

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 2

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:7-12

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Bruce: Thank you, sir. Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Good to be with you. As you can see, I’ve got p. t. after this today. The physical therapy is coming along. I do it five days a week, three days a week with the therapist for about three hours and the other two days by myself at home. So it’s making some improvement. Today I woke up rather stiff. That must be because of Hurricane Matthew. So we’ll blame it on him. *(Laughter.)*

In lieu of Don not being here, men, let’s just quietly go before the Lord and know that He is God. And let’s just think of the glories of His mercy and His grace. His mercies never end. They are fresh every morning. That means that the mercies you and I will receive this morning are not the same as the ones we had yesterday, nor will they be the same as we get tomorrow. Let’s just reflect on the newness of His mercies.

Gracious Lord, if You were not merciful, we would be doomed. Father, we thank You that You are strong and we are weak, that You are loving and we are not kind. Father, we just Thank you that You are all the things that we are not. But You are making us into the things that You want us to be. Develop us into the men that You would like us to be, Lord, for Your glory. And now we pray, Lord, that You would be pleased to open our eyes once again, that we might see behind the words and see You in all of Your glory for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Bruce: Continuing our study of the book of Galatians, let’s turn to Galatians chapter five. Again we’ll be in verses 7-12. But I want to read it in the context of 1-12. Galatians chapter 5, beginning at verse 1.

“For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Look! I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly await for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

“You were running well! Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from Him who calls you. ‘A little leaven leavens the whole lump.’ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine. And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.

“But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish that those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!” This is the word of the Lord.

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Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. I trust that you’re beginning to get a feel and some degree of understanding of the two types of religion that we’ve been talking about for the last several months—the religion of human achievement, whereby I take upon myself the ability to earn my salvation, to do those things consistently that please God, to get merit and achieve what He would want me to do. That’s the religion of human achievement.

The contrast of that, as we’ve been discovering in the book of Galatians, is the religion of divine grace. We need to understand grace in the divine context of two other words. Justice is getting what you deserve. Mercy is not getting all that you deserve. And grace is getting what you don’t deserve.

Now Paul in the first two chapters of the book of Galatians validates himself as the one who can preach the doctrines of grace, divine grace as the means of salvation. He does that in chapters one and two. He validates his credibility.

In chapters three and four, he says that the Old Testament also teaches the religion of divine grace without human achievement. That’s chapters three and four.

In chapters five and six he teaches us how we live a life of freedom. We are free in Christ. Notice, we have freedom in Christ and liberty in Christ. We have Christian freedom. So Paul begins to teach us how it is now that you understand the difference between the religion of human achievement and the religion of divine grace. How do you begin to live that out in freedom? It’s freedom in Christ. And he gives us some wonderful instructions.

What he has done first of all is that he warns us about the dangers of the doctrine of human achievement. A couple weeks ago we went through some things. These are the dangers of the religion of human achievement. This past week we went through the dangers of the false teachers who teach that side of theology. So let’s go back and review just a little bit.

Take a look at your notes. The first thing we saw was that these false teachers hinder the truth. You’ll see that in verse 7. Paul says, *“You were running well!”* “But who hindered you from continuing the race for glory?”

The second thing he says is not only do they hinder the truth—verse 7—but the next thing he says about the dangers of these false teachers is that they are not from God (verse 8.) He said, *“This persuasion is not from Him who called you.”* God called us before the foundation of the world into saving faith. But Paul is saying that these people who are teaching that you must add circumcision on top of your faith in Christ are really not from God. They are not from Him. This persuasion, meaning persuading them to take on the Mosaic law of adding circumcision to earn their salvation, he is saying that this is not from God.

So the second thing we need to understand is that we have to be discerning, men. When we hear and read things about church life—the books that are published, TV shows, the things that we hear on tape—we need to be very discerning to say, “Are they really from God, or is this some persuasion that man is creating himself?” We need to be very, very careful of that.

