

Galatians 5 (Part 2): 5-12 •

Dangerous Persuasion

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We are in the New Testament Book of Galatians. I would like you to turn there, if you would, please. And we are in the fifth chapter.

We are getting toward the end of this New Testament epistle. The word epistle just means letter. That's all it means. So there, just in case you were wondering, thought I was swearing or something. I don't know.

But this is our second, the second part of Galatians chapter 5. We did the first 4 verses last week, and we are going to pick up about 8 , –7 or 8– verses here today.

Beginning in verse 5, read along with me as I read. It says:

“For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

⁷ You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? ⁸ This persuasion is not from him who calls you. ⁹ A little leaven leavens the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is. ¹¹ But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! (ESV)

Wow. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, take this Word and speak it to our hearts, to our spirits, and may we grow in the grace and knowledge of Your character and Your heart by the study of these Scriptures. Guide and direct us, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask, amen.

In verse 5, Paul begins this section by using an interesting phrase. You will notice in verse 5 again, he says, “(But) *through the Spirit*, (by the Spirit, if you will), *by faith*, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.” I wanted to call your attention to that phrase, “*the hope of righteousness*.”

When we talk about righteousness, it is an interesting topic because we can be made to feel embarrassed by talking about righteousness, because sometimes we get accused of being self-righteous. Which if anybody really knew the gospel, they would know that is the opposite of what we are.

In fact, we realize through the Scriptures that our best personal righteousness, the Bible says, is as filthy rags. And so we have no personal righteousness. It doesn't exist. So when somebody claims that we are being self-righteous or whatever, that is really the opposite of what the Bible teaches. We have none. And then if somebody ever says that, just say, righteousness? I have none.

Now, however, that doesn't mean that I don't have a right standing with God, which is what righteousness means. Right standing with God. That I have. That you have. But we were given it. We didn't earn it. In other words, I didn't act like a good person, and then God was impressed with me and said, hey! You've been a pretty good guy, so I'm going to give you a favor because you've been working hard and doing,... No, none of that going on. None of us earned right standing with God. We can't earn it. We're not good enough. He gives us right standing with Him. We call it— and this is the theological term— it is imputed to us.

Righteousness is imputed, not earned. The righteousness that we have before God is not our own. It comes from Him. It is Christ's righteousness that we literally put on like, almost like clothing. And therefore, we are able to stand before God, approach God, because we know that He receives us in the righteousness of His Son.

You with me? Does that all sound reasonable to you and relatively biblical? I sure hope so. Here is the interesting thing about the phraseology that Paul uses in verse 5. He talks about righteousness as something that is still yet to come. Did you notice he called it, the hope of righteousness?

Let me just share something with you. Whenever you see the word hope in a sentence or phrase that talks about something Christ has given us, it means it is yet future. Here is how we know. Paul made this statement in the Book of Romans, chapter 8. He said:

Romans 8:24 (NIV)

...hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?

...hope that is seen is no hope at all. (In other words, if you have it, you don't hope for it.) Who hopes for what he already has?

Paul says, You don't hope for things you already have. If I have a car that runs decently, I don't hope for a car that runs decently. I already have it. When Paul uses the phrase, the hope of righteousness, he is talking about something that he does not yet possess.

You with me? Am I confusing you? Well, it can be confusing, and I need you to see this in the Scripture. God's Word uses paradoxical language to describe the things that we already have. And we basically refer to it as this tension between the now and the not yet. Let me explain. When I talk about my salvation, if somebody were to say to me, Paul, are you saved?

I would say, Yeah, I am saved. Past tense. That's saved, right? However, did you know the Bible also refers to you and me as being saved? Did you know that? Again, it is that paradoxical tension between the now and the not yet. I am today saved by faith, but I have not yet received the fullness of my salvation.

I have only a down payment, the Bible says. I've only been given a little earnest agreement, if you will, of my... and so have you. We haven't received everything we are going to get. That better be true, because if I have already gotten everything I'm getting, then we got gypped somewhere along the line. Because, there's so much more.

And yet I talk about salvation as if it is past tense. It is the same thing with righteousness. We refer to our righteousness in a past tense idea. I am, right now, righteous before God, and yet I am receiving. Righteousness is something I hope for because it is also coming, but faith that here's the key. Faith is what allows us to embrace things today. Right here, right now. Without faith, you can't embrace these things that are yet to come. I talk about them, I think about them, and I embrace them like they are here right now. They are mine. But actually they are yet to come.

