

Galatians 5

v. 2, 3, 4

'Tragedy of Legalism'



Sunday 9 AM Study. 12.14.2025

Holly Hills Bible Church
2400 S Holly St
Denver, CO 80222

Today's verses in context . . .

GAL. 4: 21— Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. 24 This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27 For it is written,

**“REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR;
BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR;
FOR MORE NUMEROUS ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE
THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND.”**

28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the Scripture say?

**“CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON,
FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN.”**

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman. ***It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (5:1)***

5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. **3** And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. **4** You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

v. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

Behold I Paul, say to you:

A strong attestation of the facts, legal in tone: 'I do solemnly swear ...' /. 'I hereby testify' / 'I affirm'

Other versions have it:

- Mark my words!
- Listen!
- Take note!

IF you receive circumcision: a third-class conditional; PROBABLE FUTURE CONDITION. They had not yet submitted; but in all likelihood, many will get the circumcision badge of honor. (*Wuest has: 'if you persist being circumcised'*)

Those who encouraged them into getting circumcised can then take a victory lap— receive acclamation for new Gentile converts

And now: what is circumcision?

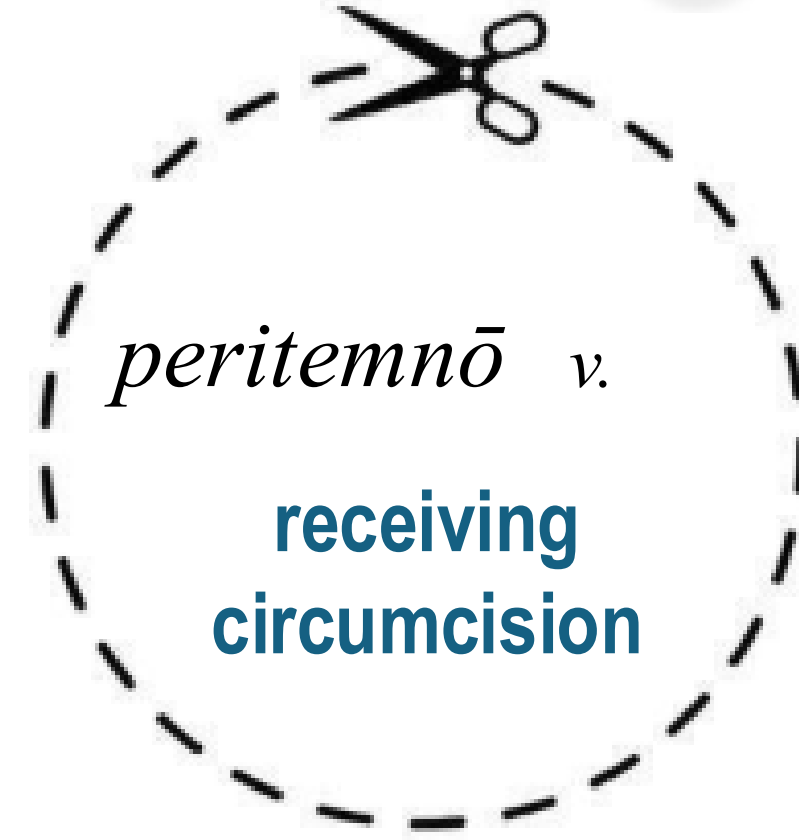
Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply so that they will not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. (Gal 6:12) For those who are circumcised do not even keep [the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised so that they may boast in your flesh. (6:13)



Circumcision:



- It was practiced widely in the ancient world, incl. Egyptian and Canaanite cultures: done by those nations at the beginning of puberty.
- But for Jews: it signified a sign of their oath to serve as the holy people whom God called to be his special servants, set apart from the sea of pagan populations, in the world: **DONE AT INFANCY.**
- A visible, physical sign of the covenant between God and His people. (GEN 17;14) and a covenant breaker
- Used a metaphor: any male not circumcised was to be “cut off from his people”
- Abandoned during the Wilderness journey, re-instated at the bank of the Jordan by Joshua before entering the Promised Land.
- Became a ‘Badge of Honor’ indicating spiritual and national superiority; of exclusivism instead of a missionary zeal to reach out to the other nations as God intended
- ‘uncircumcision’ became a pejorative for the gentiles; and circumcision/uncircumcision became politically/emotionally/spiritually charged word and brought in discord to the early N.T. church

