

Galatians 5:7-12 – The Insidious Nature of the Devil

GreekLexicon, TSK, Gaebelein, Handfuls, Reinecker, Henry, Trapp, Robertson, Poole, Geneva, JFB, Eclectic, Family, Clarke, Calvin, Bezuyen Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: The Devil is a sneaky snake, isn't he? He started off with deceiving Adam and Eve in an insidious way. **He rarely directly calls people to sin. That is his modus operandi!** And he did so by trying to deceive the Galatians. In their case, **he never urged them to deny salvation was by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, but he introduced the “and” factor:** Salvation was by Christ **AND** you! How insidious! And some loved the idea as it stroked their egos. You will hear today more about this Sneaky Snake's methodology.

Our headings are:

Satan Is Effective

You Are More Effective in Christ

Our goals are: **That you will resist the temptation of the Devil to try to make you feel self-important and make you steal credit from Christ, and that you will realize Christ gives you guaranteed strength and ability to resist the Devil and his lies.**

The Devil is Effective

7 **You ran well. Who hindered you** from obeying the truth?

1. Now Apostle Paul commended the Galatians for starting the “race” of their Christian life well.

The Apostle Paul used another sports allegory, as sports was common in the Greek and Roman world.

After they were baptized, the Galatians served the Lord faithfully. They lived the Gospel. They worshipped. They evangelized. They had zeal for spiritual things.

2. But the Galatians stumbled as they were hindered; something was thrown on their path as they ran.

Satan, working through the Judaizers, threw false doctrine as they ran so they stumbled.

“Hindered” was a military term used to describe someone breaking up a road to prevent safe passage, or jumping in front of a runner. So it pointed to some **illegal interference**.

The Judaizers were blocking God's people from progressing in their lives. They were the Devil's people.

3. But why did Apostle Paul ask, “Who hindered you?” when he knew the Judaizers had done it?

He wanted the Galatians to **acknowledge the Judaizers were guilty of lying to them** and **acknowledge they were guilty of allowing themselves to be deceived.**

The Galatians were like a sport fan thinking because he does certain superstitious acts, he is able to contribute to a team winning – like wearing the same shirt during a game...or tapping on a table so many times before a penalty kick. **It contributes nothing...but he wants to take some credit for it.**

8 This persuasion **does not come from Him who calls you.**

4. But the root of the Galatians' stumbling was actually the Devil...

The Lord had called the Galatians to himself, but **the Devil came and made a 2nd call through his people.**

God declared one was justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, and eternal salvation was written on their hearts. **But the Devil's people said it was grace AND works** – circumcision being one of those essential works. **The Devil has people, lots of people, to help him in his work.**

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

5. The result of the Devil and his people was that the Galatians Christians became polluted.

As yeast slowly permeates the whole dough (hence it is described as insidious) the people were left in mortal danger by this false doctrine. This was Jesus' language.

Matthew 16:6 Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and **beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees.**"

So even though the Galatians had many good doctrines, a really bad one as this, as yeast, affected their whole lives. That meant their whole church was affected. (Leaven was not unbelief...but false doctrines!)

Imagine the turmoil this brought between the members of the church and its leadership.

6. Lessons:

a. It is not automatic that your Christian life will run smoothly. You have to make sure you have eyes

to recognize dangers. You have to be trained in the Word. You have to surround yourself with good teachers. You have to have good friends who will hold you accountable. **The Devil will bring obstacles against you if you are living with knowledge and zeal for the Lord.** The Devil doesn't have your welfare in his mind. He is doing this to build his kingdom. He wants more company in hell with him at the end of the world. He likes to dig up the road so you have to take a detour. But press on! Philippians 3:14 *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

b. The Devil, through his people, will more likely bring subtle obstacles...which may not seem like obstacles at all...against you, if you are living with zeal and knowledge for the Lord. (People aren't good – not without Christ. Don't be fooled by “nice” people.) Those detours those people force you to follow may look like shallow waters, but they run deep and will drown you. **“Let's make women pastors. Let's make worship customer-friendly. Let's die with dignity. Let's respect women's choices. Let's welcome everyone as members or the church will die. Let's hide away from the world.”**

c. When you fall into a false doctrine, it affects not only you, but your whole family and the whole church. Example: David Jeremiah, a famous TV preacher said that after Christ returns there will be people remaining behind who will have a difficult life but they will still hear the Gospel. Lies...lies from hell. **He makes people think they will have another shot at being saved. This removes their need to repent now.** After Jesus returns there will be judgment - nothing more.

d. The churches must be prepared to run out those who are introducing false doctrines in the church in order to preserve the purity of the church and protect the praise of Christ.

