



Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Nights at 6:30

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GALATIANS 5:7 ~ You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?

This is the conclusion of the exhortation phase...

Paul's pastoral heart...

Every Christian is called to this...

No two people will shoe their heart the same way...

Choose to focus on negative, or the positive...

Race running...

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate, or the prayer/suggestion box in the entryway, or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

The word “hindered” here, means to cut off, by cutting in...

(Matthew 18:7, Romans 11:11, 14:4). The hinderance is a prevention from “obeying the Truth.”

Truth is, of course, ἀλήθεια (ä-lā-thā-ä), Alêtheia...

Obey is πείθω (pā-thō), which means to act in accordance with what you are persuaded is the Truth...

(I John 4:20&21, 2:4, 2:22). The person refusing to obey Jesus does so only because they deny Jesus is the Christ and they deny Him because they don't know Him...

A Christian can effectively deny Christ through their failure to obey Him...

When God talks about obedience it always means belief...

If the old man is still in complete control, there is no new man...

GALATIANS 5:8 ~ This persuasion (πείθω) did not come from Him who calls you.

This new persuasion from the Judaizers, while seeming to honor God, did the opposite by diminishing Christ and so, it could not possibly be from God...

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

GALATIANS 5:9 ~ A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

A proverbial saying indicating that something small can have an extensive effect...

This is about the Judaizers themselves...

GALATIANS 5:10 ~ I have confidence (πείθω) in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear the punishment, whoever he is.

Because God is faithful the Galatians will come around...

Even so, that will not help the one through whom the stumbling block came...

Be very cautious about causing damage to any church...

Paul uses the singular because, while there were many Judaizers, they were following the direction of one leader...

Paul's ambiguous "whoever he is," doesn't mean that Paul didn't know who he was...

GALATIANS 5:11 ~ But as for me, brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been eliminated.

Here Paul was answering an argument of the Judaizers...

Paul, as a Jew, did still follow Jewish Law, but as a Christian, he never did so in order to be more righteous.

His opponents were confused...

If we can do anything to make ourselves more righteous the scandal and stumbling block of the cross is largely gone.

GALATIANS 5:12 ~ I wish that those who are troubling you would even emasculate themselves.

(Deuteronomy 23:1). He wished that they would just put themselves out of the "assembly of the Lord," cut themselves off from the church.

Galatians 5:7–26 ~ 7You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. 9A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. 10I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear the punishment, whoever he is. 11But as for me, brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been eliminated. 12I wish that those who are troubling you would even emasculate themselves.

Did that seem like a disconnected series of unrelated bullet points? Like Paul was just throwing out a bunch of different last-minute points? It sure seems that way in English. I assure you; it's not that way in Greek. I'm going to try to show you that as we go along. I'm going to do it subtly and without getting technical. For now, please know that this is a well-reasoned, well-crafted, cohesively singular encouragement.

This is the final part of Paul's primary argument that he has made in his Letter to the Galatian churches. This is the conclusion of the exhortation phase where he is trying to persuade his audience to follow the action that he has advocated. His directive to them, which is ultimately from God Himself, is that they must vigilantly and continuously "stand firm" against circumcision. More broadly, the order is that all Christians must vigilantly and continuously "stand firm" against legalism of all kinds.

In this summary, Paul's urgent appeal for them to obey his command is quite passionate and deeply personal, even emotional. We would say that Paul was being empathetic. In

other words, what we can see, and sense, is that Paul cared. That, of course, is the sign of his pastoral heart.

The Holy Spirit ministering through a pastor causes him to genuinely care about those in his charge. It includes a concern for their physical and emotional wellbeing, sure enough, but far more than that, for their spiritual wellbeing. It is a God-given desire for those people in his care to embrace the love of God to such an extent, that God's love is physically manifested in them, and by them, and through them, in the church.

As a father I am often pleased with my children for a variety of reasons, but the thing that pleases me more than all else, is seeing them love God enough, to manifest His love towards each another. When my kids love, comfort, and support each another, when they are "excellent to each other," I am my most pleased self.

There is nothing better than seeing them selflessly care for Mariah and one another and nothing grieves me more than seeing them tarnish the harmonious unity of our family by acting selfishly out of pride and fear.

Likewise, the most satisfying thing to me as a pastor is seeing the people of this church family love one another. Like you did last week and yesterday supporting Tina and her family. When you do that, you prove that you love God and that you are on the right path, "running your race" on the course that the Lord has set forth for you.

God tells us in Philippians chapter 2, that we must be of the same mind, that we must be of the same love, that we must all

be one, united in the same Spirit and intent on one and the same purpose – God’s purpose.

