

Stand Fast in Liberty

Galatians 5:1-6

Introduction: straightforward and direct, a much needed appeal is given to backsliding churches and their people to stand fast in the liberty of Christ.

1. (5:1) Stand fast because Christ has freed the believer. Note two points.

1. When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he is freed from the law and its enslaving power.

He no longer has to worry if he is good enough or if he has done enough good works or kept enough laws to be acceptable to God. Why? Because Christ has fulfilled the law for him.

There was also the problem of the penalty of the law; once the law had been broken, the penalty had been enacted; it had to be paid. This is the glorious message of the cross and what the death of Jesus Christ is all about.

Jesus Christ not only secured the ideal righteousness for us, He took the penalty for our trespassing upon Himself and bore it. Jesus Christ bore our judgment and punishment for having broken the law which was death.

Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has set us free; we do stand in liberty free from the bondage of sin and death wrought by the law, but only if we believe it.

The point is this: Christ has freed the believer from the bondage of the law. Therefore, we must stand fast in the liberty He has provided for us.

2. The Galatians were about to become entangled again with the yoke of bondage. That is, they accepted Jesus Christ as the Son of God, but they did not accept the message of salvation by grace (the righteousness and death of Jesus Christ).

They taught that Jesus Christ had not come to give us a new approach to God; He came to add new teachings to the law. Therefore, a person was still to approach God...

- by undergoing the basic ritual of Jewish religion (circumcision, baptism, church membership, etc.).
- by committing himself to the law.
- by observing all the rituals and ceremonies of Jewish religion.

All of this of course sounds familiar to every generation, for if we simply omit the word Jewish, the three stipulations are seen to be present in so many teachings, religions, and churches of society.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh (**Romans 8:2-3**).

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (**Galatians 3:13**).

2. (5:2-4) Stand fast because law is not God's way for man to be justified.

Three significant warnings are strongly issued.

1. If a person is ritualized, Christ shall profit him nothing. Ritualized means a person is depending upon some religious thing to make him acceptable to God. In the case of the Galatians, it was the ritual of circumcision; but it can apply to anything:

ritual,
ceremony,
works,
law,
goodness,
church membership,
baptism,
last rites,
prayer,
religious services,
ministry,
religion itself.

If a person approaches God and tries to secure God's acceptance by any means other than Christ, then Christ shall profit him nothing.

2. If a person is ritualized, he has to do the whole law. Think for a moment: if a person trusts a ritual to save him, really depends upon a ritual to make him acceptable to God, then he had better keep the whole law.

In a summary statement: if a person approaches God by ritual, any ritual, he assumes responsibility for doing the whole law.

3. If a person seeks to be justified by law, Christ can have no effect upon him, he is fallen from grace. What does this mean?

Remember: Paul is warning the Galatian believers by issuing a strong warning.

False teachers were saying this: a person could be saved only by obeying the law and by doing as much good as possible. They were teaching that the righteousness and death of Jesus Christ was not what it took to approach God and to receive eternal life.

They said more than Christ was needed: one's own righteousness and goodness, works and effort, were also needed.

Keep this in mind: we can readily see why Paul issued such a severe warning to the Galatian believers. They must not follow the false teachers, must not turn away from Christ and become apostates.

The point is this: not only the Galatians, but we also, must heed the warning lest we begin to deny Christ. To deny Christ, His righteousness and death, is bound to lead to the doom of the apostate.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin (**Romans 3:20**).

3. (5:5-6) Stand fast because the hope of righteousness is by faith.

The hope of the believer is for righteousness. Hope does not mean the uncertainty of worldly hope, that the believer might, but then again he might not secure righteousness before God.

The believer's hope is in Jesus Christ, and it is as assured as God exists.

Hope in the Bible means the focus, the concentration, the longing, the craving, the desire for righteousness and the privilege of being redeemed and spending eternity with God. Note the source of such an assurance and secured hope.

1. The hope for righteousness comes through the Spirit of God. It is the presence of the Spirit who dwells within the believer that stirs the hope. The Holy Spirit stirs hope and gives absolute assurance that God will take His faith and count it for righteousness.
2. The hope for righteousness comes through Jesus Christ alone, not by a ritual (circumcision, law) nor by the lack of a ritual. Note exactly what this is saying:

neither undergoing a ritual (circumcision) nor being without a ritual brings hope.
neither having and keeping the law nor being without law brings hope.
neither working for righteousness nor not working for righteousness brings hope.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, can provide the sure hope of righteousness within a person except Jesus Christ: His righteousness and His death alone can offer hope to man.

3. The hope for righteousness comes by faith wrought by love. It was God's love that sent His Son to secure our righteousness to die for us. When a person really sees this, it breaks him; and he bows and surrenders his own love, faith, life, and loyalty to Christ. The love of God stirs us to love Him and to believe Him. We love Him because He has loved us.

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?
(Romans 8:24).

Read the 16th Psalm!