You Are More Effective in Christ

10 I have confidence in you, **in the Lord**, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall **bear his judgment**, whoever he is.

1. Apostle Paul was confident the Galatians would be able to withstand the attacks from Satan and his henchmen because they were in the Lord.

The Galatians were to remember they were **standing in the Lord**. It is true the Devil has a lot of power and influence and he has lots of people on his payroll, but God does not allow evil to triumph forever.

2. Apostle Paul, to further incentivize the Galatians to hold their ground against the Devil and his people, described the judgment that was coming on the attempted deceivers of God's people.

Judgment is sure! Remember what God did to Achan?

Joshua 7:25 And Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

How would judgment come? It would come through the **censures of the church** and **eternity in hell**.

“Being in Christ” was not a fake kind of confidence others might give when they say “There, everything is going to be okay” even though there is no assurance everything is going to be okay. God himself was going to stop these liars, the deceivers and robbers of God's glory. This is reflected in the Imprecatory Psalms. This is why Israel sang them and taught their children to sing them.

11 And I, brethren, **if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?** Then the **offense of the cross has ceased**.

3. There was a time when Apostle Paul was accused of preaching circumcision was essential for salvation, like when he asked that Timothy be circumcised (not for religious reasons but simply so he would have access to Jewish people), but he wasn't preaching the necessity of circumcision for salvation. He, in fact, was being persecuted for the opposite- for not preaching circumcision was necessary for salvation. But the false accusations did not stop. See Acts. To further prove he was not preaching circumcision for salvation, he noted that people were strongly offended by the necessity and exclusivity of the cross for salvation. It was a huge stumbling block to the Jews.

1 Corinthians 1:23 but **we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,**

The Judaizers preferred to gain God's affections by holding feasts, being circumcised, having ceremonies, and holding special days.

(This was Apostle Paul's personal note reminding the Galatians if they believed in salvation by grace alone, they would face opposition. So they had to hold their ground.)

12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even **cut themselves off!**

4. Finally, Apostle Paul's desired (made a strong wish) that all those who insisted on being circumcised to be saved, might go one step further and be fully castrated.

(You will notice the play on words: They want you to be circumcised -foreskins cut off- but I desire that God would cut them off completely!)

He wanted this to happen so these people would not have any children. This was not wrong! He was so concerned about this wickedness, he prayed for the destruction of the wicked, just like others prayed in much of the Bible and the Psalms. But he did not personally take revenge.

5. Lessons:

a. Because you are in Christ and are strengthened by Christ, you don't have to fall for the insidious deceit of the Devil and his people. Don't be scared of them! Don't give in. Christ makes you strong.

b. Those who stand up against God's church and try to undermine and destroy it, will themselves be destroyed. (And you must assume there will always be those who will attack the church – attack the elders, the pastors, and the doctrines.) But the Lord is all-powerful! That is God's Word. Find assurance in the destruction of God's enemies.

c. Desire and pray for the destruction of God's enemies – those tools of Satan.

d. Call out those agents of Satan who are undermining the church. Those who are promoting healthy eating, working hard, and living clean lives, in place of preaching that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, are evil. They are substituting good things or essential things. That's Satan's insidious way, not Christ's.

e. Have zeal for the kingdom of the Lord. If you don't have it, look back at the cross and ask God for his Holy Spirit to rekindle that zeal in you.

Conclusion:

Indeed, Satan is effective. He is able to work with his fellow demons and he has a great contingent of willing hands on earth ready to do his bidding. Together they can do a lot of damage. But there is another side! While the Devil is powerful, you who are resting in Christ and are being replenished in Christ. So don't fear. Instead...

