

Freedom in Christ
Lesson #17
Galatians 5:1-15

The issue of circumcision – Galatians 5:1-15

1. Paul had used the story of Abraham's sons Ishmael and Isaac as an illustration of slavery and freedom. Ishmael was born of a slave woman and therefore was not Abraham's heir. Isaac, on the other hand, was born of Abraham's wife, a free woman, making him the heir of all Abraham possessed. Using that story to illustrate the truth of the gospel, Paul reminds the Galatians that they are children of the free woman, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29, 4:21-31) Why did Paul say that Christ has set us free? (Galatians 5:1a)
2. He instructed them to "*stand firm.*" What was his warning? (Galatians 5:1b)
3. Read verses 2-12. How many times did Paul use "*circumcision*" or a form of that word?
4. Obviously, this had become a major issue for the Galatian (Gentile) believers. Paul used the strong expression, "*Mark my words!*" (NIV) or "*Behold!*" (KJV/NASB) What did he say regarding circumcision? (Galatians 5:2)
5. Paul, in an effort to be perfectly clear, restated his warning. What was that warning? (Galatians 5:3)
6. Using Galatians 5:4:
 - Why did Paul say they were contemplating circumcision?
 - What did he say the result would be?
7. After warning them about circumcision, Paul reminded them how they were (justified) made righteous. What is the only way? (Galatians 5:5)

8. Using Galatians 5:6:
If they are “*in Christ*” (according to Galatians 3:26, 27) then:
 - What is the value of circumcision?

 - What is important?
9. Athletics, particularly the Olympic and Isthmian Games, were an integral part of the Greco-Roman culture. Drawing on these games to illustrate his next point, how did Paul describe these Galatians? (Galatians 5:7a)
10. But something happened and Paul asked, “*Who cut in on you, and kept you from obeying the truth?*” What did he say about this person’s influence? (Galatians 5:8)
11. Moving to another common illustration, that of baking bread, what did Paul say happens when just a little yeast is introduced into a lump of dough? (Galatians 5:9)
12. After repeated warnings, Paul told the Galatians that he is, “*Confident in the Lord*” about two things. What are they? (Galatians 5:10)
13. Using Galatians 5:11:
What is Paul’s “if – then” question?
 - If:

 - Then:
14. How did Paul describe the cross?

Reflect: on this verse and its context. How is Paul connecting circumcision to the cross?

15. Paul added a sarcastic remark about those agitators who were insisting that the Galatian (Gentile) believers had to be circumcised. What did he say that he wished for them? (Galatians 5:12)
16. Returning to his opening statement, what was Paul's reminder to his brothers? (Galatians 5:13a)
17. What is the practical side of that? (Galatians 5:13b)
18. What did Paul say about the law? (Galatians 5:14)
19. This section ends with a stern warning to these Galatians. Using Galatians 5:15:
 - What were the Galatians doing to each other?
 - What was Paul's warning about that?

Reflect: on the situation that was happening in the church(es) of Galatia. From Paul's writing, can you determine the reason why he was so perplexed? (Galatians 4:20; see also 4:12-16)