

CRUCIFIED TO LIVE

“I am crucified . . . nevertheless I live”

by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PAUL DECRIES SATANIC CHICANERY

“Ye were running well; who did hinder you? . . .” (Galatians 5:7)

The mental antics of men have reached a new peak in their treatment of religious matters. No one knows how many forces are militating against the spiritual welfare of man. They are as subtle as the sound of a cricket and as elusive as an hart on a woodland terrace. They can strike with the sting of an adder and envelop with the grace of an octopus. They are not detectable through a microscope, nor subdued by a common antidote.

No one lives long without an awareness of unfair artifices continually operating to pry loose whatever grip one may have upon matters of eternal promise. Numberless cases of waywardness and failure, sometimes of infinite pain and sorrow, exist because an issue was confused and the regrettable choice made. Then, when disillusionment leaves in its wake a life with an empty present and a dismal future, the question marks do little more than straighten into exclamations of pathos and pity. How incontrovertibly wise is the counsel of our wonderful Lord: **“Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.”**

Satan, the arch-enemy of the soul, is a treacherous trickster. He would block the course that leads to the sinner’s salvation and would blast his hopes for eternity. He seeks also to blind the eyes of the believer, to baffle his mind and to blight his testimony. He is a chicaner of the first magnitude. His deceptive and destructive ability is being woefully minimized if not willingly ignored. His appearance is as an angel of light. His appeal is multiform and his field of strategy exceedingly extensive. Man’s weakness is his main avenue of approach and he will dog man’s path while his emissaries dig the pitfalls. No accusation against him could possibly be libelous, for the Scriptures tell us that **“he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it”** (John 8:44). He rides forth with pride and boastfulness; and as he sticks in the spurs, he gallops men into the gutter, women into prostitution, young folk into vices, nations into wars and governments into ruin, leaving indescribable destruction and sorrow in his path. He is presumptuous (Job 1:6), proud (I Timothy 3:6) and powerful (Ephesians 2:2). He would pervert the Scriptures (Matthew 4:6), oppose God’s work (I Thessalonians 2:18) and hinder the gospel (II Corinthians 4:4).

Chicanery is the employment of shifts, subterfuges and artifices to draw attention away from the merits of a case or question. This is precisely what happened to the believers at Galatia. Who can say we are stronger than they? **“He that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed lest he fall.”** Paul expressed deep alarm by saying, **“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel”** (Galatians 1:6). This amazement is not sheer surprise. It is a disillusionment of heart-rending proportions. Like an athletic coach dealing with a faltering team, he inquires, **“Ye were running well, who did hinder you?”** Their course has been completed. Ours is yet in progress. Let the same voice spur us on as it urges, **“So run as to win.”**

Satanic chicanery is manifested in a multiplicity of manners, diversified as well as diabolical. It may be perpetrated in an innocent-appearing form such as the mirth of a Santa instead of the birth of the Saviour, a rabbit instead of the resurrection, reformation instead of transformation, deviation instead of dedication, duty instead of devotion, levity instead of loyalty or goodness instead of grace. These are undeniably and irrefutably his policies and his practices. He has become a pastmaster in the art of destroying reverence and discrediting worship.

The latest unabridged Webster dictionary says concerning chicanery, *“a mean or unfair artifice to obscure the truth and to perplex a cause.”* Hardly more than a casual perusal of the Galatian epistle is necessary to learn that this was decidedly the destructive stratagem Satan used among the believers there.

The truth was obscured by false representations.

“O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?” the Apostle sadly inquired.

A certain man by the name of Simon had bewitched the people of Samaria in some pedantic manner (Acts 8:9) but the Galatians were differently approached. The word which is used in the Apostle’s question (*bas-kah-ee-no*) means *to fascinate by false representations*. Now, can the reader begin to appreciate why Paul said he was amazed at the turn of affairs among them?

He could not conceive of any truly born-again person becoming so fascinated with a substitute that the glories of Christ should be eclipsed. Yet this is what had happened. That is why he termed them **“foolish”** or *“senseless.”* Their better judgment had been rendered inoperative. The one aspect of the situation which so deeply grieved Paul was the fact that they found joy in that which was false, even as the children of Israel found enjoyment joining with the heathen in dancing around the golden calf while Moses was on the mountain in the presence of the thrice-holy God.

It was because of a similar condition some six-hundred years before Christ that the Lord had a controversy with His covenant people.

Through Jeremiah, He said, **“An amazing and an horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so”** (5:30, 31).

Those who love, or are fascinated with, the false way naturally desire false teachers to favor them with such encouragement. Paul had met them before. He was well acquainted with these diabolical inclinations, for, said he, **“After their own lusts shall they heap unto themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned to fables”** (II Timothy 4:3, 4).

Yet, he was noticeably moved when such a blight had befallen the Galatian believers. It was a stunning blow to him, and he made no attempt to conceal his emotion. He had preached the true gospel to them and had seen the evident change which had come into their lives, but alas! the enemy began quickly to corrupt their minds. They were new converts—merely babes in Christ, and succumbed quite readily to the fascinating misrepresentations visited upon them by cunning devices of false agents.