Let me show you an interesting statement that the Apostle Paul made, knowing that he was about to die. He wrote to Timothy, and he spoke of righteousness. Look at there, he says:

2 Timothy 4:8 (ESV)

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Henceforth there is laid up for me (look what he refers to it as), *a crown of righteousness, which* (he says) *the Lord, the righteous judge, will* (reward) *award to me* (when?) *on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

Isn't that interesting? So Paul makes the statement here that the crown of righteousness, that you and I talk about by faith as being ours now, is yet to be given us. We are yet to be crowned with that righteousness. And yet, today, we stand in that righteousness that is ours in Christ Jesus.

Do you understand? It is paradoxical language, I'll grant you, but that is the life of faith. Faith is paradoxical. Faith embraces the unseen. Faith is all about receiving the promise before the promise is there. If I already have something, I don't have to have faith to receive it. If there is something that I want from God, and He has already given it to me, I don't have to have faith any longer for that thing.

But today, we live by faith! Because the things that we possess, that we speak of in the past tense, are yet to be delivered. Very important that we understand the language of Scripture so that— and the language of faith, let's call it the conversation of faith— because otherwise we are going to get confused when we read through some of these things.

And then Paul repeats in verse 6 how that righteousness and all those other things become ours. He says, “*For in Christ Jesus* (look what he says) *neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but* (what counts for something in God's economy?) *... faith ...*”

He says it is just faith. That's what, this has been the conversation going on for the entirety of Galatians so far because you know Paul came and originally gave these people the gospel and said you are saved by grace through faith.

And then these Judaizers came along, these Jewish legalists came along and said, oh no. You must also keep the law, okay. Yeah. Believe in Jesus. All you want. Great. Perfect, but you have to keep the law too. And you have to be circumcised and you have to follow the food laws. just saying you have to do these things.

Now we don't, we are not usually tempted with those things today. We have talked about the things that people have added today to faith in Jesus. I haven't heard anybody lately try to get me to follow the bandwagon of circumcision. That's just not an issue today. But there are all these other things that people are adding to it today.

And Paul says, you know what, those things don't matter. Circumcision, uncircumcision, that's just, that's not the issue. The issue is faith. But did you notice how he describes faith? He says, "*faith, working through love.*" That's interesting phrasing, isn't it? "*Faith working through love.*" Do you know that love is the grease, the oil that makes faith easier to come about?

When we see the incredible goodness of God, when we see how much He has loved us, how much He gave for us, it stirs up faith in our hearts. Unlike fear. Fear doesn't stir up faith; it just stirs up more fear, right? If you're a Christian today because you are afraid of hell, and that's pretty much it, you are here just because you want to get your fire insurance, and it's like, I don't want to go to hell, so I'm going to be a Christian, then basically you are a believer predicated upon fear.

And that is not going to facilitate faith, the growth of faith, in your life. If you are here by intimidation, you are intimidated by God. I just don't want to get on His bad side, because you see God as this big boogeyman that has this huge sword that He is ready to swing whenever you get a little bit out of line.

Shook off with his head. Then you are basically a believer by intimidation and that is not going to foster faith. Faith working itself through love is what Paul is talking about here in Galatians. Faith that is literally oiled, literally lubricated, by understanding and coming face-to-face with God's love.

He loved you so much, that you are willing to put your faith, I mean, it's easier now to put your faith in Him. Because He loves you. It's easy to trust somebody that you love, and you see that they love you. It is not so easy to trust somebody that you think might be not really looking out for your best interests. And maybe even wants to hurt you, and maybe is even a little cruel. I wouldn't want to put my trust in a person like that. Not even a little.

Notice Paul goes on to say in verse 7, "*You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*" I don't know if we would normally— if I would normally— use that language. I would, I might, the first part, you guys were running well. He is basically, and by the way, Paul often uses running as a metaphor of the Christian life, running the race, In fact, when Paul ended his, or

knew his life was about to end, he wrote his last letter to Timothy, he said, I have finished the race. I've kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

So he is saying to the Galatians, you guys were running well, you were doing good. But then he says, Who hindered you from obeying the truth? And that is the part that sounds a little weird to you and me. I might say, you were running really good. Who hindered you from running good?