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The third thing we talked about last week is that they contaminate the church. The leaven impacts the whole church. Leaven is an example of something that starts in a small amount and then it impacts the whole arena. We have to be very, very discerning also about the leaven of false teachers in our church environment.

Now at the same time we spent some time talking about that last week. At the same time we need to understand this, men. You and I are still responsible for our own worship. We’re responsible for our own worship. When I go to church, I’m responsible for my worship. It is not the role of the pastor to give me a good experience. Hopefully I’ll have one. And certainly if the gospel is being preached, that’s going to enhance that opportunity. But it is not the role of the church choir, the praise team, whatever you want to call them, to be responsible for your worship. You and I are responsible for our own worship.

I’ve been in some terrible worship services from my perspective, very ungodly worship services. But I am still responsible, if I am in that worship service, to maintain my own worship. So there are certain things that I have to do. Sometimes I would just pick up the Scripture and read it myself. I’ll go to the Psalms and I’ll pray the Psalms. I’ve got to do something, because I’m responsible for worship, because what is worship?

The Greek word for *worship* is “kiss toward.” It means showing honor, dignity and respect for that to which it is due. Essentially, you are on your knees and you are bowing down and you’re giving Him a blessing. Men, we’ve got to remember that blessing is something that we do in worship because worship is a verb, not a noun. We go to worship. We don’t go into a situation to receive worship. We go to give God a blessing. We are responsible for our own worship.

Now that does not mean that we don’t talk to the people who are putting on the worship service to help them understand that they have a responsibility themselves. I’m not saying that it’s totally on us. But all I’m saying is that these false teachers impact and contaminate the church. You and I still have a responsibility ourselves to maintain the dignity of our own worship. That’s something we do every day. And so as I maintain my worship in my daily life, I maintain my worship and responsibility for that when I go on the Lord’s Day to worship Him at a service. So we need to understand that yes, they contaminate the church. But we are still responsible for our own worship.

The next thing that Paul warns us about these false teachers is that not only do they deny the truth, they are not from God and they contaminate the church, but you’ll notice the next thing in verse 10. *They will be judged.* Notice what he says in verse 10. *“I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine. And the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.”*

Now he is basically saying, “Let God be God. He’s the One who will take care of those men who are being false teachers.” That doesn’t mean that we don’t confront them when we talk to them. That’s not what I’m saying. All I’m saying is that, in the ultimate sense, God is the One who will penalize them and take care of them.

Paul uses a wise counseling strategy here in these verses by expressing confidence before condemnation. He expresses confidence before condemnation. Notice what he

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says in verse 10. “*I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine.*” He’s expressing and affirming what he wants them to become.

Sometimes, people, we need to teach them to become what they need to be. I need to treat them the way that I want them to become. And so first of all Paul uses a wise counseling technique, and he gives them confidence. “I’m very confident that you’re going to stick to the truth and not be swayed.”

But then he goes on and warns them. He says that these false teachers will be judged themselves. He affirms that by stating that he had every confidence that those who are true followers of Christ will not be led astray by these false teachers, and that they will remain faithful to the truth.

That’s a good piece of counseling, men. Express confidence before you express condemnation or criticism.

Now notice. Paul knew that they were truly in Christ and that Satan had no power over them. He’s affirming that. He’s affirming their status of being in Christ and that Satan has no power over them.

Look at John chapter 10, verses 28 and 29. “*I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.*”

Paul is saying this. God called you to saving faith. It was not through human achievement but it was by divine grace. And as a result of that, you are now in Christ’s hands. And no one can snatch you out of Christ’s hand. But just to make sure, God is greater than Christ. God’s hand is behind Christ’s hand, and no one can snatch you out of either hand.

You see, that’s what Paul is saying, because he’s affirming the fact that I know that you’re going to stick to the truth. Satan has no power over you because God is the One who authorized your salvation. And so he warns them. Don’t get upset about these teachers because they will be judged by themselves, and God will take care of that.

