

The Epistle to the Galatians¹

Ridding Ourselves of the Leaven But Not Giving Occasion for the Flesh (Gal.5:7-15)

I Getting Rid of the Leaven

A. Not Dissuaded From Obeying the Truth

Again with a mild tone, Paul praises the Galatians, saying that they were running well, but then he asks who was hindering them from obeying the truth, i.e., the reality in Christ, not mere doctrine. **(Gal.5:7)** He points out that they are being persuaded by the Judaizers' teaching to distract them from Christ to the observances of the Law. **(Gal.5:8)** This persuasion was not of God, but from Satan. We must be ever on the alert for "persuasive" speech that sounds good, logical, eloquent, soothing, comforting, enticing but distracting from Christ.

B. Not Allowing a Little Leaven to Leaven the Whole Lump

Leaven is the false teachings of the Judaizers **(Gal.5:9, Mtt.16:12)** and the lump refers to all the believers collectively. Paul probably did not consider those teachings as little leaven, but likely the Galatians believers did. We must beware that even a little is too much leaven. The leaven comprises all the negative points covered in the first four chapters of Galatians.

C. In Nothing Otherwise Minded

1. Now Paul displays his faith **in the Lord**, not confidence in the Galatians, that they will be of no other mind. In other words, they will reject the "otherwise minded" Judaizers. He was praying for the Galatians and knew that the Lord would keep them from being otherwise minded. Instead have a mind focused on pursuing and gaining Christ to the uttermost. **(Gal.5:10a, Phil.3:15)**
2. The willingness to be otherwise minded, i.e., to have a mind other than that of Christ and to be willing to accept another gospel, is a big problem to Christians. We Christians are too often willing to accept another gospel or, at least, an added negative element to the true gospel.
3. As long as we have Christ, with no idolatry, immorality and divisiveness, we need not be pre-occupied with anything else. The teaching of the Judaizers was not only other than Christ, but it divided and brought confusion to the Body.

D. Not Letting the Stumbling Block of the Cross Be Done Away

¹ Outline and materials based on the *Life-Study of Galatians by Witness Lee, Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, California, May, 1984*. Any inaccuracies or errors, in the outline above, are the sole responsibility of the adopter of these materials. - D.M.

1. Paul says that it is obvious he is not promoting the Law, as evidenced by the fact that the Judaizers are persecuting him. **(Gal.5:11a)**
 2. He could never promote circumcision because Paul knew that the reality of circumcision was the cross. **(Col.2:11-12)** The Judaizers were trying to bring the believers back to a shadow when, in reality, Christ had already died on the cross to deal with our flesh-the only effective way to deal with our flesh. Instead, Paul persisted in preaching the cross, which he knew was a stumbling block to the Judaizers. **(Gal.5:11b)** They belittled the cross and exalted in the Law.
- E. Letting the Troubling and Upsetting Ones Bear the Judgment and Cut Themselves Off
- Paul warns that these troublesome ones will bear the judgment and he wished that if they wanted people to cut themselves, perhaps it would be best if the Judaizers would cut themselves off. **(Gal.5:10b, 12)** They need to be amputated from the Body or, at least, from association with the saints. As far as Paul was concerned these Judaizers were "flesh" needing to be excised.

II Not Turning Freedom For an Occasion for the Flesh

- A. Though Paul was absolutely for Christ and freedom in Christ, he was so balanced. **(Gal.5:13, Hosea 7:8²)** He was not an unturned cake, but was so balanced and even, strong but affectionate, rebuking but mild. He encouraged the Galatians to fully enjoy their freedom in Christ and to fully reject the slavery of living by the Law. However, he was still concerned that they might misuse or abuse this freedom.
- B. We are free, but we still need to be limited in the exercise of that freedom. Freedom with limitation always results in the indulgence of the flesh **(Gal.5:20-21)** After having spoken in such a way to them to cast off the restraint of the Law, the Galatians might construe this word from Paul as a license to do what ever they feel like doing. Paul, however, was not calling them to chaos or anarchy. He was calling them to freedom in Christ, i.e.: to walk by the Spirit **(Gal.5:16)**, to be under the law of the Spirit of life. **(Rom.8:2-3)** and to be guided in our daily living by life and peace, and even by death **(Rom.8: 6)**
- C. The Galatians were called to freedom, but a freedom in Christ and for the Body. **(Gal.5:14-15)** We are free not for our own benefit but for the rest of the believers, whom we should serve as slaves. If we do live for the saints, we are fulfilling the whole law: love your neighbor as yourself.

² Israel was as a cake not turned, half burnt and half dough, none of it fit for use; a mixture of idolatry and of the worship of Jehovah.