believers to guide and sustain me. I had completely neglected the spiritual dimension of my life. It took prison to show me how empty life is without God, and so I had to go back in my memory to those Sunday-school days in Tulsa, Oklahoma. If I couldn't have a Bible and hymnbook, I would try to rebuild them in my mind.
- b. I tried desperately to recall snatches of Scripture, sermons, gospel choruses from childhood, and hymns we sang in church. The first three dozen songs were relatively easy. Every day I'd try to recall another verse or a new song. One night there was a huge thunderstorm, it was the season of the monsoon rains, and a bolt of lightning knocked out the lights and plunged the entire prison into dark-ness. I had been going over hymn tunes in my mind and stopped to lie down and sleep when the rains began to fall. The darkened prison echoed with wave after wave of water. Suddenly, I was humming my thirty-seventh song, one I had entirely forgotten since childhood.
 - (1) Showers of blessings, / Showers of blessings we need! / Mercy drops round us are falling, / But for the showers we plead
 - (2) I no sooner had recalled those words than another song popped into my mind, the theme song of a radio program my mother listened to when I was just a kid.
 - (3) Heavenly sunshine, heavenly sunshine / Flooding my soul with glory divine. / Heavenly sunshine, heavenly sunshine, / Hallelujah! Jesus is mine!
- c. Most of my fellow prisoners were struggling like me to rediscover faith, to re-construct workable value systems. Harry Jenkins lived in a cell nearby during much of my captivity. Often we would use those priceless seconds of communication in a day to help one another recall Scripture verses and stories.
- d. One day I heard him whistle. When the cellblock was clear, I waited for his communication, thinking it to be some important news. I got a new one, he said. I don't know where it comes from or why I remember it, but it's a story about Ruth and Naomi. He then went on to tell that ancient story of Ruth following Naomi into a hostile new land and finding God's presence and protection there. Harry's urgent news was 2,000 years old. It may not seem

important to prison life, but we lived off that story for days, rebuilding it, thinking about what it meant, and applying God's ancient words to our predicament.

- e. Everyone knew the Lord's Prayer and the Twenty-third Psalm, but the camp favorite verse that everyone recalled first and quoted most often is found in the Gospel of John, third chapter, sixteenth verse. With Harry's help, I even reconstructed the seventeenth and eighteenth verses.
- f. How I struggled to recall those Scriptures and hymns! I had spent my first eighteen years in a Southern Baptist Sunday school, and I was amazed at how much I could recall. Regrettably, I had not seen then the importance of memorizing verses from the Bible, or learning gospel songs. Now, when I needed them, it was too late. I never dreamed that I would spend almost seven years (five of them in solitary confinement) in a prison in North Vietnam or that thinking about one memorized verse could have made the whole day bearable.
- g. One portion of a verse I did remember was, "Thy word have I hid in my heart." How often I wished I had really worked to hide God's Word in my heart. I put my mind to work. Every day I planned to accomplish certain tasks. I woke early, did my physical exercises, cleaned up as best I could, then began a period of devotional prayer and meditation. I would pray, hum hymns silently, quote Scripture, and think about what the verse meant to me.
- h. **Remember, we weren't playing games. The enemy knew that the best way to break a man's resistance was to crush his spirit in a lonely cell. In other words, some of our POWs after solitary confinement lay down in a fetal position and died.** All this talk of Scripture and hymns may seem boring to some, but it was the way we conquered our enemy and overcame the power of death around us.

G. Your choice?

a.