

February 14, 2014

—Call to worship—

—Hymn— (567) Sing, all creation, sing to God in gladness

—Psalm— (93)

**Gloria Patri:** Glory be to the Father and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, **as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

—Scripture Reading— (Galatians 3:1-9)

You foolish Galatians! You must have been bewitched – you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly displayed on the cross! Answer me one question: did you receive the Spirit by keeping the law or by believing the gospel message? Can you really be so foolish? You started with the spiritual; do you now look to the material to make you perfect? Is all you have experienced come to nothing – surely not! When God gives you the Spirit and works miracles among you, is it because you keep the law, or is it because you have faith in the gospel message?

Look at Abraham: he put his faith in God, and that faith was counted to him as righteousness. You may take it, then, that it is those who have faith who are Abraham's sons and daughters. And scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, declared the gospel to Abraham beforehand: 'In you all nations shall find blessing.' Thus it is those with faith who share the blessing with faithful Abraham.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

—Meditation—

Paul is disappointed. The gospel was given to the Galatians and they received it with gratitude. They were a people of faith, but suddenly pushed aside their teachings. What happened? Paul does not address the people out of anger, but from affection. He doesn't address them as his brethren, as he typically does. He is empathetic to the people, but also saddened at their stability. This is a statement to remind the people of their loyalty. Are you loyal to the law or to the gospel? Many people thought that the Jewish law and faith went hand

in hand. They thought that one must obey the law in order to maintain their faith. This meant that if you didn't follow the laws, such as being circumcised, you were cursed.

Paul asks if the Galatians were bewitched. This refers to sorcery of a kind, which is found later on if we continue to read the book of Galatians. This refers to artful deception that Satan creates. He is trying to push us away from faith. Paul says to the Galatians, it is not the law that you must follow, but rather faith. Was it the law who was crucified on the cross for you? Were miracles present because you obeyed the law? The Holy Spirit was given without law, the law does not justify, faith in Christ justifies. Martin Luther refers to crucifixion in his writing *Sola Fide* – by faith alone, in this way: “...Christ can no longer be crucified in person, but He is crucified in us when we reject grace [and] faith...”

Often faith is treated as something that must be earned. Nothing we do can ever be good enough. Of course, embracing faith doesn't automatically make you faultless. All of our faiths are tested. It is the result of these tests that confirms our faith. Strengthening our faith is caused by our perseverance. In faith we are offering our complete trust and confidence in Christ. This means that we shouldn't give up when afflicted. We can repent and bring ourselves back onto the path of righteousness. How do we overcome our affliction? We do so with faith. In 1 John 5:4, we read “For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.”

The Galatians rejected the gospel teachings at first, embracing the law. Paul, out of love, held them accountable, teaching them that the law does not define your Christian identity, but

rather excludes it. Let us persevere and strengthen our faith and our relationship with Christ.

Let it remind us of our loyalty and reaffirm our confidence in Christ.

Praise be to God. Amen.

### **—Prayers—**

**ALL: Lord God of all wisdom, we pray for Acadia University, that she may be faithful to the purposes of our Founders, continue to promote the search for truth and knowledge, and be an inspiration to others who follow. May we be a community of scholars sharing this ambition, caring for one another, and loyal to the truth revealed to us as Thy disciples. Amen.**

**—Hymn— (516) Love divine, all loves excelling**

**—Benediction—**