

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

NO OTHER GOSPEL: FREEDOM IN CHRIST

LESSON 11: "Live Free or Die"

Date: November 30, 2014

TEXT: Galatians 5:1-12

INTRODUCTION

Illustration: On July 31, 1809, a simple yet unforgettable toast was offered at an anniversary reunion of the Battle of Bennington in Vermont. The toast was offered by John Stark, New Hampshire's most famous soldier of the American Revolutionary War, who, although declining health kept him from attending the event physically, nonetheless participated by letter. In it was written a simple salute, "Live free or die: Death is not the worst of evils." That famous phrase eventually became the official motto of the State of New Hampshire, adorning all license plates with its noble ambition.

Stark was not the first freedom fighter to issue that ringing cry. In fact, throughout the centuries that phrase has echoed on many battlefields and in many countries. It was heard during the French Revolution of the late 18th century, during the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s, in the Brazilian Empire of the 19th century, throughout the Ukrainian War of Independence in the early 1900s, and during the Turkish resistance of the early 20th century. Today, it serves as the motto of Greece, Uruguay, and the Republic of Macedonia. Yes, history is replete with freedom fighters, who willingly sacrificed life in order to achieve liberty.

Since its inception, the history of Christianity has also been filled with freedom fighters. Just recently, while America celebrated Halloween, another anniversary was more silently yet simultaneously occurring. Almost 500 years ago, on October 31, 1517, Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* to the door of the church in Wittenberg, Germany in defiance of the works-oriented, self-righteous, legalistic religion of Roman Catholicism. And roughly 1,450 years before that, the apostle Paul wrote an energized appeal to the legalistic-leaning churches in Galatia in defense of true spiritual freedom by grace alone and through faith alone.

Both men believed in the motto "live free or die" in their spiritual ministries. And, yet, whereas that motto is meant to communicate the

ultimate sacrifice that patriots are willing to pay in order for political liberty to be enjoyed, it means more than that in the examples of Martin Luther and the apostle Paul. As Paul writes this letter to the Galatian Christians, that motto actually describes what he knows to be at stake in the battle for spiritual liberty — not his death, but theirs. If they refused to live free in Christ Jesus, then the alternative was indeed spiritual and eternal death.

So, contemporary Christian, biblical truth has not changed, nor has this gospel-motto, "Live free or die"! In the character of a freedom fighter, Paul begins Part 3 of his epistle, in which he explores the privileges of freedom in Christ, by taking one (almost) final shot at his opponents (cf. 6:12-13). In Galatians 5:1-12, Paul issues two warnings—first against legalism and second against the legalists.

WARNINGS AGAINST LEGALISM (vv. 2-6)

In verses 2-6, Paul first warns against what would happen if the Galatians falter in their "freedom in Christ" and return to the enslaving yoke of the Law (v. 1). In all his effort to rescue his readers from bondage to the Law, Paul certainly understands that God's standard hasn't changed. Before, during, and after the Law, God's standard has always been perfect holiness, both in outward obedience and inward attitude (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, especially Matthew 5:48). Nonetheless, Paul also understands that the Law is completely incapable of providing such perfection or of mercifully dealing with man's inevitable failure. The only way that positional righteousness (what Paul has been referring to as being "justified" in chapters 2-4) and practical righteousness (what Paul will be addressing in chapters 5-6) can ever be actualized in the life of an individual is not "by the works of the Law" (2:16), but "through the Spirit, by faith" (v. 5; cf. 2:16, 20).

The alternative to this life of Spirit-dependent faith is what we call "legalism," the attempt to rightly orient oneself to God, earning His favor and appeasing His wrath, through self-effort and obedience to law. As Paul (again) clearly elucidates in verses 2-6, if you don't "live free" in Christ (by grace alone and through faith alone), then you will "die." Paul describes this spiritual death (or decay)¹ in four points.

1. *Legalism nullifies Christ (v. 2).*

The particular religious activity that these legalistic Judaizers were finding their spiritual status in was “circumcision.” This rite had become such a distinctive outward mark and source of spiritual pride for the Jews, that they were often referred to merely as “the circumcised” (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Galatians 2:7).