Now you and I have the responsibility to watch out for the beginnings of this legalism in the church. We need to recognize what the first bit of yeast is, because it’s going to spread to the whole group. It will harm the fellowship. It eventually grows and becomes a serious problem. You and I need to be wise enough to know that I see something that is going on in my church that I need to take a stand about or do something and talk to the elders about it. Just be cautious about that.

We need to be discerning. That means that we’re not being critical. Remember, we express confidence before condemnation. But there comes a time when all of us have a responsibility to watch out for the false teaching that creeps into the church today.

Notice next that he tells them this, that the false teachers will suffer judgment on their own accord. The word translated *troubling* literally means “throw into confusion.” He’s saying that these false teachers are going to come into the church just like leaven. They’re going to throw into confusion the running of the race of faith in Christ. He’s saying that whoever causes this confusion are in trouble themselves. They may be causing trouble within the church. They may be causing confusion. But they are the ones who are really

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in trouble because they are interfering with what God has designed in doing in the church.

Let me give you several verses that speak of this condemnation that will come upon those who hinder Christ’s sheep and lead them astray. Look at Matthew 23:33.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 23:33. *“Serpents! Brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?”*

Bruce: Another passage would be 2 Peter 2, verses 1-14.

Transcriber’s Note: 2 Peter 2:1-14, NKJV. *“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bringing on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*

“For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment, and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)—then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord.

“But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children.”

Bruce: Then also Matthew 18:1-6.

Transcriber’s Note: Matthew 18:1-6. *“At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’*

“Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

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“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”

Participant: Would you give those again, please?

Bruce: Certainly. Matthew 23:33, 2 Peter 2:1-14, and let’s just turn to Matthew 18. We’ll take a look at one. Matthew 18:1-6.

Transcriber’s Note: See passage above.

Bruce: Now that’s the seriousness of what God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit think about false teachers in the church. Paul says this. They will be judged. We need to recognize what’s going on, because they do contaminate the church. We need to do the things that we can to offset that.

But in the end know this. God is the One who is going to bring them into judgment. We don’t have to take them on and fight them in that sense because of judgment. God is going to do that Himself.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: A point about patience on this. If you look at Jesus and John the Baptist, whenever they came up against false teachers, or some of the scholars, the Pharisees and Scribes, they were less than gentle. I mean, they were fairly brutal.

Bruce: And?

Participant: Would it be wise for us to start off with a gentle, loving spirit, and then ramp it up to what Scripture says? Help us—

Bruce: Well for me, the illustration is confidence before condemnation. In other words, sometimes we have to treat people the way we want them to become. Now here again, I can’t come up with a black and white solution for everything. You have to trust the Spirit. We’re going to talk next week and the next couple weeks when we get into this about what it means to walk in the Spirit. What’s the motivation behind what I do? Is it something that I’ve self-generated? Or is it something that the Holy Spirit is really leading me to do? That’s what it means to walk in the Spirit. We’re going to spend several weeks talking about that and unwrapping what that means, because I think it’s so important, Brian, that you can’t always have a cloned response for every single situation. We need to be sensitive to what’s going on and let the Holy Spirit be the Holy Spirit. And then we become aggressive responders to what we see going on. So it may be at one time that you’ll be much more aggressive than another time.

I think that you also have to look at the fact of the gospel in the illustration of Jesus with John the Baptist and the timing of what was going on in the history of the church and the development of the Kingdom. There is the timing element. They could be much more aggressive and needed to be perhaps more than we need to be right now. So we can’t necessarily say, “I need to do it just like John the Baptist did.” I think we have to trust the Holy Spirit and be Spirit-led and walk in the Spirit. We’re going to talk a lot about that next week. Yes, Ted?

Ted: I’m just thinking of running through all the examples of this kind of more aggressive confrontation. It seems to me that those who did it came out of a position of

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authority. John the Baptist had authority simply because he was an established prophet. The apostles had authority. I don't see Scripture talking about an individual Christian without authority in the church doing this kind of confrontation. I see it coming from people of authority.

