

## Galatians 5:2-12 – Circumcision or Christ?

It is interesting to note the similarities between John 8 and Galatians 3 and 4. Jesus proclaimed to a number of Pharisees that they would be free if they continued in his word. When they objected to the idea that they were not free, they sighted that they were descendants of Abraham and therefore already free. Jesus told them that they were slaves to sin. When pressed, these Pharisees claimed “we have one Father, even God”. Jesus instead told them that they were children of the devil. They were slaves, they were not true children of Abraham and they were not children of God. In Paul’s words, the Pharisees were Ishmaels and not Isaacs just like anyone who chose law over Christ.

### **Read Galatians 5:1-6.**

What harm would it do if the Gentile Christians received circumcision? What four consequences would there be for someone who received circumcision so that they could “be saved”? What does it mean that Christ would not be an advantage for them? Why would someone who received circumcision be obligated to keep the rest of the law? What does it mean to be severed from Christ? What does it mean to fall away from grace? (5:2-4)

Is Paul saying that a true Christian can loose their salvation? To draw this conclusion from verses 2-4 is to read into Paul’s words something that may come from personal fear or guilt and not from the text. Paul clearly is saying that there is only one way by which we can be justified. We are not justified before God by faith and works. Someone who is justified by faith alone, in Christ alone, is a true child of God. Anyone who seeks to be justified by works is under a curse and is subject to God’s wrath. What verses clearly speak to the eternal security of the true believer? See John 6:37-40, 10:27-29.

In verse 5, do we work for righteousness or wait for righteousness? What is the difference between our righteousness now and our righteousness after our bodily resurrection? How do we wait for this future righteousness? (4:5)

Were the Christians who were circumcised better than the Christians who were not circumcised? Why or why not? (4:6)

How did Paul characterize true saving faith in verse 6? What does a loving, working faith look like?

**Read Galatians 5:7-12.**

In verse 7, how did Paul describe the Galatians' early life in Christ? Paul wanted to know who hindered them from obeying the truth. The word "hindered" is the same word that Paul used when he talked about Satan hindering him from seeing the Thessalonians. (1 Thessalonians 2:18)

The Gentile Christians in Galatia were being persuaded by the Judaizers to be circumcised. Who called the Galatians? Where did this evil influence come from? (5:8)

In verse 9, Paul didn't decide to all of a sudden give a cooking lesson. What is the point of "a little leaven leavens the whole lump"? See also 1 Corinthians 5:6-8.

At times in this letter Paul expressed his concern about the Galatians. What is Paul confident of with regard to the Galatian believers? What is true of those who agitate the Galatians? (5:10)

It seems that the trouble makers were saying that Paul still preached circumcision. How would Paul's life had been different if he was still a pharisee preaching circumcision? Why is the cross an offense or stumbling block? (5:11)

Verse 12 answers the question, "Paul, tell us how you really feel about these Judaizers who were unsettling the Galatians." What did Paul want to happen to the Judaizers? Was he speaking figuratively or literally?

Sin is very deceitful. Why would someone think that receiving circumcision would impress God to the point where God would declare that person righteous? That person doesn't understand God. That person doesn't know God. More importantly, God doesn't know that person. God will say to them, "goat, go and join the other goats". God the Father sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to suffer and die for his sheep, to shed his own blood, and become a curse for us. How is a sheep of God going to diminish all that Christ has done by saying "look at me, I got circumcised." God is not impressed. Paul felt confident in the Lord that the Galatians would reject the Judaizers' false teaching and continue to run well once again.