

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE GALATIANS

Part Five Doctrinal Section

V. Paul's Vindication of the Gospel Galatians 3:1 - 4:31

In this, the very core of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, he sets forth in order the unshakable arguments which support the Gospel which he proclaimed.

A. The Argument from the Experience of the Galatian Christians

1. Their experience of receiving the Gospel (Galatians 3:1)

"O unreflecting Galatians, who bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was placarded publicly as the Crucified One?"
(Wuest's Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament: Volume II; Acts Through Ephesians, p. 204)

- a. The word translated "foolish" means "not thinking." This crisis had come upon the Galatian church because the Christian community there had not really thought through what they were doing in listening to the words of the Judaizers. Paul sets forth several very pointed questions in order to jolt the Galatians into thinking seriously about what was happening to them.
- b. The first of these questions asks how the Galatians could turn away after having the Gospel so clearly presented to them.
 - (1) The word "bewitched" refers to the deception employed by sorcery. It does not mean that Paul believed in witchcraft, for the Bible condemns this in no uncertain terms. It is used as a figure, for just as witchcraft fascinates and turns the eyes of those lured by it, so the Galatians were being deceived into turning from Christ.
 - (2) The words translated "evidently set forth" in the Authorized Version mean to "display something openly as on a placard in the public square." It refers to Paul's preaching of the Gospel in the Galatian churches. Paul had set forth the atoning work of Christ as certainly and clearly as a public announcement written in three-inch letters, displayed before the eyes of all. Rather than keeping their eyes fixed on the crucified and risen Lord, the Galatians turned their eyes aside in response to the sorcery of the Judaizers.
- c. We are reminded by the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 that in the last days there will be those who will seek to deceive Christians and turn them aside from the truth.
 - (1) verses 4 and 5 - "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."
 - (2) verse 11 - "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many."
 - (3) verse 24 - "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

We are living in the days when these prophecies are being fulfilled. Let us keep our eyes upon the Christ of the Scriptures, lest we be bewitched by twentieth-century sorcerers who come dressed in clerical garb and speak swelling words.

"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ..."

2. Their experience of receiving the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2)

"I will ask you one simple question: did you receive the Spirit of God by trying to keep the Law or by believing the message of the Gospel?"
(Letters to Young Churches by J. B. Phillips, p. 95. Note: Phillips' work is not a translation from the Greek, it is a paraphrase. It is a helpful study but never should be substituted for a good translation of the original.)