

MSB254

MORE Seed and Bread

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE ZEAL OF THE JUDAIZERS

By M. B. Hammond

The Apostle Paul probably worked more diligently than any of the other apostles among the nations and the Jews in the dispersion. This was to the great consternation of the Jewish leaders and others, these Judaizers, who deliberately tried to hinder Paul along the way.

When he was converted on the road to Damascus, Christ had told him what he would have to endure. When Ananias was sent to return Paul's sight, he was fearful saying, . . . **Lord I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem. . . . But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake** (Acts 9:13-16). He then carried out the command, . . . **and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost** (Acts 9:17). When Paul was teaching in Antioch, **As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost (Spirit) said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them** (Acts 13:2). That was his first missionary journey, going to Cypress, Cilicia and Galatia where he established a large number of believers.

When Paul returned to Antioch (Acts 14:26-28), his glowing report was accepted by the saints, but soon this was challenged: **And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other**

of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and the elders about this question (Acts 15:1-2). This is the first we hear about the Judaizers and they are identified more explicitly in the passage that follows. **And when they were come to Jerusalem, they** (Paul and Barnabas) **were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider this matter** (Acts 15:4-6). In the next passage (15:7-11), Peter came to the defense of Paul and Barnabas, explaining that when he was sent to the house of Cornelius, a Roman centurion and Gentile, God gave them the Holy Spirit on the basis of faith and put no such yoke on them. James then clarified this further (Acts 15:13-21). Rather than imposing the law of Moses, he only asked that they abstain from pollutions of idols, from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. This was put in a written statement and was sent back to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

According to the chronology in the Scofield Bible, that meeting in Jerusalem took place in 52 AD, and after returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas decided to go back to the converts of their first journey. Barnabas determined to take John Mark and went back to his native land of Cyprus, while Paul took Silas and went back to Galatia. Armed with the written approval of the apostles in Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas were able for a time to overcome the zealous teachings of the Judaizers, and so, Paul, with the urging of the Holy Spirit, went on to Macedonia and Achaia to establish new believers. 1st and 2nd Thessalonians were written, about a year apart, to believers in Macedonia from Corinth in Achaia, where Paul remained for a year and a half. Paul returned to Jerusalem (Acts 18:21-22) and then to Antioch. This second missionary journey was about three and a half years in duration, which suggests that the Judaizers had plenty of time to go into the Galatian areas where Paul had made many converts to the faith. These Judaizers attempted to undermine the faith of the believers and get them to be circumcised and follow the law (Acts 15: 1-2), rather than the teaching of Paul.

When Paul began his third missionary journey, he went back through Galatia before going over to Ephesus where he stayed three years. Acts 18:22-23 reveals: **And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and saluted the church** (James and brethren in Jerusalem), **he went down to**

Antioch. And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. The epistle to the Galatians was written from Ephesus during his first six months there. Paul had just visited with them, and was very unhappy with the way these Judaizers had led these naive new believers away from his teachings as if there was another "better" gospel. There is little doubt in my mind that the Judaizers felt the shame of the cross much more personally than we can understand. In Galatians 3: 10-13 Paul says, **For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written (Deut. 27:26), Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith (Hab. 2:4). And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.** A comparable passage is 2 Corinthians 5:21 where Paul says, **For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who (Christ) knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.** The death on the cross was the most ignominious death any human could suffer, and the Judaizers were greatly ashamed of being identified with Christ's death.

These Judaizers were believing Pharisees who knew that baptism was an identification with both His death and His resurrection. They were so controlling they thought that certainly any Gentile who believed must be circumcised and follow the law of Moses, in effect, becoming a Jewish proselyte. In their minds the deeds of the law negated the shame of the cross and made them righteous in their "works" (though it canceled the grace of God and made them as unsaved).

A further factor in their minds was jealousy of the position of equality that God had given those believing ones of the nations. Paul, in Romans, declares, **I say then, Have they (the Jews) stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them (the Jews) to jealousy (Rom. 11:11).** Clearly, these Pharisees, who had already usurped much of the priestly and Levitical duties, were attempting to be the law-givers and take over leadership even among the out-called ones. This explains Paul's great anger toward the Galatians where he wrote, **I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another**

gospel: which is not another; but there be some (Judaizers) that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed (severed) (Gal. 1:6-8).

Paul even castigates Peter who had visited the out-called ones in Antioch. He declared, **But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain (Judaizers) came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If thou being a Jew, livest after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? (Gal. 2:11-14).** Paul went on to great lengths to make this point. In its simplest form he said, **We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified (made righteous) by the works of the law, but by faith of (in) Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of (in) Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Gal. 2:15-16).** This powerful statement completely negated the teachings of the Judaizers, but they continued to plague Paul's footsteps and create dissension everywhere he went. In Galatians 6:12-16 Paul throws a parting barb at the Judaizers who had been so disruptive in Galatia. Describing them, Paul declares: **Those who desire to make a good showing in the flesh try to compel you to be circumcised, simply that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. For those who are circumcised do not even keep the Law themselves, but they desire to have you circumcised, that they may boast in your flesh. But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon the Israel of God (NAS).**

The Judaizers were only interested in appearances for their spiritual rulers in Jerusalem, the priests and Pharisees. It is evident that several of the Jews who claimed to be believers were so zealous for the Law that they were in real fear of those Jewish leaders who claimed the power of God in the

temple worship. In fact, they were in fear of being persecuted for the cross of Christ if they were unable to get the Galatians to be circumcised. Paul states very clearly that circumcision was meaningless besides the real salvation in Jesus Christ.

Galatians had been written on the third missionary journey when Paul came to Ephesus. He spent three years there and going through Macedonia and to Corinth (where he spent three months). He returned to Jerusalem about four years later. Luke relates, **And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (myriads, tens of thousands) of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law** (Acts 21:17-20). These words clarify the misunderstanding of the Judaizers. Their salvation was in Christ, but their zeal for the Law only identified them as Jews. The resolution of this conflict was the reason he wrote the epistle to the Hebrews while in prison two years at Caesarea.

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