

4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. 7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? 8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. 9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. 11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. 12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

If we do not seek salvation in Christ alone, then He is useless to us. The death of Christ paid for all of our offenses: Adam’s sin, our sinful nature, our past sins, our present sins, our future sins. Living faith in Christ appropriates this grace and we stand in this grace, and by the Holy Spirit we have transferred our hopes away from trust in ceremonies, good works, religious activity, and such, to Christ alone. The more that we grow in our understanding of the Gospel, the more we see that our confidence is in Christ alone.

Faith that works by love is the key. True good works are not religious ceremonies, but works of compassion and kindness to men who are in the image of God. As Paul says later in this epistle: Gal. 6:2: Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. And, “Do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith.” But let us look at the words:

Verse 7: They had started out well. It is not how you start that counts, but how you end up. No man repents as he ought at the beginning of his Christian walk; he doesn’t even know of what he needs to repent of, for only with the light comes the knowledge of his sins. So we are told, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.”

You do not know what is wrong until you come to the light. If you repented once twenty years ago, and haven’t found any reason to lament your sins since then, then you do not know the light, for he that says he has no sin deceives himself, and the truth is not in him, according to John. The Galatians had started well; but a good start does not guarantee a good finish.

But this does not mean that Christ is a complete Savior and that you have to add our perseverance to our faith: no, works have nothing to do with it: it is perseverance in faith that is the key, and in the faith all of God’s people are kept by the power of God. What a great power is this, that can keep His people in the way of righteousness. This is my prayer for each of you, that you know the power of the Gospel in your own lives.

There is obedience that goes along with the truth. Who had gotten in their way? Who had introduced alien and perverse ideas that had turned them away from the truth in Christ, to think that they must add their own works to be justified before the Lord.

Vs. 8-9: Paul is very emphatic: the ideas that were being taught among the Galatians did not come from God. God does not deny Himself. His promises are not yea and nay; the ambiguity of yes and no. Paul was not a yes and no man, giving with one hand while taking away with the other. Some ministers believe that this shows largeness of mind. Because they do not want to take a position, they say, well this, but on the other hand. Both sides have truth to them—hence neither is totally right, and neither is totally wrong.

Paul does not mind stating emphatically that ideas that are incompatible with the Gospel come from some other place than from Jesus Christ. There are two ideas competing in the world: One is that man was created righteous and good by God, fell from that righteousness and goodness by the sin of Adam, and is redeemed through the grace of God in Jesus Christ; the other idea is that man did not really fall in Adam, that he is simply defective in some way, and that he can by his own works, with or without Christ, find his way back into the favor of God. The first of these is of the Holy Spirit, and those who believe have righteousness before God; the other idea comes from the devil and those who follow it have no righteousness before God, but abide under His terrible wrath and curse.

A little of this self-righteousness can leaven a whole lump and spoil the whole lot. This is the reason for Paul's words are so strong in this chapter and in the first chapter.

Vs. 10. False doctrine is a trouble. Calvin says, “Let all who introduce confusion into churches, who break the unity of faith, who destroy their harmony, lend an ear to this; and if they have any right feeling, let them tremble at this word.” Jesus said that offenses may be ordered by the secret decree of God, but woe unto those by whom offenses come. All things are ordered by God, even our testings and disappointments: but woe unto those who do the work of the devil and bring confusion and strife, for this is the devil's very best work. We must seek the peace of the church, and not seek our own ways.

“I have confidence in you through the Lord.” This is a good exhortation to those who preach the word. Our confidence must always be in the Lord. Men cannot repent their sins of themselves, nor can those who turn out of the way be brought back by the flesh: only the Lord can turn the heart and change the mind.

Vs. 11 It would have been easy for Paul to have escaped his persecution. All he would had to do was to teach that Christian must become circumcised and live after the manner of the Jews. But this would have come at the result of denying the truth of Christ. He would have had to pretend that Christ had not come. Why does Paul here use the cross as symbol of the truth of Christ. There are good and sufficient reasons for this.

1. The cross shows there can be no compromise with the truth of God. God cannot deny his truth even to save sinners. Thy law is the truth, David wrote. The soul that sins shall die, thunders the law of God. The cross declares this unambiguously. Truth is truth, and error is error.
2. The cross divides the world into those who believe and those who do not believe. It is precious to those who believe; but it is an offense to those who do not believe. “Why can't we all get along,” displays a mindset that is at odds with the truth.
3. We are commanded not to give offence to men. That is, we are to be filled with gentleness good fruit; so that there is nothing in our manner or attitude that gives offense, or that contradicts our message; but we cannot deny the truth of the Scripture. When we contend for the truth of Scripture, we are not contending for our own opinions and ideas, but for the opinions and ideas of God.
4. In today's world, we are called arrogant, unbending, unkind, fomenting war, and worst of all, biased and prejudiced.
5. James wrote in James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” You cannot agree with the world's idea of salvation and be true to Christ. This is the heart of the conflict. This is the offense of the cross. James is saying in James 4 that the root of the conflict and strife in the church was the love of the world and the desire to be pleasing in the eyes of the world. Instead

they were to humble themselves under the hand of God, for God resists the proud and give grace to the humble.

Vs. 12. Paul could not have been more emphatic. Better that the false prophets would perish, than that the whole church brought to ruin. This is the same Paul who said that he was willing to perish himself, if he could bring his brethren to faith. But his care for the people of God was so great that he was ready to go to war with those who would bring strange doctrines into the church. May it always be so with us.

God bless you.