

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GALATIANS 3 (PART 1)

PAUL IS WRITING THIS LETTER TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA OUT OF HIS LOVE AND CONCERN FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING. HE HAS RECEIVED WORD THAT AFTER HE LEFT THEM THEY BEGAN TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE TRUE GOSPEL HE ANNOUNCED. HE HAS PREACHED THAT A PERSON CAN BE FORGIVEN AND BROUGHT NEAR TO GOD THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST AND HIS WORK ON THE CROSS. THE OPPOSING MESSAGES INJECTED AN ADDITIONAL STEP OF FOLLOWING AND KEEPING THE MOSAIC LAW AS THE WAY TO *STAY* RIGHT WITH GOD.

PAUL'S CASE AGAINST THE "LEGALISM" GOSPEL IS THAT HIS MESSAGE TO THE GALATIANS CAME DIRECTLY FROM JESUS HIMSELF. (WHY WOULD YOU BELIEVE SOMETHING THAT ISN'T SOURCED AS WELL AS THAT!) HE THEN BRINGS THEM INTO HIS OWN BIOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY OF FAITH. WE LEARN THAT NOT ONLY WAS PAUL'S GOSPEL FROM CHRIST, BUT THE LEADING FIGURES OF CHRIST'S CHURCH ALSO BELIEVED AND TAUGHT THE SAME (NAMESLY JAMES, PETER & JOHN). PAUL TELLS THIS STORY TO BOLSTER HIS ARGUMENT THAT HIS MESSAGE WAS TRUE AND PURE.

AND NOW HE'S GOING TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE OUTSIDE REASONS AND POINT RIGHT AT THE GALATIANS' OWN EXPERIENCE WITH GOD AS IT RELATES TO THE GOSPEL AND ITS POWER. HE'S TALKED ABOUT HIS OWN JOURNEY AND NOW HE'S GOING TO ARRIVE CLOSE TO HOME, FOR THE GALATIANS.

GALATIANS 3:1-5 - PROBING QUESTIONS

THERE ARE A FEW KEY WORDS TO HIGHLIGHT IN PAUL'S QUESTIONS:

V. 1 - "BEWITCHED" - **βασκαίνω** (BASKAINO) - TO SPEAK EVIL, IN OTHER WORDS TO CAST A SPELL UPON, OR POWERFULLY DECEIVE.

"PUBLICLY PORTRAYED" - PAUL KNOWS HIS GOSPEL PREACHING WAS SO CLEAR THAT IT WAS AS IF THEY WERE THERE, OR HAD SEEN CHRIST CRUCIFIED. HE'S HITTING AT THE FACT THAT THEY KNEW WHAT THEY KNEW AND YET SOMEHOW GOT TRICKED ANYWAY. THAT'S WHY HE BEGINS THE VERSE WITH THE CONCEPT OF "FOOLISHNESS"

PAUL BEGINS WITH A SERIES OF DIRECT AND CHALLENGING QUESTIONS TO GET THE GALATIANS THINKING. THESE ARE QUESTIONS THAT CUT THROUGH THE EMOTION AND PRESSURE OF THE MOMENT AND GET TO THE HEART OF WHAT IS AT STAKE WITH ALL OF THIS. HERE'S A SUMMARY OF THESE QUESTIONS:

1 - DID YOU RECEIVE THE SPIRIT BY KEEPING THE LAW OR WHEN YOU HEARD THE GOSPEL AND HAD FAITH? (V. 2)

2 - YOU STARTED OUT THIS WALK OF FAITH BY RELYING ON GOD'S SPIRIT. ARE YOU NOW PLANNING TO FINISH THE RACE AND FIGHT SIN BY YOUR FLESH (PAUL'S WORD TO MEAN HUMAN ABILITY AND STRENGTH). (V. 3)

3 - DID YOU EXPERIENCE ALL THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS YOU HAVE SO FAR FOR NO REASON? IF YOU COULD HAVE JUST CONTINUED TO KEEP THE LAW AND BE SAVED, WHY HAVE YOU SUFFERED AS A CHRISTIAN (V. 4)?

