

## STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 14  
Galatians 5: 1 - 15

### **Faith Expressed Through Love**

Key word                 STAND, Gal. 5:1.  
Two key phrases      Faith which works by love, Gal. 5:6.  
                                  Love your neighbor as yourself, Gal. 5:14.

Watchman Nee, in his book Changed Into His Likeness said, "The distinctive feature of true Christianity is that it compels people to receive." This is true, because Christ Jesus gives us all that we need to fit us for heaven, our salvation, our sanctification and His Holy Spirit to bring this about. We receive, through God's love, the ability to love and be loved. It is a process whereby we continually receive from God. God's love flows toward us constantly, yet if it is diverted or stopped it is by an act of ours not His. Sin, coldness of heart, sin, bitterness against another, sin, refusing to forgive, all are means of stopping God's love. Yet to be able to walk in the Spirit, we must be receiving all the time, and in turn be giving, so others may receive God's gift of love. This is faith working by love to fulfill Jesus' command, "love your neighbor as yourself." The neighbor is any person next to you. He may be at your table or next door. He may be the person whom you dislike or distrust. God's desire is for His love to flow out of His children as streams of living water, to touch other lives.

Paul gives us an exciting charge. He says, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free." He warns us not to get entangled in rules and regulations which Christ never gave to us. Legalistic practices are not to have a hold upon the Christian. Paul told the circumcised Jews having circumcision or not having it would have no effect upon them where salvation was concerned. If they thought circumcision was needed then they made Christ's death, His blood and sacrifice, of no use. Paul used strong words because if the act of circumcision, by law, was necessary to save, then ALL the rest of the law had to be kept also (v.3). If this were followed (just a supposition), then Christ's act of grace and mercy in providing salvation for all men, women and children would be worthless. Then those who feel they are justified by law and not Christ's complete work, would fall from grace. This point may need explaining: a person is redeemed by His blood according to God's plan. However, this does not mean that person cannot fall from grace; the fellowship with God is strained. A Christian out of fellowship is not walking in the Spirit.

What did the Pharisees, who persecuted Christ to the cross, offer the people? They kept a very "correct" religious life. It was exacting, critical, joyless and loveless. They made many devious rules which they imposed upon the people, rules they themselves disobeyed. They wore certain clothes said and did certain things. They had a very grim attitude toward their God. Jesus came among them and set a totally different example. He went to weddings and celebrated festive occasions. Jesus wanted people to be happy. Jesus had a wonderfully positive attitude and made people have positive experiences. They responded to Jesus' love with grateful, loving hearts. Jesus knew the truly important issues of life!

Personal Evaluation: As a Christian, how long has it been since you examined your attitude toward those

you live with and those whom you love? Do you impose impossible rules upon them and yourself? Do these rules confuse and cause resentment? Do you make your “religion” a happy experience for your family, giving them positive attitudes, so they “look forward with anticipation” going to God’s house to worship Him with love? There are many ways we can destroy our family’s desire to seek God through Jesus Christ. In many ways, by our actions we can turn those we love away from Him, the One we want them to receive and follow.

In verse 7 Paul reminds his readers, “You began so well, you were doing fine in your Christian walk. You had liberty, you were growing, you were being fruitful and you obeyed the truth. You accepted Christ and He was enough.” Then he asked, “Who has hindered you that you aren’t obeying the very truths you accepted and in which you did so well?”

Does this apply to you? Did you receive Christ and then somehow become involved in a church or group of people who said, “You must be baptized the way we do it”? Or do they say, “You have to have the gift of tongues or you aren’t saved”? Do not believe these things, or like the Galatians, you are being led away from the truth of the gospel. Christ did it all! Nothing can be added. Trying to add to Christ’s finished work is a trick of Satan. He tries to hinder you from walking with Christ in the Spirit. Jesus did not say we had to do anything to add to his finished work of salvation. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15), as well as, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Gal. 5:14). Paul warned that being led away from the purity of the Word didn’t come from the One who called them. He wanted to know who confused them; where did their confusion come from? We need to ask, “Who is interested in hindering spiritual growth and productivity in every Christian?” Evaluate where you are. Remember it takes only one bad apple in a basket to cause all the fruit to spoil. Don’t let this happen! Stand firm in the faith and in the liberty you have! It was the “one bad fruit” principle that caused Paul to say, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” Paul shows us by his remark in v. 10 that he trusted God to bring the wayward Christians back. He also gives a strong warning to bring those who lead immature Christians away from the truth He said any one throwing them into confusion would be under God’s judgment.

