

# HIS SIDE VERSUS OUR SIDE - OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS

Or, What is a TRUE Christian?

by Norman Harrison

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## CHAPTER 12

### STANDING FAST VERSUS FALLING AWAY - GALATIANS 5:1-6

What happens when a Christian Fails -- What is he to do next?

This study will answer that question - and in so doing, bring assurance and security to the heart of GOD's people.

**"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."** -- Galatians 5:1-6

"Therefore!" As in all Paul's church Epistles this word marks the turning-point from doctrine to duty. It gathers into itself the entire doctrinal statement that has preceded and focuses its full force upon practical day-by-day living. It transmutes the teaching into a practical way of living.

Only now do we feel the full appeal of the Galatians antithesis. Christian living is a matter of staying "on side" -- His Side, with its dearly-purchased freedom. It is a matter of resisting every influence that would get us "off side", back onto Our Side, back to an endless round of self-effort.

The sickening failure everywhere evident, in the church and in the individual, is right here. Our multiplied "activities," our fine "program" which keeps us so busy -- all tends to make us self-conscious rather than Christ-conscious. We are doing something; we tend to forget what CHRIST has done and is doing. Even our preaching emphasis upon duty tends to drag us over to Our Side. We talk about the many unsolved problems engulfing society; resultantly, the vast majority of Christian people lose sight of the complete solution of all problems -- **"In Christ."**

## What is Christian Liberty?

The Christian, born of GOD, is GOD's free-born man. He is His son, His heir; all that GOD has is his. "**He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?**" (Romans 8:32). He has already "**blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ**" (Ephesians 1:3). These blessings include His unqualified favor, "**justified from all things,**" the bestowal of His life, the gift of His Spirit, access to His presence in prayer -- everything to be desired.

Christian liberty is a life so lived that these provisions of grace continue to operate.

Saved by grace initially, we must be kept by grace continually.

Life imparted by grace must be sustained by grace.

Justified by grace (Romans 3:24), we must be sanctified by grace.

Standing in grace (Romans 5:2), we must walk in grace.

We must be taught, trained and disciplined by grace (Titus 2:11-13).

We are to grow in grace (II Peter 3:18).

We are to experience the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7), not only now but eternally (Ephesians 2:7).

In the severest trial His grace proves itself sufficient for us (II Corinthians 12:9), and as we humble ourselves He keeps adding more grace (James 4:6).

He calls Himself the GOD of all grace (I Peter 5:10), able to make all grace abound toward us, that we may always have all sufficiency for all things (II Corinthians 9:8).

It is evident that GOD has a thorough-going program of grace. Grace set us free; grace sustains us in a continuous experience of freedom. This is Christian liberty, staying on His Side, in His favor, where His freeing grace continuously operates. In this freedom we are to "**stand fast**" at all costs.

## What is Falling From Grace?

So very many hold a superficial conception of grace. They think of grace as sort of booster, or bracer, a spiritual vitamin to insure against failure. Do the best you can; GOD won't fail you; He'll see you through: GOD helps those who help themselves. Not so. GOD has but two ways of dealing with men, two great principles: law and grace. Grace is GOD finding a way to set aside the demands of law and our deserts under it, having taken those deserts upon Himself, that He may be free to pour out upon us His goodness and kindness, even His very life.

"**Falling from grace,**" better understood by thinking of "falling away from grace," is crossing

the line -- changing sides -- to come under the requirements of law, thereby forfeiting the provisions of grace.

Many think of falling from grace as falling into sin, such as drunkenness or some such evil. That is not what falling from grace is, at least initially; however, as we shall soon see, its ultimate result may be something such as that.

Falling from grace is giving up GOD's provisions under grace, as much as to say, "I'd rather depend on what I can do for myself, or on what some one does for me." In the case of the Galatians it was circumcision. This seemed a harmless thing to do; but they had it done because the law prescribed it. Paul says, "That one thing labels you; you're under the law as a system of life; you've obligated yourselves to keep the whole law; you are severed from CHRIST; you've served notice on GOD you are going to do the best you can for yourself; you've cut the supply-line of His grace."

In our day falling away from grace for the many thousands takes the form of depending upon what the church can do for them. They are relying upon church membership -- they really and implicitly trust it for their spiritual security; they depend upon baptism, especially the preferred form, and what it guarantees to them; they go regularly to the Lord's Supper; they give of their means, not of the Lord's portion; they are punctilious about certain church duties. I recall one such church member who said, "I wouldn't dare miss on Easter."

If the Apostle Paul were here today, observing modern church activities, sad at heart over the lack of spiritual life and power, he would say to all such, "You are severed from CHRIST; you have left His Side and are busy commending yourselves to GOD! It is all a vain show."

Dearly beloved reader, I have observed these things from years, and widely. I am persuaded that Protestantism along with Catholicism, has in it vast numbers who have left the side of grace -- *if they were ever on that side*; -- and are inviting GOD to deal with them on the basis of their works.

What is more; it is greatly to be feared that most such, through ignorance of Bible truth and by reason of the type of preaching prevalent today, never really understood GOD's proposal of grace and provision for dealing with them under grace.

*\*\*Editor's Note: Catholicism as a system was never of grace, therefore those in it have not "fallen from grace" - they have always sought to establish their standing with GOD by works, especially for salvation. Catholicism is a works-based religion, and is not based on faith in the finished work of CHRIST on the cross.*

### **Christ-Controlled or Self-Controlled**

This is the issue before us. In terms of practical living the Galatian antithesis resolves itself into the question: Do I want CHRIST to control my life? Or do I prefer to run my own life? This is the choice before us.

