



Galatians 5:7-12 Notes

How False Doctrine *Cuts In* On the Truth

The Christian life is represented as a race (5:7)

- **running well** = "You were on the right track and were making good progress."
- The Galatians were running bravely and honorably, but then someone "cut in" on them - hindering them and leading them down the wrong track.
- **cut in** (*egkopto*) = a term describing what runners do in order to take the lead in a race. Also used of "hindering" by breaking up the road to prevent an oncoming army from moving forward.
- Not only were they *led away* from the truth, they were prevented from **obeying** the truth. Again, what was at stake was the very truth of the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.

The *persuasion* to put themselves under the law did not come from God (5:8)

- **persuasion** = the sense of this word is not passive (*being persuaded*) but active (*the persuasion which the false teachers are exerting*).
- Paul could have said, "The persuasion to subject yourselves to the Jewish Law does not proceed from him who called you to freedom in Christ."
- God had called them to freedom in Christ, apart from the bondage of any kind of law-keeping.

Even a small error in doctrine can grow to major proportions (5:9)

- This is a common proverb that Paul gives as a warning (see also First Corinthians 5:6). It refers to the corrupting influence of a little "leaven," and it applies to the false teachers themselves. A small number of false teachers have the potential to corrupt the whole church.
- Paul is answering the implied objection that, since there were only a *few* false teachers, the situation was not really that bad - the danger really wasn't as great as the apostle Paul was picturing it to be. But just as a tiny amount of leaven can change the character of an entire lump of dough, so "small" errors of doctrine tend to spread and grow.

- Errors and false teaching should be "nipped in the bud," however inconsequential they seem.

Paul still has hope that the Galatians had not gone so far as to never be restored to the truth (5:10)

- "I have confidence in you in the Lord" = his confidence is "in the Lord" rather than in men - God is able to work in those who belong to Him. As a result of putting their trust in Christ for their salvation, they had received the indwelling Holy Spirit - and Paul is confident that the Spirit will help them to understand the truth. Paul is confident not only that they will *understand*, but that they will *adopt* or *embrace* the truths of justification by faith alone.
- The one "troubling" them, however, has the responsibility and will bear the judgment for leading them astray. There are consequences for our actions!

The stumbling block of the cross is that we must trust only in Christ's atoning work rather than in any human effort (5:11)

- Paul sharply contrasts *himself* with the one "troubling" the Galatians.
- "*If I preach circumcision*" = this could refer to the false teachers' charge that Paul approved of circumcision in other churches. But Paul could just as well have responded, "It is because I do not preach circumcision that I am being persecuted" or "I do not preach circumcision, and the proof of this is that they are persecuting me!" Paul is being persecuted by his own people because he preaches *Christ crucified*, and not the Mosaic Law, as the only basis for our standing before God.
- stumbling block = Paul also discusses this in First Corinthians 1:23. This phrase could be rendered: "The necessity of depending solely on Christ's atoning sacrifice would be taken away if people could be saved by obeying the Law of Moses."

Paul extends the logic of circumcision (5:12)

- mutilate themselves (*apokopto*) = to cut from, to amputate. This is a similar term as is used in 5:7. It may be intended as a play on words: "they want to *cut in* on you - well let them *cut off* themselves!"
- "If circumcision ensures our standing before God, then maybe complete amputation will gain even *more* favor with God." This is the logical extension of the Judaizers' teaching, and it is completely ridiculous when seen in this light.

We must run the race of the Christian life with single-minded purpose and focus, realizing that some would like to "cut in" on us and lead us astray from the truths of God's Word. Even small errors in doctrine can cause severe damage to our ability to live as God wants us to live. We must realize that our actions can have eternal consequences.

High Peaks Bible Fellowship

Our primary purpose is to uphold the truths of God's Word.

"I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15)

Our primary responsibility is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12)

We meet regularly for verse-by verse teaching from the Word of God;
for encouragement and support as we grow in faith;
for prayer and service to advance God's work in our own time.