Bruce: That's a good point, Ted. Thank you. If that's the case, I think it's important that we go to our elders and speak to the elders and to our pastors and have that discussion. But that is not a responsibility that we take on ourselves. It isn't my job to do that. We have to do this.

Remember this, men, from the Sermon on the Mount. You've got to take the log out of your own eye before you take the speck out of your brother's eye. The first thing we have to do is examine ourselves. Where am I in all of this? I need to make sure that the reason I take the log out of my own eye and talk about the speck in my brother's eye is so I can serve him more effectively.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: The whole point is service. It's not confrontation.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It's not condemnation. It's service. You want to go with the spirit and the attitude of how can I serve them? And the first thing that I'm going to do is to take the log out of my own eye before I even talk to them about the speck that is in their eye, as I see and discern that. Yes, Bill?

Bill: You brought up elders. One of the main responsibilities of an elder is to refute false doctrine.

Bruce: Yes. False teachers live and preach false doctrine. Elders need to discern false doctrine. They give themselves to preaching the truth. We need to go to the elders in a position of authority. There are means by which the Scripture is going to teach us to do that, but I can't give you just one rote, black-and-white same response.

Participant: Those comments from last time sound good.

Bruce: Good. Anything else on that? Good. Thank you.

Participant: Bruce, when you said that the timing is different, obviously when Christ was here He had a mission. He's got something specific to accomplish, whereas we have more time?

Bruce: No, no, no. The timing in history is what I'm referring to. John the Baptist was there at the right time with the right message, the right man at the right moment. That's timing. We have to understand timing in history. Remember this. Revelation is progressive. Revelation is not instantaneous and complete. You start with the book of Genesis where you begin the revelation. And it ends in the book of Revelation. So revelation is progressive. And when I speak about timing, there was a progressive time that was the right time for John the Baptist to be aggressive. That does not mean that I need to be aggressive all the time. Looking at the timing of the development of the kingdom of God—that's what I'm referring to in history. This is a history lesson that we're looking at. It's His story. And so timing has to do with the timing of how God operates.

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Scripture makes it very clear, brothers, that you do not tamper with or refute God’s people without incurring His judgment. Take that seriously. The next thing is this.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Please.

Participant: Just quickly, if you can. The Scripture warns teachers.

Bruce: Ah, yes. Go ahead, please

Participant: I’m losing the verse right off of the top of my head here. But I’m going to go ahead. It’s in James. I can’t remember what it says, but they will incur a stricter judgment. How does that pan out?

Bruce: Well I think it’s the same thing as not proclaiming truth.

Participant: But I mean, you might be a Christian.

Bruce: I might be a Christian, but I’ll put it this way. I might have errors in my theology. I just don’t know where they are yet. *(Laughter.)* And as I find them I need to refine them. Ted (Wood) will tell me where they are. *(Laughter.)*

Participant: No doubt! Amen, amen!

Second Participant: If you can’t tell him, you still have a story. *(Laughter.)*

Ted: Give me a summary. *(Laughter.)*

Bruce: My point is this. If you’re in a teaching role, if you’re in a preaching role, in the role of authority, you give yourself to Word and doctrine. That’s what the Scripture says about the authority of the elders. Give yourself to Word and doctrine. They don’t sit around and talk about the color of exit signs. *(Laughter.)* They give themselves to studying the Word and doctrine, so that the things we’re talking about can be prevented. But when you’re in a teaching role, you need to make sure that I’m teaching the truth. That’s the real issue, because I might be deceived into teaching something that’s erroneous and not even know it.

So then, there is a double judgment on the teacher. When I stand before the Lord, or any other teacher or preacher, I would think that it’s going to be something like this. “Why did you say what you said?”

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Why did you say what you said? What is the basis of what you said? So that’s why it’s so important in a teaching role that you teach to the point of understanding, as Paul says. You don’t teach to the point of agreement.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: You teach to the point of understanding. That means this. I’ve had several people come up to me after a sermon and say, “I disagree with what you said,” or “I didn’t like what you said”—some comment like that.

