

"WHO HATH BEWITCHED YOU"

Gal. 3:1-3

I spoke previously about Paul writing to answer some of the crack pots in Galatia. The Romans have created a province in the center of Asia Minor and they they called it the province of Galatia. Now Paul addresses his letter to them. He has marveled at the hospitality and the reception -- both by his message and his person.

In this letter, in Chapter 4:13-15, he said you know how infirmity of the flesh I preach the Gospel unto you. And then he goes on to write, ye would have plucked your own eyes out and would have given them to me. He was astonished at their open-heartedness. Their warm-heartedness, and the way they had received the Gospel.

But now, he is no less fully amazed at how soon they are removed from the message that they had first so gladly received.

Chapter 1 - after speaking to them greetings - he wrote, I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel - with is not another.

And then coming to this 3rd chapter, he states, oh foolish Galatians. A better word would be oh (senseless) Galatians. Who hath bewitched you. They had turned from Calvary to Sinai. They had turned from sonship to slavery. They have turned from liberty to bondage. They had turned from faith to works. They had turned from Christ

to ceremonies.) Oh senseless, foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you.

There are three or four things here - first, there is doctrine, there is salvation, there is back-sliding. And then there is spiritual living. All of these are very practical.

I. DOCTRINE

We enter strictly a doctrinal part of Galatians. Paul uses some very unusual language. What he really means is - how is it that you seem to come under a sort of (spell). That you have (lost your grip) on the truth - and your hearts and minds have become clouded with error. It is quite possible for one to have been truly converted - and then by failure to study the word of God and to pray over it - Paul had come under the influence of some false system. Some unScriptural line of teaching.

And often when people do come under such influence, you find that it is almost impossible to deliver them.!

Doctrine is a word that repells many people. When we say something about doctrine - people get a vision of a long dry book. Or a dry sermon, with a lot of arguments in it. (When) people ignore doctrine, the result is, they are like children tossed too and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. Eph. 4:14.

Doctrine is important - doctrine means teaching. Christian doctrine means just

Biblical teaching, about the things which we believe. And contrary to some people, it does matter what we believe. As our doctrines are, so go our actions, because they grow out of belief.

And Paul is centering here the issue - doctrine is on Christ - or the law. These men had come down from Jerusalem teaching that you cannot be saved unless you are circumcized, and keep the law of Moses. And they have gotten such an influence over you that you are like people (bewitched). You are under a (spell). You are not able to even reason out things.

The verb translated bewitched - can refer to some (superstition) known as the evil eye. Evil people working to put a spell on you. It is like black magic. And people get (brain-washed) with certain ideas and literally have no mind of their own. And there were some who were holding to the (old pagan) belief that they could go both ways in the matter of doctrine.

Temple - de - Bewitched -
Jim Jones - Guyana - 900 people

And so Paul wants to make this clear in their midst - that the doctrine was important.

II. SALVATION

Now Paul takes a moment or so to ask these Galatians to recall their wonderful conversion - right before your eyes, there was Jesus Christ. In the last part of V. 1 - was "evidently set forth." Crucified among you.

Has Christ actually given himself for me. It is because it was impossible for me to do one thing to save myself. Because I could not, I deserved to die - but Christ took my place. The place of beginning for the Christian. Paul says are you foolish. Do you think you need to complete the work by your own effort.

You have been misled. You have been led into the fog. And Paul says if I can, I want by the grace of God to deliver you.

When we stand up for the truth of God and warn people against false teaching, it does not imply that we are unkind toward them. We may love such people. But Christ died for these people. And Paul here uses such graphic language - it was evidently set forth.

It was like a placard or a poster put up on public display in the forum or down in the marketplace - for all citizens to see it. Paul says you do not have a newspaper or public announcements - but we displayed this in public areas where everyone mingled. Where everyone could read them. And Paul uses that word with regard to the Gospel message. That he delivered to the Galatians - it was publicly, openly, evidently set forth.

