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A Little Chametz Works Its Way Through the Whole Batch of Dough 5: 7-12

A little chametz works its way through the whole batch of dough DIG: What is Paul's tone here in verses 7-12? Why does this issue move him so strongly? How did he go from being accepted to an enemy? What went wrong? What is chametz (leaven) a symbol of? How does Paul use it in his letter to the Galatians? What were the Judaizers confusing the Galatians about? What were they saying about Paul? How was the fact that Paul was being persecuted disprove their lies? How was the cross a stumbling block to the Judaizers? How is it a stumbling block to people today?

REFLECT: How is your race going? Have you stumbled lately? Have you gotten up, dusted yourself off, and gotten back in the race? How so? Is there any chametz in your life right now? How about in your family? How about in your Messianic synagogue or church? What should you do when you find it? Is there any legalism in your place of worship? How would you recognize it in the first place? What can you do about it?

Employing a metaphor he was fond of, Paul described the Galatian believers' experience as a race. They had begun their race well, but someone had blocked them, cut in on them, causing them to break stride and stumble. After exposing the false dangers that threatened the Galatians, Paul now exposes the wicked character of the men who espoused the doctrines.

Paul was fond of athletic illustrations and used them often in **his** letters. **His readers** were familiar with the Olympic Games as well as other Greek athletic contents that always included footraces. It is important to note that **Paul** never uses the image of the race to tell people how to be saved. **He** is always talking to believers about how to live a godly life. It is important to note that a person had to be a citizen to participate in the Greek games. We became citizens of heaven through **faith** in **Messiah**, then **the Lord** puts us on our course, and we run to win

the prize **(Philippians 3:12-21)**. We do not run to be saved; we **run** because we are already saved and want to fulfill **God's** will in our lives.[131]

You were running a great race (**to see link click Bf – O Foolish Galatians, Who has Cast a Spell on You**)**!** When **Paul** first came to **them**, **they** received **him as an angel from God (Galatians 4:14). They** accepted the Word, trusted **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**, and received **the Ruach ha-Kodesh**. **They** had a deep joy that was evident to all, and were willing to make any sacrifice to accommodate **Paul**. But now, **Paul** was the enemy. What happened? **Who blocked you, cut in on you, from following the truth? This detour doesn't come from the One who calls you.** The doctrine of **faith** plus works does not come from **ADONAI**. **They** had switched from operating in the sphere of **faith** to operating in the sphere of **Torah (5:7-8)**.



Paul then changed **his** figure of speech from athletics to cooking. **A little chametz works its way through the whole batch of dough (5:9)! Chametz** is generally pictured as a symbol of evil in the TaNaKh. During Pesach, for example, no **chametz** was allowed in the house **(Exodus 12:15-19** and **13:7)**. Worshipers were not permitted to mingle **chametz** with sacrifices **(Exodus 34:25)**, though there were some exceptions to this rule. **Yeshua** used **chametz** as a picture of sin when **He** warned against **the chametz of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:6-12).** And **Paul** used **chametz** as a symbol of sin in the church at Corinth **(First Corinthians 5)**. **Chametz** is really a good illustration of sin: It is small at the beginning, but if left alone, it grows and permeates the whole. It always costs you more than you want to pay, and takes you further than

you want to go. The false doctrine of **the Judaizers** (see **Ag – Who Were the Judaizers?**) was introduced to **the Galatian** churches in a small way, but before long, **the chametz** grew and eventually took over. But once deeds are added to the simple gospel of **faith** plus nothing, it is corrupted and there is no end to it.

I am confident in the Lord that you will not think otherwise (5:10a). The Judaizers were saying that **Paul** was a hypocrite because **he** taught circumcision in certain cases. In **Acts 15, Paul** argues against circumcision for **Titus** (see the commentary on **Acts Bs – The Council at Jerusalem**), but in **Acts 16** he circumcised **Timothy** (see the commentary on **Acts Bw – Timothy Joins Paul and Silas**). But **Paul** never taught that **circumcision** was mandatory for salvation.

