

# Galatians 5:7-12

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/gal/gal-5/galatians-57-12/>

*The Galatians were running well, following Christ, until these competing Jewish “authorities” misled them into believing that they needed the law and the gospel of Jesus. Paul also addresses the slander that he supposedly supports the competing Jewish “authorities” message.*

The Galatians were *running well* before. They were pursuing God through the Spirit and their faith in Christ. But now they are depending on the law. *Who hindered them from obeying the truth?* It seems likely it was the Jewish competing “authorities”, of the same type that *hindered* Peter in chapter 2. However, it appears that Paul does not know the specific identity of the false teacher, since he adds “*whoever he is.*” The message of law-following to earn righteousness did not come from God or Jesus. And it is not true. This misinformation has caused the Galatian believers to stray from God. Just as *a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*, a little false teaching can pollute a walk of faith. It does not take much yeast to make bread dough rise, and it does not take much false teaching to pollute a righteous walk of faith.

Paul is still optimistic that the Galatians will turn away from this false teaching and follow, once again, the true gospel of Christ.

The context suggests that there were rumors that Paul agreed with the competing Jewish “authorities” that the Galatians still needed to be circumcised. Paul is briefly addressing this slander, pointing out that if he was preaching the need for circumcision, then why was he being persecuted by the competing Jewish “authorities”? He asks, *if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted?* By saying “still” Paul admits he used to preach circumcision. This appears to tie back to his days prior to meeting Christ on the road to Damascus when he was a persecutor of the church. This places a very negative light on the competing Jewish “authorities” whom Paul is confronting. Paul does not specify what sort of persecution he is enduring, related to preaching grace rather than circumcision. He could be referring to having his spiritual discipleship of the Galatians undermined by the competing Jewish “authorities”. The statement could also be categorical, and include the partial list of persecutions Paul endured listed in 2 Corinthians 11:22-29.

For these competing Jewish “authorities”, Jesus’s work on the cross was a *stumbling block*, because they would not abandon reliance upon the law and instead rely solely upon Christ’s sacrifice. Trying to add the law to Christ’s finished work on the cross is an attempt by these competing Jewish “authorities” to skirt around the *stumbling block of the cross* (which, simply put, is the fact that it is through faith in Jesus and not through keeping religious rules that we are made righteous before God) (Romans 9:30-10:4). They are trying to remove that stumbling block by suggesting that it is Christ plus the law that gives us right standing before God.

Paul insists that obeying the law can absolutely not accomplish such a feat. Instead, it’s only through Christ’s sacrifice and not the law that we are made righteous before God.

Paul suggests that these competing Jewish authorities, who are lying about Paul's message and misleading the Galatians to depend on the law, ought to follow through with the circumcision process and completely *mutilate themselves*. This is a very graphic way to express his frustration with the competing Jewish "authorities" and their misleading of the Galatians away from Christ. "Don't just stop with the foreskin, go ahead and cut it all off," he is saying. If cutting away a little skin makes you righteous, then cut away all the skin. The statement drips with sarcasm.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>7</sup> You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? <sup>8</sup> This persuasion *did* not *come* from Him who calls you. <sup>9</sup> A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*. <sup>10</sup> I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. <sup>11</sup> But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. <sup>12</sup> I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.**