

## **5:2a Paul's Reminder**

### **Paul's Personal Attestation of God's Word.**

Jerome: His statement, "I, Paul, say to you," implies that the words are to be accepted not as Paul's alone but as God's. Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.2.7

## **5:2b Receiving Circumcision Makes Christ of No Advantage**

### **What the Case of Timothy Shows.**

Augustine: Now Paul says that Christ will profit them nothing if they are circumcised, that is, in the physical way that his opponents wanted, namely, to put their hope of salvation in circumcising their flesh. For Paul himself circumcised Timothy as a young man when he was already a Christian. This he did [to avoid] scandalizing his own people, not at all in dissimulation but from that indifference which made him say "circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing." 8 For circumcision is no impediment to the one who does not believe that his salvation lies in it. Epistle to the Galatians 41 [1b.5.1–3].9

### **Romans Addressed Differently from Galatians.**

Jerome: The letter that he wrote to the Romans was addressed to believers from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.... But writing to the Galatians he argues differently, since they belonged not to the circumcision party but to the believing Gentiles. Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.2.10

## **5:3 Circumcision Binds One to Keeping the Whole Law**

### **The Extensive Obligation Attached to Circumcision.**

Chrysostom: The provisions of the law imply one another. I mean something like this. Attached to circumcision are sacrifice and the observance of days. The sacrifice again entails the observance of a day and place, the place entailing many types of purification. The purifications set up a further string of varied observances. For it is not legitimate for the impure to sacrifice, to intrude upon the holy shrines or to do any such things. Therefore through this one commandment the law drags along many others. Now if you have been circumcised but not on the eighth day; or on the eighth day but without a sacrifice; or with sacrifice but not in the appointed place; or in the appointed place but not under the prescribed forms; or under the prescribed forms but not in a pure state; or in a pure state but purified by inappropriate rites— all these things are wasted. For this reason "he is bound to keep the whole." "Do not keep part but the whole," Paul says, "but if it is not of the Lord, do not keep even part." Homily on Galatians 5.3.11

### **The Law and Christ Are Two Masters.**

Jerome: Just as no one can serve two masters, <sup>13</sup> so it is difficult to keep both the shadow and the substance of the law. Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.4.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Lord Can Make the Burden of the Law Light.**

Epiphanius: When he says “bound,” he is no longer speaking of the law as something unworthy but of a heavy burden which can be made lighter. There is one Lord, who is able to make it either heavy or light according to the choice of those who have not refused to accept salvation through his grace through his appearance in the flesh. Panarion 42.12.3, Third Refutation of Marcion.<sup>15</sup>

## ***5:4a Justification by the Law Severs One from Christ***

### **Justification by the Law.**

Jerome: He is refuting those who believed that they were justified in the law, not those who observed its legitimate provisions in honor of him by whom they were commanded, understanding both that they were commanded as a foreshadowing of the truth and that they belonged to a particular time. Letters 116.19.3.<sup>16</sup>

## ***5:4b Fallen Away from Grace***

### **The Fall from Grace.**

Marius Victorinus: All the virtue of the one who believes in Christ is by the grace of God. Grace is not from merits but from readiness to believe God. Therefore [Paul writes] “You have already fallen from grace if you place your justification in the law, because (for example) you serve works, because you observe the sabbath or on account of your circumcision. If you believe that you are justified by this, “you have fallen from grace and been made void of Christ.” You no longer have your faith from Christ nor hope for grace for yourselves from his passion and resurrection, if you believe that justification comes from the law.” Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.4.<sup>17</sup>

### **Those Freed from the Debt Prefer Indebtedness.**

Augustine: Because it is they, not Christ, who are injured, he adds: “you have fallen from grace.” For when the effect of Christ’s grace is that those who were debtors to the works of the law were freed from this debt, these people, ungrateful to such great grace, prefer to be debtors to the whole law. Now this had not yet happened, but, because the will had begun to be moved, he therefore speaks frequently as though it had already happened. Epistle to the Galatians 42 [1b.5.4–12].<sup>18</sup>

## ***5:5 We Wait for the Hope of Righteousness***

### **The Tone Changes.**

Chrysostom: Having now multiplied their fear and shaken their minds and shown them the shipwreck that they are about to suffer, he reveals to them the haven of grace close by. This he does everywhere, showing thereby how extremely benign and safe salvation is.... “We need none of those legal provisions,” Paul says, “for grace sufficiently gives the Spirit to us, through whom we are offered righteousness and a multitude of great goods.” Homily on Galatians 5.5.19

## ***5:6a In Christ Jesus Neither Circumcision Nor Uncircumcision Avails Us***

### **The Analogy of Choosing Athletes on the Basis of the Color of Their Skin or Length of Their Noses.**

Chrysostom: [Circumcision] is indifferent for those who have it already before believing but not for those who are circumcised after believing. Note how he has rejected it, putting it after uncircumcision. What makes the difference is faith. For just as when one is choosing athletes, it matters nothing in this trial whether they be hook-nosed or snub-nosed, dark or fair, but all that need be looked for is that they be strong and skillful. So when a person is to be enrolled in the new covenant, the lack of these bodily trappings does no harm, just as they do no good if they be present. Homily on Galatians 5.6.22

