

# Galatians 5:1-6

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/gal/gal-5/galatians-51-6/>

*These Galatians believers have replaced the freedom found in Christ with a slavery to the law. They have ignored God's grace and have replaced it with rules that will only show their sinfulness and failure to obey. Instead, they should follow the Spirit, which they received when placing their faith in Christ's work on the cross.*

Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection sets those who believe free: free from the law and free from being a slave to the flesh. Because of this freedom, Paul is imploring the believers in Galatia to *not be subject again* to the chains of slavery. Paul acknowledges they have been walking in freedom until now, saying *keep standing firm*. Paul exhorts his spiritual children to resist the false teaching of the competing Jewish "authorities."

The competing Jewish "authorities" advocate the need for *seeking to be justified by the law* by being circumcised and following Jewish religious rules. It is not the deeds themselves that are the problem; Paul is circumcised. It is the practice of the deeds in order to *seek to be justified* in the presence of God. Only one thing justifies us in the presence of God, and that is Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Attempting to add anything, any deed, is ignoring Christ's work on the cross.

This point is similar to the statement in Galatians 2:17, where Paul also chastises the Galatians for seeking to be justified by following the law. Why seek something you already have? Jesus already provided justification in the presence of God through His death on the cross. By attempting to add their own religious deeds, they are expressing that Christ was not enough. They must add something. Doing so rejects the sufficiency of Christ.

The justification before God provided by the cross set them free from the law and from death. But the Galatians are replacing their freedom with the chains of the law and of the flesh instead of walking in the Spirit. They are no longer relying solely on Jesus to be justified in the presence of God, and instead are *seeking to be justified by law*. They have, therefore, been *severed from Christ*. They are no longer resting in God's free gift of being justified in His presence through faith. They have *fallen from grace*. They are no longer relying on grace, but upon law. They are no longer relying upon the finished work of Christ alone, but also upon their own efforts.

Paul makes a very strong statement, saying *if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you*. This makes clear that the amazing blessings and gifts Jesus provides can go to waste—be of *no benefit*. Paul shows that anyone depending on the law and legalism to be in right standing with God has abandoned relying on Christ and no longer depends on Him, but on keeping a set of religious rules. This does not mean that Jesus has abandoned us, it means we've abandoned Him. We're still in Christ because the new birth of being justified before God is given freely. But now the question is, to what benefit to my life today?

The terms *severed* and *fallen* simply indicate estrangement, which means to no benefit today. We cannot depend upon Jesus and walk by faith in Him and also depend upon our own efforts to

follow religious rules. We must choose one or the other. Depending on religious rules severs us from depending on Jesus. Relying on our own rule-keeping causes us to fall from relying on God's grace. When anyone depends on keeping the law to be justified in God's sight, they have to *keep the whole Law*, just as Paul wrote earlier in this letter:

"For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.'" (Galatians 3:10)

The law requires perfection in order to be justified in the presence of God; if anyone is seeking right standing before God through following the law, then what's the point of Christ? He is not necessary. By depending on the law, these believers have cut off reliance on Christ and on grace.

But the truth is it is *through the Spirit, by faith* in Christ that believers should seek and wait *for the hope of righteousness* before God. Righteousness before God comes through Jesus alone. The experience of righteousness in our daily walk comes through the obedience of faith.

The competing Jewish "authorities" have urged the Gentile Galatian believers to be circumcised, and keep the Jewish law in order to be righteous. But being uncircumcised or circumcised doesn't matter for being righteous, either before God or in our daily experience. What matters for being righteous in our daily experience is *faith working through love* for all those who are *in Jesus Christ*.

In Christ we have been given the righteousness of Christ. And we were given the righteousness of Christ because of God's love for us. Believers don't need to add anything. They need daily to exercise faith and allow the righteousness of Christ within to pour out of their lives through a walk of *faith working through love* toward others.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>1</sup> It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. <sup>2</sup> Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. <sup>3</sup> And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. <sup>4</sup> You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. <sup>5</sup> For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. <sup>6</sup> For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.**