And I would say, “Did you understand what I’ve said?”

“Oh yeah, I understood it. It’s just that I didn’t like it,” or “I disagree with you.”

I said, “That’s fine.” The role of the teacher is to teach to the point of understanding, not agreement. That’s what it means for the teacher to be very serious about that. Was truth proclaimed? And remember this. The only way you can really evaluate any ministry is by this standard. Was truth proclaimed? Because truth is what sets people free.

Participant: Amen.

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Bruce: It sets people free. That’s what truth does. So my role is this. Am I teaching the truth?

You know, as I drive from my house from Mount Lebanon, coming up here from Scott Township to be with you men every Friday, the thing that I’m praying always in my mind is, Lord, give me the truth to say. If I come up with something that’s untruthful, or inconsistent with who you are, don’t let me say it. Let Your Holy Spirit override that. Let it be His words. It’s so important because I understand what you’re saying, brother. Being a teacher, you get double jeopardy, if you will. You get double evaluation, because you’re in a position of proclaiming the truth. You have to be very, very careful about that.

Participant: Bruce, when you said, or as Chris was talking about, that teachers being judged at a higher level, couldn’t it also be that at your time of judgment with God that He would work to a point of understanding? I mean, He might say to you, “Why did you say what you said?” But wouldn’t His goal be for you? I mean, we’re going to learn for eternity. Isn’t that a time for us to understand this eternal God? It’s a judgment in the sense of “I want you to know what the truth is.” But it’s not a condemnation.

Bruce: It’s more of an evaluation than it is a judgment. Our judgment has taken place when we accept or reject the Person and work of Christ. For now, what we do is that when we go before the Lord, it’s going to be that there will be rewards for the good things we did, and rejection of the bad things we did. It’s more of an evaluation than it is a condemnation.

Participant: Thank you.

Bruce: Ted?

Ted: Bruce, I think there are natural consequences for bad teaching.

Bruce: Mm-hmm.

Ted: I mean God might take from that teacher his authority to teach, and he may not be able to teach anymore. I mean there are a lot of natural consequences for not doing it God’s way.

Bruce: Absolutely. And we have to be careful not to have the public response be an affirmation of not doing it God’s way. We’ve got to be careful of that. Just because a book sells a million copies doesn’t mean that it’s the right thing to sell.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: We have to be discerning, men. That’s what Paul’s point about this is. And that’s why the subtlety of legalism creeps in so easily, because you’re just adding on to it.

Remember, the legalists do one of three things in the preaching of the gospel. They lessen the gospel. They change the gospel, or they add on to it. It’s one of those three things. We need to make sure that we’re proclaiming a Biblical gospel. Yes, sir?

Participant: I think that one of the greatest dangers of teaching, even if we have the right doctrine, is when the Lord says to us, “Well why didn’t you do what you taught?”

Bruce: Right. *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.”* That’s why the most important thing after a study like this, or any time you read the Scripture or you’re in a Bible study, the question is what? What am I going to do about what I just learned?

You know, when you have a conference, people say, “Would you give me Q. and A.s after your session, so we can break up into small groups and go and talk?” I have one

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question. What did you learn and what are you going to do about it? *(Laughter.)* That’s it. Go talk about that. *(Laughter.)* That’s all you need to do. What did I learn? What am I going to do about it? You don’t want to sit around and talk about what it means to me. Quite honestly, brothers, it doesn’t make any difference what it means to you or to me.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: It only makes a difference what it means to the Lord. And the question is this. I’ve just learned something! God was pleased to open my eyes! Behind the pages of Scripture I saw His glory a bit more. What am I going to do about that? How is that going to infuse my life? What’s the impact upon my life going to be? I have a responsibility to apply that, to be a doer of the Word, not just a hearer only.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: So what am I going to do about what I’ve just learned? That’s the question I trust that all of you will ask as you’re walking out the door, getting in your car to drive back to work. What am I going to do today about what I just learned? You see, when we do that, folks, we’re developing a very intimate relationship with the living Lord.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: That’s one of the ways in which we apply the truth. It’s one of the ways in which we develop intimacy with Christ. It’s application. What am I going to do with what I’ve just learned?

