

“Contingent Christianity”

Intro: If you are a person that likes conflict, you will enjoy today. As Paul continues to write to the church at Galatia, we are about to see one of the strongest confrontations ever recorded in scripture. Apparently, some of the Pharisees in Judea who had trusted in Christ had retained their zeal for keeping the law of Moses. These men were traveling around from church to church... churches Paul had founded... and they were teaching that after believing in Christ, you had to be circumcised and keep the OT rules in order to truly be saved. So, in essence, your salvation (or right standing before God) was contingent on something you needed to do, not on God alone. In order for a Gentile to truly be a Christian, it was contingent on you becoming Jewish in lifestyle and living by the OT code. The gift of salvation couldn't truly come until you were circumcised.

FCF: Before we look down on the Galatian Christians, we need to recognize our own propensity to do this same thing. So much of our world operates on contingencies. So much of life is conditional or dependent on something else. You keeping your job is contingent on you showing up to work on time; keeping good credit is contingent on making your monthly payments; selling your house is contingent on the other people selling their house; staying on the baseball team is contingent on you making good grades. We constantly place contingencies on our kids... “If you don't clean your room, you're grounded! If you don't eat your broccoli and brussel sprouts, you don't get to have any ice cream!”

Since we are constantly surrounded by conditions, we would be extremely naive to think that we're not prone to allowing contingencies to creep into our life with Christ. As Brian said preached a few weeks ago... **[PETER]** So, I pray today that your heart would truly be open to the possibility that you are believing something about the gospel that may not be true. Here is the BIG question I want you to wrestle with: **Are there any contingencies in your version of Christianity?**

Vs. 1 (READ)

If we were to translate this text into our language today and receive it the way Paul said it to the Galatian Church, it would sound something like this, *“Oh you dear idiots of Galatia, surely you cannot be so stupid! Who has cast a spell over you?!?”* This word ‘bewitched’ is the only time in all of the NT this word is used. It can also be translated as the evil eye. During this time around Judea, there were sorcerers who practiced black magic, and it was said that if you were to look in their eye, you could be put under a spell. This was a real thing, and parents constantly told their kids “Don’t look in the sorcerer’s eye, or you’ll be put under a spell!” So Paul is tapping into the language of the culture and he’s saying to the church of Galatia, *“You idiots, who put you under a spell? Who has hyptonized you from seeing the truth?”* Why would Paul do this? Why would he use such strong language to a group of people he loves?

The seriousness of the language shows us the danger of the live the Galatians are believing [**SCISSORS / HAND GUN**]. Paul is freaking out here on the Galatian Church, but he’s doing it in love. He’s using strong language to try and wake them up! If you are under a spell in a Disney movie, you might get kissed from a prince. In real life, you get a bucket of water dumped on your head and if that doesn’t work... a face punch!

The issue wasn’t so much that the Galatians weren’t smart, but they weren’t using their brains. The 2nd part of vs 1 highlights this. The words “publicly portrayed” is the idea of a sign or a billboard being placarded over a city. Paul is wondering how they missed the message of the gospel he preached, because he certainly made it clear. *“It’s not that you are dumb, you’re just not using your brain to think about what I’ve said!”*

Vs 2 (READ)

As Paul continues, he uses another literary strategy to wake the Galatians up from their spell and get their attention. Like a teacher in a classroom of unresponsive students, he begins to unleash a torrent of rhetorical

questions. What is a rhetorical question? (Some of you are wondering if that was a rhetorical question :-). It's a question designed to make a point, and the answer is obvious **(READ VS 2 AGAIN)** How did your Christian life begin? Did it begin b/c you observed the law, or did it begin because you trusted in Christ alone? Did you receive the sign of circumcision... did you go under the knife in the operating room, receive a cut, and then miraculously you gained the Holy Spirit? Or were you saved by grace? Did you have to score points with God, like frequent flyer miles, earning enough to win your free trip to heaven? Or was it because you realized you were helpless, so you fell on the feet of Jesus? Wasn't it the latter?

Vs 3 (READ)

Foolish Galatians, have you gone crazy? You came to Christ with childlike faith, believing there was no amount of law keeping that would tip the scales of God's favor. You were saved through your ears by hearing the gospel... not by your hands doing good works. Having begun this way, will you now make yourself perfect by the flesh?

Paul is driving home his point from beginning to end... that the Christian life is dependent upon God. Just as he told the Philippians in Phil. 1:6, *"that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion"*. The Galatians were fooled into believing they were advancing in their spiritual life, but in actuality they were lapsing back to a life of the flesh. They were treating the cross like it was a diving board... like it was the entry point of salvation. But the gospel isn't just the diving board... it's the pool we swim in. It's both the means of justification and way to sanctification. I love how the worship book puts it, "The way you obtain your spiritual life is the way you maintain your spiritual life". The cross is the beginning, middle, and end of Christianity, with no other contingencies or conditions!

