

FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

We live in troubled times.

I wonder what kind of letter the apostle Paul would write to the church in Seattle. Would it speak of our sincere but busy faith? Our efforts to witness to a hard-hearted people, who has replaced a relationship with the one true God for many different gods of their own high-tech design.

Would he address the eastern thought that has permeated our society's education and culture?

I heard of the words of Omar Bradley, a four-star general. He said,

“At the end of the 20th century we will be a nation
of technological giants and moral midgets.”

I was stunned when I took a quiz that dealt with those in our culture with great levels of income. It was among those from the obscene world of luxury: “It is your job to guess which among either the NBA or NFL these statistics apply.”

- 36 accused of spousal abuse
- 7 arrested for fraud
- 19 accused of writing bad checks
- 117 directly or indirectly responsible for bankrupting at least two businesses
- 3 have done time for assault
- 71 cannot get credit cards due to bad debts
- 14 arrested on drug related charges
- 8 arrested for shop lifting
- 21 defendants for lawsuits
- 84 have been arrested for drunk driving in the last year

How many of you think it is the NFL? ... the NBA?

Neither: It is for members of the United States Congress.¹

¹ Insight for Living broadcast with Chuck Swindoll, Oct, 26, 2015.

I have to ask the question: If our government officials are truly a representative government voted in by its' constituents, what does this say about our country?

ANNE GRAHAM-LOTS was being interviewed on a national talk-show and asked the question about why God would allow our country to be devastated by great storms and terrible tragedies. Her answer was simply that "...WE HAVE KICKED GOD OUT OF OUR COUNTRY AND FORBIDDEN ANYONE TO PRAY TO HIM OR READ HIS WORD. NO WONDER HE HAS REMOVED HIS PROTECTION AND BLESSINGS FROM OUR NATION."

Paul would write that we have fallen from grace; that we need to get back to grace. He began his letter to the Galatian church:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel... (Gal. 1:6)

Like the church at Galatia our nation began as 'one nation under God,' and because of our unfaithfulness we have deserted God and left his umbrella of protection and blessing. The only answer is for us to repent and return to the God we have deserted.

- 1 You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?
- 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?
- 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
- 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?
- 5 So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Gal. 3:1-5)

Paul's letter to the Galatians is directed towards a group who has wondered from the faith. Originally they were founded by Paul and taught that salvation was by grace through faith. Then they strayed into a false gospel – one that adds works to merit God's favor.

Paul begins this doctrinal section of his letter accusing the Galatians of being brainless and bewitched.

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publically portrayed as crucified? (3:1)

He expresses a combination of anger and love, mixed with surprise.

They were carefully taught the gospel of grace: Christ Crucified.

“How could they have strayed into false teaching?”

FIRST, PAUL ACCUSES THEM OF BEING FOOLS:

Fool – The word used here is not ‘moros’

which is often used in Christ’s parables

- moros which referred to someone who is mentally deficient or who plays to fool (in the moral or spiritual realm).

Here the word, *anoetos* is used.

--Stupidity that arises from deadness and impotence of intellect.

THOUGH YOU CAN THINK, YOU FAIL TO USE YOU MIND.

--By adding works to salvation they were acting insanely foolish.

They “... nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.” (Gal. 2:21)

Their belief canceled grace and made Christ’s death worthless.

Jesus used this word to rebuke his two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

“O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” (Luke 24:25)

These disciples were foolish because they had failed to have faith.

The Galatians like so many Christians have relied on their feelings.

They have sinfully neglected faith in God’s revealed truth.

MACARTHUR WRITES,

“Defection and desertion are contemptible because they involve disloyalty and betrayal. Few things are more tragic or disappointing than a Christian who deserts the purity of the gospel for a false form of Christianity that presumes to improve on the finished work of Christ.”²

HOW MANY BELIEVERS THROUGHOUT HISTORY STARTED WELL BUT LEFT THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION BY GRACE FOR ANOTHER LEGALISTIC SYSTEM AND A “WORKS RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT PROMISES MORE BUT PRODUCES MUCH LESS.”

MACARTHUR CONTINUES,

“Some fall into formalism, substituting external ceremonies and rites for the internal reality of personal growth in the Lord. Others fall into legalistic systems of do’s and don’t, proudly hoping to improve their standing before God by doing or not doing certain things. Still others look for a second blessing – a spiritual secret to unlock some higher plane of spirituality, an additional experience of grace – hoping to receive more of God than they imagine was granted to them at conversion.”³

No matter what people follow to enhance their spiritual experience, whether over-focusing on end-time prophecy, messianic cultural worship, or the latest Christian fad, they always miss grace and genuine relationship with Jesus, just as the Galatians did. When the fad fades (as all winds of doctrine die down) they look somewhere else to find a new flame to follow.

In the church God has given pastor/teachers whose primary job is to equip the saints for service and spiritual maturity.

Eph. 4:14 “As a result we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming...”

² John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), p. 61.

³ Ibid, MacArthur, p. 62.

Paul charged Timothy to preach the word so that people had sound doctrine, beliefs and behavior.

