

Galatians 5:5-6

For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.

- Paul, the Apostle

Introduction

Paul has leveled very strong arguments against the error of legalism over and over through the book of Galatians – repeating the problem again in verses 1-4. Verse 3 points out that it is through the whole Law that a person who lives under the Law lives and so now starting in verse 5 he tackles the means by which the believer lives: by the direction of the Holy Spirit, walking in faith, keeping our minds on things above.

Exposition

Galatians 5:5

Paul begins verse 5 by reciting something that he has already told us before in Galatians: we are to be led by the Holy Spirit (3:2,3,5, 14. Further: 5:16,18,25; 6:8). Furthermore he continues to emphasize the nature of our conditional life: living by faith (mentioned no less than 20 times in Galatians). By the Spirit we are waiting for the hope of righteousness. The concept of waiting is something Paul doesn't mention elsewhere in Galatians but the waiting is entirely focused on the return of the Lord and our return with Him as full sons of God (Romans 8:19, 23; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 9:28). We wait with expectation or hope for Christ's righteousness, which will also be the revelation of our own righteousness (in Him). Each time righteousness is mentioned in Galatians (2:21, 3:6, 3:21, and here in 5:5) it is only because of God's grace through faith.

Questions for Discussion

What are we waiting for?

How are we waiting for it?

What is the difference between hope and faith?

Galatians 5:6

"In Christ" is probably one of the least understood phrases in all of the New Testament in the modern church. The believers' identification, being, and history is bound to Christ and who Christ is. With that in mind Paul attacks the glaring hole of works through circumcision (or uncircumcision). The Jews that Paul was battling for the minds of the Galatians were obsessed with the righteousness that they thought the legalism brought. They did not understand anything of Christ so their

leading the Galatians astray would have been through the argument of the power of tradition, compliance and their descent from Abraham. Paul uses two Greek words in this sentence that are related to strength or power¹ to communicate the effectiveness that the two concepts of works and grace have. As it turns out Paul is implying that circumcision is unable to render any certainty (the gentiles could be circumcised for reasons other than compliance with the Mosaic commands). Instead Paul moves onto something that was not earthly and counterfeitable: faith working through God's benevolent love.

Questions for Discussion

What areas of the life of the believer does "In Christ" impact?

What areas does circumcision impact? Law?

What areas does faith impact?

What does it mean to have an able love impacting your life?

At what time was circumcision usually performed? How did that impact the life of the Jew in regards to faith?

Paul begins verse 6 with the context of "In Christ" and therefore it was a context that the Judaizers would not been able to teach the Galatians about. Next week we'll be looking at the nature of truth, it's impact on the life of the believer and how being in Christ compels us to look at the world around us with in the light of faith and love and truth.

¹ ἰσχύω (ischyō) and ἐνεργέω (energeō) which are generally synonyms