The Judaizers must have spread a false rumor, saying Paul was preaching the necessity of the law and of circumcision. Paul countered this with the question, “If I’m teaching that, why am I persecuted? That would make the message of the cross of no offense.” Paul used this opposition to teach his followers to love their neighbors, even those against them as Christ taught His disciples. Paul really loved the opposition and he tells his readers to practice loving their neighbors, just as Jesus had told His disciples. The real issues are faith and love. Paul said circumcision or no circumcision didn’t matter. Only faith working by love mattered. It was not important that the legalists hated him. They had hated Jesus and Jesus had said, “Love them, forgive them.” He did this as He went to the cross.

When a body of believers quarrel and bicker they soon destroy the church that should be glorifying God. They are a shame to the name of Christ. However, when a body of believers work together in the Spirit, there is freedom and love. God is glorified!

Pray: “Lord, search my heart for anything that would keep Your love from flowing to those about me. Help me to live this day pleasing to You. I love You, Father and Your Jesus. Thank You for giving me Your Spirit.

Amen.”

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### SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“We love Him because He first loved Us” (1 John 4:19).

Your love for God is the outgrowth of His love for you. It is like a seed that is planted, then watered and fed until it becomes a tiny shoot. It has to be placed in the sun where it will grow steadily until mature. God draws you as He draws a plant's head toward the sun. God in His love draws you toward His Son, Jesus Christ, until Christ's life is planted in you. Then the process is the same, watering and feeding until you are ready to bloom for Him and then bear fruit.

You would never have a grain of love if it were not for God's divine love coming down from Him into your heart. If this love is divinely planted, then it must be divinely nourished. Love must be fed with heavenly bread and watered with the living water. Love cannot exist in a vacuum. Love feeds on love by faith, faith that stimulates and exercises the love into action! If you were keeping score, how would you rate yourself on: 1) Letting God love you? 2) Giving God's love back to Him? 3) Giving God's love away? 4) Feeding others with God's love? 5) Watering others with God's Word? This is what Paul meant when he said, “...faith which works by love.”

### QUESTIONS:

1. Review: What advice did Paul give to the Galatians that he later gave to the Romans in Rom. 8:21? (KJV, NIV, or RSV)
2. Comment on how you feel about the following statement. Also, look up the references to substantiate your answers.
  - a. My freedom to claim God's covenant blessing, Acts 3:25.
  - b. My freedom to accept God's promises, Heb. 10:23
  - c. My freedom to go before God's throne of grace, Heb. 4:16.
  - d. My freedom to claim all the rich treasures of God, because I am IN CHRIST! 2 Cor. 4:7, 7. L.B.
3. Read Eph. 2:3 - 6 and tell what you were before you became God's child, how you became God's child, and your position now.
4. Why did Paul say we are to stand firm in Christ?
5. Tell why Paul said circumcision wasn't of any value.
6. Was it possible to be under law and still be in God's grace? Tell why.

7. a. Tell how you can fall from grace. How would it affect your salvation?  
  
b. Read John 10:29. Tell what it says and what it means to you.
8. If circumcision or not being circumcised is unimportant, what is? v. \_\_\_\_
9. How does 1 John 4:10 show God's love and action?
10. a. Explain Gal. 5:9 in your own words.  
  
b. Could you give a personal illustration of this verse? Try!
11. What did Paul say in v. 10 that gives you comfort and confidence?
12. Tell what will happen to those who lead others astray.
13. a. What is the question Paul asks in v. 11?  
b. How does John 15:20 answer Gal. 5:11? How does this relate to you?
14. What was Paul's message that caused the Judaizers to persecute Paul?
15. Read several translations or if you do not have more than one, call a member of your class for help on this question. What was Paul's wish for the false teachers? v. \_\_\_\_
16. a. How do Christians often misuse their freedom?  
b. What does Paul tell us to do ?
17. a. How can the whole law be summed up in one sentence?  
b. Write what Lev. 19:18 tells you in your own words.
18. a. Give the warning found in v. 15, and in your own words tell what danger was being addressed.  
b. How can you apply v. 15 to your life? Write your answer clearly so you can share it in class.
19. How was this a good lesson for you?