The next thing that Paul teaches us is this. Not only will they receive judgment, but also *they persecute true believers and true teachers*. Look at verse 11. Back to Galatians 5. *“But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish that those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!”*

Now this is a difficult passage to understand without understanding what Paul is accused of. Paul is being accused of circumcising Timothy because he was part Jew and part Gentile. He had the right to do that. Paul comes along and he brings Timothy into the fold. But the reason he participated in circumcision for Timothy is because he was part Jew and part Gentile. He had a right to do that.

And so Paul was doing this for the expediency of the ministry. The very first people that Timothy would go talk to in the synagogue would be Jewish leaders. Paul didn’t want to have that hindrance from Timothy’s ministry to the Jews, and so he let him participate in this. But he was being accused. Paul is saying, “See, you did it to Timothy. You’re doing the exact same thing that we’re doing. So why are you any different?” But Paul did that for no other reason other than the expediency of the ministry. He didn’t do it as a means of earning his salvation. It was not a salvation act that he was doing. You can read about that in Acts chapter 16, verses 1-3.

Transcriber’s Note: Acts 16:1-3, ESV. *“Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.”*

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Bruce: Paul wanted Timothy to be a more effective missionary to the Jews. They would be the first people that he would seek out when he went to the synagogues. So Timothy’s acceptance of the rite of Judaism, a tradition that he had a right to because he was half Jewish, enabled him to have a dialogue with those whose offense otherwise would have rejected him. It was strictly for the expediency of the ministry.

But Paul was not willing to write to the Jews. But he was writing to Gentiles in this book in the city of Galatia. If the Galatians were to assume that circumcision was necessary for salvation, Paul would be denying the doctrine of divine grace.

And so the argument was very effective because he said this. “If I am one of them”—meaning one of the false legalistic teachers—, “why are they persecuting me? If I’m really doing what they’re doing, why are they persecuting me?” If he had been teaching that circumcision was necessary for salvation, rather than salvation through the cross, they would not have persecuted him, because the cross was an offense to those who taught salvation by human achievement.

So he says this. “If I’m really doing this, why are they persecuting me? If that’s the case, the cross is no offense.”

The offense of the cross was not just a crucified Messiah. It was also that the cross superseded the entire Mosaic economy. That’s what offended them. It wasn’t so much the cross. But it obliterated and superseded the whole Mosaic economy.

You see, the Jewish culture spent their entire lives trying to keep the law. But when Christ died on the cross, fulfilling the law, Paul would say that it is no longer necessary to observe the entire law. But believe in the One who fulfilled the law by His work on the cross. That’s what Paul is saying.

And so they could not believe one act of history. This is interesting. The Jews could not believe that one act of history could fulfill all of the law. They just couldn’t believe that. You mean one act on the cross fulfilled all of the Mosaic economy, fulfilled all the law? That’s exactly what divine grace does.

And Paul was saying this. Believe in the One who fulfilled the law, because you can’t fulfill it yourself by human achievement. By faith, believe in the One who fulfilled the law. You get credit for that.

You see, the cross basically made the entire legal system of the Mosaic economy extinct. Yes?

Participant: When Timothy agreed to be circumcised, he lost grace. Isn’t that what it says in—

Bruce: No, because he wasn’t doing it for salvation. He wasn’t circumcised to earn his salvation. He was not doing that. He did it as a means of expediency, to minister to the Jewish people to identify with them. But it was not an issue of his salvation. The reference of falling away from the Spirit of grace is referring to adding on circumcision as a means of earning your salvation. Paul did not do that to achieve his salvation. He did it for the expediency of the ministry.

Participant: Timothy was politically incorrect.

Bruce: Yes, Jim?

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 2

Jim: Jim: It just goes to motives, in that regard, really. What is your motive in doing it?