It was in no vulgar sense that the Apostle referred to them as foolish.

It was an emphasized way of letting them know that they had acted unwisely. His main complaint, and a justified one, was that they had not obeyed the truth. When truth is not obeyed, it is comparatively easy for Satan to bring about an obscuration of fact.

Gullibility is caused by defenselessness, and defenselessness results when people are not bulwarked by the Word of God. **“To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”** (Isaiah 8:20). But, even though the Galatian believers were young Christians, they, nevertheless, had heard the gospel and believed. They professed to love Christ. Then, how could they become fascinated with a substitute?

It was almost too hard for Paul to bear. He could endure hardness, he could withstand an enemy, he could meet innumerable crises, but it nearly broke his heart when professing Christians waxed cold in their devotion to Christ or turned from His will. Their immaturity, regardless of the cause, depressed him. **“My little children,”** he wrote, **“I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you . . . for I stand in doubt of you”** (4:19, 20). Paul was not one to sit by in silence while the enemy attempted to confiscate the flock. He was constrained to rush to their rescue. He knew, even when he asked, who was hindering them. It was the one who not only hinders, but hates and hurts the people of God. He had to be dealt with.

“For still our ancient foe,
Doth seek to work his woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.

The Prince of Darkness grim—
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For, lo, his doom is sure
One little word shall fell him.”

The truth was obscured through feigned authorization.

Paul may not have known the names or the addresses of those who visited the Church at Galatia with such blatant false doctrines. Had he been there, he would not have tolerated their presence, but the Galatian believers were not sufficiently established to detect the error of the presentations, all the while imbibing the unorthodoxy issuing from these pseudo-prophets.

It is possible that the intruders had convincing credentials and were pleasant enough in their manners and methods, but even Satan comes as an angel of light. Personal niceties are not a concomitant to genuineness or good platform performance the criterion for orthodoxy. The Apostle had evidently received a glowing account of the visitors—how lovely, how convivial, how able. With him, it was not so much the persons present as the propositions presented. His reply brought a stinging denunciation. “**Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel . . . let him be accursed**” (1:8).

The truth was obscured by ulterior motives.

It is the devil’s plan to counterattack wherever the gospel is advanced in a spiritual offensive. He would not only offset but obliterate, if possible, the work accomplished by the Spirit. Paul had no scruples against terming these Judaizing doctors a group of troublemakers, and no hesitance in charging them with a cool, calculating intent to “**pervert the gospel of Christ**” (1:7).

This was the discerning mind of one who had walked and talked with God for more than two decades. His firmness but illustrated his great love for the gospel and his deep interest in the spiritual welfare of Christians. He did not court the favour of any man. He spoke when necessity arose and as the situation demanded and always without partiality. He contended, “**If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ**” (1:10). The Galatian matter was a cause for real concern and it had to be dealt with.

The cause was perplexed by some contravening power.

The tense tells the tale. They were running well, but the present demonstration was anything but commendable. How general this ignoble condition is among God’s people can only be accurately known by Him Who looks down from heaven upon the children of men, but a careful observation would indicate a great company who got off to a good start and then lost their sense of direction and wandered widely afield. The Ephesians left their first love (Revelation 2:4), and Demas turned toward the allurements of this present age (II Timothy 4:10).

There has ever been a way that “**seemeth right to man,**” and, without the mind of Christ and the leading of the Spirit, that is the course he is sure to take. “**My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,**” saith the Lord (Isaiah 55:8). We must recognize the incompatibility between God’s thoughts and ours and the definite distinction between His ways and any other way that might be suggested. By Scriptural imagery, this world is a wilderness, but God has well outlined the way that leads home, and the Bible is our infallible map. Hence, no one should become perplexed or diverted into diabolical detours.

That the Galatians were sadly perplexed was readily discernible by the Apostle. That is why he enquired, **“Who hath hindered you?”**

The laws of God are inexorable. They call for growth, advancement and progress. Any attempted reversal is neither for man’s good nor for God’s glory, yet they had turned back to the weak and beggarly elements, placing themselves again under the bondage of the law.

The subtlety of their false advisers is detected in that they seemingly did not disparage the blessings of Christianity nor criticize their acceptance; but, sentimentally, they argued that a religion so old and so tried as Judaism should not be utterly discarded for some new revelation. This, quite naturally, elicited a favorable response, with the result that they tried to appropriate the new, while still retaining the old.

They would gather in the name of Christ but would observe special days and months and times and years (4:10). This was most grievous to Paul who explained, **“If I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor”** (2:18). The inference was very clear. Appealing to what spiritual discernment they may have had, he pointedly asked, **“Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”** (3:3).

While it is good strategy for the enemy to cut the supply lines and to intercept the messages from headquarters, we must not minimize the sadness of that situation where Satan has so perverted the gospel that people are doomed but contented, and where believers are saved but most barren and unfruitful.