Further, that we would do nothing out of selfish ambition driven by fear or out of vain conceit driven by pride. Rather, that in humility, humbling ourselves, we would value others above ourselves. Not looking to our own interests but, each one of us, looking to the interests of those around us – to the wellbeing of our brothers and sisters.

My friends, in so doing, we would actually have the same mindset displayed by Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Savior.

What did He do for the church? He gave up everything, including His control over His Own Life, as He entrusted His Spirit into the hands of the Father. All to the eternal glory of God (Philippians chapter 2:1–11). How much did Jesus love the church? He stretched out His arms and declared, “this much.”

Aren’t we supposed to be like Him? Given what He has done for us, is it too much to ask that we get along with each other?

Let me add two additional points. First, the pastoral heart is supposed to be the same heart for all ministry roles. What that means, as a practical matter, is that every Christian is called into the ministry and every ministry is supposed to minister as Christ Himself would minister.

That means deeply caring about the ones to whom you minister. That means that your ministry is not about you. A sure sign that you’ve made ministry about you is when you get defensive, or protective, angry, or manipulative.

Second, we are all different people and so the way I show my pastoral heart, as an example, will be different than the way other pastors show theirs. We all have our personality traits, our idiosyncrasies, our strengths and our weaknesses. As a practical matter, what that means is that you can choose to focus on what you perceive to be another's weaknesses while minimizing their strengths or you can choose to do the opposite.

It's the same with all relationships. You can focus on the negative together with Satan, or you can focus on the positive together with the Holy Spirit. That's your choice. Believe it or not, my wife, along with her pluses, has some minuses. When I choose to focus on her pluses, I am happier, more content, and our marriage is far more pleasant and uplifting and God is glorified. When I choose to focus on her minuses... Negativity flows and Satan reigns.

I mentioned "running your race." Paul started this passage off with one of his favorite metaphors – running a race. This was a real-life example that everyone back then could easily appreciate.

Running races was a much bigger pastime when the atmosphere wasn't flooded with manmade electromagnetic waves designed to entertain and distract people.

Whether as participants or as observers, everyone completely understood the phenomenon of having a runner cut in front of another runner, throwing off their pace and hindering them. Like the T-Rex's in the middle.

The word Paul used, translated as “hindered” here, means to cut off by cutting in. As I said, in the context of the metaphor it is a runner cutting in front of another runner and essentially cutting them off. “Hindered” is a good translation, but it loses the play on words with the cutting around of “circumcision” last seen in the previous verse and the cutting all the way of “emasculatation” in this final verse.

The cutting off by cutting in is to hinder, or to place an obstacle, or a stumbling block, in someone’s path. Jesus said in Matthew 18:7, “Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to the person through whom the stumbling block comes!”

Christians stumble over stumbling blocks all the time. We are hindered by obstacles that are put in our way, often by others, mostly by us. It does not mean that we stumble beyond hope. With God on our side, we don’t stumble so as to fall (Romans 11:11). We stand, meaning we continue, because the Lord makes us stand (Romans 14:4). He is our victory.

The hinderance in this case, and ultimately in all cases, is a prevention from “obeying the Truth.” That is a fascinating way to put it, and it is really quite telling as we’ll see.

Truth is, of course, Alêtheia. In this context the Alêtheia is the content of the Gospel Message. Paul had preached Christ to the Galatians, and they had embraced the Truth of it as demonstrated by them embracing Jesus as Lord and Savior. To obey that Truth is to follow Jesus as His disciple.

The word “obey” here, is not the more typical word for obedience. Here it is πείθω (pā-thō), which means to act in accordance with what you are persuaded is the Truth. It means to behave commensurate with your deeply held belief. It is actions matching convictions. It is walking the walk of your talk and not merely talking the talk.

Paul used this verb to emphasize the reality that when a belief is central to a person’s worldview it will manifest in their lifestyle... period, full stop. Non-Salvific belief is agreeing that the Truth of the Gospel is True. Salvific belief is living the Truth of the Gospel. Example: I can say that archery elk hunting is my favorite distraction. To determine if I just think that or if I actually live that all you need to do is look at what I do every fall.

If you find me hunting, you can bet that I have actually been persuaded that it is the best thing for me. You can say that I am “obeying the truth” that I have embraced. Likewise, any person can say that they are a Christian. Whether that is true or not is easily determined by their lifestyle.

A more Biblical example then... Anyone who declares that they love Jesus but act as though they hate His church is a liar. Just as the Apostle John confirmed in I John 4:20&21, 20If someone says, “I love God,” and yet he hates his brother or sister, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother and sister whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God must also love his brother and sister.

