

Galatians 5:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Analysis

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. Paul's most shocking declaration. "Behold" (ide, ἵδε)—look, pay attention! "I Paul say unto you" (egō Paulos legō hymin)—emphatic first-person: I myself, Paul, personally declare. He stakes his apostolic authority on this statement. "If ye be circumcised" (ean peritemnēsthe)—conditional: if you undergo circumcision (as the Judaizers demand for righteousness).

"Christ shall profit you nothing" (Christos hymas ouden ὄphelēsei, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὀφελήσει)—Christ will benefit you not at all. The future tense is emphatic. Circumcision undertaken as necessary for salvation or righteousness makes Christ's work useless, null and void. Why? Because it operates on a different principle: law-works versus faith-grace. To add circumcision to Christ is to say Christ's work was insufficient. It's either Christ alone or Christ plus nothing; any addition is subtraction. "Christ profit you nothing" doesn't mean loss of salvation but that trusting in circumcision means you never truly trusted Christ alone. This is Paul's line in the sand.

Historical Context

This wasn't general prohibition of circumcision—Paul had Timothy circumcised for missionary expedience (Acts 16:3). But Timothy's circumcision wasn't for righteousness, just cultural accommodation. The Galatians contemplated circumcision believing it necessary for full covenant membership and God's

acceptance. Paul declares: do that and Christ is worthless to you. You've chosen law over grace, works over faith. The Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) had settled this, but Judaizers continued agitating. Paul won't compromise: the gospel's exclusive sufficiency isn't negotiable.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. What contemporary equivalents to circumcision do Christians add to faith in Christ, making His work insufficient?
2. How do you recognize when you've shifted from trusting Christ alone to Christ plus something else?
3. Why is any addition to Christ's finished work actually subtraction, making Him profit nothing?

Interlinear Text

Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε
G1492 I Paul say unto you that if ye be circumcised
G1473 G3972 G3004 G5213 G3754 G1437 G4059

Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὀφελήσει
Christ you nothing shall profit
G5547 G5209 G3762 G5623

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 5:6 (References Christ): For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Acts 15:1 (Parallel theme): And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

Hebrews 4:2 (Parallel theme): For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Galatians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org