

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE GALATIANS -PART 6

Chapter 5 begins with a final strongly worded plea to the Galatians not to return to the slavery of rules for living. To the people of the Roman Empire more than half of whom were slaves who longed for their freedom, the picture and the argument would be compelling. No-one in his right mind would want to return to the terrible oppression and degradation of slavery. So, Paul reasons, no sensible Christian freed by Jesus on the cross would want to go back to the inescapable sense of failure caused by the Law.(5:1)

He reminds them that to be subject to one rule like circumcision is to be bound to the whole lot. Falling from grace has traditionally been used to describe a Christian returning to the ways of the world. For Paul it is not going to wild parties, brothels or casinos. His use of the term is startlingly different. Returning to rules for living means we have discarded grace and chosen to cut ourselves off from Christ. Grace, all God gives us through Christ, received by faith leads to righteous living as we let Him live within us. Love, which gives to others is how grace shows. The only way to be right with God is by faith, not Law. Why start that way and give up on His grace?(5:2-6)

So many start the 'race' of the Christian life well but then become sidetracked by listening to the crowd, not the Lord Jesus. The message of the cross followed by the Law is not from God. It is like leaven in a lump of dough. It starts small and rapidly takes over our whole thinking about life. Paul had used this illustration before,(I Cor.5:6-8) as Jesus had also done to show how a small piece of legalism can lead to a total replacement of grace in our thinking by Law.(Matt.13:33; 16:6-12) Paul knows that the Holy Spirit will be continually reminding, like a good coach, that there is only one track to follow in the race of life.(5:7-9)

Those who teach Law have much to answer for. And they will persecute those who teach grace alone. They are mutilating not just the bodies but the faith of others, as well as their own.(5:10-12)

Paul now addresses the vital practical question that is the excuse of those who turn back to rules. Won't people go wild without rules for living? There is a higher principle than freedom which will now motivate us as free men - the principle of love which puts the needs of others before our own pleasure.(5:13-15)

If the Spirit is in charge we will not want to live as we used to, but rather as He wants us to, for the benefit of others.(5:16-18)

If the flesh is in charge, here is what it will look like even in religious people - others will get hurt. Living under the Law in the strength of the flesh will have consequences in immorality, impurity and sensuality, (sexually) in idolatry and sorcery, (spiritually) in enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions and factions, (interpersonally), and in drunkenness and carousing, (abusing our own bodies).(5:19-21)

If on the other hand the Spirit is in control here is the way we will be. Love will replace sex for its own sake. We will enjoy God not re-invent Him. Peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness will replace conflict. We will care through self-control for our own bodies.(5:22-23)

The simple question is - have we died with Christ on the cross to a self run life? And therefore is His Spirit living in us?(5:24,25) Then there is no room for competition.(5:26)

Have a further look at your titles for the sections of chapter 5 to see whether you want to modify them in the light of what God has taught you as you have studied more closely. Now divide chapter 6 and give a title to each section. My suggestions are verses 1-5; 6-10; 11-16; 17,18.

#### Section 1 – (6:1-5)

Q.1 Paul returns again to the vital question of how to help those who have come to Christ but are apparently not living appropriately. If we can no longer point out their failing according to the Law and tell them to obey a rule, what is to be our response to their behaviour? How does living by faith in God's grace alter our attitude to the successes and failures of other Christians?

Q.2 What practical steps will we now take when we see someone else in trouble? What is our objective in such situations? Why does Paul warn the Galatians to look to themselves?(Rom.2:1)

Q.3 Galatians 5:26 and 6:4 seem to say opposite things about boasting, and 6:2 and 6:5 seem to make contradictory statements about bearing burdens. How can they be fitted together?

#### Section 2 – (6:6-10)

Q.4 How will a life of faith be totally different from a life of self effort in our actions towards (a) everyone (b) fellow Christians and (c) Bible teachers? Give practical examples. Was Paul looking for a donation? What does sowing and reaping have to do with these things?

#### Section 3 – (6:11-16)

Q.5 Why does Paul use such large letters? Do you think it might be explained by 4:13-15? How does taking a fresh look at the cross help us to understand false teachers, their motives and behaviour? Why does living by rules push us into hypocrisy?

Q.6 What according to verse 15 is the real nature of the Christian life?(II Cor.5:17) What is the great misconception of those who live by the law?

Q.7 What rule is being referred to in verse 16?(6:2) Who or what are 'the Israel of God'?

#### Section 4 – (6:17,18)

Q.8 How might the Galatian Christians trouble Paul? What are the brand marks of Jesus? (Gal.2:20; Jn.20:27; Rev.7:3; 13:16) What other brand marks might they have borne?

Q.9 In what sense does this letter end exactly where it began?(1:3)