

The Antidote for Church Stability

Donald Spencer

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Outline

- I. Introduction
- II. Who were the Galatians
- III. Why the Galatian church was dear to Paul
- IV. What was their mistake
- V. How can the church today learn from the mistake of the church at Galatia
- VI. What is the solution for guarding against heresy in the church
- VII. How should leaders deal with heretics and disrupters of the truth of the Gospel
- VIII. Conclusion
- IX. References

Introduction

The early church was confronted with many crises that endangered the very existence of the Church. Satan expended every apparatus at his disposal in an attempt to get rid of the God-chosen vessel for the proclamation of the gospel, the good news, of our Lord Jesus Christ. There were writers of the Bible such as Paul, Peter, Jude and John, who wrote of evil-doers who attempted to afflict damage to the faith of the Church. One of those crises became so overwhelming to the fabric of the church in Galatia that it had to be addressed. It was a problem that could not be ignored. This was such a threat that Paul had to personally address the problem. If the problem was not addressed, it would exist and possibly destroy the faith of the Church, and it would possibly have a lasting effect on the future of Christianity.

A question to ask is has the issues that threatened the Church of Galatia been resolved. Did Paul, in his Epistle to the church of Galatia, manage to put an end to this disruption to the church? Has it been vindicated or is it still a threat to the Church of today? To answer this question we first must know who the Galatians were, Why the Galatian church was dear to Paul, What was their mistake, how can the church today learn from the mistake of the church at Galatia, and what is the solution for guarding against heresy in the church.

The People

Who were the Galatians? Galatia was a province in the Roman Empire, in the area known as central Asia Minor¹. Surprisingly, the people of the region were Celts² that migrated from Gaul³. These Celts were the ancestors of some of the French, Scots, Irish and so forth are from the

1 Modern day Turkey.

2 The Greek word *Galatai* is a variant of *Keltai* or *Keltoi*, that is the "Celts"

3 An ancient region of Europe, in the area now known as France, Belgium, southern Netherlands, southwestern Germany, and northern Italy.

Danube basin of central Europe. These ancestors, not only migrated west to Gaul and Britain but they would migrate southeast into north central Asia Minor, in the following centuries. Galatia consisted of a “melting pot”; a mixture of people and cultures. It was populated by Greeks, Jews, and Romans.

Paul’s Relationship with The Church of Galatia

On their first missionary journey, according to Acts 13:14-14:23, Paul and Barnabas established churches in the cities of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe⁴. Paul had a close and devoted relationship with the church in Galatia. These were a group of people that were pagans and gentiles to which Paul gave everything to preaching the truth of who Jesus was and is. To the People of Galatia Paul taught salvation by grace through faith, and he taught that salvation comes by the work of Christ and not by our work. Because of the teachings He was able to move many of the Galatians to convert to Christianity. These were like his children in Christianity.

Mistake Made by the Galatians

After Paul and Barnabas had left Galatia There arose a problem in the church in Galatia. Paul received word that there were certain Jews⁵ that had come to the church preaching a different Gospel than the one Paul has preached. This made Paul agitated with the Galatians. He was agitated because he knew that he had just preached the good news of Jesus to the people in Galatia and they had received the word and were converted. And now someone had preached a false doctrine to the people which cause the Galatians to become disoriented in their doctrine and in their conduct. At least some of the Gentile Galatian saints had adopted the view of the Judaizers. They were willing to submit to the rite of circumcision, thereby obligating themselves

⁴ All located in southern region of Galatia.

⁵ Referred to as Judaizers

to keep the whole Old Testament law. In other words the Galatians have gone astray. After all that Paul has put into building, encouraging and nurturing their faith they were turning away from God, and turning back to ritualistic practices.

Lesson learn from the mistake of the church at Galatia

There are some lessons that the church of today can learn from the Galatians. One big mistake made by the Galatian was turning away from “sound doctrine”. If someone has received the truth of Christ and turn from it there are consequences to pay. To my understanding to avoid this problem the church has to first receive the word. After receiving the word then, one must believe the word. The church must trust and stand on the word to maintain the word. To accomplish this the church must study his word to know it. If the church knows his word the church should not be so easily turned from sound doctrine by false teachers⁶ preaching false doctrines.

What is the solution for guarding against heresy in the church

The solution for protection against false teachers and their false doctrine is actually simple. First, we must know the truth. We know the truth by knowing the word of God⁷. Knowing his word will enable us to recognize their heresy and false manner of living. Second, we must be obedient to sound doctrine and its clear principles and teachings even if others think you are crazy or you would prefer something else. Total submission to God’s will will protect you from the traps and snare of Satan, the pressure of the world, and the temptations and the desires of the flesh. These are vessels used by false teachers to lead you astray.

⁶ They were known as Judaizers. A sect in early Christianity. Some say they were elite Pharisees.

⁷ Scripture

How should leaders deal with heretics and disrupters of the truth of the Gospel

So, how should pastors and other church leaders deal with the problem of heresy and disrupters of the church? First, at the top of the list, I believe that you should make up your mind that you are going to love them just as Jesus Christ love you and he also loves them. It may be a tough and feel like an impossible thing to do. But, it can be done in Christ's strength.

Secondly, Pray for them. Seriously...just pray for them. It is commanded by Jesus when he Said "But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"⁸.

Lastly, the church leader should be on the watch for such individuals that promote heresy and disruption to the church. They can be manipulative and deceptive. They can cause a whole lot chaos and problems before you ever see it coming. If they are in leadership positions get them out as soon as possible because they are a problem now, but they may become toxic to the church in the future.

Conclusion

Just as the early church was confronted with many crises that endangered the very existence of the Church, Satan continues to expended every agent at his disposal in an attempt to destroy the God-chosen vessel for the proclamation of the gospel, the good news, of our Lord Jesus Christ. But the good news is we have a source in which we can learn the mistakes made by the early church, With the writings of the Apostle Paul and others⁹, we can learn how to identify the disrupters, and how to look for their ploy to cause problems for the church. Through the

⁸Matthew 5:44 King James Version (KJV)

⁹ Other writer such as Peter, John, Jude, and Timothy

writings of the Bible we can learn what the leadership of a church can do to address those that teach false doctrine and cause disruption in the Church.

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