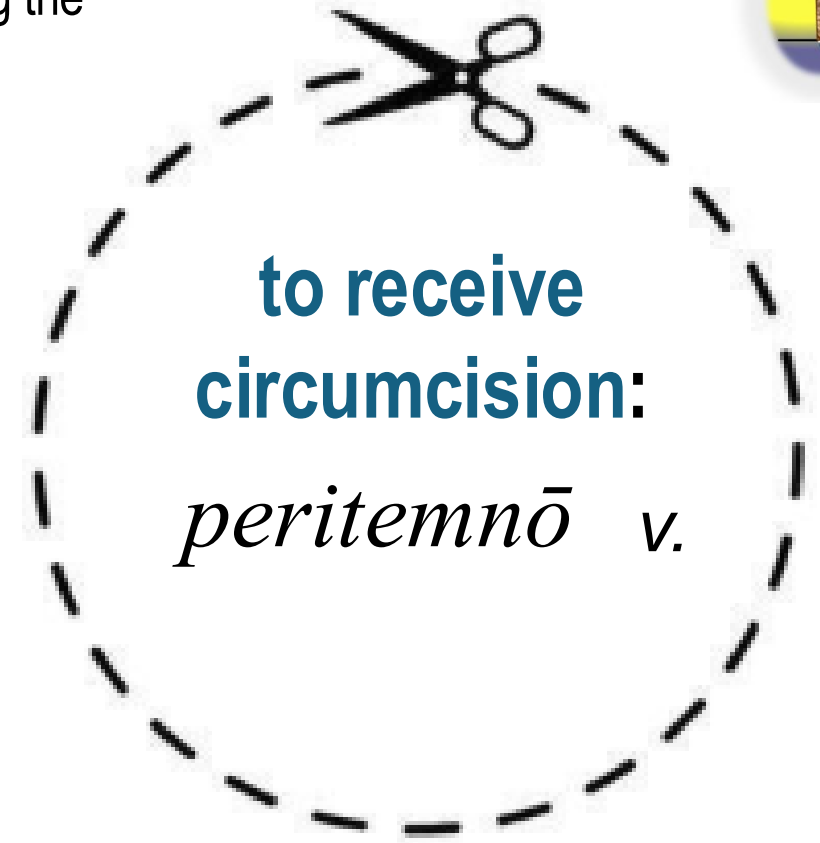


... *to cut around*



- Did the O.T. Jews have a spiritual, allegorical definition of circumcision along the lines of Paul's? Instead of just (*the righteous act bringing a Jew into Judaism?*)- (def. of right use of circumcision)
- YES! Moses and the prophets came to use the term as symbol for purity of heart and readiness to hear and obey. Ex: Lev. 26-

40 'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me— 41 I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies—**or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled** so that they then make amends for their iniquity, 42 then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.





'True' (good) Circumcision:

TRUE circumcision: Phil 3:3— those by faith in Christ alone, worship in the Spirit (as to the flesh= no confidence).

MADE WITHOUT HANDS: Col 2:11— the flesh is removed

Is **'IN HIM'**: Col 2:11

FLESH (Old Man) is REMOVED: Col 2:11

'THE CIRCUMCISION of CHRIST': Col 2:11

BURIED & RAISED WITH CHRIST: Col 2:12

CIRCUMCISION of the HEART: performed by the Spirit. Rom. 2:29

An INWARD JEW: Rom. 2:29

'False' (bad) Circumcision:

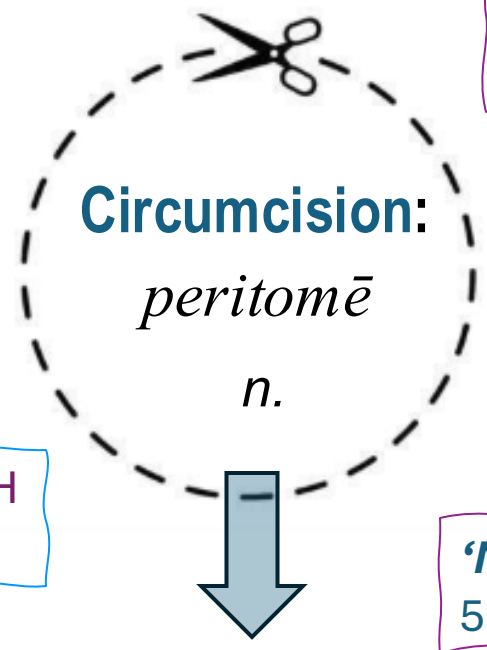
FALSE CIRCUMCISION: dogs, evil workers, Phil 3:2— those teaching circumcision necessary for justification.

'UNCIRCUMCISION': of your flesh (the Old Man) Col. 2:13 (being uncircumcised is bad as to your Standing/State)

'DEAD': in your transgressions Col. 2:13

'COMPELLED circumcision': not for your sake, but for others, that they may boast in your flesh and escape persecution . . Gal. 6:12, 13

'Mutilated ones': a hyperbole of Paul— Gal. 5:12 [*apokoptō*]



PHYSICALLY, though:
Meaningless: does not matter. What does matter: a new creation (Gal. 6:15)

an **'OUTWARD JEW':** having no saving baptism of the Holy Spirit in Christ- no heart circumcision. Rom 2:29

v. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.



If you do this: (*3rd Class conditional: probable future situation. . .*)

CONSEQUENCE NO. 1:

Christ will be of no benefit to you!

- No profit
- No advantage
- Leads to a logical question: If justification comes from the Law via the gateway of circumcision (your entry badge): why did Christ have to die?
- Christ does not advantage you in justification, but further— living the Christian life or growth (sanctification)
- *‘A believer turning to the law for production or growth is like a banker turning to a beggar for financial support’ . . . [Merryman]*

‘CONSEQUENCES OF RECEIVING CIRCUMCISION’ FROM GALATIANS: GOD’S ANTIDOTE TO LEGALISM’, PP. 84-86, RONALD C. MERRYMAN, MERRYMAN MINISTRIES, DULUTH, MN

v. 3: And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.



NOW: Again in v. 3: *'I Paul, do solemnly swear'* –

CONSEQUENCE NO. 2:

Puts the believer under the full-force and obligation of the Law of Moses

- If you I.D. yourself as being under the law or any part of it, you are responsible for the universal legal system, a debtor to all its demands (Wm. Kelly)
- MORAL code + CEREMONIAL code: no such thing as saying 'Christians are under the moral part but the ceremonial part is done away . . .
- What part of a bank loan (say \$400,000) can I say: 'I'm not responsible for the last \$100,000? I only recognize the first 75% . . . Will the bank forgive the remaining balance?
- God was the author of circumcision for the Jewish economy. **But in giving Christ He stopped it; it had served its office**. To THEN bring it BACK: is adding obscure ritual, you **DISHONOR** Christ's work [Wm. Kelly]
- Is a Christian a debtor to Christ for the cross? . . . Are we under obligation?

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v. 4: You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.



