

2/22/26

The Galatians Played The Fools
Gal. 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.

* Now, 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.

So Paul rebuked the Galatians for three things. Gal. 3:1-9

- 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 Galatians had not exercised spiritual discernment., “O Foolish Galatians!” vs. 1a
 - 1. The apostle Paul confronts them in a very strong and severe manner.
 - a. The term is not a derogatory expression about the Galatians.

- 1) The word foolish “anoetos”, means senseless or not thinking.
 - 2) The implication is an attitude of mind and heart failing to exercise their power of perception, having to do with the potential, not intellect.
 - 3) The word is used by Jesus of the two men on the road to Emmaus, “O fools and slow of heart to believe.” Lk. 24:25
- b.** The term is not racially derogatory, but for the failure to detect spiritual error.
- 1) The expression is to bring them to their senses, spiritually.
 - 2) The New English Bible translates it, “You stupid Galatians.
 - 3) The J.B. Phillips translation reads, “O you dear idiots of Galatia.
 - 4) They had set aside the grace of God, Jesus dying needlessly! Gal. 2:21
- 2.** The motive behind the words of Paul was his love for them.
- a.** Paul as a loving father was chastising his children full of emotions, fear and frustration. Heb. 12:5-11
 - 1) “I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.” Gal. 4:11
 - 2) “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Gal. 4:19

- 3) “I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.” Gal. 4:20
- b. Paul was not disobeying Jesus’ words.
- 1) The word foolish “anoetos”, is a different word from Racca “rhaka” meaning worthless and fool “moros” meaning godless or moron. Matt. 5:22
 - 2) He could see their deception clearly as a perversion of the gospel. Gal. 1:7
- B.** The Galatians had been allured to spiritual error, “Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth.” vs. 1b
1. Paul says “who”, not for information or identification.
 - a. Paul knows the Judaizers perverted the gospel, trusting in works of the law to be justified before God. Gal. 1:7; 2:16
 - b. Paul expressed their lunacy for allowing it for the Judaizers had perverted he gospel of Christ. Gal. 1:7
 - c. Their desired to bring the Gentiles under the ceremonial law. Gal. 4:9-11
 2. Paul used a common pagan belief to describe the deception of the Galatians, not that it was true, “has bewitched you.”
 - a. The word bewitched “baskaino” was a popular Greek superstition of the evil eye, to fascinate or spell bound a person, through the evil eye.

- b. The word appears only this one time in the New Testament and is used as to pervert or confuse the mind.
3. Paul plainly accused them and was astonished for the outcome, “that you should not obey the truth.”
- a. They allowed the fascination with the law to not obey the truth, their fault.
 - 1) The truth “alethia” means truth in any matter under consideration.
 - 2) This truth is the gospel, also evident by what follows, Christ crucified.
 - b. Paul was saying, what or who possessed you to trust in works, instead of the gospel of grace!
 - 1) “You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump.” Gal. 5:7-9
 - 2) The Judaizers were responsible for their deceptiveness, being under the curse of the Law. Gal. 3:10
 - 3) Paul says they should not stop just with circumcision, but continue to castration! Gal. 5:12
 - 4) They imposed circumcision to not be persecuted. Gal. 6:12
- C.** The Galatians had been presented with the crucified Christ, the reason for the rebuke,

“Before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” vs. 1c

1. The manner was by illumination, “before whose eyes.”
 - a. The phrase “before whose” is emphatic, indicating the Galatians, who were once blind to the truth about Jesus.
 - b. The preaching of the gospel was accompanied with the light of the Spirit to comprehend, believe and see Jesus as their Savior.
2. The method was a clear presentation, “Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified.”
 - a. The word portrayed “prographo” is used in two ways,
 - 1) The word is used to write before.
 - * It is used in Romans, “Whatever things were written...” Rom. 15:4
 - 2) And to portray publicly like a placard.
 - 3) It was used of a father who posted a proclamation that he would no longer be responsible for his Son’s debts.
 - b. The majority of scholars say this indicates the public proclamation, figurative like a visible placard.
 - 1) It was understandable.
 - 2) It was unmistakable.
 - c. The public proclamation “kerygma” was Jesus crucified.

- 1) The word crucified “estauromenos” is in the perfect passive participle, with the idea of past fact with lasting affects, not mere the historical fact.
- 2) The context focuses on the efficiency of the sacrifice for justification, the heart of the gospel, what distinguished Jews from Christians. Gal. 2:20; 3:1; 5:24; 6:14
- 3) Paul was saying, if the Galatians would have beheld before their eyes Jesus having been crucified, in the place they belonged, they would not have been spell-bond by the evil eye of the Judaizers about the Law.

