

**Galatians 6: 15 and 16; “Walk According to This Rule”, Message # 63 in the series –  
“Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017,  
by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.**

What a great and gracious thing it is to be “in” Christ Jesus. To be “in Christ Jesus” is to spiritually be placed in union with Christ; an actual and real union where you are one spirit with Him. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 6: 17 says: “But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” And to bring this union between ourselves and the Lord Jesus about, we had to be bought at a price; the price of the shedding of the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we are to glorify God with our body, and in our spirit, which are God’s, it says in verse 20 of that same chapter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. When you are “in” Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. This evening I want to ask 3 questions which will help us to open of the meaning of these two verses. 1<sup>st</sup> – Why, if you are in Christ Jesus, does neither circumcision or uncircumcision avail anything? 2<sup>nd</sup> – What is the rule that Christians are supposed to walk accord to? And 3<sup>rd</sup> – What are the results to all Christians if they are walking according to this rule? May the truth that we are studying tonight have its good impact upon our minds and hearts, according to the Holy Spirit’s working.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Why, if you are in Christ Jesus, does neither circumcision or uncircumcision avail anything?**

Circumcision, as a rite and ordinance of the Old Covenant people Israel, was the removal of the foreskin of the male sexual member, of every Israelite on the eighth day after they were born. This required ceremonial act began with Abraham, and it ended when Christ died upon the cross and fulfilled all of the ceremonial law and thus set it aside. God gave the covenant of circumcision to Abraham. Let’s look at the beginning. Turn with me over to Genesis 17: 10. “This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.” “He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.” “He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.” “And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

Now, we must ask ourselves why this command was given to Abraham and to all Jews and even to every male child, one born in his house, or any foreigner bought with his money. There are 3 prominent reasons why it was commanded. It was, 1<sup>st</sup> of all, given so that everyone might know and understand that the Jews (the Hebrews, those descended from Abraham) were God’s peculiar people. They were considered by God to be separate from all the peoples of the earth, because it would be through their physical descendants that God would bring His Son into the world. This action; Abraham’s circumcising himself and circumcising his son Isaac, was a covenant action which must be kept by him, as a sign that he was in covenant with God. All through the generations of the Jews until Christ fulfilled the law; the Old Testament ceremonial requirements of the law, all the Jewish parents must circumcise their sons. If they did not circumcise them, the uncircumcised person would be cut off from his people; he would be excommunicated from them, not being so, and for not doing so. It would be a “breaking” of the covenant”. And that person would be “deprived of all civil and religious privileges with the Israelites in the land of Canaan, and be reckoned as Heathens.” (Gill)

I agree with John Gill in this, but it is possible that in some cases, that a Jewish person failing to comply with this ordinance was in danger of being put to death by God Himself. We find an example of this in Exodus 4, verses 22 – 26. In this passage we find God speaking to Moses about how he was going to go to Pharaoh and tell him to let the children of Israel go, and while God was in the midst of relating this to him in verse 23, He said to Moses: “So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me.” “But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.” “And it came to pass on the way, at the encampment, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. (I think that this Moses who is being referred to, but it could be the child – Gershom) At any rate, Moses or his son, or both of them, could have been put to death because he had not circumcised his own son on the eighth day as God required. “So Zipporah took a sharp stone and cut off the foreskin of her son and cast it at Moses’ feet, and said, ‘Surely you are a husband (or a bridegroom of blood) to me!’ “So God let him go.” “Then she said, ‘You are a husband of blood!’ – because of the circumcision.”

We can also say that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith which Abraham had while he was uncircumcised. Look with me over at Romans chapter 4, verse 11. “And he (that is Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also.” This is a very informative verse because it tells us that Abraham, when he received the sign of circumcision, he received it as a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had while uncircumcised. He was declared to be righteous by faith in God while he was not yet a man who had not been brought into covenant with God in terms of His being the father of all Jews; a Hebrew. The covenant of circumcision was a covenant between God and Abraham which The reason for this, according to God’s great purpose and plans was that Abraham would become the father of all believers; both Jew and Gentile.

And finally, this circumcision was a picture of the pain and sufferings which Christ would have to undergo to change and cleanse the heart of the person whom God would choose to bring near to Him. Circumcision was a bloody ordinance. Pain was endured by the one who was circumcised, but this was only a small picture of what Christ would have to undergo on our behalf. Christ would have to become our “Bridegroom of blood” on our behalf in order that our sins could be forgiven and our hearts circumcised. Turn with me over to Colossians 2: 11 – “In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.” “And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” This is why neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything any longer.