Vs 4 (READ)

Apparently there was some persecution when the Galatians came to faith. Paul says, *"It was difficult when you began to follow Jesus. Some of your*

friends were angry and slandered you. Some of your family disowned you. Was all of that in vain if you are now returning to your old legalistic ways?"

Vs 5 (READ)

Again, did God give you his spirit by works of the law? Does he promise to do miracles by your rule keeping or by hearing with faith? Did he say if you have circumcision you can move mountains? Or is it by having faith as small as a mustard seed? Isn't this from where miracles come?

Trans: I think it would be impossible for us to overestimate the importance of the verses we've just read. Anywhere you go in the world, you'll find that the mass of humanity is asking this one question: How do I make myself right before God? What is salvation contingent upon? Martin Luther once said, "Justification by faith is the most principal and special article of the Christian life." Why? Because without it, Christianity is just another religion... like Islam or Hinduism... an endless effort to get right with God through self-discipline and rituals. Not only is this impossible, but it devalues the love God has given to us in Christ. **[HEATHER/DEBT]**

How foolish! How insulting! How idiotic! Rightly, she would say, "I didn't marry you expecting you would pay me back. It was a gift, because I love you, and I chose you as my husband. My love wasn't contingent on you earning anything... doing enough good deeds to try and pay me back."

Argumentation:

Forgiveness is a gift that Jesus has paid for. For us to act as though salvation is contingent upon us is to try and add something to the cross. **[Col. 2:13-14]** Jesus paid the debt (past, present and future), and he did this not by nailing a list of our sins to the cross, but by nailing himself and taking our punishment. But we are so quick to forget this... **[BILLBOARD]** What are the contingencies you've held in your view of Christianity? When we view our Christianity as a list of rules we must follow, we treat our relationship with God a lot like climbing a ladder...

After conversion - read the bible, pray and go to church. Work hard at my job and share Jesus with my lost co-workers. Attend a small group. Nazarene - don't dance, can't go to movies. Baptist - don't drink alcohol. Homeschool my kids, or send them like evangelists to public school. Doing foster care, going on mission trips. I'm getting closer to God! **[PRIDE]**

On the flip side - I yell at my kids, look at porn, not reading my bible, my prayer life is suffering. **[DISSAPPOINTMENT]** We feel close to God when we do enough spiritual things, and we're frustrated when we don't. This is broken religion, and it's exactly the type of slavery the Judaizers were leading the Galatian Church to. In order to be accepted by God, you've got to do enough good things.

Vs 6 (READ)

In vs 6, Paul drops the illustration to end all arguments. If you watched the Super Bowl, this is like Lady Gaga's mic drop at the end of the half time show. The Judaizers were point to Moses as their example of works, so Paul beats them at their own game and goes all the way back to Abraham. In Genesis 15, Abraham is an OLD man. God calls him out of his tent and tells him to look up at the sky. He ask, "*Are you able to count the stars? So shall your offspring be.*" And vs 6 says, "*And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*"

Does Abraham have this righteousness given b/c he's circumcised? No, its not till 14 years later, in Genesis 17 when Abraham is circumcised. Was it because he obeyed the law of Moses? No, the law wasn't given for another 430 years! Oh foolish Galatians, Abraham is the daddy of ALL Christianity! And even he wasn't justified by his rule keeping. He had to humbly depend on God in faith. This is how God has always worked!

Brothers and sisters, salvation is not contingent upon you. It is fully and completely... utterly dependent upon God and his grace!

Application:

1. When you are out of step with the gospel, don't expect for your pastors, small group leaders, or Godly Christian friends to coddle you. There will come a time in our life when you look to Jesus + something else, and someone in love may call you a fool (if your lucky). Hopefully in our text you've seen this is a good thing, because trusting in broken religion is a death sentence. And just like the Galatians, you probably won't see it. So whether it's a strong rebuke or a throat punch, receive it and repent. Surround yourself with people who love you enough to do this.
2. If you are the type of person that places a lot of conditions on people, it will likely reveal how much you are not believing the gospel yourself. If you can only hang with people that are of a certain theological bent; or only exercise and eat organic; or hold to a certain political view; or have the same color of skin... Jesus loves us without contingencies. When we are abiding in Christ and living in light of the gospel, we will love all types of people too.
3. If you have a persistent, intense feeling that you are not saved... Yes, you believe Jesus died for you, but you feel like your life isn't adding up. You constantly wonder if god loves you, and you compare yourself to other Christians... it's possible that you've bought into the lie of the judaizers. I want to encourage you to do the hard work of heart evaluation... to try and identify what you are adding to the finished work of Christ, and then repent of it. Confidence in your faith will come as you grow deeper in the gospel. Read gospel saturated books, sing gospel saturated songs, listen to gospel rich messages like the pastors here preach, and preach yourself the gospel everyday... till you see yourself warmly and loving gripped in the unconditional, loving arms of Christ.