When Paul preached the message of Christ, the Galatians could see the Lord crucified. They in imagination followed the movements of the Roman soldiers - heard the ringing of the hammers as the Lord was nailed to the tree. They heard his sobs, his tears, and his cries. They felt his suffering. And watched the blood drops fall down to crimson color the ground. Seeing him crucified. They were convicted in their

hearts. Their paganism and idolatry - and were born again into the Kingdom of Christ. They became new creatures - the (old) world, the old ways passed away. And all things in God became new. They were regenerated, through listening to the preaching word - through the opening of their hearts to the Gospel of Christ. And they forsook their old gods and embraced the true and the living God. It was new - it was a wonderful day when they obtained salvation.

Now, you have a marvelous testimony here for the Gospel said Paul. What was that message that he delivered. It was that Christ died for our sins. And that the 3rd day he arose according to the Scriptures. And when Paul preached the Gospel, that is that he preached Christ and him crucified, that is the faith - that is the substance of Christianity. So the beginning of faith and the end of it is in the Lord Jesus.

When the Apostle John writes the Revelation, he wrote the eternal life through him. He writes about Christ. When James, pastor of a church in Jerusalem, speaks of the great law giver - he is talking about Christ. When the writer of Hebrews speaks of the great high priest in Heaven and the mediator between God and man, he talking about Christ.

The Christian faith is Christ. You take that away - and you take the Lord out of it and it is nothing.

The Gospel that Paul preached was Christ and him crucified. And the power of it that had the influence upon the Galatians, in a miraculous, marvelous way.

So Paul says we posted in public the proclamations - the poster of Christ. We handed that like a billboard to you. And he challenged his readers that here was the point of regeneration. Here was the doctrine of their transformation. And now he says - who hath bewitched you in this.

III. BACK-SLIDING

The next thing that Paul moves into is the matter in which he says, evidently there have come some false teachers who have taken your minds away. They have set before you rituals, rights, seasons, dates, programs - and laws to keep. They have turned aside from the liberty that they knew in the Lord Jesus. And they are depending upon ceremonies, upon dates and calendars, and laws. And they thought they were making progress.

And Paul cries oh senseless Galatians who hath bewitched you.

Having begun in the Spirit, now are you going to try and finish it out with the flesh.

Here is someone who is saved, who is converted, and turns to Jesus. And then he goes back and he depends upon some rituals and something else. Is this progress, is this advancement - to turn aside the glorious from the liberty that we have in Christ. And bind ourselves down with ritual things.

The Galatians had back-slidden. They had turned aside from the Gospel. They had taken their minds off of Christ and were focusing upon something else. Wherever you find the Spirit of Christ there is liberty. Wherever you find the spirit of the flesh there is bondage and slavery. Now, no wonder Paul was upset, with this type of back-sliding.

I read the other day about a little Indian evangelist - he was a former Hindu. He was known by the name Sammy. He went around with a big Bible under one arm. He carried a big umbrella above his head with the other arm. And he was trotting down the road in India when he passed by a barrack - where English soldiers were stationed. They were familiar with the little preacher. And as he trotted by with his big Bible and his big umbrella, one of the British soldiers called out to him and said - say, Sammy, (how is Jesus Christ this morning?)

The little fellow stopped, drew himself up to his greatest height, and reproached the soldiers. And he said, I will answer you out of the Holy Book. Which came to us from your country. He then turned to Hebrews 13:8 and he read - "Jesus, Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." And then he trotted on up the road.

That night (two) of the British soldiers found the modest home of little Sammy, the evangelist. Knocked on his door, and when he came to the door--they said, Sammy, we are ashamed of ourselves. This morning we asked you about how Jesus Christ was. And you read to us out of the Holy Book - Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. They said, when we were back home - we were Christians. And we served the Lord but (we have fallen) away. Little Sammy, we have come to apologize and ask forgiveness. For what we said this morning - and want you to know that we are coming back. We are coming back in love and service, and ministry of our dear Lord.

Always it is in Revival, always it is true Godly service when we keep our eyes upon him. Rejoice in Christ as our Saviour. With tremendous joy - and there is no back-sliding.

