

Liberty, Legalism, and Grace

Galatians 5:1-6

East Berlin Community Church
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Introduction

- Galatian believers tempted to switch from to legalism away from grace
- Paul emphasized God's grace: Saved, sustained, serve, and kept by God's grace
- The hinge: Galatians 5:1—*"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery"* (NIV)
- Many believe that Christian freedom is dangerous for it leads to license.
- The Christian, who lives by faith, is not going to become a rebel.
- Brief overview of Galatians 5—6
 - 5:1-12—the Christian life is life of freedom, having been freed from the bondage of legalism.
 - 5:13-26—We need the internal control of the Holy Spirit. As we *"walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh"* and we will exhibit *"the fruit of the Spirit"*, the composite picture of Christ's character.
 - 6:1-10—We *"through love serve one another"*
 - 6:11-18—We live for the glory of God who makes life possible.
- Legalism is the dangerous doctrine
 - Legalists live in bondage to the flesh.
 - Legalism sugar coats the outside but leaves the inside unchanged.
 - When one abandons grace for the law, one always loses

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A. The Robbery of Legalism—Galatians 5:1-4

1. Legalism robs us of our freedom in Christ by making us slaves again to bondage.—Galatians 5:1
 - a. Before coming to Christ, we were in bondage...
 - 1) To sin.—John 8:31-32, 34-36
 - 2) To the Law—Galatians 3:13-14
 - 3) To the "elements of this world"—man-made religions
 - b. We have been set free in Christ
 - 1) Does not mean we can do whatever we want to do.
 - 2) Means that we live life under the control of the Spirit and Christ.
 - 3) We are free to be and to do whatever God wants us to be and do.
 - c. We are to enjoy this freedom that we have in Christ
 - 1) Stated positively: *"Stand fast in the liberty"*
 - 2) Stated negatively: *"do not be tangled again with a yoke of bondage"*
2. Legalism robs us of our spiritual wealth in Christ—Galatians 5:2-4
 - a. We share today in the riches of God's grace in Christ and thus we have all we need in Christ.
 - b. Three ways legalism robs us of our spiritual wealth
 - 1) We fail to profit from what Christ has done for us—Galatians 5:2
 - a) Paul is not against the practice of circumcision.
 - b) Paul's contention is with the theology of circumcision—that works are necessary for salvation.
 - c) The whole of the Christian life is by faith in Christ.
 - 2) We put ourselves under an obligation to keep the whole law—Galatians 5:3
 - a) The law is a unit and requires doing all of it
 - b) Can't pick and choose which parts to obey. Either total legalism or total grace.
 - 3) We cut ourselves off from Christ, and thus fall from grace—Galatians 5:4
 - a) Does not mean that one loses their salvation
 - b) Primary point: Law and grace cannot be mixed.
 - c) Christ loses his effectiveness in our lives

B. The Rewards of Grace – Galatians 5:5-6

1. By faith, we live a righteous life under the control of the Holy Spirit.—Galatians 5:5-6a
 - a. We eagerly await the day when our salvation is complete—Galatians 5:5
 - b. Circumcision or lack thereof means absolutely nothing to God
2. Living in Grace's sphere means a life of faith manifesting itself in works of love—Galatians 5:6b