How do we know that Paul is not taking issue with the act itself (cf. Philippians 3:5; Acts 16:1-3; Genesis 17:9-11)?

Paul is not taking issue with the act itself, for he himself was circumcised as an infant (Philippians 3:5), he condoned it when it advanced gospel-ministry (Acts 16:1-3), and he understood the divine symbolism in it (Genesis 17:9-11 with 15:6).



What was the divine symbolism in circumcision (cf. Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; 6:10; 9:24-26; Ezekiel 44:7, 9; Romans 2:25, 28-29)?

God intended the act of a physical cutting to symbolize His desire to cut away evil from human hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; 6:10; 9:24-26; Ezekiel 44:7, 9; Romans 2:25, 28-29).² Rather than being a religious rite of human effort and self-righteousness, it was meant to be a picture of total depravity and utter spiritual neediness. But many had come to trust in the symbol itself, rather than in the symbolism (cf. Acts 15), and the Galatian Christians were leaning that way now, too.

So, Paul’s first point of warning against legalism is “that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you” (v. 2). MacArthur writes, “To trust in Jesus Christ for salvation is to acknowledge that one cannot save himself. To trust in circumcision or any other personal effort as a means of grace is to supplement His divine work with human work; and a supplemented Christ is a supplanted Christ.”³

Application: There are many people in society today who are very religious and love Jesus Christ. They have a fish sticker on the back of their car, they wear a hat that says “Jesus is my Lord,” and they love the religious holidays that commemorate His ministry. But complementing and at times surpassing their affection for Jesus is their commitment to and confidence in a religious system to secure their soul before God. Dear friend, if that is you, please understand

that in so adding to Christ Jesus, you have actually neutralized any benefit that He offers. His perfect life and His atoning death, His achievement of perfection and payment of sin’s penalty, His gracious substitution and righteous imputation—all of that is of no greater value to you than an interesting and inspiring story.

Illustration: Like a fairy tale, you’re just on the outside looking in, not profiting at all from the accomplishments of the hero. A child can with happiness, contentment, and no criticism make believe all he wants that he’s a part of Robin Hood’s merry band or Star Wars’ galactic champions, but the fantasy has no real or lasting merit. At some point the child must grow up, leave the daydream behind, and experience the real world.

In the real world of spiritual standing with God, self-effort and human achievement is just make-believe and fantasy. It doesn’t work to love and admire the Hero and try to be like him. You must enter the story and totally depend upon that Hero alone—regardless of your personal merit, sincerity, or activity—to rescue your soul. According to Romans 6, the Hero delivers those who are weak and devoid of spiritual strength (v. 6), who are full of sin and admit it (v. 8), and who are even His enemies and under His wrath (vv. 9-10). These people don’t fantasize about their ability to earn God’s favor; they don’t labor to make themselves worthy of the Victor’s salvation—consumed by their spiritual neediness, they cry out for the Hero and plead for His deliverance. The Hero doesn’t help those who can help themselves; He helps those whose only hope is Him. In fact, in the great true story (not a fairy tale) of God’s plan to rescue and restore this lost world, the Hero Himself said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” (cf. Mark 2:15-17; Matthew 9:10-13; Luke 5:29-32).

Friend, if you continue in your imaginative play-acting—loving and appreciating the Hero, but rather than solely crying out to Him and wholly depending on Him, you are instead working to be near to Him and laboring to be worthy of Him—you will discover too late that rather than enhancing Christ’s benefit to you, your religious performance actually replaced and relinquished it. And your spiritual ability is like “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6, KJV). If you are trusting in your own religious observances (like circumcision), then you are not trusting in Christ alone, and He is not benefiting you at

all. If you are not standing firm in the freedom of Christ alone (v. 1), then you will hear the Hero say to you, a good and religious and self-righteous person, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you worker of lawlessness” (cf. Matthew 7:21-23). Yes, “live free” in dependence upon Christ alone, or “die.”

