

**Galatians 5: 6; “Faith Working Through Love”, Message # 33 in the series –  
“Christ has Set us Free”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023,  
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Here in verses 5 and 6 we find Paul using the word “For” at the beginning of each verse. What is the “For” there for, is always a good exegetical question to ask. Both “Fors” in verses 4 and 5 are referring back to something Paul has already declared to the Galatian churches in verses 1-4. That something is their not being entangled again with a yoke of bondage; of their bringing themselves under the bondage of the law, rather than their seeing their whole spiritual life in relation to their Lord Jesus Christ. The people who Paul had been writing to appear to me to have been very young and undiscerning Christians. They were listening to the false Judaizing teachers who had crept in to spy out their liberty in Christ, and to take it away from them if they could.

The reason that I think that a good number of the people in the Galatian churches were Christians at the time of Paul’s writing to them is that in verse 1 Paul exhorts them to “Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” Paul does not question that they had trusted in Christ and had been set free. He is, however, telling them that those persons among them who were attempting to be justified by law, that they had fallen from the word of truth concerning the grace of Christ; that grace which had been so freely offered to them in the gospel, and which they had professed to receive. Those who were going back to the law for justification were estranged from Christ.

At this time we want to think about the 3 facts which are declared here in this verse. 1<sup>st</sup> – No ceremonial law or ceremony such as circumcision avails anything to becoming a Christian or remaining a Christian. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Not having been circumcised will not affect whether you will be saved either. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – What will avail, what will confirm all the spiritual blessings of Christ to you is this principle of faith working through love.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all - No ceremonial law or ceremony such as circumcision avails anything to becoming a Christian or remaining a Christian.**

It is characteristic of a true Christian that they will steadfastly hold to the truth that it is by faith in Jesus Christ alone which will save them and bring them to heaven and eternal life. No amount of engaging in the works of the law should be added to Christ’s finished work, in the mind of the believer. It is only Christ’s righteousness and His sufferings for those people who are trusting in Him, which will result in their having, and knowing that they have, eternal life. Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians Chapter 15, verse 1. “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel, which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.”

You can see here, very clearly can’t you, that it is faith in the preached word concerning Christ which saves us from our sins. That word was received, and believed concerning the fact that we stand justified and complete in Christ. We are saved by believing this word if we hold it fast; if we persevere in faith in the gospel and Christ. The text which we are studying goes even further. It is telling us that if anything is added, or anything taken away from that perfect work which Christ has done, in the mind of the believer, it will estrange them from Christ. A true believer in Jesus Christ cannot be estranged from Christ in any ultimate or final sense, because they have believed in Christ’s perfect work in life and death, and they are trusting in the promise of God’s keeping them.

Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1, verse 3. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” You can see here that this great salvation of ours is worked out in its purchase by Christ. When Christ rose from the dead He took our

captivity captive; He earned the right in the Father's sight, to give us grace. Then in time and space, at the Father's choice and time, this work of grace is begun in us by the New Birth; not by any ceremony that we have engaged in such as circumcision or baptism. Our being regenerated in our heart, our being born again, is according to God's abundant mercy in electing love. We are born again by the Spirit of God to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

And then when we first believe the gospel of Christ it is because faith has been created in our heart. When we first believe we placed "in Christ"; that is by the Father and the Spirit into this new spiritual realm where all the blessings of salvation are conveyed to us. What we will eventually be given, what we will eventually become, is all based upon Christ's finished work of redemption. But it is presently known by us, as an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled in heaven; God Himself through Christ will completely save us; body, soul, and spirit.

While this work of redemption is going on in our life; we are being sanctified and made holy over time. All of our sins, shortcomings and failures, which are seen perfectly by our omniscient God, are covered by the blood of Christ and we are kept from ultimately being deceived by Satan, or by any false teacher, by the power of God. We are during that time, waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith, as we looked at in our last study. Turn with me over to Galatians Chapter 6 and verse 14. "But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation."

Here we see that the first part of verse 15 is just the same as the one that we are studying. But the last part is different. The last part speaks of the New Birth; what is called here, a new creation. This is what avails unto salvation; a new creation. That is, being born again, we come to have faith and to exercise faith. None of this good work was based upon the Old Testament ceremony of circumcision. And none of this good work was based upon the New Testament ceremony of baptism, either to infants or adults. Ceremonies, in and of themselves, avail nothing. This truly needs to be believed by all professed Christians, or they cannot be saved.