Now, what is being described here for us by the apostle Paul, is the circumcision of the heart which a part of the spiritual work of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The physical circumcision of the Old Testament was a type what of God does for every believer in “the putting off of the body of the sins of flesh”. In other words, the body of sin, the ruling reigning power of sin is broken; the dominion of sin is removed, and the hatred of sin commences in mind of a believer in Christ. This spiritual work also took place in the Old Testament saints, but the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit was more clearly revealed and has been more clearly understood in the New Testament times, and was set forth by Christ’s keeping the law, which was the basis of our spiritual circumcision. And this truth was set forth by His apostles. Christ by His sufferings has taken the handwriting of the requirements of law out of the way. He has nailed it to His cross.

He suffered bleed and died so that we might really die to sin and even be able to mortify sin ourselves; circumcise ourselves.

Look at Deuteronomy 30, verse 6. Speaking prophetically of Israel's future, Moses says: "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." And look also at Jeremiah 4: 4 – "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem." You can see that the Lord's work of grace in the heart and mind of a believer, leads to the believer's circumcising their own heart; they have crucified the flesh with its lusts and passions, and they will by grace learn to mortify the deeds of the flesh, and the motions and lusts of sin in their heart. You may remember in David's day that when they went into battle, they would often take away the foreskins of the Philistines as a trophy of their triumph over them. This is a picture of the battle that we as Christians have with the sins of our flesh; our putting them to death, and taking the remembrance of these battles with us, that we have overcome them.

This kind of circumcision truly avails in every way. James Haldane in his commentary on verse 15 says this: "Circumcision was, indeed, essential to the enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom of Israel; but it was of no avail in the kingdom of God." "In order to enjoy the spiritual blessings in heavenly places with which Christ blesses His people, the circumcision of the heart, the putting off the old man with his deeds, and the putting on the new man, which after is created in righteousness and true holiness, are absolutely necessary." However, the kind of circumcision which Paul is talking about in the verse that we are studying tonight is the ceremony of physical circumcision which was no longer necessary for either Jew or a New Testament Gentile who believed in Jesus Christ; the barrier between Jew and Gentile being broken down by Christ at the cross. So circumcision or uncircumcision will not avail to bring a person into covenant with God, but what does avail is a new creation; being born again, being circumcised in your heart.

### **Now 2<sup>nd</sup> – What is the rule that Christians are supposed to walk accord to?**

Verse 16 says: "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them..." The word "rule" is the Greek word – canon. (κανον) The rule which is being spoken of here, is your walking as a believer in Christ, according to all that Christ has done for you; remembering that it is He who has fulfilled the law on your behalf. It is your living a life of faith; repenting of all the sins that you find in your heart and mind; and believing in the simplicity of confessing them, and finding the grace to forsake them. It is living according to the rule of the new nature's power. This means that you walk in the Spirit and you walk in love, because Christ has first loved you, and has by His grace, purchased for you a complete redemption. He is in the process of applying that complete redemption to your soul, right now, and to your body in the Day of the Resurrection; the day in which He will return. By His powerful grace and the working of His Spirit, He has given you the ability to live a life of faith according to the law of a new nature within you.

According to this rule of the new nature, you will want to do God's will. You will go about to do and keep the commandments of God's word, knowing that you will not keep them perfectly, but because Christ is there to justify and sanctify, you will go about to do the will of God with the greatest desire to keep them. And you will realize a great freedom in going about to do them, in the sight of God. Romans 8: 1 and 2 – "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit." "For the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." You see, it was Christ who has purchased grace for you to stand in, in justification, and it was He who gives you grace to enable you to serve God through His intercession, and the Spirit's working to enable you, and help you on to maturity, and to glory.

Christ has purchased for us a full and free salvation at great cost to Himself. He has set you free from the law of sin and death. The rule that you walk by, (that is, the rule that you live your life by, and do all your works in conjunction with, is the perfect law of liberty. Turn with me over to James chapter 1, verse 18-25. “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” (There’s the new creature, or new creation) “Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” (There is the call to sanctification) “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.” (There’s repentance) “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” (And there’s evangelical obedience) “For if anyone is hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.” (There’s the explanation of the rule that the Christian walks according to) It is the perfect law of liberty. Christ fulfilled the law, and He purchased a complete redemption at the cross, and the Spirit works to supply the grace for our becoming obedient and faithful to God’s word.

**Then, 3<sup>rd</sup> – What are the results to all Christians if they are walking according to this rule?**

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.” You can see the wonderful result of walking according to this rule, the law of liberty, the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus; it is that you will have peace and mercy from God, upon you. And not only will you, as an individual Christian have mercy and peace upon, you but your church family will have mercy and peace upon them, as many of them will walk according to this rule. And we can go farther. We can say that if the many people who make up the universal Church, here upon the earth, will walk according to this rule, peace and mercy will be upon them, for they are the Israel of God. Paul is speaking of the spiritual Israel of God here, in distinction from those are simply the carnal descendants of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. These are His elect in every place; those who are redeemed by Him, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation; who are called by His grace and justified in His Son. Philippians 3, verse 3 – “For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”