

Galatians 3 pt. 1 v.1-9 Read Thru

Paul continues to boldly declare the truth that those who believe in Christ are justified in God's eyes and that justification is not contingent on any human based program or any work of effort of our own devising.

V.1 Paul charges the plurality of churches in Galatia, with being bewitched, he uses quite passionate language, beginning with the interjection 'Ω'.

Paul, having concluded the re-telling of his defense to Peter and the Judaizers regarding their shared salvation with the gentiles through faith, begins to address the Galatians' circumstances.

The last direct statement to the Galatians that Paul made was in chapter 1, verse 11 - he then goes on to recount his own personal conversion history, early ministry, and ministry at Antioch where Paul had dealt with a similar situation -- the church adopted the legalism of the Jewish tradition.

He has said all of those things up until chapter 3 by way of illustration and lays the groundwork for his spirited defense of grace.

He then turns his pen to address the Galatians directly about their own falling away.

From Paul's words we see that they are in a dangerous situation indeed. They can follow their current course to destruction or they can return to faith.

So Paul's words in chapter 3 need to be strong, clear, bold. They are! He does not beat around the bush at all.

“O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you...”

These words cut. I dare say one would be hard-pressed to begin any sermon in our era with these words and still remain in the pulpit any meaningful length of time afterward - regardless of how right or necessary the correction may be.

Paul here is outright declaring that the churches in Galatia are foolish for following a lie.

And then he uses the words “who has bewitched you...” there's a lot going on there

First, it becomes apparent that some other party has been carefully weaving their lie in such a fashion that it has entranced the Galatian christians.

About this term for “bewitched,” Thayer’s Lexicon reads, “*to bring evil on one by feigned praise or an evil eye, to charm, bewitch one...hence, of those who lead away others into error by wicked arts.*” (Thayer’s)

We can also determine from Paul’s word choice - that this thing has happened! Somebody has bewitched you, they are not bewitching you now, nor waiting for a future opportunity - the thing has happened! You are bewitched!

You are under the spell! It has happened.

Please note that Paul is contending for them! He has not abandoned them, nor retreated, nor thrown up his hands and said, “everybody has an opinion.” He contends for them on the basis of God’s clear word and as we will see, by the Spirit.

The next thing Paul does after calling them foolish and bewitched is remind them of what they have seen and partaken in, what has been illustrated among them.

...before your eyes Christ was clearly portrayed, or demonstrated as crucified...

So it is Christ crucified at the center! Come back to that! Remember foolish Galatians what first moved your dead hearts to faith - Jesus Christ on the cross.

This is true for us as well - Christ crucified is the center of our faith. To stray from that is to fall under the spell of bad doctrine or the cult of self.

V.2 Paul continues his campaign for them by way of reason. How did you receive the Holy Spirit, by the Law or by faith?

This has profound theological significance.

Bear in mind that it was not until Pentecost, in Acts 2 that the general dispensation of the Holy Spirit occurred - meaning that, as we understand from the Bible, the average everyday person walking around before Pentecost did not receive the Spirit of God within them no matter how devout or pious they were.

In times past (OT) it was the prophets and certain select people who received the Holy Spirit for a particular God-given work.

Simply by obeying, observing the works of the Law did not entitle one to communion with God by the Holy Spirit. There was a vast separation between God and man - as depicted in the Law - and the relationship between God and man was arbitrated by the High Priest.

But then Jesus Christ came, our High Priest, and promised the Holy Spirit to all who believe.

[Jhn 14:15-17 NKJV] 15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Now, presently, God tabernacles within His people. His Spirit lives within us. The inner sanctuary that God occupies on planet earth is within our hearts, not any man made temple. The temple that God occupies is the one that He built by His own will - YOU! And He dwells there on the basis of faith alone.

So the answer to Paul's question is that the Spirit was received by faith - believing in the crucified Christ rather than works of the law. No one could deny that.

V.3 Shots fired! Just how foolish are you? Do you think that it's possible to improve upon Christ's work by your own flesh?! Are you going to level up somehow by some cleanse? Some legalistic diet? Some rigid code of conduct? Some dress code?

The implied answer is NO!

We can never perfect God's work of the Spirit by our own devices. Never. It is God who does the work within us and moves us to work His salvation outwardly. Conversely, when we strive to focus on outward works in order to attain an inward result - that is a fool's errand.

I have met many people over the years who have gone down that path - myself included.

If I could just quit doing x,y,z; or if I could just start doing x,y,z then I will be ready to commit to this Jesus guy. That's completely backwards.