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

1. Rest in the Lord! You can't contribute to your salvation.

2. Resist those who are who are luring you to "self-aggrandizement."

3. Rejoice in the Lord. You couldn't save yourself, but he could, and did. Don't be afraid.

4. Remind those who are trapped in trying to "cooperate" with the Lord for salvation to stop it.

Finally: Every religion tells you that you can do something to save yourself. The Bible says if you try to do things to save yourself you will go to hell. If you don't want to go to hell, call on God to save you. He has the ability because Jesus died on the cross for sinners and he offers Christ's works as your works for free.

HC 126 – Pray the Father Will Forgive Your Sins

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: God commands you to **hallow his name**. But for God's name to be hallowed you have to **build his kingdom in your heart, church, and country**. And to build his kingdom **you must teach, believe, and live God's will – which is the Gospel**. And in order to do God's will **you need a sufficient supply of food and material things**. But to get food and material things to build God's kingdom, **you need to be close to him by getting his fatherly forgiveness**. This is the message today.

Let me distinguish between **fatherly forgiveness** and **judicial forgiveness**. When you were justified (declared righteous) and became a Christian, all your sins were forgiven (**judicial forgiveness**). But in your day-to-day life you sin against God and you daily need to ask your heavenly Father for his forgiveness. It is this 2nd type of forgiveness (**fatherly forgiveness**) that we will focus on today.

Our headings are:

God promises forgiveness

You need forgiveness

You must respond to forgiveness

Our goals are: That you would **recognize your daily need for fatherly forgiveness so you can remain close with your Father, so you can get the things you need, so you can do the things you have to do to honor your Savior**.

126 Q. WHAT DOES THE FIFTH REQUEST MEAN?

A. *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors* means, **Because of Christ's blood, do not hold against us, poor sinners that we are, any of the sins we do or the evil that constantly clings to us**. Forgive us just as we are fully determined, **as evidence of your grace in us, to forgive our neighbors**.

God Promises to Forgive

1. You have debts – debts of sins - that you cannot pay.

The word “debts” normally referred to legal bills which had to be paid.

Luke used the word “sin,” (“Forgive us our sin -the general use of the word sin – but it is the same idea) Luke 11:4).

You owe God a **moral or spiritual debt**. Your debts are not dollars. Those would be easy to pay.

And worse, every time you break God's law **you owe him more**.

Those who use translate the word “debt” as “trespass” are following the error of the Anglican Book of Prayer and William Tyndale. “Trespass” means a **“deviation from truth.”** So trespass (**doing what you shouldn't**) is a weak translation—half the meaning. You have 2 debts – doing things you shouldn't do and not doing things you should. So your guilt is more! **Confessing half your sins is to give Christ half the glory** that belongs to him.

2. Because you have debts that you cannot pay, God, out of love, bound himself to forgive both debts you owe...sins of omission (not doing what you should) and sins of commission (doing what you shouldn't-trespases).

3. God forgives you your debts because you are a child of God through the blood atonement of Christ.

Hebrews 9: 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and **without shedding of blood there is no remission**.

God is obligated to forgive you. This may seem like strong language, but it is not. Christ redeemed you by his blood and **God cannot reject you**.

1John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and **just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If God did not forgive you your sins it would contradict his promise to forgive. He keeps his promises. **If God contradicted his promise, then God would contradict his nature.**

4. So you must confidently make this petition for your debts to be removed, regardless of the seriousness of your sins - knowing God will forgive you. (Do you get this?)

Because you are God's child by adoption through Christ, you get God's fatherly forgiveness for all – even serious sins. Count on it! And don't think that someone who committed a terrible sin –worse than you committed - will not be forgiven.

Romans 8:1 **There is therefore now no condemnation** to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

And you also know that God forgives his children without limit.

Hosea 14:2 Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; **Receive us graciously...**

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have **redemption through His blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

No child is afraid to go to his good father and ask for good things, and neither should a child of God be afraid to go to him and plead for forgiveness...something you daily need.

