

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Part Fourteen Practical Section

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

- A. Exhortation to Stand Firm in Christ (5:1-12)
- B. Exhortation to Love One Another (5:13-15)
- C. Exhortation to Walk in the Spirit (5:16-26)

Introduction

The source of the outward conflict among the Christians in the churches of Galatia was the struggle which raged in the heart of all those involved. The struggle was between the carnal nature and the Holy Spirit. This conflict is a major theme in the Apostle Paul's epistles. Paul majored on this theme because it is a fundamental factor in every Christian's life. No Christian has ever been exempted from participation in this struggle. Every defeat for the Christian Church through the ages can be traced to lost battles in individual hearts. Where the flesh prevailed over the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Church suffered defeat. In our day victory will not be sustained by merely having an orthodox creed, although this is certainly important. Victory will only come in proportion to the degree of surrender there is in the hearts of individual Christians to the Holy Spirit.

1. Negatively : Do Not Fulfill the Lusts of the Flesh.

a. the meaning of "the lusts of the flesh"

- (1) "flesh" does not refer to the physical part of man. It refers to corrupted nature of man. The body is not evil in itself. (This was an error perpetrated by heretics in the early centuries of the Christian Church, the Gnostics and Manicheans.) Man's intellect, will and emotions, along with his body, were totally depraved by the fall. ("Totally" means every part was effected.) Man became self-centered rather than God-centered. To walk in the flesh, then, is to walk according to the dictates of a corrupted nature. "Lust" refers to the desired or appetites of the corrupted nature.

b. the manifestation of the "lusts of the flesh"

- (1) Paul lists what he designated the "works of the flesh." When the corrupted desires are satisfied, this is the result. (c.f. James 1:14,15) Compare this list with those given in Colossians 3:5-9 and II Corinthians 12:20,21. The list can be divided into four groups. The first and last items in the list are not included in the best manuscripts and will not be included in this grouping.

(a) group one - sensual sins

- fornication - includes all illicit sexual relations
This was a grave problem for the early Church because such behaviour was not only sanctioned by the non-Christian religions of the day, but it was a part of worship in many cases.
- uncleanness - this would include evil thoughts, off-color stories, and all that would lead up to fornication.
- lasciviousness - this refers to living a shameful life without restraint or morals

Note: In our day a very dangerous trend has developed which is called "the New Morality." This so-called moral revolution is simply a rejection of the Word of God. Its advocates say that we must change our standards to conform to contemporary behaviour.