

Galatians, Chapter Five, Lesson Two

STRENGTHENING THE BRETHREN Galatians 5:2-12

STIMULATE

** As Paul showed us our "Freedom in Christ", last week, we learned from him three steps that would help us to establish Christ honoring standards for our life. Do you recall those three steps?

1) **Do not sin!** cf. Romans 5:20-6:2

2) **Do not cause a weaker brother to stumble!** cf. 1Corinthians 8:1-13

3) **Do all to the glory of God!** cf. 1Cor. 10:27-31

** Did anyone get the opportunity to apply one or more of those steps to the make up of your everyday life?

Absolutely yes! Each one of us should have been applying all three of those principles to the form and structure of who we are! If we want to bring glory to our God, we need to be committed to living His word daily and not merely be like those who hear it, but never change. cf. James 1:22

MOTIVATE

** Having seen last time that we are to be cautious with our "Freedom in Christ" so we do not cause a weaker brother to stumble, Paul is now going to show us how to be a positive influence on our brothers. As we follow the account of Paul's interaction with the Galatians, we will learn the Christ-like skill of "Strengthening the Brethren". Please join me now in Galatians 5:2-12 as we learn this wonderful truth together.

Read passage (V.2-5) (V.6-9) (V.10-12)

Opening Prayer

Strengthening the Brethren

INVESTIGATE

V. 2 ** How does Paul get his reader's attention as he opens our passage for today?

He says, "Behold" [Ide], an interjection: See!

A far more common word used for "behold" is "idou", used some 187 times, for example; Pilate said, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and **behold**, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you have made against Him..." (Luke 23:14)

The word that Paul uses here is far more scarce in Scripture (translated only 21 times as "behold"; only 8 more as either "lo, look, see, or see here") and it is used to get their attention.

** What phrase does Paul add to this word to make sure that the Galatians are listening?

"...I, Paul, say to you..." He is about to make this bold proclamation based upon his apostolic authority! cf. Galatians 1:1

**** Right out of the starting blocks, Paul starts "Strengthening the Brethren". How would you put his warning to the Galatians into your own words?**

If you insist on trying to earn your salvation, then the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ on your behalf is wasted!

**** Is Paul pronouncing a Biblical prohibition on the medical practice of circumcision?**

No! It is the motive behind the act that he is addressing. "...if you receive circumcision [for the purpose of obtaining salvation], Christ will be of no benefit to you."

**** Did Paul ever get involved in circumcision?**

Yes! Look with me at Acts 16:1-3. Paul had Timothy (unlike the gentile, Titus [Galatians 2:3]) circumcised "because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek"(V.3). Paul did not want Timothy rejected as a "half- breed", so he had Timothy circumcised in keeping with Jewish custom and not for religious principle.

cf. 1Corinthians 9:20-23

V. 3 ** Now back in Galatians 5:3, of what requirement does Paul remind the would-be law keeper?

You must keep the entire law! James, the brother of our Lord knew that to be true.
cf. James 2:10

V. 4 ** What terrifying impact does the decision to be circumcised for salvation have?

It severs you from Christ!

**** How does Paul describe the people who would do this?**

"...you who are seeking to be justified by law..."

**** What is the end result?**

"...you have fallen from grace"!

**** Does that mean they have lost their salvation?**

Absolutely not, that is impossible! cf. Romans 8:28-30, 38-39, John 10:27-29, John 18:7-9

**** Then, what is he saying?**

You cannot mix Law and Grace! These who would be justified by keeping the law, came to the very threshold of salvation by grace and turned away to try and earn their own righteousness by works. cf. Hebrews 6:4-6 and 10:26-27

V. 5 ** As Paul continues "Strengthening the Brethren", he encourages the Galatians with an accurate description of a true Christian, what is it?

We..."are waiting for the hope of righteousness."

** From where do we get the patience to wait and hope?

"...through the Spirit, by faith..."

V. 6 ** If you are a Christian, trusting Christ alone for salvation, does it matter if you are circumcised?

No, "...for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything..."

** Then what does matter?

"...faith working through love", not flesh working through self-effort!

All see - cf. Ephesians 2:8-10, 4:1-3

V. 7 ** What had been the track record of the Galatians prior to the peer pressure of the Judaizers?

They "...were running well...", Paul often used an athletic metaphor.

cf. 1Corinthians 9:24-27, 2Timothy 4:7.

