

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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Judaizers: Final Thoughts

By Brian R. Kenyon

The previous articles on “Judaizers: Old and New,” seems to have struck a chord among our readers. The editor has had much feedback, mostly positive, concerning the content of these articles. In a publication such as this, much editing has to be done in order to fit the material in this limited space. As a result, much is sometimes left out. That was the case with Parts 1 and 2 of the articles on Judaizers. Thus, in this final article, we will include material that had to be cut out of the previous parts by examining two more ways the Judaizers of Paul’s day harmed the church and make comparisons with some today who, like the Judaizers of old, can potentially harm the church of our day as well.

The opponents Paul refers to in Second Corinthians and Galatians are known as “Judaizers,” or “Judaizing teachers.” Again, these terms are not explicitly mentioned in the text, but have been humanly coined to describe these opponents because of their insistence on binding parts of Judaism, such as circumcision, as requirements for salvation (cf. Acts 15:1, 5, 10). Let us note these characteristics.

Suppress The Whole Counsel Of God

Judaizers harm by not allowing the whole counsel of God to be taught (cf. Acts 20:27), which in turn leads to other problems, all of which hinder church growth, the spread of the Gospel, and salvation of souls. This harm is illustrated by examining at least two passages where Paul defends his work. First, in defending his work to the Corinthians, Paul wrote,

For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.¹⁶To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?¹⁷For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ. (2 Cor. 2:15-17)

Far from “stinking up the place,” Paul and his coworkers were “the fragrance of Christ” among the people they influenced. Paul and his coworkers do not change the word of God to make it more attractive like the Judaizers did. “Who is sufficient?” focuses the fact that not just anybody is sufficient to faithfully discharge the Gospel (cf. Paul’s opponents) (2 Cor. 2:16b). “Sufficient [adequate, NAS]” is from a word that means worthy, fit; sufficient, able (2 Cor. 2:6; 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:9; 2 Tim. 2:2). Paul was not sufficient within himself (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 4:1; Gal. 2:7), but his sufficiency was of God (2 Cor. 3:5).

Paul and his coworkers were different from many teachers who had contact with the Corinthians. They were not like the many who peddled God’s word. “Peddling [which corrupt, KJV; peddlers, ESV]” (from *kapeleuo*, καπηλεύω) means to peddle for profit. This word literally meant “to trade in,” or “peddle,” but because many merchants would mix water with grape juice and/or use false balances, it came to have a negative connotation (Kruse 87). The word was also used to describe “inauthentic philosophers” who sold their teaching for money (Thompson 40). The fact that Paul later defends himself for not taking monetary support from the Corinthians

(2 Cor. 11:7-9) seems to indicate that these peddlers were teaching for money, which means they would “corrupt” God’s word to make it more attractive. Paul and his coworkers, however, were sincere with the approval of God (2 Cor. 2:17b). “Sincerity” is the opposite of the deceit practiced by those who “peddled” God’s word. “In the sight of God” and “speak...Christ” further assures Paul’s integrity. Preachers must not dilute or change the message to make it more attractive to potential “customers.”

Second, in defending what he preached, Paul wrote,

For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. “For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:5-6)

Paul and his coworkers were servants of Christ. They themselves were not the content of their preaching. As already mentioned, Paul’s defense that “we do not preach ourselves” likely reflects an accusation by the Judaizers that he preached himself (which also probably implied that the Judaizers were the ones who actually preached themselves). Whether that is the case, the content of Paul’s preaching was clear—he preached “Christ

Jesus the Lord” and he and his coworkers as the Corinthians’ “bondservants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5a). The word “preach [proclaim, ESV]” is from a word (*kerusso*, κηρῦσσω) that means to proclaim, make known, preach (2 Cor. 1:19; 11:4; Rom. 10:8, 14-15). This is the verb form of a word that referred to a town crier, or herald, whose job it was to deliver an unaltered message from a superior (1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:5). “Christ Jesus [as, NAS] the Lord” was the content of Paul’s preaching (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:5 cf. Acts 2:22-37; 13:26-47)!

Rather than promoting themselves, Paul and his coworkers were quite the opposite—they were the Corinthians’ servants (2 Cor. 4:5b). The word translated “bondservants [servants, KJV]” refers to a slave (Gal. 1:10; Eph. 6:5-6; 2 Tim. 2:24; 1 Pet. 2:16). To be such a slave requires humility and follows the example of Christ (Mt. 20:25-28; Phil. 2:7). The fact that Paul and his coworkers were the Corinthians’ “bondservants” on account of Jesus shows that a right relationship with Christ leads to a right relationship with others. Paul’s “service to them is a service to Christ” (Thompson 61).

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Contrary to preaching themselves, Paul was simply communicating what God gave him (2 Cor. 4:6). Paul's use of light shining in darkness has been taken different ways, but no matter which of the Scriptural possibilities one takes, it is clear that Paul was showing that his ministry had Christ's authority, and was, therefore, superior to that of the Judaizers. The "knowledge of the glory of God" was the "light" to which Paul referred that dispels darkness (2 Cor. 4:6b cf. Jn. 1:6-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 2 Pet. 3:18). The "face of Jesus Christ," as opposed to the veiled face of Moses mentioned earlier (2 Cor. 3:7, 13), was where the fulfillment of God's new covenant stood (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7-18).

