

5/17/98

The Galatians Played The Fools
Galatians 3:1-9

Paul having dealt with the personal section of his letter, he now moves on to the doctrinal section of the Epistle in Chapter three.

Here he rebukes the Galatians, showing their folly of having believed the lies of those who had perverted the gospel of Christ and he does this by arguing from their own faith experience.

Paul rebuked the Galatians for three things.

- I. Paul rebuked them because they had believed the gospel. vs. 1
- II. Paul rebuked them because they had received the Holy Spirit. vs. 2-5
- III. Paul rebuked them because they had contradicted Scripture. vs. 6-9

I. Paul rebuked them because they had believed the gospel. vs. 1

- A. The rebuke was due to the fact that the Galatians had not exercise discernment of heart or mind. vs. 1a
 - 1. The severity of his expression is clear, "O Foolish Galatians!"
 - a. You stupid Galatians (N. Eng. Bible).

- b. O you dear idiots of Galatia (J.B. Phillips).
- 2. The apostle Paul calls them foolish "anoetos" referring to one who can think but fails to do so.
 - * A senseless, unthinkable attitude of mind and heart void of the practical exercise of the power of perception.
 - a. The word was used by Jesus for the men on the Road to Emmaus, "O fools and slow of heart to believe". Luke 24:25
 - b. Paul is not disobeying Jesus by calling them foolish, the word Jesus used means worthless "Raca". Matt. 5:22
 - c. Paul is not being derogatory to the racial group.
 - * They had set aside the grace of God saying Jesus died needlessly! 2:21
- 3. The motive behind Paul's words is his love for them.
 - a. He was chastising his children as a loving father full of emotion. 4:11, 15, 19-20, Heb. 12:5-11
 - b. He could see the deception clearly as a perversion of the gospel. 1:7
- B. The outcome of the bewitchment was that they should not obey the truth of the gospel. vs. 1b

1. The word bewitched “baskaino” was used of a popular superstition of the evil eye to fascinate or spell bound you through the evil eye.
* This is the only time it appears in the New Testament.
2. The apostle Paul asked them who has bewitched you?
 - a. They were Judaizers who had perverted the gospel of Christ. 1:7
 - b. They were those who were trusting in works of the law to be justified before God. 2:16
 - c. They were those who were desired to bring the Gentiles under the ceremonial law. 4:9-11
 - d. They were leaven among the wheat. 5:7-9
 - e. They were those who would be held responsible for their deceptiveness. 8:10
 - f. They were those who imposed circumcision in order to not be persecuted. 6:12
* Paul says they should not stop just with circumcision but continue to castration! 5:12

C. The reason for the rebuke was that Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed before their eyes as crucified. vs. 1c

1. The word portrayed “prographo” is used of a public proclamation like a placard in public.
2. The word is used also of a father who would post a proclamation that he would no longer be responsible for his Son's debts.
3. The same word is used in Romans, “Whatever things were written..”. Rom. 15:4
4. The clear visual understanding, was that of Jesus Christ having been crucified “estauromenos” which is in the perfect participle, communicating the idea of a past fact with lasting affects.
 - 1) The context focusing on the efficiency of the sacrifice.
 - 2) This is the heart of the gospel and what distinguish Jews from Christians. 2:20, 3:1, 5:24, 6:14

Illustration

The story has been told of a woman who had acquired wealth and social prominence and decided to have a book written about her genealogy. The well-known author she engaged for the assignment discovered that one of her grandfathers was a murderer who had been electrocuted in Sing Sing. When he said this would have to be included in the book, the woman

pleaded that he find a way of saying it that would hide the truth.

When the book appeared, the incident read as follows: "one of her grandfathers occupied the chair of applied electricity in one of America's best-known institutions. He was very much attached to His position and literally died in the harness."

* How easy it is to twist the truth into a believable lie!