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. The Pastor and believers are to lovingly confront believers that deviate from the gospel, not exercising spiritual discernment and even rebuked if need be.
 - a. “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia-- remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” 1Tim. 1:3-4
 - b. “O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is **falsely** called knowledge.” 1Tim. 6:20
 - c. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” 2Tim. 4:2-5
 - d. Christian at times refuse to grow and mature spiritually, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you

again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Heb. 5:12-14

2. Faithful Pastors are accused of being unloving when they expose false teachers or doctrine.
 - a. “Now for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be burdensome to you; for I do not seek yours, but you. For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved. But be that as it may, I did not burden you. Nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you by cunning! Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you?” 2Cor. 12:14-17
 - b. A faithful shepherd studies warning constantly against spiritual error as a watchman, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus

and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some.” 2Tim. 2:15-18; Ezk. 3:17; 33:7

3. The greater accountability and responsibility is due that we have received the greater light, Jesus Christ.

- a. Understand spells cannot be cast on Christians.
- b. Understand that there are many entrapments in the Christian life, self-love, money, pride, doctrinal error, humanism, psychology, etc.
 - 1) “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” Prov. 27:6
 - 2) “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” Lk. 12:48d-g
 - 3) “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall. 1Cor. 10:12

Paul rebuked them because they had believed the gospel!

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

- A. The first question of Paul deals with the Galatians is how they had possessed the Holy Spirit. vs. 2
 - 1. Paul wanted them to think how they came to experience the possession of the Holy Spirit,

“This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law.” vs. 2a-b

- a. The question is rhetorical having only one and very obvious answer, No!
 - * He already proved they were not justified by the law. Gal. 2:16
 - b. The law was never given to the Gentiles, unless they proselytized.
 - 1) There were “God-fearers”, who did not submit to circumcision.
 - 2) There were “proselytes of the Gate”, who did submit to be circumcised.
 - c. The law did not promised to every believer the indwelling of the Spirit.
 - 1) The Holy Spirit was given to chosen individuals for service.
 - 2) Like Moses, Aholiab, Joshua, kings, priest or prophets.
2. Paul gave the Galatians a second choice of how they had possessed and experienced the Holy Spirit, “or was it by the hearing of faith?” vs. 2c
- a. The hearing of faith refers to the proclamation of the gospel of Christ.
 - * Remember, that for faith to be biblical, it must be based on God’s word!
 - b. Their hearing of the gospel by faith illuminated their hearts and minds about being sinners in need of salvation.

- c. Their repenting obedience in faith was by the word and Spirit of God and made them born again of their own free-will.
- d. The Holy Spirit then dwelt in them by faith, their bodies became the temple of the Holy Spirit. 2Cor. 6:14-16
- e. Their experience of faith was superior to the Old Testament economy.
 - 1) “But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Gal. 3:24-25
 - 2) “But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we

have such hope, we use great boldness of speech-- unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” 2Cor. 3:7-16

- B. The second question of Paul deals with the Galatians lack of perception over the superior efficiency of the Spirit to the inferior efficiency of the flesh, in order to continue progressing in their faith experience. vs. 3
 1. Paul now addressed them for acting as fools, “Are you so foolish?” vs. 3a
 - a. The term foolish “anoetos”, is the same expression as in verse one, senseless.
 - b. The implication once again being an attitude of mind and heart, failing to exercise of their power of perception.
 - c. But this time it is placed in a question form, not a statement of fact.
 - 1) Paul asked, do you want to continue in this senseless, unthinking state?

- 2) Think and consider how you came to possess the Holy Spirit!
 - 2. Paul declared his second rhetorical question, “Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect in the flesh?” vs. 3b
 - a. The contrast is very obvious, they began in the Spirit by faith in Christ, prior to the coming of the Judaizers.
 - b. Would they now attempt to finish in the flesh, the natural abilities of man?
 - * This the Judaizers were teaching!
 - c. The answer is again obvious, NO!
 - 1) The word perfect “epiteleo”, means maturity, intended goal or completion.
 - 2) One cannot finish in the flesh what the Spirit has begun, it is a contradiction!
- C. The third question of Paul deals how the Galatians were affected by their faith. vs. 4
- 1. The apostle Paul declared his third rhetorical question, “Have you suffered so many things in vain?” vs. 4a
 - a. The word suffered “pascho” means to be affected and have been affected, the context will dictate if it is good or evil, positive or negative.
 - 1) The word appears 42 times in the New Testament, translated suffer, suffering and suffered.

- 2) All are in the negative, but our text seems to be positive, the context is being justified and Spirit filled.
 - 3) Many do interpret the text in the negative for sufferings, yet we have no evidence of suffering of the Galatians, only deception.
 - 4) We do have the sufferings of Paul in Galatia on his First missionary trip, Perga, Iconium, Lystra telling them they must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation. Acts 13:50; 14:2, 5-6, 19-22
- b. So when Paul posed the question, have the many things you have experience “in Christ” been in vain?
- 1) I think it refers to the benefits of justification and the Holy Spirit.
 - 2) The term vain “eike” means without purpose, success or effect, confirming the benefit, the obvious answer is no!
 - 3) The Galatians had been made one with God by faith, through Christ and given the Holy Spirit, what the law could not do.
 - 4) In affect Paul is saying, will you now turn from Christ and the benefits to the law and flesh?
 - 5) But if this referred to sufferings the answer would still the same, no!