Like the Judaizers of old, some "Judaizers" today suppress the whole counsel of God. Even when the subject of their hobby is a legitimate and needed Bible subject, when it becomes the entire focus of their prolonged teaching, then it prevents other, needed subjects from being taught. Sometimes the desire of the new Judaizer to force his hobby on others results in his distorting God's word to make it appear as if the Bible supports the extreme position taken by the Judaizer (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16). Thus, like Paul's opponents, the Judaizer of today becomes a "peddler" of God's word and promoter of self, wanting to make his hobby as attractive as possible to the "customers" he seeks to enroll in his "fellowship" of hobbyists. Indeed, Judaizers harm by suppressing the whole counsel of God!

Corrupt And Cheat The Local Church

In a verse where Paul sought to restore the affection from the Corinthians that was lost by their allowing themselves to be deceived by the Judaizers, Paul wrote, "Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one" (2 Cor. 7:2). The three things he denied doing were likely charges the Judaizers leveled against him. Before considering those charges, consider Paul's touching request for the Corinthians' affection. "Open your hearts [receive, KJV; make room... in your hearts, NAS]" is from one Greek word (*choreo*, χωρέω) that means to make room for, have room for; accept; hold (Mt. 19:11-12; Jn. 8:37; 2 Pet. 3:9). The verb form (aorist imperative) used here suggests that Paul was looking for specific action on their part to show their affection toward him (Kruse 141).

Again, the three areas Paul insisted that he and his coworkers were not guilty were three areas in which his opponents likely accused him. In each of these denials, Paul appealed to the knowledge still fresh in their minds of his visit with them (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2; 5:11; 6:3; 1 Thes. 2:1, 9, 11). First, Paul denied harming the Corinthian church. The word "wronged" means to treat unjustly, harm; do wrong or evil to (2 Cor. 7:12; 1 Cor. 6:7-8; Col. 3:25; Phile. 18; Acts 25:10-11). Second, Paul denied ruining the Corinthian church. The word translated "corrupted" (from *phtheiro*, φθείρω) means to corrupt, ruin, destroy; lead astray, seduce (11:3; 1 Cor. 3:17; 15:33; Eph. 4:22; Jude 10; Rev. 19:2). Third, Paul denied cheating the Corinthian church. "Cheated [defrauded, KJV; took advantage of, NAS]" (from *pleonekteo*, πλεονεκτέω) means to take advantage of, cheat; get the better of (1 Thes. 4:6). Paul used this word elsewhere in Second Corinthians to mean "to corrupt by misleading tactics" (2 Cor. 2:11) or "to ruin financially" (2 Cor. 12:17-18). Given Paul's concern for the collection (2 Cor. 8-9), and the "defense of his behavior" (2 Cor. 11:20), he appears to be defending himself against the charge that he misused money (Thompson 100).

Conclusion

As is the case many times, the ones who often accuse others, are in fact guilty of those same sins (cf. Rom. 2:21-23). Thus, while the Judaizers accused Paul of harming the church at Corinth, they were the ones who were actually doing the harm! So it is with some of our day. They are the ones who wrong, corrupt, and cheat the church by suppressing the whole counsel of God and by desiring to please men (especially the "fellowship" of their hobby) at the expense of the Gospel, and seeking to destroy faithful brethren's reputations!

Concerning the negative feedback received from the previous two articles, why are some so insistent on knowing who the "some of our day" are? The editor has been asked whether he was referring to this brother or that brother. My answer remains: if it applies to a certain individual, it applies; if it doesn't, then it doesn't! 🙏

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Shall your brethren go to war while you sit here?

were Moses' words to the children of Reuben and to the children of

Gad when they wanted to stay on the other side of Jordan and take care of their cattle instead of helping the rest of the children of Israel conquer the land that God promised them (Num. 32:1-6). On that occasion, the anger of the Lord was kindled, and He compared their rebellion to that of the unfaithful spies and the faithless Israelites who believed them (Num. 32:7-15). God's children must not think they can sit by idly and do nothing to help the Lord's cause while the battle is raging.

Spiritually, we are involved in the greatest war known (cf. Eph. 6:10-20). King Jesus wants as many helpers as possible! Preachers are among the frontline soldiers in this great war (cf. 2 Tim. 2:3-4). Their training and their being sent are of absolute importance if they are to be successful in defeating the enemy and his forces (cf. Rom. 10:13-15; 2 Cor. 10:3-5). The Florida School of Preaching has been faithfully training preachers and preparing souls to better serve the Lord since 1969. The only way we have been able to operate as we have for these forty-three school years is because good brethren have not sat by idly expecting others to do all the work and/or give all the financial support. As lives on earth change (through death, economic standing, etc.), the need for new supporters arises. That need must be met. We realize that supporting the school is not the only way to fight this great war,

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