(Illus. for Bible Preaching, p. 100)

Application

1. We are to be loving in confront those who have believed the gospel but have failed to exercise their discernment and even rebuke them if need be. I Tim. 1:4, 2 Tim. 4:2-5, Heb. 5:12-14

2. A pastor's care can be so misunderstood at times due to his directness regarding deception. 2 Cor. 12:14-19, 2 Tim. 2:15-18, Tit. 3:10-11

* Faithful are the wounds... Prov. 27:6

3. No one is amuned to fascination.

a. Understand that no one can cast a spell on a Christian.

b. Understand that there are many entrapments in the Christian life, be it men, women, self-love, money, pride, doctrinal error, humanistic psychology, etc.

* Let him... I Cor. 10:12

4. The greater accountability and responsibility is based on the fact that we have received the greater light, Jesus Christ.

* To those that much is give much is required! Lk. 12:48

Paul rebuked them because they had believed the gospel!

II. Paul rebuked them because they had received the Holy Spirit. vs. 2-4

A. Paul's first question is whether they had received the Holy Spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? vs. 2

1. The law was never given to the Gentiles unless they proselytized.
2. The law promised no one nor every believer the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for it was given to chosen individuals for service, such as Moses, Aholiab, Joshua, Daniel, etc.
3. Their experience of faith gave witness to the hearing of faith, through the gospel, resulting in the illumination by the Holy Spirit to understand the gospel message.
4. Their experience of faith was superior to the old economy. 2 Cor. 3:7-17, Gal. 3:24-25

- B.** Paul's second question is, if faith is superior to law, are you so foolish, lacking in the power of perception, that having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect in the flesh? vs. 3
1. The contrast is obvious.
 - a. They began by hearing the gospel but were now attempting to end with a perversion of the gospel.
 - b. They had begun in the Spirit by faith in Christ and now were continuing trusting works.
 - b. They were believing they could perfect in the flesh, based on natural abilities of man, what they had begun in the Spirit of God.
 2. The question is rhetorical, having an obvious answer, NO!
 - a. One cannot finish in the flesh what the Spirit has begun!
 - b. The word perfect "epitele" means maturity, the intended goal, completion.
- C.** Paul's third question is have you suffered so many things in vain, if indeed they were in vain? vs. 4
1. The word Suffered "pascho" is translated by some to mean experience but of the 42 times it is found in the New Testament it is translated suffer, (ing)

- (ed), in the negative, to be vexed, except for one, translated "passion" for the Lord after the resurrection. Acts 1:3
2. The apostle Paul had in fact told those he preached to in his first missionary journey, the very region of Galatia, that they must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation. Acts 14:2, 5-6, 19, 22
- D.** Paul's fourth question is from a concluding statement, the God Who supplied the Holy Spirit to them and equally worked miracles among them, did He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? vs. 5
1. Paul returns to his original question of vs. 2
 2. The answer is obvious by the hearing of faith!
 - a. The word supplies "epichoregeo" appears five times in the New Testament and means, to supply abundantly or bountifully.
 - a. The word is in the present participle, something ongoing in the present.
 - b. The root word "choregia" means a generous expense at one's own cost used of one who paid the training and performance of a chorus.

- c. The term also is found in marriage documents for the husband's support for the wife.
- 3. Paul is not just limiting the working of these miracles to external events that defy natural laws but to those in their own personal lives.
 - a. He is specific “among you”, in the midst of the body life and in their own personal lives.
 - b. They had received the Holy Spirit entering the world of the supernatural, kingdom of God.
 - 1) The receiving of the Holy Spirit by every believe was a distinct economy from that of the Jewish economy.
 - 2) They had experienced the regenerating and illuminating work of the Holy Spirit as well as miraculous intervention for their lives.
 - c. Paul said earlier that the gospel worked effective in him toward the Gentile, apart from the law. 2:8

Illustration

Telephone pole climbing is an art. In order to climb, one must have a belt that goes around the pole and wear spiked shoes. The secret is to lean back and depend on the belt so the spikes of the

shoes can dig into the pole. Depending on the belt it is hard to learn; often a beginner slides down the splintery pole because he won't depend on his equipment. It only takes a few such experiences to convince the beginner that it is better to depend on the belt.