We each come to the crucified Christ, the resurrected Christ, and beg to share in His death and resurrection. In that moment we are required to count all of our works, good and bad, as dead before Him as we take hold of His work, whereby we share in His life.

That's where the real meaningful work begins, not before, and there is no after.

Understand, there is only each moment with Christ - He is supporting us, not the other way around.

When I say there is no after what I mean is that Jesus Christ is not a milestone on the road to sanctification - He is the road, He is the way.

For me to move on from Christ, forward or backward, demonstrates my own fickle nature and desire to build upon that which is already completed.

It is to spit in the face of Christ's perfect sacrifice and propose an alternative method of holiness rather than relying on the Spirit to work in us.

V.4 To be a Christian cost something in a big way!

It cost people their families, their livelihoods, sometimes their lives.

Was it all for nothing?

Unfortunately sometimes yes.

There are those who come to faith in Jesus, who do suffer much as we are each promised. Perhaps the strain was too much, perhaps they took their eyes off the cross, perhaps after counting the cost it just wasn't worth it. This is heartbreaking and yet we know this will come to pass among the saints.

[Mar 4:5-6 NKJV] 5 "Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth. 6

"But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away.

V.5 Another test of their soundness -

Does God work among His saints by the works of the law or by faith?

It is only faith! Nothing else.

In our culture we are not too wed to the OT law but we will happily substitute faith for many other things, or perhaps more common - augment our faith with those things that grasp our attention.

What things have crept into the church - that bewitching song, to lure Christians away from the cross, away from faith, in order to "be better, do better, mobilize, achieve, etc." Many things, sadly.

But how does Christ work among us? By faith alone. Bear in mind that faith spoken of is our faith in Him, not our faith in anything else we have wrongly attached to the cross.

That is the whole Jesus + equation that we have been denouncing these past several weeks - there is no other gospel!

No special interest, no cause, no work of our hands, no church, no matter how religious or good they may seem has saved us - Christ alone has saved us, by faith alone!

And if that proclamation rubs us the wrong way then perhaps our eyes aren't fully fixed on the cross - perhaps we find ourselves desiring to add something to the cross.

V.6-7 - Paul drives the point home, answering his questions in full with a singular illustration - "Abraham BELIEVED God and it was accounted to him for righteousness." (Gen 15:6-7)

It is God, the Lord God, who will do the thing! He will bring us into our inheritance as we keep our eyes on him!

Do not be charmed from the truth Christian - if you think you are above it - reflect on Paul's words to the Romans.

[Rom 1:21-22 KJV] ...when they knew God, they glorified [him] not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

It is faith that brings us into the family of God! Nothing else.

Perhaps that point seems a bit redundant by now. It is quite plain. Faith alone.

Nevertheless, time and time again in scripture and throughout history we have seen and we do see now that we need to be reminded of this. Not because we don't care but precisely because we do care!

We want to contribute! We want to be better, do better, help others. And there is nothing wrong with that - but the lie is that if you do those things then God will love you more. That is the lie.

The truth is that God loved us completely when we were at our darkest, worst moment. If you haven't been there yet, God will love you perfectly in that moment because you are His child; and even while we make ourselves His enemy He desires to have communion with us.

In our guilt and shame we say, "How can I approach such a one as God after all my darkness?" By faith dear one.

By faith alone - trusting that it is He who makes you sufficient and righteous by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. That is why nothing else will do!

What can we add to the brilliance of Christ's robes? Nothing. Anything we add shows up like a glaring mustard stain.

V.8-9 Paul stands on God's word, the Scriptures

In this portion Paul actually anthropomorphizes the scriptures - God's word - he writes as if they are a living being that foresees the nature of God's promise to the Gentiles, and then preaches to Abraham. Wow! Does God's Word preach to you?

What did it preach - the gospel. Let that sink in. In the ages before Jesus came down to us the gospel was preached to Abraham.

How? By God's Word to Abraham - "In you all the nations shall be blessed." (Gen 12:3) That was the sermon preached to Abraham.

And just so there's no misunderstanding Paul clarifies by saying that it is the people of faith that are blessed, alongside Abraham who believed God, and God counted his belief as righteousness.

...there are going to people like you Abraham, people who believe the promise!

And here we are! Believing, trusting upon Christ, receiving the gospel even as the scriptures preached it to Abraham so we have it preached to us and we believe - and it is in that belief, that faith, that we are made citizens of God's country - by faith in Christ alone.

About Abraham's faith, and his off-spring the author of Hebrews writes:

[Heb 11:12-16 NKJV] 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born [as many] as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced [them] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that [country] from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly [country]. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

This is your heritage! God has prepared a city for you dear one. Only believe in Christ. Let Him be your everything, your only thing. Amen.