Bruce: Right.

Jim: Is it to earn your salvation, or in this case to make him a better instrument in witnessing to the Jews. Paul says in 1 Corinthians that “I do all things that I might by all means win some.”

Bruce: Sure. Excellent.

Here’s an interesting statement by the fourth century bishop Chrysostom. “The cross was not as great a stumbling block to the Jews as was the failure to require obedience to the ancestral law.” In other words, he’s saying this. It wasn’t so much the cross that offended the Jews. It was the fact that it exterminated and eliminated the entire Mosaic economy, all of the things they’d grown up with. You’re telling me that one single act in history made all that extinct? That was the offense to the Jewish culture--not the cross by itself, but what the cross signified when Paul was teaching divine grace. He was saying this. Yes, that one act of history at the cross fulfilled all of the Mosaic economy. And when you put your faith in the Person and work of Christ who sacrificed His life for you on the cross, you get credit for keeping all of the law of the Mosaic economy. You get credit for that!

That’s why in Romans 5 that we’re justified by faith, not by works. Remember, *justified* means declared righteous. God gives you credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of Christ. And the difficulty the Jewish culture had with Paul in the church of Galatia was this. Do you mean to tell me that one single act could fulfill all the law, when I’ve been working my tail off all these years to earn my way into salvation? You’re telling me that’s wrong?

And Paul says this. “If I were preaching what they were preaching—human achievement--, then why are they persecuting me?” You see, one of the things that false teachers will do is that they will try to persecute true teachers.

Participant: C’mon, sir!

Bruce: They’ll try to persecute true teachers by saying various things against the teaching of the truth. So you’ve got to be careful and be very discerning as we listen to other people teach us because sometimes these false teachers will take on the true teachers, because they’re not proclaiming the same legalistic system of human achievement that they are.

Participant: And that was the stumbling block to the Jews, as Paul says. The gospel is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: And that was the stumbling block.

Bruce: That was it. The stumbling block was not so much the cross per se as the cross accomplished. He made the entire Mosaic economy extinct. Now that means all the law. That’s what I mean by the Mosaic economy—the circumcision of the day, the rituals, the feasts, all those things. All those things were removed at the cross because Christ accomplished all that.

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 2

Now go back to Romans chapter five for a moment. Look at Romans chapter 5 beginning at verse 1.

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we also have obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

Notice what happens as a result of our trusting Christ. We get credit for that, the accomplishment of all the law. We’re justified by faith. And notice. Where do we stand?

Participant: We have peace.

Bruce: We have peace. Where do we stand? We stand in grace! Notice. We stand in grace. *“We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand.”*

Men, when you come to saving faith, you are now standing in grace. That’s why it’s so important that as we take on our personal responsibilities for developing our saving relationship to Christ and maturing in our faith, we put ourselves in the position to absorb grace. What are some of the things you do to absorb grace? Worship, Bible study, prayer, confession, fellowship. Put yourself in a position to absorb grace, because if you have been justified by faith, that’s where you’re standing. And no one is going to snatch you out of His hand. No one can remove you from that. We are now involved in standing in the sphere of grace. And grace is sufficient for all things, for all times, for all areas.

Look at Acts chapter 6, verse 13. Turn with me there to Acts chapter six. I want you to see why they were upset with Stephen. Acts chapter 6, verse 13.

Now let me start with verse 8 of Acts chapter 6. *“And Stephen, full of grace and power,”* (not human achievement), *“was doing great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those who belonged to the Synagogue of the Freedmen as it was called, and the Cyrenians and all the Alexandrians and all those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.*

“Then they secretly instigated men who said, ‘We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.’ And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes. And they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council. And they set up false witnesses and said, ‘This man never ceases to speak against the holy place and the law.’”

You see, the reason they were upset was not because he was talking about a crucified Messiah. They were upset because he was speaking against the law and the holy place and the synagogue. And then if you want to read what happened afterwards, look at chapter seven. How would you like to have this be your response? Look at the end of chapter 7, beginning at verse 54.