1John 2: 1 **My little children**, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And **if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father**, Jesus Christ the righteous.

What wonderful joy forgiveness brings every day when your heavenly Father forgives you!

You Need Forgiveness

1. When you pray "forgive us our debts," you acknowledge you are a sinner in real need of forgiveness.

You acknowledge that you are guilty of **the sins you inherited** from Adam and **your actual sins** that you commit everyday. You daily add to your condemnation by your sins of thoughts, words, and actions. Those actions include attitudes that are sinful (**Children, beware of this.**), like not correcting a brother in sin, or not setting an example that is worthwhile of being followed.

Romans 3: 10 As it is written: "**There is none righteous, no, not one**; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." 13 "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; 14 "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." 15 "Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 Destruction and misery are in their ways; 17 And the way of peace they have not known."

Psalms 130: 3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?

2. And notice the language of the catechism: You are described not just as sinners, but as "poor sinners."

Consider how David described himself after he failed God and committed adultery and murder. He showed he was spiritually very poor. Get the deep sense of his spiritual poverty.

Psalms 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness; According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, **Blot out my transgressions.** 2 **Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,** And **cleanse me from my sin.** 3 **For I acknowledge my transgressions, And my sin is always before me.** 4 Against You, You only, have I sinned, And done this evil in Your sight—That You may be found just when You speak, And blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

You must respond to forgiveness

1. There is that strange part at the end of this petition: "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" **does not mean you cause God to forgive you** because you forgive others. God does not forgive you based on your good work. **You are forgiven only because Jesus took your sins on the cross. Even if you did forgive others, your forgiveness is never pure and never full.** You might forgive so people would think good things about you. You might forgive and still hold hatred in your heart.

2. Forgive us our sins "as we forgive our debtors" simply means "forgive us our sins just as we forgive our debtors."

We know our debtors need forgiveness when they sin against us...so we know we need forgiveness too. So forgiving others **does not cause salvation** but it **describes our own need for forgiveness.**

3. Now look at a passage some try to misuse to teach that forgiving others causes God to forgive you.

Matthew 6:14 "For **if you forgive men their offence, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** 15 "But if you do not forgive men their offences, **neither will your Father forgive your offences.**

The meaning is the same as before: **Just as you forgive men their sins against you, just so your heavenly Father will also forgive you.** So it is **not causative but descriptive.** (So you can use the words "since." Since you forgive men, knowing they need forgiveness, God will forgive you.)

On the other hand, just as you don't forgive men their offences, which means you are not a Christian, just so God will not forgive you. It is **not causative but descriptive.**

One more illustration showing forgiving others does not cause your forgiveness but describes normal actions. (Keep in mind you were saved by grace alone – not by good works!)

Matthew 18: 21 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 "And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 "But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 "The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 **Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.** 28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 **So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'** 30 "And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 "So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 34 "And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. 35 **So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.**"

Conclusion:

God is obligated to forgive your sins if you are a Christian; God obligated himself to do so. Every Christian knows he needs forgiveness, for his sins are a great debt he owed but could not pay. He sins in thought, words, and actions (including attitudes, failure to set a good example, and ignoring correcting others). He knows no payment, regardless of how rich he may be, can remove his sins—only Christ's blood can. He then forgives others.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus:

1. It is not common to speak of yourself as needy and dependent, but you are. You are trained to think of yourself as independent. **But the Lord commands you to recognize you are needy and need the impediment of sin removed, so you can come near to him, so you can do the work he has called you to do!** Yes, to be close to God you have to remove any impediment, namely, your debt.

2. So you must ask God to cancel all your debts (things you shouldn't do, but you did, and things you should do, but you didn't) because Christ died for your sins of the past, present, and future.

3. Every time you look at your neighbor and remember he has sinned against you, forgive him. This is good for him and this is good for you, as it reminds you of what you have received from him and continue to receive.

Finally, if you aren't a Christian, you owe God! If Jesus hasn't taken away your sins you owe God. If you owe God you will have to pay for it with your life in hell. But there is a way out! Praise God there is! Like we do, call on God to accept Christ's death as full payment for all your debts and bring you close to himself.