

## Hindrances to Faith

Galatians 5:7:18 (The Living Bible)

<sup>7</sup> You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? <sup>8</sup> It certainly isn't God who has done it, for he is the one who has called you to freedom in Christ. <sup>9</sup> But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others.

<sup>10</sup> I am trusting the Lord to bring you back to believing as I do about these things. God will deal with that person, whoever he is, who has been troubling and confusing you.

<sup>11</sup> Some people even say that I myself am preaching that circumcision and Jewish laws are necessary to the plan of salvation. Well, if I preached that, I would be persecuted no more—for that message doesn't offend anyone. The fact that I am still being persecuted proves that I am still preaching salvation through faith in the cross of Christ alone.

<sup>12</sup> I only wish these teachers who want you to cut yourselves by being circumcised would cut themselves off from you and leave you alone!

<sup>13</sup> For, dear brothers, you have been given freedom: not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other. <sup>14</sup> For the whole Law can be summed up in this one command: "Love others as you love yourself." <sup>15</sup> But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always critical and catty, watch out! Beware of ruining each other.

<sup>16</sup> I advise you to obey only the Holy Spirit's instructions. He will tell you where to go and what to do, and then you won't always be doing the wrong things your evil nature wants you to. <sup>17</sup> For we naturally love to do evil things that are just the opposite from the things that the Holy Spirit tells us to do; and the good things we want to do when the Spirit has his way with us are just the opposite of our natural desires. These two forces within us are constantly fighting each other to win control over us, and our wishes are never free from their pressures. <sup>18</sup> When you are guided by the Holy Spirit, you need no longer force yourself to obey Jewish laws.

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## **A. The Christian Life as a Race**

The Christian journey is likened to a race, emphasizing the importance of finishing well rather than just starting. The Galatians were once progressing well, but Paul questions who hindered them from obeying the truth, suggesting a deviation from their initial faithfulness.

## **B. Reflection on Past and Present**

Paul reflects on the Galatians' past blessings and contrasts them with their current failure. He uses the metaphor of a race to describe the Christian life, highlighting endurance over speed and the possibility for all to win the "crown of life." The race has a clear end, purpose, and rules, and it's not about competing with others but running with patience and discipline.

## **C. Former Blessings in Galatia**

The Galatians' initial reception of the Gospel and their treatment of Paul are recounted as former blessings. They had shown great love and obedience, but now Paul challenges their current state, urging them to return to their first works and not rest on past laurels.

## **D. Hindrances to Faith**

Paul identifies false teachings as a significant hindrance to the Galatians' faith. He expresses astonishment at their quick desertion to a different gospel, which he clarifies is not a gospel at all. Paul warns against those perverting the gospel and emphasizes the importance of adhering to the true message they initially received.

## **E. The Hindrance of False Teachers**

False teachers are highlighted as a major obstacle, leading the Galatians away from the grace of Christ. Paul reminds them of the true gospel and the grace and peace it brings, contrasting it with the confusion caused by false teachings.