

"Ye Were Running Well ..."

"Ye were running well; who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you" (Gal. 5:7f). Galatians were given to acting quickly and without forethought. They had responded eagerly and speedily to the gospel, receiving the apostle as an angel of God; so attached to him that, had it been possible, they would have given their eyes to him (Gal. 4:11f). Just as quickly they turned aside from what they learned inasmuch that Paul marveled at their fickleness (Gal. 1:6-9). But, they had had help. Someone was hindering them from running as they had run. Paul knew that source of that problem was Satan. But Satan had his angels and Paul asked these brethren who it was who had hindered them. He was certain of one thing: this persuasion -- i.e. that they should receive circumcision and the law -- came not of him who had called them. Had they remained in the doctrine of Christ, they would have known that *"neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith working through love"* (5:6).

And so he warned them, *"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"* (5:9). This was likely a proverbial statement, the significance of which has not lost its meaning even today. Paul sent the same warning to Corinthian brethren when he charged them to withdraw from the incestuous brother. He asked, *"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"* (1 Cor. 5:6)? This characteristic of leaven was recognized by Jesus in his parable on leaven. *"Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened"* (Mt. 13:33). A similar statement is found in 1 Cor. 15:33: *"Be not deceived, God is not mocked. Evil companions corrupt good morals."* Now when Paul warned against the working of leaven in the Corinthian church, it was morals to which he referred. Here in Galatians five the warning against the effects of leaven is a warning against false doctrine. False doctrine is as leaven, if it is not exposed and ferreted out, soon the whole body will reek of it.

Still, although he marveled at the Galatians and called them *"foolish,"* he was not in complete despair concerning them. *"I have confidence to you-ward in the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded"* (5:10). Even though his rebuke and warning was severe, he does not regard them as beyond hope. His letter was written to shake them, to sting them; but he believed the fruit it produced would be that their sensibilities would be awakened to the jeopardy of their souls which Judaistic teachers had placed them in. *"But, he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be"* (5:1). Jesus warns of the severity of judgment passed upon such an one:

"Woe unto the world because of the occasions of stumbling! For it must need be that the occasions come, but woe unto that man through whom that occasion comes" (Mt. 18:7)! It is terrible for a man to lose his soul because he embraced false doctrine; it is infinitely worse for him that through his teaching of error, he should also persuade others to embrace it. Was the teacher or teachers in Galatia working undercover as a termite, feigning themselves sound, lovers of God and Paul? Paul does not name these teachers as he does in other places, but whoever they were, they must have experienced a tremor of fear when they read Paul's words, *"He shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be!"* NEXT: "If I Still Preach Circumcision ..."

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