“Now when they heard these things”, (and you can read about all of that in chapter seven—his sermon), *“they were enraged and they ground their teeth at him.”* How would you like that to be a response to your sermon? (*Laughter.*) People grinding their teeth in anger.

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 2

“But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, ‘Behold, I see the heavens open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.’

“And they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.”

This is the beginning of the conversion of Saul. God will use anything in ministry that He needs to do to bring people to a saving faith, even the death of Stephen. *“And they were stoning Stephen and he cried out, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!’ And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”*

Now the reason they were so upset about Stephen was because he was preaching against the law and against the synagogue. You see, to the Jewish culture, they just could not believe that one act in history negated the whole system of the Mosaic economy. And Paul said, “If I were teaching something other than that, why are they persecuting me? If I were one of them, why are they persecuting me?”

Every believer has the responsibility to watch out for the beginnings of legalism in our churches. That first bit of yeast infects the whole fellowship and eventually grows into a very serious problem. No wonder Paul was so vehement, as he denounces the false teachers. Paul could say, “I’m suffering persecution because I preach the cross.” These false teachers are popular celebrities because they preach a religion that pampers the flesh, that feeds the ego.

“Do they want to circumcise you? I wish they would cut themselves off.” This is what he says in the last verse, verse twelve.

With the death and resurrection of Christ, there is no spiritual value to circumcision. It is only a physical operation.

Now notice this. In verse 12 Paul wished that these false teachers would operate on themselves, emasculate themselves. It means to castrate themselves so that they could not produce any more children of slavery. That’s what he means. He says, “I wish they would just castrate themselves, because then they can’t have more children.” They would be producing children of slavery. And we’re talking about giving up a yoke of slavery and walking in freedom in Christ. He’s saying this with such great concern and passion and vehemence. “I just wish that they would castrate themselves so they cannot produce any more children of slavery.” Boy, talk about a condemnation of these false teachers!

The believer who lives in the Spirit of God’s grace is free, rich, and running the race that leads to reward and fulfillment. But the believer who abandons grace for law is a slave, a pauper, and a runner on a detour. As Paul would say, he’s just a loser. And the only way to become a winner in the race of faith is to purge out the leaven, the false doctrine that mixes law and grace. Yield to the Spirit of God.

I want to read something to you as we conclude. *(A phone rings.)* That means this is a point of emphasis. So pay attention. *(Laughter.)*

This is a statement from one of the Puritan authors. It’s called “By the Grace of God I Am What I Am.”

“The Dangers of False Teachers” Part 2

Now men, I hope you understand this. By the grace of God you and I are really who we are because of grace. Do you understand that?

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: I am what I am because of grace, not because of human achievement. Listen to these words.

“All that I am as a child of God, as a servant of Christ, as an heir of heavenly glory, I am by the grace of God. Am I cleansed from the guilt of my sin? It was Your grace, O Lord of love, which opened the fountain that washed all my sin away. Am I sanctified? It is not by works of righteousness which I have done, but by Your grace that I am saved from the love and power of my sins.

“Am I justified? It was Your grace that provided the spotless robe of righteousness in which I stand accepted before You as one of the beloved. Am I bearing any fruit to Your glory? It is by Your grace in Christ Jesus. For apart from Him I could do nothing.

“Am I different from what I once was, or from the ungodly who have their portion in this world? It is Your grace alone which has made me to differ. I have nothing which I have not received from You.

“By the grace of God I am what I am—a pardoned sinner, a justified believer, an adopted child, an heir of glory.”

Let’s pray. Father, it is by Your grace that we are what we are. And so we can’t take credit for what we are, because we have received nothing that has not come from You and Your grace, Your unmerited favor. Father, allow us to stand in grace and be firm. No one can snatch us out of Your hand. And God is greater than Him, and no one can snatch us out of His hand. May it be so that we will stand in grace for God’s glory this day. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” Thank you. (*Applause.*)