Finally, professing Christian, if you, too, have begun to supplement the simplicity of your faith-filled relationship with Jesus Christ with self-sustained goals and effort, then you are undermining the sufficient and sustaining benefit of Christ. If you are trusting in your devotions, your religious performance, your weekly church attendance, your public persona, your rare day of no slip-ups, your disciplined denial of sin, your pacified conscience, your increased prayer life, your ministry service, your community acceptance, etc. to approve you to God, you are bypassing Christ and His advantage. You are a Christian who has been severed from your Head (cf. Colossians 2:19) “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:4) and who alone can root and establish you (cf. Colossians 2:6-7). If you are not “living free” in Jesus Christ, then you are spiritually decaying.

2. Legalism empowers the Law (v. 3).

Secondly, Paul says in verse 3, “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole Law.” As Paul explained in chapter 3, there are fundamentally only two ways to relate to God—“by Law” and “by grace through faith.” And if one chooses “by Law,” then he chose “by the entirety of the Law.” As we have seen over and over again, that and no less is the demand of the Law (cf. Galatians 3:10; James 2:10). In fact, the Greek word for “obligated” comes from a root that means “to be in debt”—the life of legalism is a lifetime (and beyond) of indebtedness.

Application: In attempting to placate your God through your obedience, you merely arouse His wrath further. In a foolishly produced irony, your living by the Law merely exacerbates your failure and invites what you were striving thereby to avoid—God’s punishment. God’s unchanging standard of holiness should cause us to spurn our arrogant presumption and haughty self-evaluation and compel us to cast ourselves upon the mercy of God.

3. Legalism separates from grace (v. 4).

Paul issues a third point of warning against legalism in verse 4: “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.” One commentator explains the two important verbs in this verse:

Severed is from katargeō, which, when followed by the preposition, means to be separated or loosed from (cf. Rom. 7:2, 6). Fallen is from ekpiptō, which means to lose one’s grasp on something. Simply stated, a person cannot live by both law and grace. To attempt to be justified by law is to reject the way of grace.⁴

“Christ” and “grace” here do not refer to salvation itself, but rather to a method of salvation—i.e., through Christ and by grace (cf. the opposite way of “through the Law” in 2:21). In other words, Paul is not suggesting a loss of salvation (cf. Romans 8:30; 11:29), but is stressing (again) the total incompatibility of Law and grace (in both justification and sanctification). “Contrary to the teaching of the Judaizers, to add circumcision and other works of the law to what Christ accomplished by grace is not to raise one’s spiritual level but to severely lower it. Legalism does not please God but offends Him. It does not bring a person closer to God but rather drives him away.”⁵ Romans 5:20-21 informs the Christian that our entire spiritual atmosphere now is one of grace, but when we engage in our sanctifying walk with Christ legalistically, we suffocate ourselves!

Application: For the Christian, a serious reminder needs to be provided here. Paul recently contrasted grace/faith-living with Law/works-living, using the descriptors “by the Spirit” and “by the flesh” (cf. 4:23, 29). Romans 4:4-8 reminds us that “those who are in the flesh cannot please God” and are “hostile to God.”

Therefore, dear Christian, if you engage in your sanctification and service “by works” in a legalistic manner, you have not merely failed to please God, but you have actually offended Him. Your soul may still be eternally secure, but your transforming relationship with God is being unnecessarily stifled by your own selfish pride. Rather than cooperating with God’s grace working within him for spiritual growth (cf. Titus 2:11-14), the legalistic Christian works alone in

order to receive grace. He's reversed the order, and thereby "fallen away from grace." Ironically, the very thing he so desperately labors for, he loses because of that labor. Grace cannot be earned, and any attempt to do so serves only to reveal how devoid of it we actually are.

MacArthur helpfully quips, "Contrary to justifying grace, sanctifying grace is interruptible."⁶ Therefore, brothers and sisters, will you check your mental motives and your heart attitudes and repudiate all self-effort and human works, lest you become separated from the sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ?