IV. SPIRITUAL LIVING

Now we have moved from doctrine - which is important. To salvation - which is in Jesus Christ. To back-sliding - which is found among many. To the matter of spiritual living. "Who hath bewitched you." That you should obey not the truth, of the Lord Jesus. When you have had a billboard put up before you. Are you going to try to finish out your life and living for him - in the flesh.

V. 3 - "Are ye so foolish - having begun in the Spirit. Are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

I think sometimes we have a tendency to poke our fingers at other people. In their ritualistic services of other denominations and we say, well, they follow a prayer book - don't they? They go through the same old thing year after year.

Do you know what I think - we are exactly like them. If you don't believe it - you look at the format of our public worship services. Year after year. I am not talking about two Sundays - I am talking about 52 Sundays. And I could go down - if I was in Egypt today - I would know exactly what this church was doing at such and such a time.

How do we get away from it? Well, I have been doing the same thing here - 35 years or more. And, we want to depend upon the liberty and the movement of the Spirit, in the services. I just get up here as God would help me preach the message that He puts on my heart. And here is Paul saying, oh foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you. The (Greek word) means that a fortune teller, a diviner has placed them under a spell. He hath bewitched them. Paul vows that an evil eye has possessed the Galatian Church. And pulled them away from the truth. And Paul speaks of the truth of the Gospel. Was it by the works of the Lord that you receive the Spirit of God. Was it by hearing the favor.

I like that illustration that Paul goes on and picks up here. About Abraham believing God - and it was accounted unto him for righteousness. The just shall live by faith.

Abraham was living by the faith long before the law - and here is a powerful statement. The (just shall live by faith). It is just as powerful and when God said - let there be light. It has a resounding action in it.

Spiritual living - how does it take place?

First, it is not by feeling. If the just are going to live by faith - there are lots of people who would make that read - the just shall live by feelings. By our own feelings - when everything is calm and smoother, happy, for us - then we know we are in the will and the favor of God. We are really blessed. We belong to the family and the household of faith. Everything is going our way. And we say, I know I am saved because I am prosperous.

But when the way gets dark and the wind gets boisterous - and when the waves are rolling high, and when the night is black, and we cannot see the light, the clouds are low, and everything has fallen in despair. We think that God does not love us anymore and we have lost our salvation. I am just lost, I am just forgotten. And the Lord does not know that I am here on this earth.

It is dangerous to define God's attitude towards us by our feelings. And we attach our salvation on our feelings. We say, I am saved. I feel that I am saved. But if I do not feel that way - then God has forsaken me.

Listen, if we ever attach our salvation to feelings - we are going to be dragged down to death.

The basis of my salvation is not in me. It is in God. The foundation of my hope is not in me. It is in Christ. If my salvation is in me, and if it depends upon me, what shall I turn too. I am faulty, frail, I am filled with mistakes. I error, I sin, I ultimately grow older and age soon takes hold of me. Weakness comes to me. Disease comes to me. And death comes to me - what shall I do. It is inescapable. I am unable in my own strength to save myself. And as long as I look to myself and my feelings - God help me and be merciful to me. And that is exactly what Paul is saying. Lord, I cannot save myself. I am undone and weak. Salvation is in him, hope is in him, and he will in no wise cast me out.

If I wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning, or at 4 o'clock in the morning, or at twilight - or at dawn. And I can look out and I can see something of the strength of the sun. And I can know that the promise of Christ never changes.

John 1:11 - He came unto his own and his own received him not. Well, but as many as received him - to them he gave the power to become the sons of God. Even to them that believe upon his name. That does not change. Lord, I have trusted Thee. I believe in Thee. My hope is in Thee.

Oh senseless, foolish Galatians who hath bewitched you. To think that it is a matter of feeling.

2 Second, live by speculation. Now spiritual living is not by feeling. And second, it is not by speculation. It is what we call sand for a foundation to build a house on. The Bible speaks of repentance and faith in Christ. And acceptance of the Lord - and I know that. But this is the way I think about it - you say. And did you know, that it was human speculation that caused the early church many sorrows and many heartaches. They turned aside from evangelizing the world and the presenting of the Gospel.