But the one who is confusing (Greek: *tarasso*, meaning *to disturb the faith of someone*) **you will pay the penalty, whoever he is (5:10b).** Whoever this **one** was, because **he** stood against **ADONAI** and **His** truth, **he**, along with **the** other **Judaizers**, would carry the full weight of **their** own judgment for disturbing **the faith** of **the Galatians**. False teachers often cause many others to **follow their immoral ways, and as a result the way of the truth will be maligned. In their greed they will exploit you with false words.** But **their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction does not slumber . . . the Lord certainly knows how to keep the unrighteous being punished until the Day of Judgment (Second Peter 2:2-3** and **9).**

The one who was **confusing the Galatians,** and **the Judaizers** were saying that **Paul** was still preaching circumcision when it suited **his** purpose. **Paul** answered this charge by calling attention of **the Galatians** to the fact that **he** was still being persecuted, implying that it was because **he** was against legalism. The implication is clear that **Paul** at one time, before **he** was saved on **the road to Damascus** (see the commentary on **Acts Bc – Sha'ul Turns from Murderer to Messiah**), preached the necessity of **circumcision** as a means of acceptance with **God**. There is no evidence that **he** included circumcision in **his** preaching after **he** was saved. It is clear that **he** made a clean break with legalism as a method of salvation before **he** started **his** ministry.

The book of **Acts** records that fact that **he** was continually being persecuted by the Jews because of **his** break with legalism. It was as a Pharisee that **he** had preached **circumcision**. **As for me, brothers and sisters, *if* I still proclaim circumcision** for Jews**, why am I still being persecuted** (see the commentary on **Genesis El – God's Covenant of Circumcision with Abraham**)**?** The word ***if***, is

from the Greek *ei*. It is a contrary-to-fact condition. **Paul** denied that **he** was preaching **circumcision**. The very fact that **Paul** was being persecuted meant that **he** was preaching the simple gospel of salvation equals **faith**-plus-nothing.

The persecution of **Paul** had its basis in the fact that the cross was an offense to the Jews. What made the cross so offensive to them? **If I still proclaim circumcision,** then **the stumbling block of the cross has been eliminated (5:11).** In other words, ***if* circumcision** was preached as one of the prerequisites of salvation, then the cross of **Messiah** would cease to be an offense. The offensiveness of the cross to the Jew lay in the teaching that believers in **Yeshua** are free from the legalism of perfectly obeying the 613 commandments of Moshe. That was the very point of contention when the Great Sanhedrin (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lg – The Great Sanhedrin**) was trying **Stephen**. Their charge was not that **he** was worshiping **the Crucified One**. But that **he** was preaching blasphemy against the Temple, **circumcision**, and legalism **(Acts 6:13-14)**. All of which goes to show that the Jew of the first century had perverted **the Torah**, salvation is, and has always been, by **faith**-plus-nothing.

The cross still offends people **in the world (First John 2:15-16)** today for the same reason. Whether Jew or Gentile, all **mankind** is prone to trust in what they can do for themselves and are offended when told they can do nothing at all to make themselves right before **God**. To preach **the cross** invites persecution because it is the supreme offense to righteousness through deeds. But as **Peter** boldly proclaimed before the Great Sanhedrin: **There is no salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12)!**

Paul was only human, and **he** became so upset at the false teaching of those Judaizers that **he** exploded: **I only wish those who are agitating you would castrate** (Greek: *apokopto*, meaning *bodily mutilation, to cut off*) **themselves (5:12)! Paul** expresses the wish that **the Judaizers** would not stop at cutting off the foreskin, but would go on to cutting the whole thing off for all the good it would do! If cutting off a little bit of skin would improve **your** standing before **God**, why stop there? Why not cut a lot of skin off! Obviously, **he** was using exaggeration to make **his** point that no amount of cutting would result in justification.[132]

From what **Paul** has said so far, a question could legitimately be raised. **What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may abound?** But **Paul** answered **his** own question: **May it never be! How can we who died to sin still**

live in it (Romans 6:1-2)? If I am saved by **grace**, can I do anything I want to? Is that what our freedom **in Messiah** really means? So to make sure that **he** is not misunderstood, **Paul** now deals with this issue of freedom in the next file.