

# Appendix A: Galatians 5:1-6

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***For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. 3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. 5 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. Galatians 5:1-6***

The Lord's apostle is very emphatic in Galatians 2:16 that justification is not by works, but by faith, by believing, by faith, and not by works, not by works. Yes, he is that repetitious! Surely Paul does not contradict himself in what he says later. This paper is written to consider what Galatians 5:1-6 tells us, especially the words in v.4 ***"You have fallen away from grace"***.

If falling from grace means we can lose our salvation, then our salvation cannot depend entirely on God. God cannot fall from grace. Only humans can do that. Does "falling from grace" mean we can have the grace of genuine salvation and then still lose it? If that is so, our hope of eternal life also depends on us. And if that is so, then our eternal destiny rests not only on what Jesus has done, but on what we add to finish the job. Note that those who make our faithfulness a reason for eternal salvation always assign to Jesus a major role. That makes their doctrine look good, but adding to what Christ does reduces His role as Savior. Some say of our standing with God that Jesus did His part, and now we do ours. That is one of the great errors in Roman Catholic teaching, something Galatians was written to correct.

Adding our contribution to secure our salvation is the notion that Paul resists so strongly in his letter to the Galatian Christians. Any addition to what is needed for salvation would have to be our obedience. So in that teaching, whether we lose or retain salvation is really is up to us. We must have some righteousness in compliance with God's law, and that *obedience of ours* is essential to lock in our eternal salvation securely.

THAT is the kind of thinking Galatians resists vigorously, and the reaction against it includes Galatians 5. It teaches that if we add anything as a reason for God to declare us righteous, we are mixing opposite principles, replacing grace with merit, when merit and grace are incompatible. Salvation really is by grace, so it cannot be by merit, or even

partly by merit. Those who think that it is have lost their grip on what grace is. In other words, they have fallen away from the grace principle, from the truth of grace. A confusion of the gospel is perplexing their minds. An impure element has entered to poison the good news of the gospel. Let us walk through Galatians 5:1-6:

**Verse 1, For freedom** [from salvation by the heavy demands of the law] **Christ has set us free.** [We could never live up to God's holy standards in God's law. The law is not bad, but we are sinful. Therefore the law condemns us for our disobedience, and in all of us there is a lot of it. We should] **stand firm therefore** [against getting back into the slavery of trying to persuade God of our righteousness; we have none to offer Him!!], **and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery** [which some teachers are leading you into. If your salvation depends on you even a little bit, you can only have anxiety whether you will make it. Any sinner attempting to satisfy the holiness of God is attempting the impossible. He is in bondage to a false system. There is relief in our Savior. ]

**Verse 2, Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision,** [this means if you have circumcision to increase your hope of acceptance with God] **Christ will be of no advantage to you** [in other words either Christ is enough, or He is not. To add to what He has done (in keeping the entire law for us) is a way of saying His contribution is not enough. Some teachers were saying that more is needed, especially circumcision. If we take that kind of stance with God, we have fallen away from grace into a false gospel. To put our trust in a sacrament, or tradition, or anything we might do to impress God, shows that Christ has been rejected by us as our complete Savior. To add anything else to Christ means we do not consider Him our complete Savior. That is moving away from Him (Galatians 1:6). He will be no advantage to us at all if we do that.]

**Verse 3, I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision** [For the reason stated above, it is alright to have circumcision as recognition of being a real Jew.] **that he is obligated to keep the whole law.** [Ah, if we add in one thing we must do to gain eternal life, we cannot pick and choose. Justification by works requires full obedience without exception. In Galatians 3:10, it says, "...Cursed be everyone who does not abide by **all** things written in the Book of the Law, and do them." A sinless life is impossible for sinners. Only one man in history has kept the law of God, and that is the Lord Jesus Who died for our law-breaking, and obeyed for our law-keeping.]