4. ***Legalism forfeits righteousness (vv. 5-6).***

Turning for a moment to the more positive alternative of true gospel belief, Paul offers his final point of warning against legalism. He writes in verses 5-6, "For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

Believers operate, like their spiritual father Abraham, according to promise. Recognizing the experience of a disconnect between our positional and practical righteousness, we maintain a fervent hope in the climax of the gospel, when the righteousness of God will become ours in fullness (cf. Romans 8:18-25; 1 Peter 1:3-4, 13). That will happen at the return of Christ, for which we "eagerly await." That phrase is used seven of its eight times in the New Testament to refer to the second coming of Christ (Romans 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Galatians 5:5; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28). At that point, "believers will be completely conformed to all the requirements of God's will. The inward and forensic righteousness which began at justification will be transformed into an outward righteousness at glorification. God will then publicly acknowledge all believers' full acceptability with Him."⁷

In the meantime, that reality is clung to in "hope" "through the Spirit, by faith" (v. 5). And when it does happen, even as it is happening partly and progressively now in sanctification, "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision [or any other work of human flesh] counts for anything" (v. 6). The phrase "counts for anything" translates a Greek verb that means "to have requisite personal

resources to accomplish someth., have power, be competent, be able."⁸ Those who trust in themselves forfeit all spiritual ability and saving righteousness, because the flesh is utterly weak (Matthew 26:41; Romans 7:18, 24). Those "in Christ Jesus," on the other hand, successfully and powerfully live out true righteousness through God's grace by "faith working through love" (v. 6).

Application: "Through the Spirit," "by faith," "wait[ing]" in "hope," and "through love" are four designations Paul has used and will elaborate on to describe the grace-centered Christian life. Do they describe your Christian life? Are you in step with the Spirit, operating by faith, waiting in hope of God's promises, and lovingly relating and responding to God and others? If so, then you can be sure you are reflecting a righteousness that is completely foreign to you, but a gracious gift of God. Reflecting that righteousness, rather than earning one's own righteousness, is what true Christian living is all about—"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (2:20).

Paul, the freedom fighter, is championing a sober spiritual motto—"live free or die." The nullifying of Christ, the empowering of the Law, the separating from grace, and the forfeiting of righteousness—these are the dangers facing those who would live by Law.

Illustration: "The story is told of an aspiring artist who was commissioned to do a large sculpture for a famous museum. At last he had the opportunity to create the masterpiece he had long dreamed of. After laboring over the work for many years, he saw it grow not only in shape but in beauty. But when it was finished he discovered to his horror that it was much too large to be taken out a window or door and that the cost for tearing down part of the building in order to remove it was prohibitive. His masterpiece was forever a captive to the room in which it was created.

That is the fate of all human religion. Nothing a person does to earn God's favor can leave the room of this earth where his self-made works are created."⁹ The so-called gospel of legalism—justification by the works of the Law—is "weak and worthless" and enslaving (cf. 4:9). So, friend, "stand firm therefore" in the freedom for which Christ has set you free (v. 1)!

Transition: Having plainly rehearsed the spiritual dangers of legalism, Paul now turns his attention to the corrupting character of those who promote legalism.

WARNINGS AGAINST LEGALISTS (vv. 7-12)

Paul offers several characteristics of the legalistic false teachers in Galatia who were troubling (cf. 1:7) and bewitching (cf. 3:1) the believers.

1. ***Legalists prevent the truth (vv. 7-8).***

Paul laments in verses 7-8, “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from Him who calls you.” As a result of Paul’s ministry in Galatia (cf. 4:8-20), the Christians had been “running well,” a metaphor for the Christian experience that Paul frequently used (cf. Romans 9:16; 1 Corinthians 9:24-26; Galatians 2:2; 2 Timothy 4:7). But, when the Judaizers entered that area, they “hindered [them] from obeying the truth” (cf. 1:6-7). “Hinder” means “to make progress slow or difficult,”¹⁰ and the legalists were doing that both to unbelievers as they prevented them from believing in Christ alone and to believers as they impeded their faith-filled, Spirit-directed, love-oriented pursuit of Christ.

In the Greek, there is a play on words between “hinder” and “persuasion,” as both words come from the same root. Paul’s point is that the “persuasion” by the false teachers to abandon faith for works was not the “persuasion” of the God who called them “by grace” (cf. 1:6, 15; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14). But this shouldn’t surprise us, as Paul has already identified these false teachers as being self-promoting and not God-honoring (4:7).

