

SET FREE!

Volume 1, Issue 10

**HAVE
YOU
FALLEN**



**FROM
GRACE?**

Paul is speaking to the Christians in the church at Galatia. They have run into religious thinking. When I say religious I mean it in its simplest root definition, which means to return to bondage. Religious thinking is a form of bondage.

What had happened in the church at Galatia was this, there were Jewish people who wanted to retain the customs and rules of the Old Covenant and apply them onto the New Covenant believers. Jesus had taught that you can't put new wine into old wine skins, but that was what they were trying to do.

They wanted the men to be circumcised. They wanted people to keep the food rules, to observe the feast days, to continue in repetitious coming to God seeking forgiveness and so on. Basically keeping the Old Law.

Let's see what Paul told them.

Galatians 3:8-11 (MSG)

⁸Earlier, before you knew God personally, you were enslaved to so-called gods that had nothing of the divine about them. ⁹But now that you know the real God--or rather since God knows you--how can you possibly subject yourselves again to those paper tigers? ¹⁰For that is exactly what you do when you are intimidated into scrupulously observing all the traditions, taboos, and superstitions associated with special days and seasons and years. ¹¹I am afraid that all my hard work among you has gone up in a puff of smoke!

Why did the Law come?

Galatians 3:19a-21-22

^{19a} the purpose of the law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Christ (the descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us. ²¹⁻²²If such is the case, is the law, then, an anti-promise, a negation of God's will for us? Not at all. Its purpose was to make obvious to everyone that we are, in ourselves, out of right relationship with God, and therefore to show us the futility of devising some religious system for getting by our own efforts what we can only get by waiting in faith for God to complete his promise. For if any kind of rule-keeping had power to create life in us, we would certainly have gotten it by this time.

Where the problem has come in the church today is that many are still trying to keep the Law, the rules.

We have put together this code of conduct and said that this is how a Christian should act and this is what you are to do and not do. And if you are a "real Christian" you won't break the rules.

The trouble is - no one can keep the rules. Just like no one could keep the Law.

So here we are with these rules and we judge each other by them. Then when someone doesn't keep them we've said that they are backslidden - and if they are really bad, we say that they have "fallen from grace."

In other words, they are so bad in their actions that God has given them up and they are bound for hell. The quality of grace has been strained just too far - and there is no hope for them.

We look around us and see people who have been in the church and seemed to be going along just fine in the "church game" and then suddenly they just dropped out. They just don't act like we think Christians should act.

Let's look at where that term "fallen from grace" came from and what it really means.

I don't know if many of you can remember a TV campaign from a few years ago, but it involved an elderly lady who had fallen down in her house and she was calling out "**Help! Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!**" Do you remember that one? A lot of humour was taken from it.

The commercial then went on to tell you about a signal device that you could get, so that if you were to fall, you could just push the button and help would be on it's way. It was a great idea.

There is another kind of incapacitation that has occurred in the body of Christ today. It is not, however, a physical condition. It is a condition of the heart and the mind in those who, of all people, should know better.

These afflicted have also "fallen" like the elderly woman in the TV commercial, only theirs is not a tumble to the ground but rather a fall from grace.

When we hear that expression we think of falling from grace as falling out of favour with God because of our sinful actions but falling from grace does not mean that we lose our right standing, or our son-ship before God.

To say that God's grace can be taken away from you, or forfeited by you through your actions and deeds, is to contradict the very definition of the word.

Grace is no longer grace if it is initially attained, or perpetually kept, through our performance.

Grace is a gift!

We didn't earn it and we can't keep it by acting nice.

So what does it mean to fall from grace? The answer lies not in religion, not in tradition, not in how you feel about it, but in the Word of truth.

Who are these people that have fallen?

Galatians 5:4

⁴*I suspect you would never*

intend this, but this is what happens. When you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects, you are cut off from Christ, you fall out of grace.

The KJV puts it this way:

Galatians 5:4

⁴*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; **ye are fallen from grace.***

Paul tells us whom these people are who have fallen from grace. He declares, "when you attempt to live by your own religious plans and projects you fall out of grace."

Who is it that has fallen from grace? Is it those who are not living their lives like we think they should? Are they those folks that the church so frequently condemn and point the finger at? Are they the ones who have fallen?