But he said, who hindered you from obeying the truth? And I got to thinking about that, and I got to thinking that legalism, which is what the Jewish legalists had come to introduce there in Galatia, legalism, the idea that you have to keep rules and regulations, it is actually disobedience to God. How you like that?

Legalism is disobedience. In other words what Paul is saying here is to trust yourself, which is what legalism demands. You have to do it. That's what legalism tells you. Jesus, what He did, okay, all good and fine, but you have to do something too. You have to. Well, that's putting your trust in you.

That is fundamental disobedience. Why? Because the Word of God tells you there is nothing you can do. There is nothing you can do so to disobey that Word and to trust that well if I go to church on Saturday Or if I get baptized in water or if I get baptized in water in the name of Jesus in that church Or if I do this or if I do that or if I speak in tongues.... Then I'm going to be saved... That is disobedience.

It doesn't mean that the necessarily any of those things are wrong. It means if you are trusting in those things and doing those things to please God, then you are being disobedient. You know, it's interesting. Jesus was once asked about what it meant to obey God and what the people needed to do in order to be obedient, to do the works of God.

The Jews were all about that. They were all about doing the works of God. Let me put this up on the screen. It's from John. The gospel of John chapter 6.

John 6:28-29 (ESV)

Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

It says— they're talking to Jesus, and *"Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"* (Look at) *Jesus answered (here) them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."*

Isn't that interesting? Believe in the one who he has sent. That's the work of God. You want to do the works of God, have faith. And by the way, when he says to believe, right? He's not talking about just believe that He came on the scene. I mean, some people frankly believe in Jesus like they believe in Abraham Lincoln.

Yeah, I believe there was a guy like that historically, and I think, I read about it somewhere, and I think he's, yeah, he was a real person. Okay, fine. That's not what Jesus means when He says believe. He's talking about trust. Put your trust in. You want to do the works of God? Put your trust in the one whom he has sent. That's the work of God. Which, by the way, is no work at all. Because it takes faith. It's faith. You have to believe and trust.

Look at verse 8. This is really an interesting verse. He says, "*This persuasion is not from him who calls you.*" Now that is another incredible statement here made by the apostle Paul.

He's basically saying to them, you've been persuaded into believing that circumcision is required. And that God is requiring it from you in order to be saved. But I want you to know something. This persuasion is not from the one who calls you. And what Paul is saying here is, I know that you didn't come to this conclusion on your own. Somebody came along and they persuaded you. They jumped in midstream in this thing, and they persuaded you to believe that way.

And you know what? That's the way it is with all the wacky unbiblical beliefs that are out there. Basically so many times when somebody comes to me or says something that's wacky, I just want to say, Who taught you that? Because you didn't get that out of the Bible. Who taught you that? Who told you that? There is just no way that some people can come up with some of those things on their own.

Recently I got a note after one of my on our YouTube channel, people will make comments from time to time. Some of them are not very nice. But this one guy wanted to know why I didn't teach from the Authorized King James Version of the Bible. And it was just like that. I knew exactly what he was asking. I knew even why he was asking it. He was asking the question because he had been persuaded by others.

He had been told that the Authorized King James Version of the Bible was the only true translation of God's Word, and all of the others are corrupted and polluted. The reason I know that is because I've spent many years in the past

debating and talking to this group of people we call King James only-ists. That is actually a name. It is a thing.

And it is people who believe that the King James Bible is the only true expression of God's Word, and all the others have been polluted and corrupted over the course of time. And it is a bunch of hooey. Now, if you love the King James Version of the Bible yourself, and you prefer that, good on you.

I mean, if that is the Bible that you prefer, praise the Lord. But you know what? There is no way in the world that just by reading your King James alongside other Bibles that you would come to the conclusion yours is the only inspired Bible, and all the rest of them are garbage.

There's no way. It's the same thing like Paul saying. This persuasion does not come from God, and it does not come from his word. You got taught that. Somebody came along and hijacked your heart. They came along, and they told you, and they said, listen, here's the deal. And they started going through, and they started twisting and turning and believe me, I've read the material.

And they and they basically come up with this. This thing that says, you see, this has been corrupted. These other modern language versions of the Bible. But the only one that you can trust is the King James. And there's people out there going, Okay, you got it. They didn't come up with that on their own.