Life on His Side is, in the provisions of grace, a person-to-person relationship -- "**I in you**"; "**I**

**will dwell in them and walk in them"** (John 15:4; II Corinthians 6:16); the other Person is in control. Back on Our Side life becomes a one-person affair; that person is thrown upon his own resources.

On His Side life is spiritual, with spiritual ideals and aims and experiences that thrill the soul. The fallen-from-grace life, though it be intensely religious, is essentially a moral life; "I" call upon myself to live up to certain standards of conduct that satisfy my religious sense of right and wrong.

It is the Romans 7 life as against the Romans 8 life. In Romans 7 the pronoun "I" occurs 38 times; "I" am trying to live up to a standard set for me, but there is something in "I" that foils my best efforts. The attempt ends in a defeatist mood, a sense of wretched failure (7:24). That mood is reflected in church life today. Religious life, a solo effort to solve one's problem, is deadening and discouraging.

But Romans 8! Another Person is introduced into human experience, and with Him a new control -- "**the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus**"; and this control by Him "has made me free" (vs. 2). The "I" has disappeared; we can now use "we" -- He and I are living a joint life, I in Him (vs. 1) and He in me (vs. 10). My responsibility, so far removed from the former self-effort, is so to yield to Him that He can realize His life in me. Now life is "we" living together.

How practical this is. It works! This becomes the more evident when the relationship is carried over into Ephesian truth, a relationship of head and body -- He the Head, while the believer constitutes the body. The head, of course, is in undisputed control; the body maintains an attitude of instinctive yieldedness.

Grace has attained a marvelous solution to man's problems: he is free in the freedom of His Creator-Redeemer living His own life in and through man. Beside it the world system of control is truly "**weak and beggarly.**"

### **Life in the Home versus Work in the Shop**

The Christian life is still more; it is "**faith which worketh by love**" (Galatians 5:6). The faith-life sets up the highest possible control and motivation -- the love bond. Grace not only establishes a head and body union; it joins us to CHRIST in marriage -- "**married to Another**" (Romans 7:4; see Ephesians 5:31, 32).

Love is the highest motivating power known to personality. Love moved GOD in the overcoming of the greatest possible obstacles (John 3:16; Romans 5:8). Grace brought us over onto His Side, in the realm of divine love, where "**the love of Christ constraineth us**" (II Corinthians 5:14). What a let-down to fall away from grace, drop His love out of our lives and plod along on our own, in dependence upon self-effort and self-motivation.

The situation, to use a modern illustration, is much like that of a man leaving home for the shop. He lives at home; he works at the shop. As he goes forth his wife's kiss and words of encouragement linger with him. Her love warms his heart.

As he enters the shop his eye falls upon rules tacked up on the wall; and there are certain city ordinances to be observed. How different, he thinks, from the life at home. During the day a watch is kept to see that men observe the regulations of the shop. The men are conscious of working by rules, by orders, and by the clock.

At the close of the day is our friend so fond of the shop routine that he asks for a copy of the rules to take home and post on its walls -- just to see that he doesn't break any of them? No, indeed.

What a relief to enter his home: its atmosphere is love; its life is free. Love regulates and motivates, each wishing to please the other. The home is so sacredly sovereign that no police ever intrudes to ensure that city ordinances are being observed. How beautifully free is the life that flows from a heart filled with true love. Grace has given us such a life; and grace enables us to live it.

### **When a Christian Fails -- What?**

We are in the realm of practical Christian living. In this realm we meet many disappointments, many embarrassing situations and problems. There are failures, plenty of them. Seemingly true Christians fail to live the life.

I am persuaded that every such serious lapse is, at root, a case of falling away from grace.

It cannot be otherwise. Grace supplies all the resources of GOD for life's living, even GOD Himself. "**Christ liveth in me.**" If I am living where grace operates to supply these resources, I am "**kept by the power of God.**" If I move out from the realm of grace, its supply is cut off; I am thrown back upon my own resources, and "I" fail. "I" do what "in CHRIST" I could never do.

We all know Christians whose lives are a puzzle. I think with sadness of preachers who are doctrinally sound, outstandingly so. They are known as gospel preachers, proclaiming the Word of GOD and the cross of CHRIST; but --. Here is one who cheats the government in his tax return; here is one who lies; another is mean, unkind, inconsiderate; another "gets mad"; another is foul in personal speech; another treats his wife contemptibly; another is guilty of immorality in one form or another; another is labeled "crooked."

How shall we explain such lapses? Has the Christian faith failed? No, indeed. The explanation is this: doctrinally, they are on His Side, in the realm of grace; practically, they are back on Our Side, fallen away from grace. Grace can no longer operate to exercise His control, so "I" is back in the saddle, denying in practice the gospel preached from the pulpit.

To make this matter perfectly plain and practical I often give a testimony such as this: I couldn't be dishonest: I couldn't knowingly keep a nickel that didn't belong to me. And it's not because I aim to be honest. I might mean to be honest, but temptation might overtake me and be too strong for me. I am honest, I couldn't keep that nickel, I simply couldn't because I live to please CHRIST, and I know it would hurt Him. Yes, it would raise a barrier between us. A nickel would becloud the sunshine of His love in my heart. That love, that Presence in my life, that purpose to please Him -- this is my all-sufficient guarantee of honorable, upright living.

This is one guarantee of heart and life purity. I could be impure; men far better than I have been, but CHRIST in me -- never! The life in grace, the life of faith ministers CHRIST to the heart every moment -- it's the way to live, the only way. Friend Christian, label your life:

**"KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD."**

~ end of chapter 12 ~

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