4 - WHEN YOU HAVE SEEN SIGNS, MIRACLES AND WONDERS, DID YOU SEE THEM AS A RESULT OF KEEPING THE JEWISH LAW OR BY THE POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT WORKING BY FAITH? (V. 5)

THESE ARE ACTUALLY REALLY GOOD QUESTIONS!

BEFORE WE DIG INTO THESE QUESTIONS A BIT MORE, LET'S REMEMBER SOME OF WHAT IS RECORDED ABOUT PAUL'S TIME IN GALATIA.

ACTS 13:42-52 - PAUL & BARNABAS IN PISIDIAN ANTIOCH: THE GOSPEL SPREADING, DISCIPLES FILLED WITH JOY & THE HOLY SPIRIT

ACTS 14:1-3 - PAUL & BARNABAS IN ICONIUM: MANY SIGNS AND WONDERS

ACTS 14:8-10 - PAUL & BARNABAS IN LYSTRA: LAME (FROM BIRTH) MAN HEALED

ACTS 14:19-22 - PAUL STONED IN LYSTRA & MIRACULOUSLY HEALED

THESE SCRIPTURES RECORD WHAT HAPPENED TO AND IN THE EYES OF THE GALATIAN DISCIPLES THAT PAUL IS WRITING GALATIANS 3 TO. THEY HAD SEEN A GREAT MOVE OF GOD IN THEIR REGION AND IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST. SO NOW LET'S CONSIDER AGAIN PAUL'S QUESTIONS:

1 - DID YOU RECEIVE THE SPIRIT BY KEEPING THE LAW OR WHEN YOU HEARD THE GOSPEL AND HAD FAITH? (V. 2)

2 - YOU STARTED OUT THIS WALK OF FAITH BY RELYING ON GOD'S SPIRIT. ARE YOU NOW PLANNING TO FINISH THE RACE AND FIGHT SIN BY YOUR FLESH (PAUL'S WORD TO MEAN HUMAN ABILITY AND STRENGTH). (V. 3)

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THE RESOUNDING ANSWER TO PAUL'S RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IS "IT WAS BY FAITH IN THE GOSPEL AND THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD'S SPIRIT THAT OUR LIVES WERE CHANGED!" AND IF THAT'S THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION, THE FOLLOW UP QUESTION FOR THE CHURCH MUST BE GALATIANS 3:1:

"OH, FOOLISH GALATIANS! WHO HAS CAST AN EVIL SPELL ON YOU? FOR THE MEANING OF JESUS CHRIST'S DEATH WAS MADE AS CLEAR TO YOU AS IF YOU HAD SEEN A PICTURE OF HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS. (NLT)"

THIS BRINGS UP AN **IMPORTANT QUESTION** FOR US TO ANSWER.

Q - WHAT HAPPENED AND WHY? HOW DOES SOMEONE DRIFT FROM A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND A SIMPLE GRACE-BASED VIEW OF SALVATION TO BELIEVING THAT OBEYING A SET OF RULES IS RIGHT, BETTER, OR REQUIRED?

Q - WHAT ARE THE THINGS IN OUR WORLD THAT MIGHT CAUSE US TO DRIFT FROM THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL? NOT TO TURN TO SIN, BUT TO TURN TO TRUSTING IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE GRACE OF GOD. WHAT IS IT THAT TEMPTS US TO "EARN" OR "KEEP" OUR SALVATION?

Q - IN WHAT AREAS ARE YOU SUSCEPTIBLE TO TURNING AWAY FROM LIVING BY THE SPIRIT AND LIVING BY THE FLESH (AKA YOUR OWN EFFORTS AND ABILITY?)