**Verse 4, You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law** [if you turn away from Christ as your sole hope of acceptance by God; you have replaced Him with a different obedience – your own!!, and by doing that you have been cut off from Christ]; **you have fallen away from grace** [you have lost sight of what God's gracious salvation is. It is gift, but you are making it something you earn. Grace gives perfect righteousness at no cost to you; you are substituting your unacceptable righteousness for Christ's. Our defective law-keeping will never impress God. He rejects fake righteousness and whoever dares to offer it to Him. To go this way means you have fallen away from the essence of the gospel. In such error, human merit replaces divine grace. That is a fundamental and lethal mistake. Those who choose any substitute for Christ will be eternally damned. Paul said in Galatians

1:6, “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel” So, come back to the gospel. Anyone who forsakes Christ never knew Him. He has turned away from a salvation he never had.]

**Verse 5, For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.**

The Holy Spirit is a gift from Christ, obtained by us when we believed. The Spirit does not lead us to trust in *our* hanging on as our hope. He makes us delight in Christ. We know a gracious change has begun in us, and our good works are evidence of this. Since the basis of justification is Christ, and the Spirit keeps Him before us, our hope that all will be well in the future is such well-founded assurance that we are eager for that day. Since God has already forgiven our sins and declared us righteous in His sight, He will keep on to do for us all we need and all He has promised. The Lord will not give us in Christ the perfect righteousness He requires of us and then turn around and reject us. God is satisfied with the obedience of Christ to His law. We should be as well. God cannot reverse Himself. In Christ we have certainty that all we yet hope for is ours by title and will be ours in experience. The hope that springs from righteousness is the hope of the person declared righteous by God. If Jesus would die for us, and if God would forgive us, since both are true, there is nothing good He will not do for us (Romans 8:32). For our standing before God, we must never place confidence in ourselves; to do so is to turn away from Christ, and whoever does that has fallen from grace.

**Verse 6, For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything,**

[Our standing with God does not depend on whether we have been circumcised or baptized. It does not depend on our confession, our progress, our repentance, or the degree of our sincerity or love. It does not even depend on our faith, because faith is simply the means by which we receive all benefit from Christ. Our secure standing depends only on our Savior’s obedience and blood. To add to this is to subtract from it.] **but only faith working through love.** [Real faith has much good fruit. Faith is the root, and love is the fruit. Seeing our sin and then embracing our Savior in faith produces in us immediate gratitude. We love our Savior Lord Who died for us, the Father Who sent Him, and the Spirit Who produces repentance and faith within us. Our faith is alive; it fosters love for God and our neighbor, His holy law, His will, and His agenda in all things. Our love is not our faith. It is the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). The logical order is: as unworthy sinners we repent and believe in Christ, and so God accepts us as His children; He then gives to each one the gift of the Holy Spirit Who produces love and all the virtue of a Christian life. We cannot live in sin, because our sin makes the Holy Spirit react to draw us into holiness. Our assurance in Christ (or our certainty of an “un-losable” eternal life) does not prompt us to sin, but to great thankfulness, joy in the Lord, and self-denying service. In our conversion, faith received, and then love serves with gratitude. We cannot look on this as a freedom to sin so that grace may abound (Romans 6:1). Rather we have been joined to Christ, and His Spirit within us battles our sinfulness, and makes us hate what we loved as sinners, and love what we now have in our Savior.]

**A Word of Warning** The Bible clearly denounces a salvation brought about by our good conduct. This applies to anything we might add to what Christ has done. Since this is so, we must not suppose that we can lose our salvation by our wrong conduct, for that would mean that we retain salvation by proper conduct. We cannot frame the issue by moving the efficacy of salvation into our own hands. That is what Galatians denounces. Beware of a temporary salvation when God guarantees eternal life. Beware of all ideas that His true sheep can be lost when He is our Keeper. Never think that what Christ has done fails to secure us, as if His work is not enough.