* Such is the Christian life of faith, God wants us to climb by depending and leaning on Him and the Holy Spirit He has given us. When ever we get a handful of splinters, we should recognize that we are not leaning on his strength for loving protection.

(Illus. for Bible Preaching, p. 53)

Application

1. Every believer receives the Holy Spirit when receiving Christ and is to be filled daily. Jn. 14:16-18, 16:7, 14, Acts 2:4, 8:17, 10:45, Rom. 8:9, 14-16, Eph. 1:13, 5:18

2. Every believer becomes a Christian by the Holy Spirit and must finish in the Spirit. Phil. 1:6, Heb. 12:2-3

3. Every believer needs to recognize that only the Holy Spirit can accomplish the new life, not rituals or formality. Gal. 5:17-21, 22-25

* Jesus said, The spirit is indeed willing but the flesh is weak or impotent. Matt. 26:41

4. Every believer is to grow, develop and mature by the word to enhance the body life through His Spirit. Eph. 4:11-16, 2 Pet. 1:3-11.

* But it doesn't happen automatically but with all diligence!

5. God's desire is to do miraculous works in our lives that can only come about as we walk in the Spirit. Eph. 3:16-21, 4:20-24, 30-32

6. Some of you having experienced the miracles that God has done in your lives are now turning away to the former things that held you in bondage, living in your own power. Gal. 4:8-9, 2:20

7. Some of you are walking by human reason and understanding, thinking that you have all things figured out and in control, without recognizing that you are sowing to the flesh. Gal. 6:7-9, Rom. 13:11-14

- a. Pornography, dishonesty in business, flirting with your passions, unequally yoked, etc.
- b. Remember that the children of Israel experienced miracle after miracle yet they constantly turned from God desiring to return to Egypt, remembering the leaks and onions but forgetting the whip and burden.

Paul rebuked them because they had received the Holy Spirit!

III. Paul rebuked them because they had contradicted Scripture. vs. 6-9

- A. Abraham was the model of saving faith, not works of the law. 3:6-7

* Paul the apostle has shown the Galatians that their three-fold faith experience of; believing the gospel, receiving the Holy Spirit and experiencing miraculous intervention, was due to the hearing of faith and not the works of the law. 3:1-5.

1. Abraham believed God by faith as they had. vs. 6a

* “Just as Abraham believed God”.

a. Abraham was trying to work out how God might logically fulfill His promise of an heir, all he had was Eliezer his servant. Gen. 15:1-3 LXX

b. God told Abraham, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come of your own body shall be your descendants. Gen. 15:4

c. Then God brought him outside and asked him to count the stars for so his descendants would be. And he believed the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Gen. 15:5-6

1) He believed contrary to hope..not wavering at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. Rom. 4:17-22

2) Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen. Heb. 11:1

2. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness. vs. 6b
 - a. Not personal righteousness but imputed righteousness.
 - b. The word accounted "logizomai" is used in papyri as a business term, to calculate, count up or put to one's account. Rom. 4:1-4
 - c. This occurred not when he was circumcised but uncircumcised. Rom. 4:10-11
 - d. Paul uses Abraham throughout the doctrinal section to illustrate and prove justification by faith apart from the works of the law which came 430 years after. 3:6, 8-9, 14, 16, 18, 29, 4:22
 3. Abraham's sons are those who came by the hearing of faith only, this is the clear conclusion. vs. 7
 - a. Not by physical descendance.
 - b. Not by the ritual of circumcision.
 - c. Not by the works of the law.
 - d. Nothing but by faith in Jesus Christ. 2:16, 3:26
 - * Jesus said to the Jews, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham." Jn. 8:39
- B.** Abraham was the man through whom salvation would come to the Gentiles. 3:8-9