They didn't get it just from, they didn't sit down and go, that's interesting. I'm going to compare my King James with some of these other versions. I'm going to read these things side-by-side and compare them parallel style and see what the difference is. If they did that, what they'd find?

It's the same Bible, just in modern language. I have a program on my computer. I literally keep like 6 different versions of the Bible open simultaneously. And I keep the King James open, because I want to see what that has to say. And I have the New King James, and the New American Standard Bible, and I have the NIV, and I have the ESV, and even a couple of variations of some of those.

And I look at them side by side, and I've been doing that for over 30 years. It's God's Word, you guys. And yet, people get persuaded. But they never would have come up with that on their own, just by reading the Word of God. Hey listen, you ever been confronted by a Jehovah's Witness? In order for them to hang on to their belief system, they had to come up with a new Bible. They had to literally take this Bible and rewrite it to match their doctrine. But, and you know why they, the Jehovah's Witnesses don't want you reading this version?

Because there's no way you'd come up with the beliefs that they've got. You cannot read this Bible and come to the conclusion that the archangel Michael and Jesus are the same person.

But that's what they believe. But you won't get it out of reading the Bible, you see. So they don't want you reading this Bible. They want you to read their Bible. You see, it's what Paul is saying. This persuasion doesn't come from God. This persuasion comes from man. And I'm not smart enough, strong enough to go beyond the Word of God.

That's one of the reasons why here at Calvary Chapel when we're teaching through the scripture, we teach chapter by chapter and verse by verse because otherwise, you know what happens, it's too easy for persuasion to enter in because, I become persuaded that I need to hammer you guys on a particular subject that I think you guys aren't really getting.

And so I start hammering you, and I start throwing off this persuasion your direction, and pretty soon, you know what? You're persuaded right beyond the Word of God. And it happens, you guys. It happens when we don't stick to the Word. Some of you guys know what it's like to go to a church where they don't teach from the Bible like this.

They just teach... the pastor read a new book, and so he says, we're going to do a 6 week series on giving. And everybody in the church goes, yippee, because everybody knows what's going on. Things are a little bit tight financially, and so we're going to have a 6-week series on giving.

Oh, yay. I think I'm going to be gone for the next 6 weeks, or something like that. I get that. When I first went into the ministry, I was influenced by guys who taught topically first before I got into chapter-by-chapter and verse-by-verse teaching. And I remember when I first started ministering the Word, I was, what am I going to talk about?

And it was really a drag. I mean, there is a lot of material here, but it was just like, what do you want me to do? What do you want me.... Lord, What do you want me to do? What do you want me to talk about? And what I was taught was that you have a subject that you talk about, and you have a couple of scriptures.

Maybe there's one in Zechariah, and there's one in Psalms. and then there's one over in Hebrews, and you just touch on them a little bit, but you don't really teach through those passages. You just touch on them. That's the way I was first taught. And I hated it, and I didn't know why I hated it. But I hated it.

Then suddenly when I first started pastoring a church up in Washington, I thought, this is for the birds coming up every week, trying to come up with a new message. I'm not that smart.

So I started— what the very first thing I taught through was the Beatitudes in Matthew I went to chapter 5, and I thought, What I'm going to teach through the Beatitudes, and, in fact, I taught through the whole Sermon on the Mount chapters 5, 6, 7 of Matthew.

I was a young guy at the time, and we had this little tiny church that met in a gymnasium, and I'm just teaching through the Scripture, and I was like, this is cool! I know exactly what I'm going to teach on next week! I thought, Wow, what if you start just teaching through the Bible? Well, then I start hearing guys on the radio, like Chuck Smith. All he ever does is teach through the Bible! He's got all this stuff, because he just goes to the next passage.

But then I realized something that was very important. It's safe. It's safe. I started looking at all of the persuasive statements that pastors were making to people in churches that really pushed the boundaries of truth. And, you know what? It's not safe. And the more I realized just teaching through the Word of God was safe, the more I was like, this is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life.

You guys know we are on our third trip through the whole Bible. And after we are done with this, we will start number four because this is safety, and it is too easy for the persuasion of man to slip in and become something that it was never meant to be, to get us off track. There you go.