Turn with me over to 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7, verse 17. "But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk." "And so I ordain in all the churches." "Was anyone called while circumcised?" "Let him not become uncircumcised." "Was anyone called while uncircumcised?" "Let him not be circumcised." "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters." Here again, the first part of the verse is like our verse 6 of Galatians 5. But here Paul explains what he means. Circumcision is nothing; uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God.

In other words, a new creation in your heart is what begins everything in relation to your being saved. You are born again; faith in Christ is created there where it never existed before. You exercise that faith and you are justified; you are declared righteous by God and all of your sins are taken away, and the process of sanctification begins in you. You learn to keep the commandments of God in relation to Christ's giving you grace, And this process begins and it continues all the rest of your life until God brings you into eternity and into heaven through your death. No ceremonial law like circumcision or baptism ever brought any of this about.

**Now 2<sup>nd</sup> – You need to see that not having been circumcised will not affect whether you are to be saved either.**

Turn with me over to Romans Chapter 4, verse 5. "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.'" "Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only, or upon the uncircumcised also?" "For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness." "How then was it accounted?" "While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised?" "Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised." "And he received the sign of circumcision, a

seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while still uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”

Abraham believed God’s promise in Genesis 15 concerning the number of his descendants being as the number of the stars, even though he and Sarai had had no child; no heir. “He believed God,” it says in Genesis 15: 6, “and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” Later in Genesis 17, circumcision was commanded of Abraham, and he received it as a sign of the faith that he had while he was still uncircumcised. In this act of his obedience, he was not justified, though he was blessed with being called, “the father of all who believe”. He was not saved by circumcision; rather his faith was sealed to him. His being circumcised did not bring him grace; it was a sign that he already had grace. He believed in what God would do for him through Christ, the bloody sacrifice; even as circumcision is a bloody sacrifice and ordinance.

He had believed that God’s promise would be fulfilled; that he would have a son, and through him as many descendants as the stars in the sky. It was a seal of the righteousness of faith which he had. In this obedience of faith, he became the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the step of the faith which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.”

Let us understand that Abraham was never justified by anything but faith, and his being circumcised was an act of faith as well. Abraham took steps of faith while still uncircumcised, and he took a step of faith in believing in the promise and word of God to him that he would have many descendants in being circumcised as an act of obedience. But all of his obedience was based upon the grace that he received from God. It was based upon what God would do for him through Christ. Neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision availed anything, either to save him, or to keep him and bring him to heaven. His faith rested entirely upon the promise of God.

**Now 3<sup>rd</sup> – What will avail, what will confirm all the spiritual blessings of Christ to you, is this principle of faith working through love.**

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.” This verse could easily be read this way: “For in Christ Jesus, nothing of keeping the law, nor any thought that you are free from its righteous requirements avails anything, but faith working through love. Faith is always needed whether you are a Jew or a Gentile. Faith in Christ is needed by all men to be saved; for if you have faith, you will be given all the manifold grace of Christ to do what will be pleasing to God and loving in relation to people around you. Your faith is in Christ, and you will love God and keep His commandments if you really have this saving faith that we are talking about.

Look with me at Romans 5, verse 1. “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. This verse sounds quite a bit like verse 5 of Galatians 5. “For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.” But let us go on. “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”

So, you can see here that when we believe in Christ, we begin to live by faith in the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. We begin to learn that trials are for our good, and because we trust in Him that He knows best how to build our faith, we begin to show Him love by going about to do and keep His commandments, and we are learning, and attempting to please Him in whatever we do and say under the most difficult of circumstances. Faith is something we work at,

but we do it out of love for what Christ has done for us. Love is poured out within our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is the chief of all the graces, and without it we are nothing, and we can do nothing for God and Christ if we do not exercise it. But as we persevere in these graces of faith and love we come to see that Christian character is being formed in our lives and this brings to our soul a real hope, the hope that will not disappoint; that God will be glorified in us whether by life or by death.

Listen to the Apostle Paul in closing, in Philippians 1, verse 19. “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” This is the best attitude in living the Christian life, and faith working by love is the best principle to live by in order to glorify God.