Their interference of truth and distraction from the divine have been detailed elsewhere in Scripture, too. 2 Peter 2:1 says, “There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” And 2 Timothy 3:7-8 references those who are “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. ... These men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith.” Indeed, their so-called gospel was no truth at all (cf. 1:6-9).

2. ***Legalists permeate the church (vv. 9-10a).***

Paul uses a colloquial idiom to provide a second characteristic of these legalistic false teachers. Just as “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (v. 9), so these legalists can affect and infect a large group of people. Like a cancer that spreads undetected until it has affected too much to be stopped, Law-promoting teachers influence many with their flesh-appealing and self-promoting message.

Illustration: Benjamin Franklin wrote, “For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost; and for want of a rider the battle was lost.”¹¹ Oh how one nail, one untruth, can wreak so much damage!

For the encouragement of the true, but troubled believers in Galatia, Paul builds upon the word-play of the word “persuasion” by using it again in verses 7-8. He assures the believers, “I have confidence [lit. am persuaded] in the Lord that you will take no other view.” Because Paul knew that his message of a divine and gracious calling was true, then he was “sure [lit. persuaded] of this, that He who began a good work in [them would] bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ...for [they were] all partakers with [him] of grace” (Philippians 1:6-7; cf. John 10:4-5, 14). Nonetheless, the permeating work of the false teachers would not be easily dealt with, and they would indeed take some false professors with them (cf. 1 John 2:19-20).

3. ***Legalists will be punished by God (v. 10b).***

Paul offers a third feature of these legalistic Jews in the second half of verse 10: “The one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.” Because they “trouble” (lit. shake or stir up, confuse; cf. 1:7) God’s people, they will experience God’s judgment (cf. Matthew 18:6; 2 Peter 2:2-3, 9)—God’s wrath will be stirred against them and will trouble them. Interestingly, in both verse 7 and verse 10, Paul refers to the opponent in the singular, as he did in 3:1. Perhaps, Paul is subtly alluding to the final judgment of the Evil One who is behind the destructive ministry of these legalists.

4. *Legalists persecute gospel-preachers (v. 11).*

For his final aspect of warning against the false teachers, Paul returns to a point he made in his previous section in which he drew an analogy from Isaac and Ishmael. In Galatians 4:29, Paul showed how the “Ishmaels” have always persecuted the “Isaacs,” and that is no different now. Paul asserts here in Galatians 4:11, “If I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.” False religion has always been and will continue to be the most aggressive and dominant persecutor of the church (cf. John 16:1-3; Rev. 17:5-6). Satan fights God, and satanic religion fights the true faith.”¹²

Paul was facing great “persecution” from the Judaizers, in that they were outright attacking his authority and message (cf. Acts 13-14). And then, to add injury to insult, when it served their purposes, they confused people even further by stating that Paul preached and practiced circumcision just as they did (cf. Acts 16:1-3; Philippians 3:5). Paul logically retorts that if he really was promoting circumcision like the Judaizers, he wouldn’t be persecuted the way he had been. It was the fact of his public oppression that actually testified to the genuineness of his faith (cf. Matthew 10:22; John 15:18-25; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12).

Furthermore, Paul was too committed to the “offense of the cross” (cf. 2:21) against human self-righteousness, because he knew that what made the cross “scandalous” is what gave it its power—it completely undermines the religion of man, rendering it totally worthless (cf. 4:3, 9; Colossians 2:8-23), and offers the invaluable accomplishment of Christ alone as our only hope (cf. Acts 4:12) for salvation (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5).

Paul sets himself and the false teachers in stark contrast. They were preaching circumcision; he was preaching Christ and the cross. To preach circumcision is to tell sinners that they can save themselves by their own good works; to preach Christ crucified is to tell them that they cannot and that only Christ can save them through the cross. The message of circumcision is quite inoffensive, popular because flattering; the message of Christ crucified is, however, offensive to human pride, unpopular because unflattering. So to preach circumcision is to avoid persecution; to preach Christ crucified is to invite it. People hate

*to be told that they can be saved only at the foot of the cross, and they oppose the preacher who tells them so.*¹³

Application: Beware the one who troubles you and prevents you from participating in the truth of God’s grace. Even within the ranks of our local assembly, beware the one who permeates his self-promoting, Christ-abasing doctrine that opposes those who preach the truth. Beware those over whom the judgment of God hangs, because they have undermined the liberating cross of Christ for the enslaving bonds of the Law. Beware the legalist!