That’s why this statement comes after I John 2:4, The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His

commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. As well as I John 2:22, Who is the liar except the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

It appears like there are three different ideas here. One about a failure to love others, one about disobeying commandments, and one about denying Jesus as the Christ. These statements could even seem a bit contradictory.

In reality, all three statements mean the same thing. The logic flows like this... a person who actually knows Jesus Salvifically has been persuaded that He loves them and that He is their Lord and their Savior.

That is what that person genuinely believes, or they wouldn't be Saved. Belief at that level, fundamentally alters a person's perspective from the perspective of a person who does not believe. That's why the Holy Spirit renews our mind. It's about perspective. While the unbeliever can refuse to obey Christ, the Believer simply cannot because they have already obeyed the Truth.

Their very belief drives them to act in accordance with their belief. Their belief that they are loved, accepted, adopted, and filled with the Breath of God, moves them to obey His commandments.

The person refusing to obey Jesus does so only because they deny Jesus is the Christ. There is a slight nuance here. All non-Christians deny that Jesus is the Christ with their beliefs as proven by their actions regardless of what they say.

A person could claim that they believe that Jesus is the Christ, but that they choose not to live as a Christian or choose not to obey Jesus. It's nonsensical. Such a notion only shows that the person doesn't comprehend what the title Christ means.

The real nuance I want to point out though is that it is completely possible for a Christian to effectively deny Christ through their failure to obey Him.

This is important because it is precisely what our word obey means. To obey in this context is to act in accord with your belief. A Christian failing to obey Christ, failing to "obey the Truth," is doing the opposite of that. They are acting contrary to their belief that Jesus is Christ.

That's really stupid, isn't it? That's Paul's point. Don't do that. Through the power of the Holy Spirit behave more and more in concord with your belief and as you do your belief will be strengthened and then your obedience can be purer and on, we go.

Many of these Galatians were Christians who were acting contrary to their belief because the Judaizers were cutting off, or hindering, their previous belief by promoting a new belief.

This new persuasion from the Judaizers seemed Godly. It seemed like they had the answer to the all-too-common question, what do we do as Christians?

We are to love God and love the church and love the lost. That's a lot of love and love is hard. Isn't there something we

could distract ourselves with so we can put the whole love thing on the back burner?

How about endless debates on the finer details of doctrine? How about endless rites, rituals, ceremonies, and duties? How about getting circumcised and learning how to be Jewish?

Paul declared that the persuasion from the Judaizers while seeming to honor God did the opposite and that their delusion could not possibly be from God.

Because this is so important, I'm going to rehash it from a slightly different angle... Isn't it interesting that Paul wrote "obeying the Truth." You'd think that with all his emphasis on grace apart from works, that the last word that he would use for dwelling in and living out the Truth of the Gospel, would be the word "obey."

When God through any of His Biblical authors talks about obedience it always means belief. A belief that is real enough to produce a life in alignment with that belief.

For well over 4 chapters, Paul has been expounding on the heresy, the blasphemy, the sacrilege of obedience to get ahead with God, emphasizing the free gift of Grace found in Christ, but here he begins to give us the rest of the story.

Make no mistake about it my dear friends, anything that you do to appease God is a legalistic, self-promoting denial of Christ and His completed work on your behalf. But anyone believing in God, in His Truth of the Gospel, enough for it to actually be

Salvific for them, that faith, that persuasion, will change them fundamentally.

No person can believe enough to be Saved by Grace and not have it profoundly affect them at a core level. Technically, when we are persuaded to trust in that Truth the Holy Spirit transforms us into a new creation enabling our obedience to the Truth.

While we are still wrapped in our earth suit that spiritual transformation affects our mind. Our thinking is altered and so our worldview, our perspective, our way of mentally ordering our existence is converted from a self-centered to a Christ-centered focus.

That simply cannot be true if there is no change in a person's behavior. If the old man is still in complete control, there is no new man. That lifestyle denies Christ. When the old man loses his grip on controlling your behavior it means the new man is gaining control and a change, a transformation, has taken place internally and is breaking out externally.

No one can earn righteousness, but the one who God declares righteous in Christ will act more and more righteously... in keeping with who they truly are in Christ.

Paul's question in verse 7 is simply this... You were persuaded that Jesus is the One and Only Savior as evidenced by the change in your lives wrought by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Who cut you off by wanting to have you legalistically cut yourselves?

Verse 8, this new persuasion most assuredly did not come from God, Who has already accepted you as His Own children because of your earlier persuasion. I keep using the word persuasion because the word, obey, in verse 7, *παίθω*, is the same word used by Paul in verse 8 translated as “persuasion.” He will use it again in verse 10 where it is translated “confidence.” Again, this ties everything together in Greek but is completely lost in this English translation.

