

Lesson 9

"Paul's Pastoral Appeal"

How does a pastor deal with conflict in his church? For that matter, how does a prophet deal with an offshoot movement? "Paul's pastoral appeal" is an effort at conflict resolution (Gal. 4:12-20).

Paul reminds the Galatians that his missionary approach was to become a Galatian to the Galatians--"I am as ye are" (vs.12). He fit in with them. He spoke their language. He ate at their table. He lived among them. Insofar as possible, without compromising Christian ethics, he lived as a Galatian.

Now, Paul writes, "be as I am." And how is Paul? "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). Paul has so completely chosen to identify with the Crucified One that it is no longer Paul who lives, but Christ who lives in him. He lives the at-one-ment life by the faith of the Son of God. This is why their enemy stance toward Paul is no offense to him. Paul's ego is dead in Christ (Gal. 4:12).

Physically speaking Paul was not "easy on the eyes" when he commenced preaching the gospel in their midst. But the gospel he proclaimed was "in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4), so that the people saw Christ crucified among them. The Galatians received Paul as a messenger of God, even as they would have received Jesus. And accepting Christ, they were filled with the power and joy of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 4:14).

But now all that has changed. "The blessedness ye *spake* of" is gone (vs. 15), which is the blessing of Abraham. The blessing of knowing that Christ had redeemed them from the curse of the law through the promise of the Spirit which is righteousness by faith activated by *agape*-love has been lost. The Galatians have been "bewitched" by the false gospel of "the Pharisees which believed" (Gal. 3:1; Acts 15:5).

The counterfeit gospel teaches that once launched into salvation by faith in the Messiah, one must do something in order to continue in salvation; namely, "the works of the law." And once the door has been opened just a crack for faith to be motivated by egocentric concerns, there is no end to the idols one must obey in order to be saved, including the worship of spirits on calendar days from which bondage the Galatians had been delivered (Gal. 4:9, 10).

While the Galatians enjoyed this blessedness, its fruit appeared in the love which they showed to Paul. This love was the very self-sacrificing love of Christ--the abundant love of God shed abroad indeed in the heart, by the Spirit which they had received. Seeing the apostle in need of eyes, they would gladly have plucked out their own and given them to him, if such a thing could have been done (vs. 15).

But now, what a change! From that height of blessedness they are driven back into such a condition that Paul is obliged to appeal to them: "Am I therefore become your *enemy*, because I tell you the *truth*?" (vs. 16). This is the mark of the Galatian. It is the mark of the man who professes to be a Christian justified by faith, but does not have the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ. Whoever tells him the truth he considers his enemy.

The Galatian considers himself "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" (Rev. 3:17). When the prophet warns him that he is not in "the truth of the gospel," he rejects the Spirit of Prophecy. The mark of Galatianism is the rejection of the prophetic gift. It is the mark of man and worldliness to persecute the messenger of truth and consider him the enemy.

Galatianism is the mark of the carnal mind that is at enmity with God (Rom. 8:7). Pride does not like the "most precious message" which uplifts and honors the Crucified One. Self does not wish to submit in repentance at the foot of the cross. "Many" in the one true denominated church of Christ did this in the 1888 era and the attitude of the "fathers" is perpetuated to this day whenever the message is proclaimed. [1] Our history of rejection of justification by faith united with the cleansing of the sanctuary truth is justified with the argument that the church did accept righteousness by faith and corrected its legalistic course. Therefore, the church has no need to repent.

However, the Spirit of Prophecy tells us otherwise. "We may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years, as did the children of Israel; but for Christ's sake, His people should not add sin to sin by charging God with the consequence of their own wrong course of action. [2]

Who has created this disunity in the church? Is it the one who has proclaimed "the truth of the gospel" or is it the Agitators who advocate righteousness by "the works of the law"? Is it the Spirit of Prophecy that creates division or is it those who reject what the prophet writes?

Paul squarely acknowledges the zeal of those who teach faith and works. They are the "offshoot movement" that teaches separationism out of selfish motives. He writes: "These

teachers of a counterfeit gospel have great zeal to win you over to their side so you can be fellow fanatics with them in an offshoot program" (Gal. 4:17). [3]

You want to be zealous? Then be zealous for a good cause. Is the gospel a self-propelled vehicle? Or does its proclamation and propagation depend on church members (and pastors!) constantly being prodded by church leaders into action? "Lay Activities" leaders in churches can testify: to get much done it takes constant "promotion."

The New Testament letters of the apostles reveal a strange lack of such works "promotion." They chronicle amazing activity, but seldom if ever were believers prodded or whipped into action. Their zealous activity was simply assumed, it was natural. Their gospel was a "self-propelled vehicle." Why?

Their message had the power built-in. Nobody needed to be whipped into action. The motivating force was greater than that of a steam engine, for the power was implicit in the news about the sacrifice of the Son of God. He burst upon everyone's consciousness as "the Lamb of God," a blood-sacrifice offered by God. Examples: "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14).

Someone must travail before children are brought forth (Gal. 4:19). Herein lies the danger in human planning, in the work of God, lest human wisdom devise short cuts in methods of world evangelism, which to a lukewarm church seem very acceptable. It is easy to sit in a comfortable pew and give offerings. It appears to provide fuel for the continued operation of evangelistic machinery, 21st Century devised, labor-saving and man-power saving in its skillful design to "finish the work" in the shortest possible time with the least possible man-power and travail of soul. If an invention of a clever committee could be made to give life, then verily righteousness would come by evangelistic inventions. No running to and fro, and no knowledge that shall be increased in the time of the end will ever take the place of that "travail in birth" on the part of soul winners, "until Christ be formed in" the converts.

If modern methods of spiritual obstetrics are discovered which obviate the old-fashioned travail, which the church of old endured when she brought forth her children, it may be doubted whether Christ is formed indeed within the "converts." No "push-button" warfare will close the great battle between Christ and Satan. The old hand-to-hand fighting, heart-to-heart wrestling in the Spirit against principalities and powers, alone can bring triumphs of faith.

--Paul E. Penno