Look at verse 9. He says, *“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”* And he is obviously using a baking metaphor that is very common in the Scripture. To say that yeast or leaven that is used in bread is a symbol or a picture of how easy things get worked in and begin to spread.

And even that persuasion that a pastor begins to use to persuade his people, if it is not quite on-target— it just takes a little bit of error. And, Paul contextually is talking about the error of heresy that had come in through these Jewish legalists, but he is basically saying, Hey, it just takes a little bit, just a little bit of this leaven, to work its way through the whole batch of dough.

In the same way, legalism. By the way, do you know what yeast actually does? It spoils the dough. Technically speaking, it spoils the dough. Not so that you can't use it, but it creates, it gives off gas, and it makes it rise. That is what

makes dough rise so that we like to eat it, and it's light and fluffy, and that sort of thing.

Otherwise it is super chewy, and not real fun, and it's hard to cut. But, technically speaking, yeast ruins—spoils—the dough. And that's why Paul is using this picture here of legalism that spoils the body of Christ.

Verse 10, he says, *“I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view. and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.”* And then he stops and says, *“But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.”*

It's like Paul was in the middle of writing this letter, and then somebody came up to him and said, by the way, I forgot to tell you. In the region of Galatia, these legalists are telling the people that you have actually gotten on the bandwagon of circumcision, and you are now preaching circumcision and the Ten Commandments is the way to be saved.

And so Paul says here, he says, I have a question for you. If I still preach circumcision, if I'm still preaching that as the way to be saved, then why am I still being persecuted by these Jews? Because Paul knows, if I had switched, if I had gone back to preaching circumcision, the Jews would have laid off. I would have been their big buddy. I would have been their friend. But last time I looked, they have been persecuting me just as much as they ever have.

Look what he goes on to say at the end of that verse: *“In that case, the offense of the cross has been removed.”* What is the offense of the cross? It's very simple. There is nothing you can do to earn your salvation. That is what the cross communicates to you and me. There is nothing you can do. Nothing. Zero. You are going to try to be a good person? Go to heaven? Not going to work.

You can't do that. The cross tells you, you can't do that. You're going to try to live a good life? You're going to, you're going to do this, you're going to do that? You know, those things don't matter. It is only faith in what Jesus did. That is the only way you can be saved. Well, that is offensive. You see, it literally smites me in my pride.

You are telling me that if I live a good life, God is still not going to accept me? Yeah, that's exactly what I'm saying. He will not accept you just for living a good life. Not that he won't appreciate it, but it can't save you. You can't be good enough. That is the offense of the cross. That is what the cross teaches us.

Paul says in verse 12, *"I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!"* Gee, Paul, tell us how you really feel. I mean, this is a strong statement, to be sure. I read about a dozen commentaries from other Bible scholars and teachers, and you know what? We don't know what was in Paul's heart when he made this statement.

And we don't know everything that was going on. What we do know is that he cared very intensely for these people. I think that Paul's heart was broken over the fact that they had been subjected to such confusion over this subject of the Gospel. And Paul considered himself like a father-figure to these people.

And anybody who has ever been a daddy knows that: you mess with my kids, and you got me to deal with. That's going to rile me a little bit if you start coming against my kids. You know, that whole papa bear kind of a mentality. Same thing with mama bear, but still, these are my kids.

And I think what the strength of Paul's statement here in verse 12 just underscores the seriousness by which Paul viewed this threat. And I think that it is something that you and I need to share. And that, I don't think we share it to the point of being angry or belligerent. At some church down the road who adds to the Gospel or some group over there that says, oh, yeah, you got to also do this to be saved.

That's not what I'm saying. I am saying, though, that we need to understand the extent of the danger which is introduced in this situation. That people's eternal salvation can be affected by this. We need to, whenever possible, defend our hope in Jesus Christ and His finished work alone as the means of our salvation.

That means speaking the truth in love. If somebody comes off with some half-baked idea about, well, I know that I'm saved because... And they mention something other than Jesus, we have to come back lovingly and say, that's just not what the Bible says. The Bible says you are saved by grace through faith alone and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, lest any man should boast, Ephesians 2:8-9. There is no boasting.

You can't say I got saved because I did this. You can only say I got saved because He did this.

Jesus did it, and it is finished, and we are the recipients.

And that's the good news.