

HIS SIDE VERSUS OUR SIDE - OVERVIEW OF GALATIANS

Or, What is a TRUE Christian?

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CHAPTER 3

A REVELATION VERSUS A REASONING - GALATIANS 1:11, 12; 2:2

Where does a preacher, or a soulwinner, get his authority to speak for GOD? What sets Christianity apart from just another religion?

A Question of Authority

"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ;"
"And I went up by revelation" -- Galatians 1:11,12; 2:2

If the Christian faith is NOT a revelation of GOD it is merely another religion; possibly the best, but still one of the many, on a human level, subject to man's alterations and altercations.

The Judaizers of Paul's day wanted to make the Christian faith a revised version of the Jews' religion, subject to its legal regulations and requirements. Then it would be THEIR religion; they could keep it within the realm of their own reasonings. Their successors of our day are doing the same.

What the Christian faith needs is a return to its birthright -- an authoritative revelation. Take it, or leave it alone!

The Damascus Road Experience

To discredit Paul's message, these Judaizers must discredit the man. He is not an apostle, they said; he cannot qualify; he has never seen the risen Lord.

Paul devotes a chapter and a half to a detailed refutation of this calumny. He had seen the Lord, as He revealed Himself to him on the Damascus road. He had also heard the Lord speaking with him. It was a crisis experience. From being determined to destroy the faith, he became its most ardent and convincing advocate. Paul was no neurotic, easily swayed; he was schooled in all the

learning of his day. This right-about-face, traced as it is here in Galatians to its supernatural source, was utterly disconcerting to the enemies of the faith, as indeed it has been ever since.

A Christ-Centered Viewpoint

From that day forward Paul was a changed man. He had a new outlook upon life. He experienced an utter reversal of values; **"What things were gain to me"** -- his attainments in the Jewish religion -- **"those I counted loss for Christ"** (Philippians 3:7, with vv. 4-6). What he formerly prized he now esteems but **"... dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:"** (Philippians 3:8, 9).

Paul's repeated "but" carries the antithesis of a crisis experience. No trends here; no groping for something better. He knows himself taken out of the column of self-effort (v. 3) and flesh-confidence to the column of GOD's beneficiaries in the bestowment of His righteousness. It was a clear-cut break with OUR SIDE over to HIS SIDE.

Not by a process of reasoning but **"by revelation of Jesus Christ"** Paul acquired a complete system of Christ-thinking and living. Through CHRIST's words from heaven, **"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"** (Acts 9:4), he saw CHRIST indwelling His Church, fully identified with His people, suffering in all that they suffered.

In the silent years that followed, the quiet times spent in Arabia (Galatians 1:17), this realization of identification matured into the intimate conception of the Church as the body of which CHRIST is the Head (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Colossians 1:18).

A head and body constitute an organism. It is complete in itself, with its own laws of growth, **"building itself up in love"** (see Ephesians 4:12-16). A great conception this! Nothing can be added to a body! Controlled by its head, it requires no external laws for its regulation. The Christian life is Christ-centered and Christ-controlled. So constituted, it is fully self-sufficient. The apostle will defend its sufficiency against all comers.

Man Seeks Freedom of Thought

The chief enemy of the Gospel is human nature. Man is proud. Especially is he proud of his own thinking. He does not want to be told what to do or believe! He dislikes having a supernatural revelation handed to him; it leaves to room for speculation. He likes to "discover truth"; then it is HIS truth, something he can be proud of.

Many of us who willingly acknowledge that man's MORAL nature is perverted by sin -- the evidence is incontrovertible -- still refuse to realize that man's MENTAL processes are likewise warped, biased and undependable because of sin. The Corinthians prided themselves on their thinking. Read 1 Corinthians 1-2 for GOD's estimate of human thinking that set aside divine wisdom, climaxing in a statement of man's utter incapacity for spiritual things:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians

2:14).

It is to be feared that the average preacher of our day is feeding his mind upon human thoughts; and, naturally, these mould his own thinking and preaching, when the charge is, "**Preach the Word.**"

I was in a metropolitan preachers' meeting when the visiting speaker, a popular pastor, advocated preachers reading a BOOK A DAY (preparation for book reviews). Only a sense of courtesy restrained me from asking what he would advise as to habits of reading the Bible.

On a transcontinental trip I was thrown in with a preacher who had just pocketed a call to a pulpit under the eaves of an outstandingly modern university. He had with him a case containing a dozen to a score of books. From them he was busy gleaning the latest "trends" of thought. Later I came to know his ministry. His people testified that it lacked the Gospel. Human thought crowded it out.

The reason men of our day repudiate Paul's theology and turn with preponderant emphasis to the teachings of Jesus is crystal clear. By ridding themselves of a supernatural interpretation of those teachings, climaxing in His death and resurrection -- an interpretation which is rigidly unsusceptible of alteration -- they leave themselves free to give their own interpretation. They are free to speculate as to what those "teachings of Jesus" SHOULD mean for "the modern mind."

What Christendom needs is a renewed fear of GOD's anathema upon all perversions of the pure Gospel. It seems that nothing but such fear will bring us back to its unadulterated purity.

And we, with our very best intentions, need to exercise great care lest our ministry be but Galatianizing our people, through exhorting them to a goodness of life which is not definitely the expression of an inliving Presence.

~ end of chapter 3 ~

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