

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Part Twelve
Practical Section

VI. Paul's Application of the Gospel
Galatians 5:1 - 6:18

A. Exhortation to Stand Firm in Christ (5:1 - 12)

Introduction

In chapters three through five the inspired Apostle delivered to the church an indestructible argument in favor of Justification by Faith. However, he did not end his epistle when he ended his formal argument against wrong doctrine. Right doctrine is not enough. To be orthodox is not necessarily to be in the center of God's will. Right doctrine must produce right living. Of course, the converse is just as true: e.g., right living must have its foundation in right doctrine. The two are inseparable in Christianity. Chapters five and six, therefore, constitute the practical application of the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

In chapter 5, verses 1-12 Paul exhorts the Galatians to apply the doctrine by standing firm in Christ and resisting those who would bring them into bondage.

1. Stand Firm by Exercising the Essential Things

- a. hope (verse 5) - i. e., "the righteousness hoped for by us as a possession that is secured here by faith, but extends into eternity and involves the bliss and glory of the future life." (Schaff)
- (1) it refers to that which is absolutely sure, not something which is only a possibility.
 - (2) to stand in hope is to stand in Christ, for He is our hope. I Timothy 1:1, "Our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, which is our hope."
 - (3) hope produces stedfastness. Hebrews 6:18,19.
- b. faith (verses 5 and 6)
- (1) it refers to belief and confidence in Jesus Christ
 - (2) to stand in faith is to stand in Christ, for He is the object of faith
 - (3) faith produces stedfastness - Hebrews 11, the Faith Hall of Fame, gives many examples of men and women who stood firm when the opposition was great.
- c. love (verse 6)
- (1) it refers to the essential element in our relationship to God and our fellow man. Scripture defines love by listing its attributes in I Corinthians 13.
 - (2) to stand in love is to stand in Christ, for Christ is love. I John 4:10,16.
 - (3) love produces stedfastness. I John 4:7-21.

Characteristics
of those
who are in
the state
of Grace

2. Stand Firm by Guarding Against Doctrinal Error

The following doctrinal errors were pointed out to the Galatians by the Apostle. Many of these errors are prevalent today in principle:

- a. to participate in the rite of circumcision in the way prescribed by the Judaizers would destroy their liberty in Christ. (verses 2-4)
- (1) Circumcision was instituted by God in Genesis 17:11-14 as a sign and seal of the Covenant made with Abraham. It was required of every Jew and also of every Gentile who wished to enter into the covenant community. Circumcision had to do with the promise that in Abraham's seed all nation's would be blessed. When the promise was fulfilled in Christ there was no further significance in the rite.

However, this rite had become so important a part of of Judaism that the Jews that received Christ had difficulty in giving it up. To be uncircumcised was equal to being heathen as far as the Jew was concerned. The Judaizers did not regard circumcision as merely a sign of the covenant which was fulfilled in Christ; they regarded it as part of keeping the Law and a necessary step toward salvation. To take part in the rite, then, was to be initiated into a