The same contravening power is operating effectively today, and the cause is so perplexed that isms and cults are springing up like weeds; and, true to the prediction of our Lord in His message to the disciples on the Mount of Olives, the time has come when many are being deceived. The real issue is lost because satanic propaganda is drawing the attention of the masses from the true meaning and transcendent importance of the finished work of Christ on Calvary.

The cause was perplexed by ill-persuasion.

The reason they were running well was because they were correctly started, and the reason they deviated was because they later were ill-advised. The course of their action proved the source of their advice. **“This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you,”** the Apostle pointed out, adding **“I do not frustrate (atheteo—“lay aside”) the grace of God; for, if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”** (2:21).

The word the Apostle used was expressive of their attitude; they had laid aside the grace of God by not obeying the Truth. Paul estimated the seriousness of the whole affair, the entrance of false teachers and the hearing they were granted, as being tantamount to a re-crucifixion of Christ (3:1). Weigh carefully his words to them on this indictment,

“O foolish Galatians . . . before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you” (3:1).

The many interrogations and emotional outbursts in the epistle reveal something of the depth of the sorrow which filled his heart when the incredible news reached him about the departure among the Galatian believers. Whether they would receive his correction and amend their ways, was a matter that he had to leave where faith rests every problem, but he sought hard to register the fact that their present procedure was not in keeping with their new calling and was irrefutably not of God.

Paul usually found, when in a difficult position, that a word of personal testimony was most helpful. Thus, he related to them how he:

- Walked by revelation (2:2),
- Lived by faith (2:20),
- Served with steadfastness (2:5)
- Fellowshiped through grace (2:9).

He explained that they were not the only ones who had to contend with the enemy forces, and the trait of a good soldier is never to give ground. This requires strength, the kind of strength which is derived from God's Word; but the Galatians closed their eyes to the Truth, were fascinated with false representations, became utterly confused and lost their testimony. The Apostle told them frankly and without equivocation that he was afraid of them, afraid of what deplorable effect their inconsistencies would have upon others who needed Christ and might be won for Him.

The cause is being perplexed by cunning substitutions.

There are three familiar appellatives used to set forth the relationship of believers to the Lord; namely, the temple, the body and the bride. They speak respectively of worship, service and fellowship, or communion, commission and companionship. The strategy of Satan is to corrupt the worship, disrupt the service and interrupt the fellowship, thereby robbing the Sovereign, the sinner and the saint.

God not only desires worship but commands it. "**Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.**" It is also stated that the Father seeketh such (John 4:23). This indicates both longing and lack, for that which is found in abundance is not sought after. God is not only a jealous God but a thrice-holy God and He has ever attached the greatest importance to His worship.

There is perhaps no other phase of the sacred sphere where Satan has made such devastating attacks. His demoniacal chicanery calls for a missing of the mark and it matters not to him which way the pendulum swings. To whatever extreme the people may be the more susceptible, to that end he directs their attention.

On the one hand, he presents hyper-ritualistic procedure with its emptiness; on the other hand, he encourages unguided informality with its appalling irreverence and its distasteful secular character.

The ritualist looks with disdain upon the informalist who, in turn, decries the ritualist. All the while both may have missed the mark according to the true standard of acceptable worship.

It would seem that the scriptural requirements call for enough dignity to make for reverence and sacredness, but enough informality to allow the Holy Spirit liberty in His operations. How can one work without worshipping? How can one benefit by worshipping unacceptably? To those in Malachi's day who followed their own inclinations in worship, the Lord said, "I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept an offering at your hand" (1:10).

Satan tries to disrupt the body by breaking the unity. His distractions and disturbances are occasioned by jealousy, misunderstanding, unkindness and personal ambition. If there is mutiny in the camp, no offensive can be waged. Prayer is thwarted, power diminished and witnessing limited. Then, the unsaved are justified in saying, "**No man cared for my soul**" (Psalm 142:4).

Where is the assembly of believers that has not felt the blow? Satanic treachery follows no rules and adheres to no laws. The body is for expression, but the Lord cannot express Himself when there is disruption. "**God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints**" (I Corinthians 14:33).

Disputation and division are twin evils and can only be avoided by the most careful and prayerful attention to basic matters—by obedience to the Word of God. There cannot be a united effort where there is a divided front and the forces of evil are continually operating to develop just such a precluding factor. Cumbersome organization and involved activity in a local church may have an imposing appearance to the outsider and a gratifying effect upon the one within and yet make not a solitary contribution to the cause of Christ. Unless the believer exercises the utmost vigilance, his fruit will be but leaves, dried and worthless at the coming of our Lord.

With the keen appreciation which Paul possessed, being filled with the Spirit, walking in closeness to His Lord and enjoying the triumphs of His grace, he could not refrain from decrying the deceptive devices which were so adversely affecting the well-being of the Galatian Christians.

His voice needs to be heard today, denouncing the subtle inroads of Satan so subtly visited upon the poorly informed and unsuspecting people who, in their sad complacency, are totally unaware of the irreparable loss they are sustaining. We ourselves may have known better and more fruitful days, but have been hindered.

"Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1, 2).

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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