It may surprise you to know that the answer is NO. It is actually the opposite.

Those who have fallen from grace are those who are "seeking to be justified by the law"!

To fall from grace is to knowingly or unknowingly revert back to thinking that you can earn or can do something to maintain the right standing you already have with God through Jesus Christ.

In other words, you've fallen or stopped trusting in grace.

It is a foolishness that so many have fallen into at one time or another and it is the greatest deception that the body of Christ has ever faced.

If the grace of God is undeserved, unmerited, unearned favor with God, then how can you lose it? The answer is you can't. His grace

was never something He rewarded you with because of your great performance. It was a gift that He lovingly bestowed upon you and then asked for nothing in return other than your thanks.

And yet the gift is much more than that. There is life and power in God's grace from one moment to the next as we rest in it. In fact, it is His grace that is "instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age...zealous for good deeds" (**Titus 2:11-14**)

Paul's letter to the Galatians was not dealing with their embracing a lifestyle of illicit sex, drugs, and booze. Just the opposite was the case. These dear folks had drifted backwards in their thinking about the gospel to which they had once so gratefully responded. The road they were sadly traveling back down again was the road of law keeping for righteousness.

Paul, therefore, was disappointed and perplexed.

Galatians 1:6-7

⁶*I can't believe your fickleness--how easily you have turned traitor to him who called you by the grace of Christ by embracing a variant message!*
⁷*It is not a minor variation, you know; it is completely another, an alien message, a no-message, a lie about God. Those who are provoking this agitation among you are turning the Message of Christ on its head.*

As you read this letter, to the Galatians, you will quickly see the common theme that runs throughout.

According to Paul, in:

Galatians 2:4

⁴*While we were in conference we were infiltrated by spies pretending to be Christians,*

who slipped in to find out just **how free true Christians are.** Their ulterior motive was to reduce us to their brand of servitude.

Even Peter had fallen for this trap.

Galatians 2:12

¹²Here's the situation. Earlier, before certain persons had come from James, Peter regularly ate with the non-Jews. But when that conservative group came from Jerusalem, he cautiously pulled back and put as much distance as he could manage between himself and his non-Jewish friends. That's how fearful he was of the conservative Jewish clique that's been pushing the old system of circumcision.

He was afraid of them because they might think he was **enjoying his freedom in Christ too much.** He was eating non-kosher food and enjoying his fellowship with the Gentiles, all of which Law abiding Jews were not suppose to do.

If you start enjoying your freedom, people will judge you too. But don't back off - remember, "It is for freedom that we have been set free."

Now when Peter did that it in turn put others back into bondage:

Galatians 2:13

Unfortunately, the rest of the Jews in the Antioch church joined in that hypocrisy so that even Barnabas was swept along in the charade.

Paul went on to say in **Verses 16, 21** ¹⁶We know very well that we are not set right with God by rule-keeping but only through personal faith in Jesus Christ. How do we know? We tried it--and we had the best system of rules the world has ever seen!

Convinced that no human being can please God by self-

improvement, we believed in Jesus as the Messiah so that we might be set right before God by trusting in the Messiah, not by trying to be good. ²¹I am not going to go back on that.

Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God's grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.

He goes on to ask several rhetorical questions contrasting the works of the law against faith in Christ, perhaps for the purpose of waking the Galatians from their foolish state of mind.

Galatians 3:2-5

²Let me put this question to you: How did your new life begin? Was it by working your heads off to please God? Or was it by responding to God's Message to you? ³Are you going to continue this craziness? For only crazy people would think they could complete by their own efforts what was begun by God. If you weren't smart enough or strong enough to begin it, how do you suppose you could perfect it?

⁴Did you go through this whole painful learning process for nothing? It is not yet a total loss, but it certainly will be if you keep this up!

⁵Answer this question: Does the God who lavishly provides you with his own presence, his Holy Spirit, working things in your lives you could never do for yourselves, does he do these things because **of your strenuous moral striving or because you trust him to do them in you?**

Under the Old Law, if you broke just one rule you were guilty of them all.