2 Tim. 4:1-4 “I solemnly charge you... preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.”

The Galatians were not using their heads.

In the same way Christians who embrace false doctrine, are foolish.

SECOND, PAUL ACCUSES THEM OF BEING BEWITCHED.

Bewitched – baskaino - from a metaphor derived from the popular superstition of *the evil eye*. The word denoted either the fascination of an evil or some malignant influence akin to it. The Galatians were negatively influenced by some mysterious power of evil to follow the false teaching of the Judaizers.

The Message version says,

You crazy Galatians! Did someone put a hex on you? Have you taken leave of your senses? Something crazy has happened, for it’s obvious that you no longer have the crucified Jesus in clear focus in your lives. His sacrifice on the cross was certainly set before you clearly enough.

PAUL IS SAYING, ‘There’s no explanation for your behavior.’

Their behavior is reminiscent of the people of Lystra, who tried to worship Paul as a god but, after the Jewish intervention, stoned him.

(See Acts 14:8-19)

Paul’s Arguments for Grace:

- Believers are justified by faith.
- Their personal experience confirms grace.
- Abraham was justified by faith.

1. Paul contends that believers are justified by faith.

Paul introduced justification by faith in 2:16,

...a man is not justified by the works of the Law

but {A MAN IS JUSTIFIED} through faith in Christ Jesus,

even we have believed in Christ Jesus,

so that we may be justified by faith in Christ

and not {be justified} by the works of the Law;

since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.

“Justify” – (dikaioo) -a term borrowed from the law courts.

- To “*justify*” means, “TO DECLARE RIGHTEOUS, OR INNOCENT.”
- Opposite: “to condemn” or “to pronounce guilty.”

BOICE WRITES,

“In themselves, all persons fall short of {God’s} standard – “FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD” (ROM. 3:23). But in Christ, God declares all righteous who believe, imputing divine righteousness to them...Justification ... expresses the judicial action of God apart from human merit according to which the guilty are pardoned, acquitted, and then reinstated as God’s children and as fellow heirs with Jesus Christ.”⁴

2. Paul appeals to their personal experiences.

Oswald Chambers: “We cannot learn beyond our experience.”

SERIES OF QUESTIONS:

WHO BEWITCHED YOU? [The false teachers]

❖ **Their personal experience with the gospel of Christ. :1**

The understood and received the gospel of grace: Christ Crucified

The gospel was clearly preached to you.

⁴ Boice, p. 42-43.

Publicly portrayed - prographo – “TO WRITE IT ON A PUBLIC BULLETIN BOARD”

“You could not have missed that Christ was crucified!”

Q - HOW COULD YOU ADD TO CHRIST’S PAYMENT FOR SIN?

William Hendricksen has said,

“A supplemented Christ is a supplanted Christ.”

PAUL WROTE,

“If righteousness comes by keeping the law Christ died needlessly”⁵

❖ **Their experience with the Holy Spirit.**

This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? (Gal. 3:2-3)

Q - HOW DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

By faith; or by keeping the law?

They received the Holy Spirit by faith when they believed.

No one ever received the Spirit by keeping the Law.

Q – If the Holy Spirit was crucial for your conversion, will He not also be crucial in your personal growth as a Christian?

DO YOU THINK THAT RULES, REGULATIONS, AND RITUALS WILL BRING SPIRITUAL GROWTH WHEN THEY WERE USELESS FOR SALVATION?

❖ **Their experience with suffering.**

⁵ Gal. 2:21.

Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?
(Gal. 3:4)

They were exposed to persecution when they followed the gospel.

(See Acts 14:19-22)

Q - WAS ALL YOUR SUFFERING IN VAIN? ...meaningless?

❖ **Their experience with God the Father.**

So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?

(Gal. 3:5)

God gave them the Holy Spirit and worked miracles among them.

Q – Did you earn the miracles God performed in their midst?

2. He looks to Abraham the example of faith.

Even so Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. Therefore be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham. (Gal. 3:6-7)

Everyone who is justified before God is justified by faith.

No one has been justified apart from faith.

“Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:1)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9)

See: Acts 13:38-39

Heb. 7:18-19, 22

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness

(for the Law made nothing perfect),

and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God...so much the more also Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant.”

If we come to Christ through grace alone the Father will give us His Holy Spirit, who will give us new life. Then Christ will live His life through us as we yield to Him and grow in grace.

Wonderful grace of Jesus
 Greater than all my sin
 How shall my tongue describe it
 Where shall its praise begin
 Taking away my burden
 Setting my spirit free
 For the wonderful grace of Jesus
 Reaches me

Chorus

Wonderful the matchless grace of Jesus
 Deeper than the mighty rolling sea
 Higher than the mountain
 Sparkling like a fountain
 All sufficient grace for even me
 Broader than the scope of my transgressions
 Greater far than all my sin and shame
 Oh magnify the precious name of Jesus
 Praise His name

Wonderful grace of Jesus
 Reaching the most defiled
 By its transforming power
 Making him God's dear child
 Purchasing peace and Heaven
 For all eternity
 And the wonderful grace of Jesus
 Reaches me