### **Nor Does Uncircumcision Count for Righteousness.**

Jerome: [Lest Gentiles should say] that uncircumcision, in which “Abraham pleased God and had his faith counted for righteousness”<sup>23</sup> is better than circumcision, which was given as a sign and was of no profit to Israel though it possessed it, we shall see that this arrogant boast has also been excluded with the greatest foresight. Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.6.24

## ***5:6b Faith Working Through Love***

### **Faith Works Through Love.**

Marius Victorinus: Everywhere he says that faith in the gospel of Christ accords no value to rank or sex or works done with regard to the body or from the body or for the sake of the body, such as circumcision, works and other things of this kind. None of these, he says, has saving value in Christ. Circumcision is therefore vain, nor by uncircumcision do we gain value in Christ. Because we have conceived faith in him and because we have believed his promises and because through his resurrection we too rise and have suffered all things with him and rise to life with him but also through him, our faith is sure. Through this faith comes works fitting to salvation. This comes about through the love that we have for Christ and God and thus toward every human being. For it is these two relationships above all that set life straight and

fulfill the whole sense of the law. They contain all the commands in the Decalogue—if it follows necessarily that he who keeps faith will also keep love, since these two fulfill all the precepts of the law of Christ. Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.6.<sup>25</sup>

### **No Drift Toward Bondage.**

Chrysostom: He strikes them here with a great blow by showing that it is their failure to be rooted in love for Christ that has given entrance to this error. For what is looked for is not only faith but also faith abiding in love. It is as though he said, “Had you loved Christ as you ought, you would not have gone voluntarily into slavery, you would not have insulted your deliverer.” And here he also alludes obliquely to those who have plotted against them, showing that if they had love for them they would not have dared to do this. He also wishes to amend their lives through this saying. Homily on Galatians 5.7.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Faith That Works Through Love Distinguished from the Faith of Demons.**

Augustine: This is the faith that separates the righteous from the unclean demons, for they too, as the apostle James says, “believe and tremble,”<sup>27</sup> but their actions are not good. Therefore they do not have that faith by which “the righteous live.”<sup>28</sup> On Grace and Free Will 18.<sup>29</sup>

## ***5:7 Who Hindered Obeying the Truth?***

### **The Question Itself Is a Testimony of Loss.**

Chrysostom: These are not the words of one who asks a question but of one who is at a loss and grieving. [Paul means] “How was so great a race cut short? Who had strength to do such a thing? You who were superior to all and were in the position of teachers have not even remained in the position of disciples.” Homily on Galatians 5.7.<sup>31</sup>

## ***5:8 Persuasion Not from God***

### ***5:9 A Little Leaven***

#### **Keep the Bread Unleavened.**

Marius Victorinus: All leaven corrupts the bread, and the corrupted bread is flour. When the mass of flour is left, it sours, and then comes the leavening. Now when a small amount of the leaven is put into the mass, the mass is corrupted. “You,” he says, “must be unleavened bread. Therefore that little addition of yours, which you thought a small amount, namely, your observing of circumcision and the rest, because it is corrupt, corrupts the mass of our gospel. If so, you do not have full hope in Christ, and neither does Christ regard you as his own or people whose hope depends on him. For it is faith that sets free, and, as I

have said, he has no faith who hopes for any sort of help apart from Christ, even along with Christ.” Epistle to the Galatians 2.5.9.<sup>34</sup>

#### **This Persuasion Could Lead to Rampant Judaizing.**

Chrysostom: Some may say, “Why do you blow up the matter so portentously by your words? We have kept a single command of the law, and are you clamoring because of that?” But Paul is concerned not only for their present but for their future.... “For,” he says, “this little evil, if uncorrected, has the strength to lead you into complete Judaizing, just as leaven acts on the lump.” Homily on Galatians 5.9.<sup>35</sup>

### **5:10a *Confidence in the Lord and in Them***

#### **Paul’s Confidence in the Faithful in the Lord.**

Chrysostom: He did not say “I know” but “I have confidence.” “I trust God,” Paul says. “I am confident when I call on the Lord to assist in your amendment.” And he has not said, “I have confidence in the Lord” but “I have confidence in you in the Lord.” Everywhere he interweaves his admonitions with praises. It is as though he said, “I know my disciples, I know your uprightness. My confidence is based first on the Lord who does not allow the least thing to be lost, and then on you, who can quickly recover control of yourselves.” At the same time, he asks them to bring their own zeal, since we cannot receive from God without bringing something of our own. Homily on Galatians 5.10.<sup>37</sup>

### **5:10b *The Troubler Will Bear His Judgment***

#### **The Troubler Was Someone Other Than Peter.**

Jerome: Some say that Paul is tacitly attacking Peter, whom he says he “opposed to his face”<sup>38</sup> ... but Paul would not speak with such offensive aggression of the head of the church, nor did Peter deserve to be held to blame for disturbing the church. Therefore it must be supposed that he is speaking of someone else who had either been with the apostles, or was from Judea, or was one of the believing Pharisees, or at any rate was reckoned important among the Galatians. Epistle to the Galatians 3.5.10.<sup>39</sup>