So like a tenacious bulldog, Paul presses on with his mission of dispelling any notion that a man can be right with God through his performance. He reminds the people in

Verses 11-12

¹¹The obvious impossibility of carrying out such a moral program should make it plain that no one can sustain a relationship with God that way. The person who lives in right relationship with God does it by embracing what God arranges for him. **Doing things for God is the opposite of entering into what God does for you.** Habakkuk had it right: "The person who believes God, is set right by God--and that's the real life." ¹²Rule-keeping does not naturally evolve into living by faith, but only perpetuates itself in more and more rule keeping, a fact observed in Scripture: "The one who does these things [rule-keeping] continues to live by them."

Think about it. Why would Paul be bringing these things up if the Galatians were standing confidently in the finished work of Calvary?

If their falling from grace was tied to a sex, drugs, and booze downfall, why doesn't he address these issues?

I'll tell you why. It's because it had nothing to do with their behaviour. It's because they were not standing firm in the faith. Their bondage was to working for righteousness, and not to breaking the rules of holiness.

The deception that the Galatians had fallen for was the same one that has plagued the saints throughout history. They doubted the testimony of Paul concerning the righteousness they had in Jesus Christ.

They, like so many through the ages, were going back to the law, back to their works, in

an attempt to justify themselves before the Lord. It is that very mindset that puts you, me, and anyone else into the miserable condition of having fallen from grace.

To be fallen from grace is a mind set of bondage to the rules.

If we don't accept grace and it's freedom, then we have fallen from it, we've missed out on its liberty.

Paul's impassioned plea to these confused saints in the first century is his same plea to us today: *Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you. (Galatians 5:1).*

Trying to work for right standing with God will do nothing but knock you down, put you on your back, and make you feel like there is no way to get up out of your misery. You'll be like that elderly lady, "I've fallen and I can't get up!"

If you fall for that trap, the way you get right back up on your feet is by renewing your mind once again on the most comforting and reassuring message ever proclaimed...the gospel of the grace of God!

Because of what Christ has done for you, you are now seated high on the highest mountaintop of all that God has to give you. You reside on the peak of "grace" mountain, seated in heavenly places.

Ephesians 2:6

and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

There is no loftier position a person can enjoy. Your righteousness is a gift that is now yours forever. There are no exchanges, no refunds, and

no recalls. You're stuck with the gift whether you choose to believe it, enjoy it, or not.

Have you fallen from grace? I hope not. But if you have, you will know it because your confidence will have switched from what Jesus has done to what **you** are doing.

The peace and the joy that you once knew will be replaced by fear, anxiety, and condemnation day after day. Why? Because your *doing* can never measure up to the righteous requirements of the law. You can't even measure up to your own standards much less those of your neighbour!

So what is the solution?

It is to believe the gospel and to rest in knowing that –

Romans 5:1

By entering through faith into what God has always wanted to do for us--set us right with him, make us fit for him--we have it all together with God because of our Master Jesus.

Continually remind yourself of the righteousness that is now yours in Christ Jesus. Do not give in to the temptations all around you to work your way into or to maintain your right standing with God through your actions.

**Get up and stand firm in the truth.
You are free!**

He has made you right and to try to add to what He has done is to say you think He did not complete the task...and that would be what the Word calls, "fallen from grace."

**"Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you."
Galatians 5:1 MSG**

SET FREE

Is a complimentary ministry, prepared for you, by:

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Are You Afraid Of Your Freedom?

Freedom is frightening for those who have never known it.

Paul proclaimed freedom from the law, but many have used the law as a method to control their sin (and others) for years.

From our years under law, we were conscious of our propensity to sin. But now we are pardoned and free, not only of guilt, but also of shame. We are conscious of a new identity in Christ. The Word never refers to us as "sinners saved by grace", rather we are the saints, "holy ones" saved by grace.

Will some take advantage of such generous grace? I really hope so because that's what it's there for. We must all take advantage of it, or we have no hope of righteousness.

Grace isn't a substitution for righteousness but rather it establishes God's favor and acceptance for those who don't deserve it. A sin consciousness indicates we are not walking in the truth of God's grace. Are you still busy being conscious of your sin? What you need to be is conscious of God's grace by which you enjoy unashamed fellowship with Him.

Romans 6: 14 *You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it's your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you've let sin tell you what to do.*