**A Word of Hope** Galatians also promotes the energetic work of the Holy Spirit in every believer. Not all Christians are equally fruitful or mature, but the Spirit in every child of God makes us call our Father “Father” (Galatians 4:4). The Spirit produces fruit (5:22,23). He wars against our sin (5:16). He works repentance in backsliders who belong to Christ. Since this is so, we never face a situation where any person truly saved continues to live in sin. No Christian can do that. 1 John 3:4-9 teaches us that anyone living in sin has not been saved, and everyone who is saved cannot live in sin. Therefore we need not worry that the Lord’s promise to keep us (1 Peter 1:3-5) is a doctrine which will lead to a license to sin. It is the opposite; His wonderful grace is our reason to obey with gratitude. And it is still true that anyone who thinks that justification rests on our obedience has fallen from the joyful truth of grace. Everyone who is tempted to add to the keeping power of God is in danger of falling from grace; he is losing his grip on the gospel.

Our wonderful security in Christ is found in many Scriptures. The Corinthian church had a long list of problems, yet the confidence the Apostle Paul had was in the Lord Jesus, “*Who will sustain you to the end*”.

*“... You are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:7-9). *“The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable”* (Romans 11:29).

## Appendix B: The Meaning of Philippians 2:12-16

Does *fear and trembling* imply that we may lose our salvation?

*12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and*

*twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

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This paper considers how we are to obey the command in Philippians 2:12 to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Does Paul order these Christians to have a fear of perdition when elsewhere in this same letter he says he does not want them frightened by anything? Not being fearful is a sign of salvation in 1:28. The wicked are those who lack a fear of God (Romans 3:18), so it should be characteristic of us that we maintain a wholesome fear of the Lord. I think we will understand Paul's words better if we look at the positive use of *fear* in the Old Testament and how Paul himself uses *fear and trembling*.

**The “fear of the Lord” in the Psalms** The godly are often labeled as those who fear the Lord (22:23, 31:19, 103:11, 115:13). They receive His blessing, deliverance, compassion, and friendship (31:19, 34:7, 103:13,17; 115:13, 25:14). He takes pleasure in them (147:11). Those who fear Him hope in His steadfast love (33:18). Hope is the opposite of dread. We pray that we may fear Him with a united heart (86:11). The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (111:10), so this kind of fear must be a very good thing. Approaching the Lord with fear (5:7) is proper worship; it is respect and honor for our Lord as our God. A proper response to Christ includes fear with trembling (2:11).

**The strong statement on “trembling” in Isaiah 66** The one who trembles at God's Word is one who respects God so much that he is careful to obey whatever God has said. The Lord says: “... *But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word*” (66:2). Then in 66:5 the Lord speaks of trembling at God's Word as an expression of loyalty. Such trembling is a sign of spiritual life. (See also Deuteronomy 10:12,13.)

**How the apostle uses “fear and trembling”** What does Paul mean when he says *fear and trembling*? Is this a fear of losing salvation? Hardly! In **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** fear and trembling speaks of Paul's great caution when he proclaimed the cross of Christ, lest the gospel be corrupted by worldly wisdom. In **2 Corinthians 7:13-16**, it refers to the respect which, as a servant of Christ, Titus received. Paul uses fear and trembling in **Ephesians 6:5-8** to describe how workers should respect their human employers, submitting to them under the eye of the Lord.

## **Two matters of background**

- **Language:** From the Scriptures referred to so far, we see that for Jewish believers *fear* often expressed respect for the majesty and goodness of God. The word is sometimes coupled with obedience and is used that way in Philippians 2:12.

- **The social setting:** The words addressing the Philippians are all plural. He is concerned for the unity of the group (2:1-5). He loved them dearly, and all were partakers of God's grace (2:7,8), but he still feared rivalry and an outbreak of pride among them. He even named two sisters in 4:2 and urged their agreement. Their differences had become public. So they needed the mind of Christ within their Christian community (2:5). There was something serious for them to work on together.