2. Paul affirmed the things that had affected them were not without efficiency and personal benefit by his response, “If it was in vain?” vs. 4b
 - a. The fact they as Gentile sinners had been saved and justified by faith. Gal. 2:15-16
 - b. The fact they had received the Spirit by faith. Gal. 3:2
 - c. The fact that they could be perfected in the Spirit. Gal. 3:3
- D.** The fourth question of Paul deals with the One responsible for the Spirit and miracles. vs. 5
1. Paul comes to a concluding statement, “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you.” vs. 5a
 - a. Notice Paul returns to his original question of verse two, that God is the supplier of the Holy Spirit by the hearing of faith, not the works of the Law. vs. 5a
 - b. He, who supplies the Spirit to them was Jesus and the Father.
 - 1) The word supplies “epichoregeo”, means to supply abundantly or bountifully and is in the present participle, something ongoing.
 - 2) The word is found five times in the New Testament, the root word “choregia” means a generous expense or supply at one’s own cost, used of

- one who paid the training and performance of a chorus.
- 3) Also in marriage documents for the husband’s support for the wife.
2. Paul continues in connection with the Holy Spirit that it is God who, “and works miracles among you.” vs. 5a
 - a. The word for miracle “dunamis” is the same as the word Jesus used for the Holy Spirit in Acts. Acts 1:8
 - b. The meaning is inherent power by virtue of its nature of the miraculous, defying the laws of nature by the Super-natural.
 - c. The specific is “among you” in the midst of the body life and their personal lives.
 - 1) The Galatians had experienced the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.
 - 2) The Galatians had experienced illumination of the gospel truth.
 - 3) The Galatians had experienced various gifts and miracles through Paul.
 3. Paul is dealing with the faith of the Galatians experiencing miracles by way of contrast, “does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” vs. 5b-c
 - a. The fourth and last rhetorical question.
 - 1) The answer is obvious again by the hearing of faith, not the works of the law!

- 2) Paul said earlier that the gospel worked effective in him toward the Gentile, apart from the law. Gal. 2:8
- b. The entire personal experience of the Galatians was based on three things.
 - 1) By the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
 - 2) By faith!
 - 3) By the work of the Holy Spirit!

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 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 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; 2Pet. 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 have experienced miracles that God did in their lives and have turned away to the former things that held them in bondage, living by their own power. Gal. 4:8-9; 2:20
7. Some are walking by human reason and understanding, thinking they have all things figured out and in control, without recognizing they 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 many miracle yet they constantly turned from God desiring to return to Egypt, remembering the leaks, onions and melons, but forgetting the whip and burden of slaves!

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. Gal. 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. Gal. 3:1-5

1. Abraham believed God by faith as they had, “Just as Abraham believed God.” vs. 6a

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. 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 imputed righteousness like theirs, “and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” vs. 6b

a. Paul is quoting, the declaration of God about Abraham believing by faith the promise of God. Gen 15:6

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 being 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. Gal. 3:6, 8-9, 14, 16, 18, 29; 4:22

3. Abraham’s sons are those who come by the hearing of faith only, this is the clear conclusion, “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” 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. Gal. 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. Gal. 3:8-9

1. The Scriptures revealed this from the start, “And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith.” vs. 8a-b
 - 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, Inerrant and Infallible. 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 God put plan #2 into effect when the Jews rejected Christ.
 - 2) But God had the Gentiles in mind all along from the beginning. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14
2. God knew the Gentiles would be justified by faith in the One who would come through the seed of Abraham, “preached the gospel

to Abraham beforehand, sayin, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” vs. 8b-d

- a. Paul by the Holy Spirit interprets the text to mean blessing of justification, not mere material blessing, “In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Gen. 12:3c
- 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 have been when Melchizedek met Abraham returning from the recovery of those taken captive from Sodom and Gomorra. Gen. 14:18-24
 - b. It could have 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, making him righteous before God. Rom. 5:1
3. Paul declared the mutual blessing of those believing by faith as Abraham, “So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” vs. 9
 - a. Those of faith, the ones who had believed the revelation of God

concerning faith in the work of His Son and received it as promise. Gal. 3:16

- b. They are blessed with believing Abraham.”
- 1) The word blessed “eulogeo” gives us our word eulogy, to speak well of one.
 - 2) Abraham was called a father of many nations. Gen. 17:5; Rom. 4:17
 - 3) 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 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. Gal. 1:22; 2:4, 17; 3:26; 5:6, 10; Jn. 1:12; 1Jn. 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

* “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

Paul rebuked them because they had contradicted Scripture!

Conclusion

The three-fold rebuke of Paul to the Galatians is a warning to instruct us!

- I. Paul rebuked them because they had believed the gospel!
- II. Paul rebuked them because they had received the Holy Spirit!
- III. Paul rebuked them because they had contradicted Scripture!