CONSEQUENCE NO. 3: *(if you obligate yourself via circumcision)*

You sever yourself from Christ . . . or Christ becomes of no effect . . . or you Alienate yourself from Christ [NAS; KJV; NIV]

- **The Cross of Christ**— think upon the work of it; saves you from your sins; provides continual forgiveness of sins; co-identifies you in His death, burial, resurrection; separates you from the body of death; transfers you from the kingdom of darkness to His kingdom; raises you to newness of life; transfers you from Adam's race to Christ's; you become a new creation, ascends you to heaven with Christ, seats you in the heavenlies with Christ, gives you His eternal life
- NOW: consider it of no effect, seek something else to add to it Is there anything more absurd in the universe?
- Severed/ estranged / alienated = ***katargeō*** *a very familiar word in a familiar verse*
- *'knowing this, that our (Old Man) was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;'* ROM 6:6
- At HHBC: we like to define it as; rendered inoperative; taken off-line; put out of business
- See the absurdity!—Christ rendered inoperative? Unemployed? Rendered useless? Loosed from power?

v. 4: You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

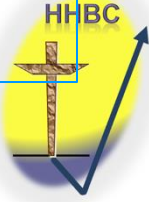


CONSEQUENCE NO. 4: *(if you obligate yourself via circumcision)*

You fall from grace

- If you are a Calvinist: this reads you have fallen out of grace, down through the open manhole into the pit of darkness
- Fortunately, you're not; more like being knocked off the grace-faith platform for Christian living, down to the law-works- unbelief platform. [Wuest has: *'lose hold of'* grace]
- Out of grace standing and down to conditional self-standing, to fall from the engaged power and life of the Holy Spirit, down to power of the Old Man; from spiritual to natural
- Remember what Miles reminded us of the other week: besides grace being unmerited favor, it is a gift from God, no strings attached. The Life in Christ is a gift effectuated by the H.S.
- **Christ = a complete Savior, but He is also an exclusive one** [Wm. Kelly]. Adding to His work destroys His salvation for the one seeking to be justified by any other means. It's one or the other. It can't be both.

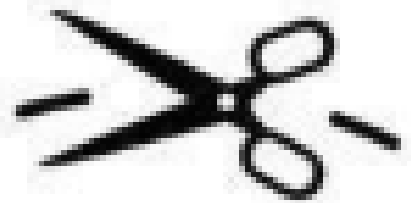
v. 1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery



Circling Back to the Main Point in v. 1:

- i. In freedom, Christ set us free, or FOR freedom, Christ set us free. It was for our advantage. We have complete liberty in Christ
- ii. In Galatians (see 4:21-30), they were trying to be perfected in the flesh; they were not in liberty. The apostle tells them that Abraham when Issac was weaned made a feast, all in the house doing honor to Isaac; all except one, a youth of fourteen, and he mocked. That was Ismael. Sarah says he must be cast out. The first great thing in getting rid of the religious man is that Christ must have an acknowledged right to everything that I have, from the nursery to the office. No man has liberty till he has parted with one man- Adam, and is in another— Christ; till he comes to “Christ liveth in me”. Then he is able to say: “I am crucified with Christ’
- iii. There are two things: the first is that you acknowledge Christ— the True Isaac— in His place. The second is that you do not tolerate Ismael. **[See: Addendum for more]**
- iv. We can cast it all off- the law, its requirements, its demands, the Old Man, the burden of its yoke
- v. Stoney: *circumcision is stronger than crucifixion* — It is (Camp) Gilgal, **every trace of the old thing gone. the whole thing is swept away**. It is a positive relief that I am clear from all here (Old Man...religiousness...) through the death of Christ.

II, III, V: FROM 'LIBERTY' FROM MINISTRY, BOOK 6, J. B. STONEY, KINGSTON BIBLE TRUST, ENGLAND



**Circumcised of Heart
w/o hands by the H.S.**

**Cast off...
excised**

removed...

*A fragrance of Christ
A New Creation*

Crucified with Christ:

Body of Flesh

COL 2:11

*accepted in the beloved
children of light*

*...the true circumcision
Children of God*

Chafer's 33 truths of being "In Christ"

The true Isaac:

GEN 21: 9-14;
GAL 4:30

*His workmanship
a New Man
The Lord's possession
God's fellow workers*

**Cast
out...**

Ismael

**Reproach of
Egypt (O.T.)**

JOS. 5:9

**Wilderness
wandering (O.T.)**

**deeds of
the body**

ROM 8:13