Do you know what caused the early church to turn away from the great thrust of the Gospel. It was because among themselves they began hair-splitting over doctrines, and speculating about theology. And began to fight among themselves.

The first century Christians - when it looked as if the whole world would be won in their generation. And even the Bible says, they had such faith that they turned the world upside down. But, they turned aside and began in fighting - within the church.

Edward Gibben, a noted historian said, they divided the entire civilized world over one Greek letter.

One group said Christ is a like substance. In talking about God. A second group said, he is the same substance. Now, they began to discuss those two ideas. And when we get to looking at those things - and we get to looking at little things that we have our differences about. Fighting one with another - what happens. What happens to us. It is simply this -- we forget the evangelization of the world.

That is exactly what happened to the Christian faith - they had literally won the civilized world in three centuries - to Jesus Christ. And then they stopped. And they forgot the great masses of the East, the West, the North, and the South. The great Africa, Indian, China, Japan - all of them were forgotten. Do you know something - for the most part they are still forgotten today. The just shall not live by speculation. The just shall not live by feelings. But by faith.

3 - Third, not by worldliness. Here is a third thing - spiritual living cannot be based on feelings. It cannot be based on speculations. And it cannot be based on worldly wisdom. Now the Bible does not say that the just shall live by their smartness, or their shrewdness. The world says that is the way to get along.

The world says, you do not need to pray. You do not need God. You do not need a warm-hearted religion. You do not need a church. You do not need to worship.

All you need is shrewdness. Smartness and you'll get places in this world.

Isn't it tragic that even in our churches about people who have no faith in prayer and the need of God. And turn to the world for flesh and power.

Do you remember Lot whose herdsmen began the war with the herdsmen of Abraham. And the land was not able to contain them because of the vast increase. And Lot said, let there be no strife between your people and mine. You choose what you think is best for me and what is remaining to me I will accept unto God. I will accept that--you make the choice. Lot stood on the edge of the high mountain, there was a well watered plains. The cities with their merchants flourishing - soverign. And he turned to his uncle and he said, if I have my choice - I will choose the plains and the city of Sodom. Now the world said yes, they are smart. That is wise in the world. Yes, look at those plains - they are flowing with streams. And the fields are green. Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom. He is elected mayor. And he set in the gates and he was prosperous. But here is old Abraham up here on the Rocky Mountain, walking with God Almighty - believing, trusting, worshipping, serving and loving. For the just shall live by trust, faith, committment, prayer, and by loving Jehovah Lord.

"Who hath bewitched you, oh Galatians."

I read a wonderful little story by William Henson. Who is pastor of the First Baptist Church, New Orleans. He said, when I was a young boy, a playmate and I received small toys. A replica of a sliding trombone from the dime store. He said we were in the driveway one day, and I called to my mother. And she was looking through the kitchen window. I said mother, we have something to play for you on your Birthday.

We made an effort to hum through Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved

a wretch like me. Once was lost, but now am found. Was blind but now I see.)

Henson said to his friend - he said, hey, your mother is crying. I knew our music wasn't good - but I didn't realize that it was that bad. And I said, Mother, what is wrong. And she replied with a broad smile, Billy, these are tears of joy. When I think of the Amazing Grace that God has given me through Jesus Christ, I'm so glad that my rejoicing brings tears to my eyes. One day Billy, I pray, that you will know of that Amazing Grace.

No wonder after that incident, everytime I sing and realize when we have been there ten million years, bright shining as the sun, that God is calling us to rejoice, be glad and to accept.

I would like to this day, ask you to respond as never before. To accept God, with a positive declaration and ask God to teach you His way. And to commit your life to His way. And ask God to bless you. And if there is anything that needs to be done - whether it is a rite or a ritual, whatever it is -- make that personal commitment today. And say that you are going to love him and worship him.

Let it not be said of you - oh foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you. Come back to the faith, come back to Jesus. With the just - the just shall live by faith.