

TITLE: AN OBVIOUS CHOICE!

TEXT: GALATIANS 5:1-12

INTRO: In his commentary on Galatians, Tom Wacaster outlines the 6 chapters of Galatians as: The Doctrine of Liberty Stated (ch. 1-2), The Doctrine of Liberty Defended (ch. 3-4), The Doctrine of Liberty Applied (ch. 5-6). Paul has spent 4 chapters explaining and defending the true gospel, proving that it alone (not Judaism) is the only way to salvation. In chapter 5, he will state this again, then begin making necessary applications.

I. THE OPTIONS (v. 1-6):

A. A fall from grace... (v. 1-4)

(v. 1) Liberty (freedom) vs. bondage (slavery): Stand fast in Christian freedom; don't return to slavery (of the law). Don't misinterpret this as so many do today. It is a comparison of Christianity & Judaism. How to stand firm follows in **ch. 5-6**.

(v. 2) If you get circumcised, Christ is useless to you. In other words, this is practical rejection of Christ! This is not just about circumcision, but about keeping *any* portion of the old law (**4:10**). Those who believe the Ten Commandments are binding on us today should take heed to Paul's warning in v.1-4.

(v. 3) Also, you'll be a debtor (i.e., slave) to keep the whole law. Which is it going to be? Follow Christ, & not the law? Or follow *all* the law? Why don't those who follow the T.C. also sacrifice animals, etc.? They must be consistent (**James 2:10-11**)!

(v. 4) If you choose the law for justification (which he's already said is impossible – **2:16**), Christ is become of no effect to you. It's one or the other; there can be no mixing of the two. Christ's atoning sacrifice is useless; it can't cover you, because you've rejected Him. "*Ye are fallen* (aorist/past tense – "you fell") *from grace*." Can **O.S.A.S.** be refuted any more clearly? Adherents say that if you fall away, you were never really a Christian. But these Galatians clearly were Christians (*baptized into Christ, have put on Christ-3:27; adopted as sons-4:7; known by God-4:9*), and Paul says they had fallen away!

B. Or a hope of righteousness (v. 5-6)

(v. 5) *Through the Spirit* (context: Christianity) *we wait for the hope of righteousness* – the hope that comes by our righteousness. Being righteous brings hope – an expectation of eternal life. Those who in any way hold to the old law cannot have this hope!

(v. 6) *In Christ* (being a Christian), circumcision & uncircumcision don't make any difference. It's not wrong to circumcise, unless it's being done according to the law. This helps us understand Paul's reason for circumcising Timothy (**Ac 16**). It wasn't done to be obedient to the law, but rather to avoid an unnecessary barrier to teaching the Jews. Had these Jews required it, Paul would've reacted as he did with Titus (**Gal 2:3-5**).

- What matters is **faith** (again, a reference to Christianity as opposed to Judaism). A man can become a Christian regardless of whether or not he's been circumcised. "*Faith...worketh by/through love*." Notice that faith **works!** No work, no faith!

II. THE OBSTACLES (v. 7-12):

A. The perpetrator (v. 7-9)

(v. 7) *You were running well* (an analogy from the Greek games). **1 Cor 9:24** – run to win the prize! (Cf. **Gal 4:14-15**). *Who hindered you* (another 'Greek game' term; to cut into one's course; be an obstacle) *that you should not obey the truth (3:1)?* Someone (Judaizers) had knocked them off their course, so that they were not obeying the truth. Paul is rebuking them for this. Notice that the truth is not just a fact to be known, but commandments to be obeyed.

(v. 8) The perpetrator is **not** the one that called you (could refer to God or Paul, probably God). Either way, the one to blame is the one teaching another gospel **other than what we have taught (1:6-9)**. Holding to Judaism is *not* from God!

(v. 9) *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. Very common analogy in Scripture (**Mt 16:6** – beware of the leaven...; ***1 Cor 5:6-7** provides appropriate instruction for the Galatians as well). These leavening agents need to be removed!

B. The punishment (v. 10-12)

(v. 10) Paul expresses confidence in them, but not in their false teachers.

1. When rebuking, it's also good to give encouragement and to show confidence that they will do the right thing (cf. **Heb 6:9** – *we are persuaded better things of you; Phm 21* – *having confidence in thy obedience...that thou will do more than I say*).

2. *But he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment*. False teachers have condemnation awaiting them for the discord, division, & destruction they bring to the church of Christ (**2 Pet 2** – "*swift destruction, their damnation slumbereth not, shall utterly perish in their own corruption, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever*").

(v. 11) *If I preach circumcision* (apparently this was a false claim against him), *why do I suffer persecution?* If the claim were true, then I wouldn't be persecuted by these Judaizers. Paul dealt with them everywhere he went! If he preached circumcision, then *the offense of the cross* (the gospel message of salvation apart from the law) *would cease*. "My persecution is evidence that I preach the truth and not Judaism!"

(v. 12) *I wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off* (amputate, mutilate – middle voice). Some believe Paul really means that he wishes these Judaizers would be disfellowshipped. But the middle voice describes an action one does to himself. A member doesn't disfellowship himself! Paul is making a very strong statement of disgust with these false teachers! Today we shouldn't think that God feels any differently about people who disturb and divide the church!

CONCLUSION: God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9), but obviously not all will. Those few who will be obedient will always be under attack from atheists, or practical atheists (false teachers & those who follow them), who don't like to see God's people living according to God's instructions. **One form of attack is in options.** We are given many options to obeying the pure gospel truth (add a little here, subtract a little there...no big deal). But it is a big deal to God. "*All His commandments are righteousness*" (**Psa 119:172**), and He expects them to be followed. Don't let anyone (preachers included) distract you and dissuade you from the hope of righteousness!