*12 Therefore [in light of the obedience of Christ just mentioned], my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, [there is a current matter needing attention] not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, [even if I am not there, you all must] work out [plural verb] your [again plural] own salvation [not just one's personal salvation, but the obedient life of the whole body] with **fear and trembling**, [the language of loyal obedience, because what they need to work on together is for the glory of God. This calls for God-honoring obedience, which was found supremely in Christ in verses 5-11.] 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. [So it can be done!]*

Note Paul said “*as you have always obeyed...*” What should we expect to follow? Simply that they continue to obey. That was what he meant, and he expressed the call for continued obedience as “work out ... in fear and trembling”.

## **Features in Philippians affecting the interpretation of v.12.**

**Salvation** “Salvation” does not always refer to the conversion of a sinner. It does in some texts such as Luke 19:9,10. The salvation in mind in v.12 was a goal for those who were Christians already. There is an emphasis on the future. Their salvation was not completed, since they were instructed to continue to work on it. (Note Romans 13:11-14.) Paul looks at the coming of Christ (v.16) and the current danger of grumbling as a threat to the church (v.14). They were still in a sinful world (v.15), but they could not shine as lights in the darkness if they did not work out what salvation entails by dealing urgently with threats to their unity. The world can see us. Paul's earnest entreaty has in mind a wonderful result, which he will later rejoice in when the Lord comes. When salvation is complete there will be no sin to resist, no fractures in the unity of God's people, no ugliness of conceit (2:3) with individuals pursuing their self-interest (2:4). Meanwhile, as the mind of Christ (v.5) constrains us, our corporate salvation will be advanced by our obedience, correcting more and more of what is wrong. All this comes as we continue to work out our salvation in fear and trembling before the Lord.

**Working** In v.14 they are to **do** something. To do this requires that they “work out” these salvation issues with energy and diligence. When we have sin in all of us, plus pressure from the world, a command to increase holiness can be discouraging. But there is encouragement in Christ (2:1), and we do not work alone. We do not initiate progress in holiness with God coming along only when needed to assist us. It is quite the

opposite; it is God Who calls us to work out salvation, and that effort requires fear and trembling. This is not a crushing burden to us (1 John 5:3), because His commandment is accompanied with His energy. God's working in us includes that He writes His laws **on our hearts** (Jeremiah 31:33). This is the same as saying "*God works in you*". He makes us willing to work out our salvation, so that our compliance is not half-hearted. With God doing this, a good result is the sure thing. He is determined to have a faithful church laboring in the gospel (1:5). He has begun this already (1:6), and He will bring His purpose to completion (1:6). When will it be finished? – at "*the day of Jesus Christ*" (1:6 & 2:16). The completion is ahead of us, but our full salvation is certain, so we face difficulty with confidence as we work together with godly *fear and trembling*.

**What Philippians cannot mean** We are not commanded to be in fear of losing our salvation when we work with fear and trembling. This cannot be, because our working with fear and trembling happens because God instills this fear and trembling in us to accomplish His good purpose. God is not working in us a fear of going to hell, "... *God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 5:9). So He produces in us a willingness to pursue what pleases Him. We must keep verses 12 and 13 together. God's effective working in us is the cause of whatever diligence is in us. Eternal loss is what the wicked should expect, but we have salvation from God (1:28). This makes us strive with fear and trembling for what pleases Him.

**What about sins we have not committed yet?** Are we in danger of eternal loss until we actually reach heaven? Perhaps some wonder if Jesus covers our future sins. If that question is not decided by God's Word, we will have constant anxiety. All of our sins were future sins when Jesus died for them 2000 years ago. "*For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified*" (Hebrews 10:14). These sins include huge embarrassments (all sin is embarrassing!), like sinful unbelief and small gratitude. "*We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty*" (Luke 17:10). Our sins are many, but the offering our Lord made on the cross covers all our sin. Our Father uses our sins to stir us to confession and a deeper desire for holiness. In His mercy, God continues to forgive and cleanse (1 John 1:9). The Spirit will make us confess our sins frequently, and we are always brought back by Him to the blood of Christ for constant cleansing till the day Jesus comes again. We can lose our joy but not our union with Christ. Because of that union, we find sin more repugnant, and the desire to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4) will cause us to work out our salvation in holy fear and trembling.