1. The Scriptures foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles from the beginning. vs. 8a
 - a. The Scripture is personified as a person as wisdom in the Proverbs.
 - 1) The Scriptures are the revelation of God, His will, His purposes and His plans for man's redemption.
 - 2) The Scriptures are God breathed, innearant and infalible. 2Tim. 3:16-17, 2Pet. 1:20-21
 - 3) The Scriptures are all that God will ever hold us responsible for!
 - b. The Jews did not think the Gentiles could be saved and called them dogs unless they proselytized.
 - 1) Some believe that God put plan #2 into effect when the Jews rejected Christ.
 - 2) But God had the Gentiles in mind all along. Gen. 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14
2. God knew that the Gentiles would be justified by faith in the One who would come through the seed of Abraham so God preached the gospel to Abraham. vs. 8b-d
 - a. Paul by the Holy Spirit interprets the text in Genesis to mean blessing of justification, not mere material blessing or anything else, "In you all

the nations shall be blessed". Gen. 12:3

- b.** Where and how did God preach to Abraham?

* Jesus said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day and saw it and was glad".
Jn. 8:56

- a.** It could of been when Melchizedek met Abraham returned from the recovery of those taken captive from Sodom and Gomorra. Gen. 14:18-24

- b.** It could of been when Abraham offered up his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. Gen. 22:1-14

* Justification is the act of God removing the sinner's guilt and penalty of sin demanded by God's wrath by the death of Christ and making him righteous before God.
Rom. 5:1

- 3.** Paul declares that those who are of faith are well spoken of with believing Abraham. vs. 9

- a.** The word blessed "eulogeo" gives us our word eulogy, to speak well of someone.
- b.** Those who are of faith refers to those who have believed the revelation of God concerning faith in the work of

His Son and received it as promise.
3:16

- c.** Abraham was called a father of many nations. Gen. 17:5, Rom. 4:17

- d.** Abraham is called a friend of God.
2Chron. 20:7, Is. 41:8, Ja. 2:23

* Righteousness is the state of being in right standing with God, imputed to the believer in the person of Christ. Phil. 3:9

Illustration

A Peanuts cartoon pictured Lucy and Linus looking out the window at a steady downpour of rain. "Boy," said Lucy, "look at it rain. What if it floods the whole world?"

"It will never do that," Linus replied confidently. "In the ninth chapter of Genesis, God promised Noah that would never happen again, and the sign of the promise is the rainbow."

"You've taken a great load off my mind," said Lucy with a relieved smile.

"Sound theology," prontificated Linus, "has a way of doing that!" (Bib. Ills:113)

Application

1. Our faith in God must be a Scriptural faith to be Biblical.

* Experience and profession must always be verified and subordinate to the authority of scripture as the Bereans. Acts 17:11

2. Our faith in God's Word is pleasing to Him.

Heb. 11:6, 9, 11, 17-19

3. Only those who are of faith “in Christ Jesus” are sons and daughters of Abraham. 1:22, 2:4, 17,

3:26, 5:6, 10

* Jn. 1:12, I Jn. 3:1-2

4. God rejects one's own righteousness. Rom. 10:1-4, 11:8-12, 20-22

5. There is no class or race distinction with God.

Gal. 3:28-29

Paul rebukes them because they had contradicted Scripture!

Conclusion

Lets allow Paul’s three-fold rebuke to the Galatians to warn us and instuct us!

- I.** Have you believed the gospel message and perhaps now are in the process of being bewitched, fascinated by something in the world or a perversion of the Gospel?
- II.** Have you come to the place that you trust in your flesh or human ability to perfect that which God has begun and alone can perfect through His Spirit?
- III.** Have you been contradicting the Scriptures about your sonship to God by trusting your own works rather than faith in the work of Christ?