PAUL IS SETTING UP SOMETHING HERE THAT WILL BECOME CLEARER LATER. THERE IS A BATTLE FOR EACH OF US BETWEEN THE "FLESH" AND THE "SPIRIT". OUR BATTLE OF THE FLESH MIGHT NOT BE KEEPING THE LAW, BUT THERE ARE CHALLENGES THAT WE WILL FACE IN THIS AREA NONETHELESS.

"LIVING BY THE SPIRIT" DOES NOT MEAN DO NOTHING AND GOD WILL DO EVERYTHING OR THAT ONCE YOU RECEIVE THE SPIRIT, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW YOU LIVE - IF YOU THINK THAT AFTER HEARING THE GOSPEL WE ARE ALL SET WITH NO RESPONSE, YOU'RE BEWITCHED JUST AS MUCH AS THE GALATIANS WERE. (EX: MATTHEW 7:21-23). WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHAT **GRACE** REALLY MEANS. WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT'S TRUE. WE OFTEN THINK THOSE TWO VIRTUES ARE IN COMPETITION SOMEHOW, BUT THEY ARE NOT. WE NEED GRACE *AND* TRUTH AND WE NEED TRUTH *AND* GRACE. PAUL'S HEART FOR THE GALATIANS, AND FOR US, IS THAT WE BE NOT MOVED AWAY FROM THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL AND SIMPLE DEVOTION TO JESUS AS OUR LORD, WHICH IS ALL EMPOWERED AND FUELED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

HE WILL WRITE TO THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH A SIMILAR WORD:

2 CORINTHIANS 11:3-4 - BUT I AM AFRAID THAT, AS THE SERPENT DECEIVED EVE BY HIS CRAFTINESS, YOUR MINDS WILL BE LED ASTRAY FROM THE SIMPLICITY AND PURITY OF DEVOTION TO CHRIST. 4 FOR IF ONE COMES AND PREACHES ANOTHER JESUS WHOM WE HAVE NOT PREACHED, OR YOU RECEIVE A DIFFERENT SPIRIT WHICH YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED, OR A DIFFERENT GOSPEL WHICH YOU HAVE NOT ACCEPTED, YOU BEAR THIS BEAUTIFULLY.

AND FOR US IN THIS CURRENT GENERATION, WE MUST RETURN TO THE JESUS REVEALED IN SCRIPTURE SPECIFICALLY. WE MUST ABIDE IN HIM, READING THE GOSPEL ACCOUNTS AND LETTING HIS TEACHINGS GUIDE US. HE PROVIDES THE PERFECT MIX OF GRACE AND TRUTH. AND THAT'S REALLY WHAT WE NEED IN THIS SITUATION. WE NEED THE GRACE OF GOD: TO KNOW WE'RE LOVED AND WANTED AND PURSUED, AND THAT NOTHING WE DO/DON'T DO EARNS THIS LOVE FROM GOD. AND WE NEED THE TRUTH OF GOD: WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON IN THIS WORLD, IN OUR HEARTS, WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED, HOW SHOULD WE LIVE? GRACE AND TRUTH. WE MUST HAVE THE BALANCE OF GRACE AND TRUTH. AND THE PLACE THOSE TWO REALITIES MEET IS IN JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF:

JOHN 1:14 - AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH, AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE SAW HIS GLORY, GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN FROM THE FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH.

JOHN 1:17 - FOR THE LAW WAS GIVEN THROUGH MOSES; GRACE AND TRUTH WERE REALIZED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

KEEPING OUR EYES ON JESUS IS THE FIRST AND PRIMARY ROLE OF A DISCIPLE. IF OUR COMMITMENT IS TO HIM, WE WON'T BE SWAYED BY COUNTERFEITS, IMITATIONS OR OTHER OFFERS. WE'LL CLOSE TODAY WITH THE REMINDER FROM THE GREAT HYMN:

*ON CHRIST THE SOLID ROCK I STAND,
ALL OTHER GROUND IS SINKING SAND,
ALL OTHER GROUND IS SINKING SAND.*