

Series: Galatians

Title: Liberty from Fatal Consequences

Text: Gal 5: 2-4

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Galatians 5: 1: Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

This passage deals with the motive of our heart: why we do what we do. The outward work they were making a necessity was circumcision and the law of Moses. But it was legalism because the motive of the heart was for justification and sanctification rather than faith in Christ constrained by the motive of Christ's love.

That is the difference between newness of spirit and the oldness of the letter. Oldness of the letter looked to outward circumcision as a work to bring one under the old covenant of works; the motive was salvation by works. But God gave outward circumcision to Abraham as a token reminder of what God had done in his heart so that through faith Abraham was brought into the everlasting covenant of grace.

Romans 2: 28: For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Newness of spirit is worship in the new spirit given of God. The inward motive affects what we do in our bodily members but faith and love is in the heart in spirit. The same is true of oldness of the letter. If the heart motive be legal conviction then the outward is sin though the act may be good. Conversely, for one God has given a new heart, the outward may fall short, as it always does, but if be done in faith constrained by the love of Christ, it is accepted in the perfection of Christ. That is the difference between newness of spirit and the oldness of the letter. God looks on the heart and only God can make our heart pure and keep us cleansed.

The devil is a master deceiver and our fleshly hearts are too. As easily as the Galatian's were being beguiled with the old covenant law, we can become entangled even using the doctrine of grace and the commands of our Redeemer. If doing is from legal convictions so that we put confidence in our doing then it is the motive, not the command, that makes it bondage or liberty.

What is the danger?

Proposition: The Spirit of God gives three fatal consequences of a legal heart. By looking at the opposite of these we will see why it is essential that we believe on Christ and are motivated in heart constrained by his love. Only Christ gives liberty from these fatal consequences.

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Here are the three fatal consequences of legalism.

One, Christ becomes unprofitable to us—**Galatians 5: 2: Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.**

Two, if in our heart something we do is a necessity rather than Christ being our all then we must keep the whole law—**Galatians 5: 3: For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.**

Three, if a man can trust his works, and go on in that, it is not Christ working effectually in his heart; he has left grace for works—**Galatians 5: 4: Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.**

NO PROFIT

Galatians 5: 2: Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

If in the heart a sinner makes one work a necessity for salvation then Christ shall profit him nothing. Opposite to this, Christ is profitable to God's elect redeemed by Christ who in newness of spirit believes on Christ alone.

Christ is the believer's profit as our Prophet. He is our Counsellor (Is 9:9), the Messenger of the Covenant (Mal 3: 1), the Morning Star (Rev 22: 16), the Lamp who lightens our darkness (2 Sam 22:29).

Isaiah 48:17: Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I *am* the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way *that* thou shouldest go.

Christ is profitable to his people as our Prophet by revealing himself and giving us spiritual understanding all our days. Christ sends the Holy Spirit who regenerates and continually renews us inwardly. He does so by turning our hearts to Christ in God-given faith.

2 Corinthians 3: 15: But even unto this day, when Moses is read [when all the word is read], the vail is upon their heart. 16: Nevertheless when [the heart] shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away. 17: Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

Christ profits by teaching us to put no confidence in our sinful flesh and makes us rejoice in him alone! He teaches us things seen are temporal but things unseen are eternal (2 Cor 4: 18) by giving us faith to we see him who is invisible, as did Moses.

In the natural realm, we cannot think with another man's mind or know another man's heart. But when Christ is made Wisdom unto us, he gives us his Spirit to know him and the things freely given to us of God.

2 Corinthians 2: 11: For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. 12: Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13: Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14: But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. 15: But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself

is judged of no man. 16: For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

What a gift! By the Spirit of Christ we “have the mind of Christ.” It means Christ our Prophet gives us spiritual discernment. In his light we see light (Ps 36: 9). In Christ we find hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3). Christ alone makes us wise unto salvation so that we rest in his unchanging love.

But if one can turn from Christ to his works Christ our Prophet shall profit him nothing. The sinner whose heart finds profit in his doing receives no profit from Christ. Christ only profits sinners who know that their flesh profits nothing.

Brethren, we know this by experience. In those seasons when we begin to look to ourselves or to our brethren then we lose sight of the profit we have in Christ. Our assurance fades. We begin to become entangled in the yoke of bondage. But our Prophet sanctifies the gospel to our hearts granting repentance from ourselves and our works to believe him alone. We find in him all our profit. Christ is our Salvation and we are complete in him.