In verse 9 Paul employs one of his favorite aphorisms, or adages, or proverbial sayings. You know like “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” “A penny saved is a penny earned.” “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.” Here, it is “A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.”

Do not read more into it than Paul intended. It was a common saying from everyday life back then to simply indicate that something quite small and seemingly insignificant can have quite extensive effects over time.

Here Paul wasn't talking about the doctrine of the Judaizers, but about the Judaizers themselves. Allowing false teachers to teach will only get you false learning, faulty understanding, and wrong acting, in the end.

A little Old Testament... Verse 10 is where Paul uses the word *παίθω* again. I have confidence, is I am persuaded to the point of actual confidence. Why? Because the Galatians are so clever? Paul's persuasion to confidence is in the Lord, not the Galatians.

Because God is faithful the Galatians will come around. Even so, that will not help the one who has thrown a monkey wrench into the churches. As I pointed out earlier “Woe to him through whom stumbling blocks come.”

This is a far more relevant point than it might seem. The Judaizers believed to the core of their beings that they were serving God and helping the Galatians be fully approved children of God. It never occurred to them that they were creating a problem in the churches, hindering Christians from obeying the Truth.

Many Christians, and I suppose others who wrongly believe that they are Christians, create havoc in churches. We see it all the time. We’ve seen it right here at Alêtheia. These church saboteurs actually convince themselves that they are advancing God’s agenda.

Not only are they deluded, they will be punished by God for the stumbling blocks that they produce.

I warn all of us to be very cautious about causing damage to any church. I’m not saying that all churches are good – I’m saying be absolutely sure before lodging an accusation against a pastor, ripping his leadership, and assassinating his character. Be definitively certain before throwing a grenade in a church. If you wouldn’t bet your life on it, it would probably be best to let it go. Maybe just quietly slip away and find a different church.

In the end of verse 10 Paul uses the singular by saying “the one who is disturbing you.” The singular because, while there were many Judaizers, they were following the direction of one leader.

Paul's ambiguous "whoever he is," doesn't mean that Paul didn't know who he was, believe me he did. Paul had just said that anyone hindering other Christians would face judgment. He wasn't going to follow that by naming the guy and in so doing possibly cause a stumbling block for the Jerusalem church.

We can't know for sure, but I am quite confident that the leader was, and this is merely my opinion on the matter, Jesus' brother James, the leader of the Jerusalem church. If I'm right, you can see why Paul didn't name him. Beyond that, if I'm right you can see the extraordinary work of the Holy Spirit completely changed his mind as we'll see when we get back to the Book of Acts.

Remember, the early church was constantly struggling to figure out the details of Christianity. What's a little disappointing to me is that after 2,000 years of the church figuring things out, most of us today ignore that work and keep trying to reinvent the wheel.

Verse 11 seems out of place because we don't know what they knew. All scholars are sure that Paul was answering an argument of his opponents that Paul himself still lived as a Jew when he was among Jews.

By his example he was still teaching circumcision from their perspective. We will see that after this Paul encouraged Timothy to be circumcised as seeming confirmation of their argument.

We talked about that last week. Paul, as a Jew, did still follow Jewish Law, customs and traditions when it was beneficial to his

purpose of spreading the Gospel. But Paul, as a Christian, never did anything in order to be more righteous.

His opponents were confused, and the proof of that confusion was that Paul was persecuted by Jews and by overly Jewish Christians. Why would that be if he advocated what they advocated?

His point is brought home by one of the most profoundly terse statements in the Bible. "Then the stumbling block of the cross has been eliminated." The cross itself is a stumbling block as Jesus Himself confessed. It is a stumbling block to the Jews and to all self-righteous people because it is a repudiation of the works of man to Save himself.

Spurgeon said "Do not try to make the gospel tasteful to carnal minds. Do not hide the offense of the cross, lest you make it of no effect." I think far too much of that has taken place over the last 60 years and I think it's one of the primary reasons that the church in America is in such bad shape.

If we can do anything to make ourselves more righteous the scandal and stumbling block of the cross is largely gone.

Verse 12 is strange, right? What in the world Paul? Was he just getting carried away and lashing out? Nope. Deuteronomy 23:1, "No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off may enter the assembly of the Lord." Paul's point was that he wished that they would just put themselves out of the "assembly of the Lord," cut themselves off from the church.

If you are in conflict with the church to the point that it is disturbing others, thus cutting them off, then just cut yourself off from the church. Far better to leave the church than be the cause for the church to falter.