CONCLUSION

In verse 11, Paul reintroduces the heightened and charged language that he’s used at other times in his epistle to make two final points. He asserts, “I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves” (cf. Philippians 3:2)! On the one hand, Paul suggests that like the cultists of Cybele who castrated themselves in religious fervor, the legalists might as well as go to that abhorred extreme in their futile human activity (cf. Deuteronomy 23:1). On the other hand, he is reissuing his sentiments as to how these legalists ought to be treated (cf. 4:30). They should be cut off! Indeed, Paul the freedom fighter knows the stakes in this battle for spiritual liberty—“live free or die”!¹⁴

ENDNOTES

¹ Scripture is clear that a truly born-again Christian can never lose his/her salvation—they will both persevere unto the end and will be preserved by God (cf. 1 Peter 1:5). By using the motto “Live Free or Die” as our proposition, we are not suggesting that true believers who stumble in their freedom and relapse to a legalistic way of relating to God will forfeit their spiritual life and experience spiritual death. Nonetheless, their spiritual vitality will indeed be terribly affected if they return to a legalistic mentality. For them, it would be more appropriate to speak of spiritual decay than spiritual death.

² MacArthur relates a very helpful understanding of physical and spiritual circumcision: “Every Jewish boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth (Lev. 12:2–3). It was the sign that he belonged to the covenant nation (Gen. 17:10–14). Throughout Israel’s history there had been two schools of thought about circumcision. Some held that circumcision alone was enough to save, since it granted membership in the covenant nation. That view was wrong, since ‘they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel’ (Rom. 9:6). Membership in the covenant community did not guarantee individual salvation. Paul writes in Romans 2:25, 28, ‘For indeed circumcision is of value, if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.... For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.’ The second view recognized that circumcision was only the outward demonstration that man was born sinful and needed cleansing. The cutting away of the male foreskin on the reproductive organ was a graphic way to demonstrate that man needed cleansing at the deepest level of his being. No other part of the human anatomy so demonstrates that depth of sin, inasmuch as that is the part of man that produces life—and all that he produces is sinful. That is the biblical view.... The experience of Abraham illustrates the truth that circumcision does not save. Paul writes in Romans 4:11 that Abraham ‘received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised.’ Abraham was not circumcised until many years after ‘he believed in the Lord; and [God] reckoned it to him as righteousness’ (Gen. 15:6). His circumcision was the outward sign of a heart already made righteous by faith” (MacArthur, John, *Colossians*, [Chicago: Moody Press, 1996], 105-106).

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *Galatians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 134.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁷ Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 605.

⁸ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 484.

⁹ MacArthur, 137.

¹⁰ Arndt, 274.

¹¹ Quoted in MacArthur, 140.

¹² *Ibid.*, 141.

¹³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 136–137.

¹⁴ “Ours is an age of tolerance. Men love to have the best of both worlds and hate to be forced to choose. It is commonly said that it does not matter what people believe so long as they are sincere, and that it is unwise to clarify issues too plainly or to focus them too sharply.

But the religion of the New Testament is vastly different from this mental outlook. Christianity will not allow us to sit on the fence or live in a haze; it urges us to be definite and decisive, and in particular to choose between Christ and circumcision. ‘Circumcision’ stands for a religion of human achievement, of what man can do by his own good works; ‘Christ’ stands for a religion of divine achievement, of what God has done through the finished work of Christ. ‘Circumcision’ means law, works and bondage; ‘Christ’ means grace, faith and freedom. Every man must choose. The one impossibility is what the Galatians were attempting, namely to add circumcision to Christ and have both. No. ‘Circumcision’ and ‘Christ’ are mutually exclusive” (Stott, 137–138).