

## The Futility of Trusting in Works Galatians 5:2-6

### I. You are separated from the truth (v.2)

#### A. There is no spiritual benefit in circumcision (works).

- "Circumcision and everything like it belong to the rule of the *paidagogos*, not to the dominion of sonship; to return to them is to deny what has been done at the cross."<sup>1</sup>

#### B. One cannot trust in Christ and his own efforts (works of the Law or tradition). [Rom. 9:30-32]

- "The Bible goes to great lengths to combat legalism and establish us in grace. If you are a legalist, you will never enjoy grace or know real spiritual freedom...the Christian life will be a burden to you, not a joy."<sup>2</sup>

### II. You are snared by the law (v.3)

#### A. Keeping any part of the Law implies that one must keep all of the Law. [Gal. 3:11-12; Js. 2:10-11; Rom. 9:30-32]

- "Circumcision was prescribed under the Abrahamic Covenant, but it was also prescribed under the Mosaic Covenant (Lev. 12:3), though the significance was not the same. Under the Abrahamic Covenant, it was mandatory for Jews only and it was a sign of their Jewishness. Under the Law of Moses, it was mandatory for both Jews and Gentiles and it was a means of submission to the law. It obligated the one circumcised to keep the whole law..."<sup>3</sup>
- "You cannot take the principle of law [works] and the principle of grace [faith alone] and blend those two together. They are like oil and water—they will never mix. If salvation be of works, it is not of grace; and if it be of grace, it is not of works."<sup>4</sup>

### III. You are severed from Christ (v.4)

#### A. Embracing the Law means letting go of grace and Christ. [Rom. 7:2]

##### a. Paul is not speaking of loss of salvation:

- "Paul is not dealing with the security of the believer but with the contrasting ways of grace and law, works and faith, as means of salvation. He is not teaching that a person who has once been justified can lose his righteous standing before God and become lost again by being circumcised or otherwise legalistic. The Bible knows nothing of becoming unjustified...Paul's primary

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point in this passage, as throughout the letter, is that law and grace cannot be mixed.”<sup>5</sup>

- b. The believer is eternal secure in salvation [Jn. 6:37-40, 10:27-29; Rom. 8:29-31, 38-39]
  - “Paul exulted in the confidence that nothing, including any other created thing (which has to include yourself), can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ (Rom. 8:38–39). And again he declared: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). The consistency of God’s character guarantees a secure salvation.”<sup>6</sup>

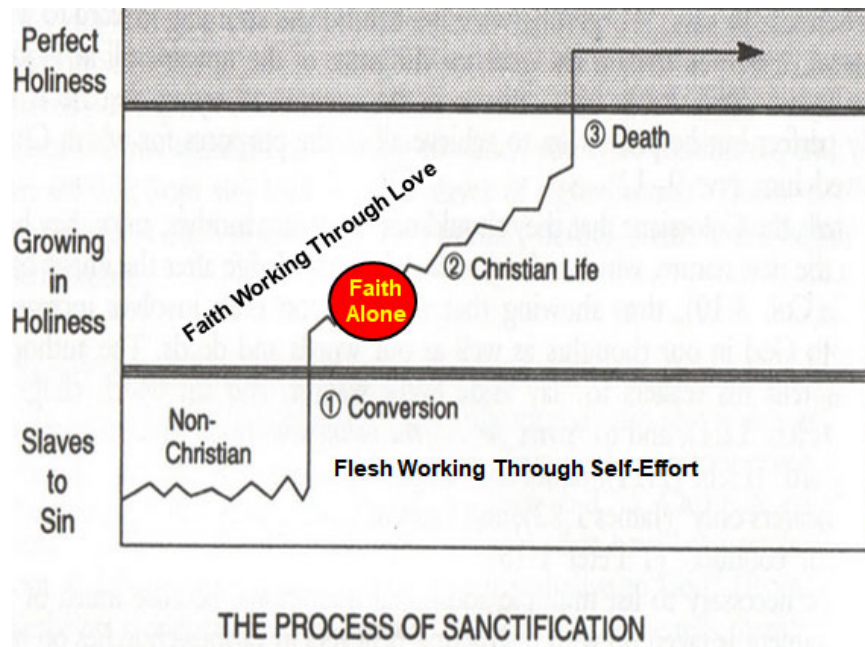
#### **IV. You are shut off from righteousness (v.5-6)**

- A. You are experientially excluded from hope and righteousness. (v.5)
  - “The Judaizers promised complete righteousness in ones’ earthly life, beginning with circumcision and achieved with obedience to the Law. Paul spoke of righteousness coming in completeness in the age to come.”<sup>7</sup>
  - “At the coming of Christ believers will be completely conformed to all the requirements of God’s will. The inward and forensic righteousness which began at justification will be transformed into an outward righteousness at glorification. God will then publicly acknowledge all believers’ full acceptability with Him.”<sup>8</sup>
  
- B. You are experientially excluded from growth and joy.
  - “Nothing that is either done or not done in the flesh, not even religious ceremony, makes any difference in one’s relationship to God. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything. The outward is totally unimportant and worthless, except as it genuinely reflects inner righteousness.”<sup>9</sup>

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- a. The Appeal is to live and grow in holiness. [Phil 2:12-13; Rom. 12:1-2, 6:11-12; Col. 3:5; Gal. 5:13, 2 Tim 2:15]
- “Believers are ‘created in Christ Jesus for good works’...But their working is the product of their faith, not a substitute for it. They do not work for righteousness but out of righteousness...Love needs neither the prescriptions nor the proscriptions of the law, because its very nature is to fulfill the law’s demands.”<sup>10</sup>

**Points to Ponder:**

1. Man can add nothing to the grace of God for his justification or sanctification. Only life in, by, and through the Holy Spirit can produce the righteous life that God desires.
2. The question is “How are you going to use your freedom in Christ?”

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- <sup>1</sup> Daniel Bush and Noel Due, *Live in Liberty: The Spiritual Message of Galatians* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 149.
- <sup>2</sup> Tony Evans, *Free at Last: Experiencing True Freedom Through Your Identity in Christ* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2001), 76.
- <sup>3</sup> Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, Rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1994), 593.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles Spurgeon, Galatians, ed. Elliot Ritzema, *Spurgeon Commentary Series* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013), Ga 5:3.
- <sup>5</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., Galatians, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 135.
- <sup>6</sup> Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 385–86.
- <sup>7</sup> Bob Deffinbaugh, The Goal of the Gospel (Galatians 5:1-12). Online. Accessed on November 10, 2018. <https://bible.org/seriespage/goal-gospel-galatians-51-12>
- <sup>8</sup> Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 605.
- <sup>9</sup> MacArthur, *Commentary*, 137.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

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