** While Paul continues to strengthen the Galatians with this appraisal of how they were doing, what is the answer to his question? Who had hindered them from obeying the truth?

While we do not know specifically, we do know that it was the Judaizers (Acts 15:1). Anytime that we are distracted with false doctrine, we will be hindered in our daily effort to glorify God.

V. 8 ** What clarifying statement does Paul make regarding the source of legalism?

It "...did not come from Him who calls you."

** What is encouraging about that statement and how would it strengthen the Galatians' faith?

First, God is the source of all truth and "this persuasion" to a life of legalism was demonic.

cf. James 3:15, Galatians 1:8-9

Paul is protecting the Galatians by letting them know the source of this false doctrine.

Second, he is encouraging them with the truth that God chose them for salvation, based upon His grace and not their religious effort. cf. John 15:16

Paul is strengthening the Galatians with the good news that God loved them and called them into a saving relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

V. 9 ** How much false teaching does it take to negatively influence an entire group of believers?

Only a "little"! Jesus issued the same warning to his disciples on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee. All see - Matthew 16:5-12

V.10 ** Well, back in Galatians 5:10, Paul continues to strengthen the believers. How does he do it?

By expressing his confidence in them!

** What was he confident about?

That they would "...adopt no other view..."

**** Why not, what or who was looking out for them?**

Paul's confidence was "in the Lord", he knew that Christ would complete His work in them. (Philippians 1:6)

**** What will become of the false teachers that disturb the faith of God's elect?**

They will bear their judgement. cf. 2Peter 2:1-3 and 2Peter 3:9 (in reference to 2Peter 3:4)

V.11 ** What do you suppose might have been a rumor or accusation brought against Paul on the subject of circumcision?

While spreading their false gospel the Judaizers were saying that Paul was preaching circumcision for salvation, like they were. The fuel for that lie was in the fact that Paul had been circumcised on the eighth day (Philippians 3:5) and that he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:1-3).

**** How does Paul defuse that lie?**

He says, "...why am I still persecuted?" Paul was constantly persecuted for preaching against circumcision.

**** If Paul did preach circumcision for salvation, what effect would it have?**

It would remove the offense of the cross from the Jew. cf. Romans 9:30-33

V.12 ** In one final act of "Strengthening the Brethren", Paul tries to protect his Galatians. What would he want to have become of the Judaizers who had been bewitching them?

He would want them to "mutilate" [apokopto] themselves. The word meant literally "to cut off" and referred to the pagan practice of castration. Paul was making reference to the cult of Cybele, a popular pagan nature goddess in Asia Minor. The devout male worshipers in the cult castrated themselves as the supreme act of religious devotion. Paul was saying that if you think you can make yourself more pleasing to God by being circumcised, why not go to the pagan extremes of self-mutilation?

**** By the way, did this harsh treatment of the physical body make someone more devoted spiritually?**

Absolutely not, it was a painful waste of time. cf. Colossians 2:20-23

EXTRICATE

**** In today's passage, we were able to observe the apostle Paul as he was "Strengthening the Brethren" in three different ways. Can you find them?**

1) He warns them - V. 2, 3 and 9

2) He encourages them - V. 5, 7 and 10

3) He protects them - V. 8, 10 and 12

DELINEATE

**** What was the one phrase in our passage today that would protect us from false teaching, and about which Paul had great confidence in the Galatians?**

V.10 - "...that you will adopt no other view..."

Paul is telling us to hold tight to the truth of God's precious word, while refusing to adopt the heresy which stems from the doctrines of demons. cf. 1Timothy 6:20

EVALUATE

** While it has been good to see Paul strengthen the faith of the Galatians, is it really a job for me to do for my brothers and sisters in the faith? What am I supposed to do, once I have been strengthened with the word of God?

Let's close our study for today by looking at a passage together that will answer that question for us. Please turn to Luke 22:31-32. Read passage.

Clearly, when we have been strengthened by the Lord with His word, through His Spirit, we are to become as those who are "Strengthening the Brethren".

ACTIVATE

** Lord, please help me to stand up for You and to know Your word that I might strengthen my Christian brothers and sisters for Your name sake.

Closing prayer