A DEBTOR TO DO THE WHOLE LAW

Galatians 5: 3: For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

If one makes even one work necessary for salvation then he becomes a debtor to do the impossible—the whole law! The law requires obedience not only to the letter of the law, but also in spirit. The law forbids not only stealing but even coveting what belongs to another (Ex 20: 15, 17). By one sinful thought we become guilty of the entire law of God.

Yet, Christ profits his people as our High Priest. He profited his people by making satisfaction to the law for us. He fulfilled all righteousness for his people by his obedience, meaning, Christ obeyed the law for us. Also, our Substitute put away our sin satisfying justice by being made a curse for us.

Hebrews 9: 26: Now once in the end of the world has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself...[there is one judgment we all face]...28: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

As Paul asked, “Do you not hear the law?” Behold on the cross what the law demands of us. We must obey the whole law actively loving God and our brethren with perfect self-denying love. Christ did so by laying down his life under its curse. Christ alone is the Righteousness of God! He alone fulfilled all righteousness for his people on the cross.

The law declares that from the top of our head to the sole of our feet we are wounds, and bruises and putrifying sores (Is 1: 6). For his people, Christ took our place. He was wounded for our transgressions. His body was bruised and broken for our iniquities. From top of his head where they placed the crown of thorns to the sole of his feet nailed to the cross, Christ bore the curse his people deserved being forsaken of God. But by satisfying justice, with his stripes we are healed. In Christ crucified our body of sin is destroyed so that we are dead to sin before God. In Christ we are dead to the law and that first husband is dead to us so that we are lawfully married to Christ. In Christ death is dead to us because we are risen in Christ

and death has no more dominion over him. (Read Romans 6 and 7). Therefore, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe on him (Rom 10: 1-3).

But if a sinner is moved by legal motives to put himself and his works in the place of Christ then he is giving himself the glory that belongs to Christ. Therefore, Christ our High Priest shall profit him nothing. He is a debtor to do the whole law of God.

Yet, even when we begin to become entangled in that yoke due to our pharisaical old man, for the believer, Christ profits us as our High Priest by his intercession at God's right hand. He is our Advocate with the Father. Christ's blood is not only a sacrifice whereby God is appeased and atonement made but Christ is a propitiation whereby we are brought into union with God and God is at peace with us. Christ is our mercy seat where we come and confess our sins and ask mercy so that God is faithful and just to forgive us.

A believer honors the law by confessing our sin to God from a broken heart. Doing so we acknowledge that the law is holy, just and good. That is what Paul said in Romans 7. We honor the law and fulfill it by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ who fulfilled it for us. And Christ keeps us doing so. Christ profits us by his blood purging our conscience from dead works. He profits by ever living to make intercession for us as our Righteousness before God. He profits by coming in Spirit in tender mercy, keeping us trusting his Righteousness alone.

FALLEN FROM GRACE

Galatians 5: 4: Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

If a person can put trust in their works then it is not by Christ working effectually in them but by their own sinful flesh. Doing so they have left grace for works salvation, proving they never were born of the Spirit.

Romans 11: 6: And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.

But Christ profits his people as our King. His kingdom is a kingdom of grace, ruled by grace. The law of his kingdom is faith and love. Under the old testament the king was also the judge. God the Father has committed all judgment to Christ our King. As our King Christ is all-powerful to get the gospel to his child so that he judges us in the court of our conscience renewing us to know that we re saved and kept by his free and sovereign grace. Our King judge's righteous judgment for his people. He silences satan's accusations and puts down all our enemies.

He keeps us looking to him who died in our room and stead. By grace, our King suffered that we might reign with him as kings. Heaven was shut to him that we might ascend into God's very presence with access to his throne of grace.

Samson ate honey out of the dead lion. By grace, Christ keeps us beholding him crucified in our place. He declares he is all our profit. He keeps us knowing he is all our Righteousness and the law agrees we are righteous in him. He keeps us knowing salvation is all of grace. He keeps us in grace giving us liberty from these fatal consequences. So that we confess from a pure heart, "*How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than **honey** to my mouth!*" (Ps 119:103).

Amen!