

COMMON SENSE CHRISTIANITY



Have you ever lost a friend's confidence and did not know why there was a turning away?

Have you ever evaluated someone without looking at previous experiences you had with them?

Do you change for change sake...or do you evaluate the past, present and future before coming to a set conclusion?

Have you ever had a problem solved without looking at the problem?

Contrast Summary of What We Have Been Taught from the Letter to the Churches in Galatia

- ***Conversion to Perversion***
- ***Friend to Foe***
- ***Love to Lack of Respect***
- ***Faith to Fear***
- ***Wisdom to Weariness***

APPEAL TO COMMON SENSE CHRISTIANITY

[\(Galatians 4:12-20\)](#) 4:12-20 Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, because I became as you are. I have no complaints against the way that once you treated me. You know that it was because I was ill that I first preached the gospel to you. It must have been a temptation to you to do so, but you did not look on me with contempt or turn with loathing from me, but you received me as if I were an angel of God, as you would have received Christ Jesus. I once had cause to congratulate you. Where has that cause gone to? I am prepared to give evidence in your favor that you would have dug out your eyes and given them to me. So then have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth? It is not for any honorable reason that these other people pay court to you, but because they wish to put the barriers up so that you will have to pay court to them. It is always a fine thing to be zealous in a fine affair, and that not only when I am actually present with you. My little children, for whom I suffer the birth-pangs all over again, until you have taken the form of Christ, I wish I could be with you now! I wish that I had not to talk like this to you, because I am worried about you."

Paul makes a personal appeal; not a theological one.

- Paul reminds them that for their sake he had become a Gentile:
- He stopped the traditions in which he had been brought up and become what they are...
- His appeal is that they should not seek to become Jews but might become like himself.

This is not a problem with a proud or haughty spirit on Paul's part. When he stated that he pleads with them to become as he is, he is not referring to his purity or lack of sin on his part...He is saying to the Galatian church members to "give everything you have for the cause of Christ. God saved you to hold on to your faith no matter the circumstance."

PAUL PREACHED THE GOSPEL UNDER THE MOST TRYING OF CIRCUMSTANCES. HE WOULD NOT RETREAT FROM THE GRACE MESSAGE JUST TO APPEASE THE JEWISH TRADITIONS.

Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is probably first seen here.

"You know that it was because I was ill that I first preached the gospel to you."

2 Corinthians 12:7b-10, "...in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

What was the "thorn in the flesh" Paul experienced in his life as a Christian...maybe before he was a Christian?

"Thorn"....can be interpreted from the same Greek word as "Stake."

There have been many theories as to what the "thorn (stake) in the flesh meant."

Some of those theories are "out there"...while others are possible (What we know for sure is that it does not say in the Bible what the "thorn in the flesh" is).

Theories as to “the thorn in the flesh”:

1. **Spiritual temptations**---the temptation to doubt his mission...and to shirk his duties...sting of conscience when temptation conquered. (Calvin’s view)
2. **The opposition and persecution which he had to face, the constant battle with those who tried to undo his work. (Luther’s view)**
3. **Carnal temptations**....when monks and hermits locked themselves up in their monasteries, they found that the last instinct that could be tamed was that of sex. This was the view of the Roman Catholics.
4. **Paul’s physical appearance.** “His bodily presence was weak” 2 Cor.10:10but what about the pain that was there...true pain in the flesh?
5. **Epilepsy...painful and recurrent...sometimes it produced trances and visions.** People literally turned from the epileptic stating this was demonic....and Satan had control of the person that had it. People spat upon the epileptic in those times.
6. **Severe headaches....migraine type headaches.** It will put you down for a while.

Tertullian and Jerome believed that.

7. **Eye trouble....when he was blinded, he never fully recovered.**

Paul stated in Galatians...that they would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him (Galatians 4:15)...End of Galatians Paul writes “See in what large letters I am writing to you” Galatians 6:11....as if he was saying of himself...I am having a difficult time seeing.

8. **Suffered from chronically recurrent attacks of virulent malarial fever which haunted the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean.**

This was an extreme pain....”like the grinding, boring pain in one temple”...like the dentist’s drill...or “the red-hot bar thrust through the forehead”...sometimes reaching the extreme point of human endurance.

Paul prayed that it may be taken from him...but God answered that prayer as He answers so many prayers.....he did not take the thing away but gave Paul strength to bear it....

Is this not how God works? He sometimes does not spare us things, but makes us able to conquer them.

**To Paul came the promise and the reality of the “All-sufficient grace.”
Some of the things in which that grace was sufficient:**

• **It was sufficient for physical weariness.**

John Wesley....preached 42,000 sermons, averaged 4,500 miles a year. He rode 60 to 70 miles a day and preached 3 sermons per day on the average.

When he was 83...he wrote in his diary, "I am a wonder to myself. I am never tired, either with preaching, writing, or travelling."

That...my friend, was the work of the "All-Sufficient Grace."

- **It was sufficient for physical pain.**

Once a man went to visit a girl who was in bed dying of an incurable and a most painful disease. He took with him a little book of cheer for those in trouble, a sunny book, a happy book, a laughing book. "Thank you very much," she said, "but I know this book." "Have you read it already?" asked the visitor. The little girl answered, "Yes sir, I have...I wrote it."

That was the work of the "All-Sufficient Grace."

- **It was sufficient for opposition.**

All his life Paul was up against it and all his life he never gave in. No amount of opposition could break him or make him turn back.

That was the work of the "All-Sufficient Grace."

- **It made Paul able, as this letter shows, to face slander.**

There is nothing so hard to face as misinterpretation and cruel misjudgment.

Once a man threw a pail of water on a mighty man of God. The man of God said nothing at all. And when a friend asked him how he could bear it without wanting to counter act, he said, "He threw the water not on me, but on the man he thought I was."

The "All-Sufficient Grace" made Paul care not what men thought him to be but what God knew him to be.

Remember, in every opportunity there will be problems...but it is also true, that in every problem there are opportunities.

Do you have the desire to be a Christian soldier no matter what the cost?

Do you understand the consequences of being a "faithful to the end" follower of Christ Jesus?

God wants you to know that He never fails you...that no matter what you are going through, His grace is sufficient for you.

"It was through illness that first he (Paul) came to them."

Remember: "The Galatians would have given him their eyes if they could have done so."

It has been suggested that Paul's eyes always troubled him because he had been dazzled so much on the Damascus Road that ever afterwards he could see only dimly and painfully.

Note: In Galatians 6:11, "See in what large letters I am writing in my own handwriting."

Leads me to believe that Paul had a problem with his eyes...and this MIGHT be his "thorn in the flesh."

Conclusion: He talks about those who were sedulously paying court to the Galatians;

- *Meaning: those who were seeking to persuade them to adopt Jewish ways were trying to turn the Galatians away from Paul's teaching...and have them to pay humble court to them to be allowed in order to be circumcised and enter the Jewish nation.*
- *The Judaizers (seducers) paid court to the Galatians to get control of the Galatians and reduce them to subjection to themselves and to the law.*

Paul let the Galatians know that bringing the cause of Christ (the grace faith belief) cost him pain like a mother's travail; and now he has to go through it all again. Christ is in them, as it were in embryo; he has to bring them to birth.

"My little children" always express deep affection when it is stated in the New Testament. John often uses this expression but Paul uses it nowhere else except here with the Galatians; his heart is running over for the Galatians.

